

IN AN AGE when most rock groups make a big splash with a hit record and then slowly sink from sight, the Four Seasons, like Ol' Man River, just keep rock 'n' rolling along. Together about 40 seasons, the New Jersey foursome see no end in sight to a union that's spanned a decade and given birth to the sale of some 55 million records. Last year, the Seasons were the first rock group to play the Empire Room at the staid Waldorf-Astoria and are currently doing an encore at the posh inn. Individually, the Seasons are Frankie Valli, lead singer; Bob Gaudio, second tenor; Tom DeVito, first baritone, and Joe Long, bass.

But are they actually a rock group? "I don't know what that word means anymore," shrugged Bob, 26, youngest member. "My definition is that we're a pop group. Whether you'd call it hard rock, soft rock, easy listening or psychedelic, I don't know."

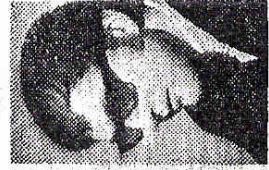
Pop Records Beat

'Imitation' is the real thing

USA Early 1969 Article

A very unlikely candidate for an underground album, one by those Jersey idols of the teenybopper set, The Four Seasons. But that's exactly what they've got. At least I haven't heard it on overground Top-40 radio. Or on underground radio for that matter. The record company didn't even bother sending me the record (they do send me records) until I requested it, specially.

Very curious. A record album by The Four Seasons that has been reviewed more in the underground than the overground press. I liked it before I even listened to it. Can see why the underground press dug it—the jacket is a six-page news-



By
George
Kanzler Jr.

The dawning of the Four Seasons can be traced back to the summer of 1960 when Frankie, Tommy and original Season Nick Massi were with the Four Lovers in New Jersey and Bob was working with the Royal Teens, who had a hit record, "Short Shorts." Bob was invited to join the group and later they decided to adopt a new name. "We were gigging at a Jersey club one night," recalled Tom, "and a neon sign advertising the place caught our eye. We've been the Four Seasons ever since." (Nick Massi left the group in 1964 and some time later was replaced permanently by Joe Long.) But it was in 1962 that the group really took off with a hit disk titled "Sherry," composed by Bob. It turned to gold and the boys' success was assured. "Sherry" led to "Big Girls Don't Cry," "Rag Doll" and many hit albums.

Knocking down about \$1 million a year with their combined ventures—writing, publishing and producing among them—the Seasons have

paper with an eight-page supplement enclosed. A surreal mixture of wire service stories and creative news and lyrics printed as news stories and put-ons all delightfully irreverent.

Called "The Genuine Imitation Life Gazette" (Philips), that's exactly what it is. Satire, parody, political consciousness, irony—the underground press has already pointed out all of this. And they're right. Yes, The Four Seasons are into it all—and not always with tongue in cheek.

But the whole album is into something a lot deeper than just a discovery of hip themes by The Four Seasons. They aren't just jumping aboard a gravy train paved by Beatles and Steppenwolfs.

Some random lines from the title song, "Genuine Imitation Life," suggest where they are getting at:

"People worship crosses, fingers crossed behind their back. Genuine Imitation Life."
"People buying happiness and manufactured fun.

in Nutley, N.J.; Bob recently bought a 30-room castle-like mansion in nearby Montclair; Tom lives a few blocks from Bob and Joe lives in Roseland. Working and living so close, do they have any squabbles? "You better believe it," answered Frankie. "It would be a very unhealthy atmosphere if we didn't have differences. We have our hangups and sometimes it tends to be a drag, but I think the arguments are very necessary. We don't throw punches at each other," he chuckled, "but there are times when I feel like it. It doesn't mean a thing, though," he added. "Arguing is just our way of releasing frustrations. Like the guy who has an argument with his wife and says he's leaving. He's not going anywhere."

And the Seasons aren't splitting, either. They intend sticking together in fair or stormy weather. □

Everybody's doing what everybody's done. You count on lots of people who can only count to one."

* * *

Genuine Imitation Life. It's a heavy theme. But they bring it off. Illusion versus reality. Sham versus truth. You are not what you think you are; or what you want to be.

Am I just writing this to get an invitation to Bob Gaudio's castle in Montclair? Anything's possible in a Genuine Imitation Life.

The music too, by Bob Gaudio, is genuine imitation. It's rich in allusions and insinuations of other rock songs—other groups. The end of "Hey Jude" adds a new dimension to that familiar piece of music. You'd need a cross-referenced tape recorder to pick up all the borrowings (or suggestions) but hearing them is part of the fun.

So don't let the rep overwhelm you, read the Gazette and hear the record. It's a fifth season.