

“Why Charles Calello and I Always Argue” by Ken Charmer

Trying to identify who did what in the creation of The Four Seasons sound has always been a focus of this group’s research and so going to Charles Calello for some answers would be a good starting place, or so I thought.

The Tony Awards have been made, the dust has settled and I thought I could ask him how does he see this event and the happenings of the last 9 months? Have the Four Seasons and their music really achieved artistic credit and recognition as a result of this play on Broadway? And who made the Seasons sound the success it was and is all over again Charles told us....”**One of the reasons the Seasons and groups like us didn’t reach the main stream was because we manufactured our records, they weren’t from an ‘organic’ place. Sort of like the Backstreet Boys today! Although they are all good singers they are a “pop” band and in a world of Rock and Roll, Pop only cuts it for the kids.**”

Surely not I argued the music you guys created is terrific..... Charles again....on the early days with Bob Crewe and the Seasons..... **“In terms of the industry I certainly feel Bob Crewe has not received the recognition he truly deserves, however, this has always been an industry of image and the type of records we made, although they were great, for their day and they do have their place in history, we were not really trend setters such as the records of the Beatles, The Stones and Motown were. We made great manufactured hits. Bob Crewe had the right idea, always having his (house) band (The pre-Four Seasons) sing backing on the records so he could create the sound he wanted. That did happen in the early days and on the early**

FRANKIE VALLI RECORDING SESSIONS JUNE, 2006



Frankie Valli

Charlie Calello

Lee Shapiro

Bob Gaudio

Artie Schroeck

Four Seasons tracks the group played. However, when the music became more demanding and the product needed to be produced to a higher level, if Tommy and Nickie had continued to play on the records we would never have been able to make Dawn, Let’s Hang On, Working My Way Back to You and many of the other classics that became a part of our history “

With regard to his small part in the story of Jersey Boys he told me....

”The 4 Seasons (the original 4 guys that made Sherry and Big Girls) are the ones in the ‘Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.’ Although I was involved in making the records I was NOT one of the original 4 Seasons. The Jersey Boys story is a great vehicle for telling the story of how these 4 guys made it and what happened to their lives. Somebody had to do what I did, writing the arrangements and helping them to make the records. I am grateful it was me!! Frankie and Bobby spent there lives as 4 Seasons and owning the band. I was just there doing my job. I know they respected what I did and I know in my heart I played a MAJOR part but - - I was not one of the original 4 Seasons and that’s what the show is about. My life is filled with similar

stories about how I played a MAJOR part in making artists careers soar; Engelbert Humperdinck, Neil Diamond, Barbra Streisand, David Geffin, Lou Christy, Juice Newton and Lorrie Morgan are some of the other stories. It would have been nice if I was displayed for my contribution to the success of the 4 Seasons but my participation would not have made the show any more successful. When a story is told especially by 5 people they tell it like they remember it. I’m just glad I’m mentioned at all.

The success of Jersey Boys, after seeing it 5 times, is the story. The book is compelling. They don’t play a 4 Seasons song until 40 minutes into the show and by that time they have you. The “hits” only enhance the show but the story - - - that’s the real hit. Of course, the music, being introduced to a new audience is being greatly accepted because the show is so good. You’ll be interested to know that in the show they also relate as to why they never became bigger then they became and the answer is similar to my statement above.” OK I said.... If portrayed correctly it seems likely Bob Crewe would have matched the roles of the individual Seasons and this would probably

have damaged the play structure and storyline. The stars of the play had to be the Four Seasons. So we agree that the story is the key and (although not accurate) it had to be balanced and set around the Seasons..... but how can you be so dismissive of the music's quality as just 'manufactured pop' as you have described itI don't think I can see it that wayand as for your contribution.....On the one hand you describe your role as.....

"Somebody had to do what I did, writing the arrangements and helping them to make the records. I am grateful it was me!....I was just there doing my job."....Yet you also acknowledge the importance of your role....."I know they respected what I did and I know in my heart I played a MAJOR part"

But we know you played a MAJOR part and we want it to be part of the history. The real story not the play. Will the record ever be put straight?

I and many other dedicated collectors believe this play has changed history's perception of the Four Seasons and their music. The implications for the group and the portrayal of their contribution to 60's music folk-lore cannot be exaggerated. The perception of their music has changed for all-time. Our perception and appreciation of it has changed. And this has occurred almost over-night. Now that I know a bit more of the 'story' from the play, like many original fans of the music in my teens, I listen to the music with perhaps more respect for what the Seasons went through....and I see the contribution of you, Bob Crewe and others as being the teamwork necessary



Crewe and Valli in the studio rehearsing 'Can't Take My Eyes Of You'. Photo courtesy of George Showerer

to create the quality that you achieved. Let me just remind you of what you told me a little while ago....

"Although I was working on the 4 Seasons records, I really didn't have a chance to have complete input until "Dawn." In the beginning I was there mainly because I knew how to write music and I worked with Gaudio writing the arrangements together. "Dawn" was originally written with a totally different feel than what's on the record. How that happened was, Frankie Valli and I were in a car when "More," the Kai Winding record came on. Frankie said, "that's the kind of feel we need on our next session," which was in two days. When we recorded "Dawn," we recorded 5 other songs on the same date. I usually worked on the arrangements with Gaudio the day before the sessions and the night before the sessions, when it came to "Dawn" I asked Gaudio to give me around 10 minutes as I felt the song wasn't happening. After around 10 minutes Frankie, who was sleeping on one of the desks in Crewe's office jumped up and both he

and Gaudio come into the writing room and said, "What's that?" I said I'm working on "Dawn." It blew them away. In 10 minutes I had come up with the basic figure that was the glue to the song and the bell sound that became part of the Seasons' sound for the next few years. I changed all the chords, wrote the whole tone scale rise at the end of the bridge and wrote all the instrumental parts in around an hour. The next day I made my "first" Calello track for the 4 Seasons. Although my input was important on the other records I worked on, "Dawn" was the first record I felt I really made the track and controlled the musical taste of the record.

Another record I really loved was "Let's Hang On." I had the "Satisfaction" fuzz guitar sound on the intro. I not only wrote the arrangement for the band but also wrote the vocal parts. The Seasons were in Atlantic City performing and after we made the track, Denny Randell took the vocal part down to them to teach them the song. The intro was added when the guys came into town to do the vocal. The intro was also good; I think it was Crewe's idea. The cool part about the instrumental is, I basically wrote the melody of "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine," which we had recorded a few months earlier. I didn't realize it until I heard it on the radio. Another record I was proud of was "Working My Way Back To You."

Gaudio, actually got the idea for Rag Doll from Sandy Linzer and Denny Randell. He and Denny were writing in one of the writing rooms at Crewe's office and Gaudio popped in. He asked what they were working on so

they played him the song. The lyrics were not complete, so when they sang him the song they did ooh's and ah's - - - thus two weeks later, "Rag Doll". The Seasons made that record on their own. They actually made it as a demo but it turned out so good they didn't re-record it. "Rag Doll" maintained the bell sound from "Dawn"

No doubt about it, Gaudio was the main guy! Crewe was talented and was very instrumental in keeping us on our toes but

99005). I made a copy for Frankie and I played it at the rehearsal. We sat around reminiscing It was really great. It blew him away. "

One story I will also relate as some fans have been discussing lately.....in late 1963 the 4 Seasons went to England for the 1st time. Frankie came home with a dozen or so 45's. He and Bob Gaudio brought them to Bob Crewe! (I was there and an eye witness) Frankie played Bob Crewe the 1st 5 Beatles hits and

Question"..... do you believe you guys achieved something very special and unique in the annals of 60's pop music?..... with a very special sound every bit as important as the Phil Spector sound. Wasn't the real story that it was the result of everybody's team effort, without which it probably wouldn't have happened.?

"Well Ken"...said Charles...." I think you're reading through the lines pretty well!!! The real story????? Who really knows what the real story is - - Remember as the saying goes - - - there are 3 sides to every story, HIS - - - HERS and THE TRUTH. In this case there are 9 sides - Frankie, Bobby, Tommy, Nicky, Bob Crewe, Sandy Linzer, Denny Randall, ME and THE TRUTH. I guess somehow - we'll never know!!!! I'm finishing my book and a part of the book will address my experiences with the 4 Seasons. I haven't finalized this portion of it as yet. Maybe when I finish it - - - I'll tell all!!!!"

So you see...I always argue with Charles...because of his modesty...but many thanks Charles...for 'sitting on the fence' a bit like Bob and Frankie all these years, letting us reach our own conclusions...right or wrong... it will be the enigma that was The Four Seasons....but as Bob Crewe is working on his memoirs.....we won't know who to believe....I suppose the play and Charles comments have reminded me that when it comes to the Four Seasons and all the connected people....."I love the things they did...I don't judge the way they lived."....words from the Artie Wayne song "There's A Crack In the Star" (On Hollywood Boulevard)

.... And in the end when we are all dead and gone...the music will tell the story.

With grateful thanks to Charles for his insights and humour from all who will always love and respect his work.



Bob Crewe in the studio with George Showerer...who supplied this photo

Gaudio was the 4 Seasons.

Today, when ever we get together, he is still the same guy he was when we were kids. When ever I'm in his company, I never lose sight of the fact that he is one of the best song writers and creative minds I have ever worked with; he truly was a "pop" genius!

We were recently together, myself, Gaudio and Frankie, making a new CD and I have a CD of all the songs Frankie did before the 4 Seasons (as a solo artist - The Fantastic First Years SP CD

said we should cover these songs. Crewe listened and said "we write better songs than these" so they were never covered. Had we covered, "I Want To Hold Your Hand" in addition to the other songs he had, we would have really changed history!"

These are the stories of a master craftsman and demonstrate what an important member of the team you were (along with the others) and why you were brought back in for this new CD...Surely you accept that? So come on Charles...give me a straight answer.... to the "Key