

Jerseyans On Stage

Frankie Valli: From here to stardom

By ROBERT W. MAITLIN

It is a long way from Abington Avenue School in Newark to the Coconut Grove in Los Angeles but one young man who has made the trip and sold millions of records along the way is Frankie Valli, the lead singer of America's top pop group, "The Four Seasons."

Recently Valli recorded some records on his own and wound up being voted the second most popular male vocalist by Cashbox Magazine, the music industry bible.

His recording, "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" sold a million and a half records and has been nominated for two Grammy Awards, symbolic of the best in popular music.

It was not so long ago that Valli, then in the fourth grade at Newark's Abington Avenue School, nervously went on the school stage to sing "White Christmas" at a school assembly.

"I was so nervous about singing when I was younger that I used to hide behind the chair in my living room whenever my uncle asked me to sing for anyone," Valli remembered.

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Recalling his early career Valli said he always was interested in getting into show business.

"When I was going to Central High School I would go into the little clubs around Newark where my friends were playing and they would ask me to sing. That's how it all got started," he said.

And get started it did. Since 1962, when the first Four Seasons smash, "Sherry," hit the number-one spot on music charts throughout the country, the group has sustained its popularity regardless of all the different trends music has taken over the past few years.

But now that Valli has established himself as a top single performer as well, the question is always asked: Are the Four Seasons breaking up?

"The group has no plans to break up. We have the busiest concert season in our careers coming up this year. But we are going into different areas each member of the Seasons would like to develop for themselves. In one way or another each of us has his own thing to do," Valli said.

THE FOUR SEASONS

Will You Love Me Tomorrow: Silhouettes (Phillips BF 1651). Trying to keep my natural pro-bias out of it, this revival of the Goffin-King song seems to me a cert for the charts. Beautifully, indeed wondrously, arranged, it has Frankie Valli doing the quiet bits and then the others coming in on their monster harmony scene. A lovely song and a lovely production. Flip: Super-class and Seasonal revival.

CHART PROBABILITY



Valli himself is not content with collecting royalties from such recent hit records as "I Make A Fool Of Myself" and "To Give." He recently enrolled in a New York acting school.

"I am very interested in film work," he said. "When I say film work I mean straight dramatic acting, no teeny-bopper movies."

Valli is unique among other pop performers in that his 3½-octave range allows him to develop a song through the use of a true falsetto range. This singing technique can be reproduced at a live performance, a feat many of the "new sound groups" cannot imitate.

"Much of the music today is created in the studio and cannot be reproduced on stage. Neither I nor the Seasons involve ourselves in anything of this type. You should be able to perform beyond the record. But this takes experience, something most of today's new groups don't have," Valli said.

Though he appears in the nation's biggest nightclubs and on all the major television variety programs, Valli said he prefers appearing on college campuses.

"I prefer doing college dates. There is no shifting around, no waiters bringing food and everyone is attentive. If a college crowd enjoys you they will let you know. They are very honest about their feelings," he explained.

"The element you perform to on a college campus is very intelligent. This is not always so in a nightclub. Many of these kids in college are underestimated. People try to treat them as kids but in many cases they are superior to the people who are telling them what to do," he added.

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Frankie Valli sees today's popular music as a driving force that will shape the entertainment business in the years ahead. As evidence he pointed out that most of the major nightclubs have begun to use the major pop groups and by-pass the standard club performer.

"Clubs are now using The Four Seasons, Supremes and Temptations. Club owners have found groups of this type draw the biggest crowds. And there is a basic reason for this," he explained. "It is the young people who bought the records of these groups who are filling the clubs to see them in person. There is nothing that can replace a live performance."

"And besides," he added, "what greater feeling is there for a performer than to get a standing ovation from the fans who have supported him throughout his singing career."

Valli lives in Nutley with his wife Mary and their three daughters, Celia, Antonia and Francine.



Saturday's Father.

Unusual and compelling piece of ballad material penned by Bob Gaudio and Jake Holmes is given an exceptional vocal performance by the consistent chart climbers. (6/15/68)

THE 4 SEASONS GOLD EDITION PHS 2-6501

Sherry • Big Girls Don't Cry • Connie-O • Walk Like A Man • Candy Girl • Marlena • Peanuts • Ain't That A Shame • Dawn (Go Away) • Stay • Big Man In Town • Alone • Save It For Me • Girl Come Running • Ronnie • Rag Doll • Bye Bye Baby (Baby, Goodbye) • Toy Soldier • Let's Hang On • Don't Think Twice (The Wonder Who) • Working My Way Back To You • Opus 17 (Don't Worry 'Bout Me) • I've Got You Under My Skin • Tell It To The Rain • Beggin' • Silence Is Golden • C'mon Marianne • Watch The Flowers Grow • Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow