



# Timepieces

Four Seasons Stories from the past



## The Arrival of The Four Seasons - As told by Billboard Magazine

We all love 'Jersey Boys' - The musical story of the life and times of The Four Seasons, but it is very easy to get wrapped up into believing the story and accepting it as the truth. But the real story portrayed in the magazines of the day isn't the true story either as the group sought to hide their background and their somewhat shady origins. So with the www publication of the most historic music magazine of the 20th century, Billboard it is worth reviewing in their pictures and words just how the Four Seasons 'arrived'. So in date order we journeyed through google.com.books to find and review the story of the Four Seasons arrival and present our scrapbook with commentary

### Introduction

By 1960 Billboard was into it's 66th year as the USA's 'amusement industry's leading News Weekly'. It was the music 'establishment's newspaper describing the company and management organizations major moves week by week More Broadway than Hollywood the paper covered the record company developments and the releases of major artists. But it's main claim to fame by the 1960s was it's singles chart. As the purchase and production of the 45 exploded at the start of the decade, the record industry was a rising star as city and urban populations used their residual income for entertainment. The sales of albums still exceeded 45s but that was to change as the decade unfolded. The **Billboard Hot 100** became **THE** chart as far as a measure of success, but the paper served all the main genres of Jazz, Country and R'n'B as well as specialty records for children and the religious markets.

As far as pop was concerned the traditional MOR artists of the 50s and band/orchestras still held sway with artists like Mantovani alongside Don Gibson, Nina Simone or Sammy Davis Jnr in the record ads. And today it seems difficult to remember a time when the Four Seasons weren't around on the charts. But that would not happen till 1962 and so as we watch the start of Jersey Boys and we see the portrayal of the early years told by Tommy De Vito...we compare the facts in Billboard with what we know of their pre-Seasons history. A reality that was somewhat different as Billboard shows as we go back to 1954



JUNE 5, 1954

**NEW TALENT TO WATCH**



# Frankie Valley

## "Somebody Else Took Her Home"

AND

## "Forgive And Forget"

MERCURY 70381 • 70381X45

**FRANKIE VALLEY**—Somebody Else Took Her Home.....80  
MERCURY 70381—The label has come up with a new singer with an exciting style and a sound somewhat in the vein of the early Johnnie Ray. He sings this pretty ballad with a lot of life and feeling over a quiet backing. The chanter bears watching, and with exposure this record has a chance. (Chappell, ASCAP)  
Forgive and Forget.....75  
The chanter turns in another powerful rendition on this slight new tune, this time with help from a large chorus and a pounding ork arrangement. Flip has more power, but this side could also pull spins. (Favorite, ASCAP)

1953 is the source of this record when Frankie regularly attended The Variety Trio gigs and they usually asked him to sing. Paul Kapp (founder of Kapp Records) saw his vocal talent and recorded some songs with him. In 1953 'My Mother's Eyes' (his on-stage regular song) and 'The Laugh's on Me (Corona 1234) got a release and although popular in the 'neighbourhood' hardly sold. Moving on to 1954 Frankie had joined the group (now the Variatones) and surprisingly Mercury picked up these two tracks from the previous session. It's hard today to see that the style was 'exciting' but the voice was amazing and although the B side was more up-tempo the lack of success was no surprise. The search for a style of vocal performance that would bring success had some time to run. This experience of recording and performing was clearly a big help to Frankie's ambitions to become a successful singer and the strong vocal range is there for all to hear. Another two years and a new direction and a new sound would be explored and provide his next appearance in Billboard

## The Four Lovers—1956/1958

The Four Lovers from the left:  
Frankie Valli, Nick Massi, Hugh Garrity,  
Tommy DeVito



36	MUSIC RARIS	THE BILLBOARD	MAY 5, 1956	MAY 5, 1956	THE BILLBOARD	MUSIC RARIS	37
<b>The Most Fantastic Rock N Roll Group on Record!</b>							
		<b>THE FOUR LOVERS</b>					
<i>Two Smash Hit Records From the Instant of Release</i>							
<b>PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME</b>				<b>YOU'RE THE APPLE OF MY EYE</b>			
• • •				• • •			
<b>HONEY LOVE</b>				<b>THE GIRL IN MY DREAMS</b>			
20/47-6519				20/47-6518			
<b>Don't Miss Their National Kick-Off on The Ed Sullivan Show May 6th!!</b>							

A new manager and a new name would change the fortune of Frankie and the guys. Peter Paul became their manager in 1956 and **“a week later they were auditioning for RCA-Victor”**, according to Peter Grendysa in the notes to the Bear Family CDBCD15424. Head man Joe Carlton liked their ability to blend country & western with rhythm and blues. **“The label had recently had considerable success with Elvis Presley, who did the same thing....The group selected a more hip name, The Four Lovers and recorded for RCA-Victor on April 21<sup>st</sup> 1956”** writes Peter. **“For some strange reason, RCA dumped the first two singles by the group on the market at the same time – usually the kiss of death in the record business.”** We found Billboard’s 2 page ad for these releases on May 5th 1956.

**“The radio stations settled on ‘Apple Of My Eye’...and the teenagers loved it. It entered the Billboard charts on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1956, inched up to No 62 and then disappeared after 5 weeks..... However RCA really believed in the group, at least for a while and two weeks later the group started to work on the ‘Joyride’ album.”** A weird mixture of songs and performances this most certainly was. The record buying public of the day **“remained unconvinced”**, says Peter....as would most Four Seasons fans to this day. In ‘Jersey Boys’ they are portrayed as a most embarrassing episode in their history. The sounds were changing in rock’n’roll and the ‘Lovers’ had been left behind. .

Peter Grendysa again... **“During the next few years, the Four Lovers did studio backup singing and recorded for a number of small labels under a bewildering variety of names: Frankie Valle & The Romans. The Village Voices, the Topics. Alex Alda. Billy Dixon & The Topics”.....and....“By 1962 the Four Lovers were history, and the group was earning \$100 per side as backup singers. Frankie was doing construction work to support his family and contemplated moving to Las Vegas where Nicky DeVito had offered to help him find a job”** They had entered the wilderness years until a new song-writer was recruited. Bob Gaudio, formerly of the Royal Teens. As he says in Jersey Boys.....**“none of this could’ve happened without me ”**



The Billboard's Music Popularity Charts . . .

• **Review Spotlight on . . .**

**RECORDS**

• **Reviews of New Pop Records**

**RATINGS—COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL**  
 Each record review expresses the opinion of the members of The Billboard music staff. In determining the commercial rating, the following factors are considered: Interpretation, material, artist's name value, distribution power, exploitation potential. The same considerations are applied to records reviewed in the country and western, and rhythm and blues fields.

80-100, Tops  
 80-89, Excellent  
 70-79, Good  
 60-59, Satisfactory  
 40-59, Limited  
 0-49, Poor

**Review of Four Lovers releases 5th May 1956 and of Frankie Vally release 2nd Nov 1959**

**FRANKIE VALLY**  
 \*\*\* Please, Take a Chance — DECCA 30994—Frankie Vally sells this rockabilled with feeling over a warm backing. Good side. (Sunno, BMI)  
 \*\*\* It May Be Wrong—On this side the warbler sells a pretty tune with much authority, helped by a good arrangement. (Sunno, BMI)

**Factfile – The Four Lovers - foreign RCA & Epic releases**

-by S.Wriedt, with help from J.Sanchez & J.Pingree

**Canada - RCA :**  
 45 & 78 rpm RCA 6518 You're The Apple Of My Eye/Girl Of My Dreams  
 45 rpm RCA 6519 Honey Love/Please Don't Leave Me  
 45 & 78 rpm RCA 6646 Jambalaya/Be Lovey Dovey  
 7" EP "The Four Lovers" RCA 869  
 Diddilly Didilly Babe/Shake A Hand/The Stranger/Night Train

**Chile - RCA :**  
 7" EP CME 114 Never Never/The Stranger (plus 2 by the Blenders)  
 7" EP CME 132 You're The Apple Of My Eye/The Girl Of My Dreams (plus 2 by the Ames Brothers)  
 10" "Joyride" LP CML-3023 (10 tracks only)  
 black & white cover, same photo as USA album  
 green RCA label

**France - RCA :**  
 7" EP RCA 75.350 Rock And Roll No.5 with The Four Lovers

**Germany - RCA :**  
 7" EP "The Four Lovers" EPA-869 [1956]  
 (as US EP, no ads on back, same notes)  
 7" EP "Joyride" EPA-871 [1957]  
 (as US EP, no ads on back, same notes)  
 12" "Joyride" LP LPM-1317-C [1956]  
 (as USA album, no ads on back, same notes)

**India - RCA (on WB) & Epic (unconfirmed) :**  
 45 rpm Warner Brothers 4210 Night Train/The Stranger  
 45 rpm Epic 9255 My Life For Your Love/Pucker Up

**THE FOUR LOVERS**

**You're the Apple of My Eye . . . . . 79**  
 VICTOR 6518 — A catchy, pop-styled r.&b. item, with satiric overtones. Likely to get good play. (Shalimar, BMI)  
**The Girl in My Dreams . . . . . 75**  
 This side is a ballad, nicely done, but without the impact of the flip. (Modern & Roosevelt, BMI)

**THE FOUR LOVERS**

**Honey Love . . . . . 81**  
 VICTOR 6519—This was a big hit some months back in r.&b. as done by Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters. The satiric style here may give it the edge to revive it for present-day rock and rollers. **Progressive, BMI)**  
**Please Don't Leave Me . . . . . 81**  
 This one was a Fats Domino hit before that artist began to hit the pop as well as the r.&b. charts. Again, there's a satirical edge, but the side is potent rock and roll. (Commodore, BMI)