

VIVA LAS VEGAS! By Lynn Boleyn

Well, what can I say – what a fantastic time we had in Vegas and at the get together at the Riviera. You have just got to see Vegas to believe it – now I know why Joe, Demetri and Bill live there!

I must say a huge “Thank You” to Johnny Hornsby for arranging the get together and for inviting Joe Long, Demetri Callas and Bill DeLoach to share some time with us. It was lovely to see Joe and Demetri again and a real pleasure to meet Bill. Gerry Forbes made the trip from Scotland and it was good to see Jack Adrian again from Chicago and Ron and Sandra Gardner from Rhode Island along with other guests, Cliff Hagberg; Allan and Gloria Minkowsky and Diane and Steve Albert, all from Las Vegas.

It was great to hear that Bill and Frankie Valli are still very good friends. Bill told me “I still hang out with Frankie – we did lunch last time he was here – I took him to The Tuscany Grill. We speak for a long time on the phone at least 3 – 4 times a year – he treats me like a younger brother”. Bill was told that it was intended to list the names of all the members of the Four Seasons, past and present, somewhere on the jacket of the CD ‘Romancing The 60’s’. Although that never happened we do know that all members, past and present, were listed on the Jersey Beat Box Set – I wonder if they might do the same on the credits of the Jersey Boys movie when that eventually comes out?

Bill, now aged 58, joined the Seasons in the early 1970’s just after the release of Chameleon. Fans will remember March 1973 when drummer Paul Wilson quit the band. The Seasons continued to perform with a substitute drummer but the ongoing crisis came to a head on 25 March 1973 during a concert at the Capitol Theatre in Passaic, New Jersey. The time came for Bill to sing his solo selection. According to Goldmine Magazine “*Bill refused saying his throat hurt. Valli exploded backstage and angrily proclaimed his retirement and his intention to disband the Four Seasons*”.

I obviously had to ask Bill about the time in question and he told me that he “had no voice at all – it was strep or whatever”. Before the show he did the usual thing like taking warm salt water to soothe his throat. He said he “could have squeaked out a song if I tried but it could have been the most embarrassing night ever”. He said Paul Wilson had already left and Gerry Polci was still being worked in as the new drummer which had been ongoing since Paul had given his notice to quit. He says sometimes he feels a bit like Pete Best – if he had stayed on board he may have been picked to sing “December ‘63”.

Bill, who was 21 when he joined the Seasons, said the group were going through a low period at the time and he could tell Frankie was frustrated - a culmination of various problems caused the band to be sacked.

Demetri

Bill

Joe



Ken Roberts was the Manager at the time, who was also sacked. Bill did ask if anyone knew where Ken was and what he was doing now. If anyone has any information please let me know and I will pass details onto Bill. Of course, as we now know Frankie was suffering with his hearing at that time and his 13 year marriage had collapsed. Fortunately, Frankie's "retirement" only lasted a matter of weeks and "How Come" was released later in 1973. Bill said never did any recordings with the Four Seasons "just TV stuff and concerts". Unfortunately he never visited the UK. He is a tenor singer and did all Bob Gaudio's parts when he first joined the group. That's Bob's keyboard in the photo he is playing! His favourite song is "Rag Doll" and he said the one he enjoyed playing the most too.



Bill, Frankie, Joe and Demetri – Madison Square Gardens 1972

Bill also spoke to us about hanging out with Maurice Gibb of the Bee Gees who he says is a really great, funny guy. He told how the Bee Gees once heard them warming up in the shower room at a venue singing "C'mon Marianne" and said how good they sounded. Maurice said "Was that you singing in the shower" and added "You're one of them now" – one of The Four Seasons. He said he was honoured to have met so many people like the Bee Gees, Chuck Berry; Sly & Family Stone and Mott The Hoople.

Bill has lived in Vegas for 27 years – Tommy DeVito has lived there for 35 years but Bill said they have never met. Joe and Demetri were hoping that Tommy DeVito could have joined us for our get together but unfortunately he was not able to join us as he was entertaining guests out of town. However, I did ask Joe to pass on our best wishes to Tommy. Now I bet he has a few stories he could tell – perhaps next time Tommy?!

Joe and Demetri, of course, had some wonderful stories to tell us too – like the time they flew with Frank Sinatra. They were the first rock act to play at The Waldorf where Sinatra was spending the Summer. He invited the Seasons for a drink and asked how they got to their gigs. "By commercial airplane" they told him. He then offered them the use of his twin engine Lear jet along with his pilot and co-pilot. The plane was always loaded up with drink and crystal glasses with "Come Fly With Me" etched on them! Joe said they flew on Sinatra's plane for around 4 – 5 months but very sadly the plane crashed into mountains in Las Vegas when the pilot was flying Frank Sinatra's Mother, Dolly, from Palm Springs, killing all on board in January 1977.

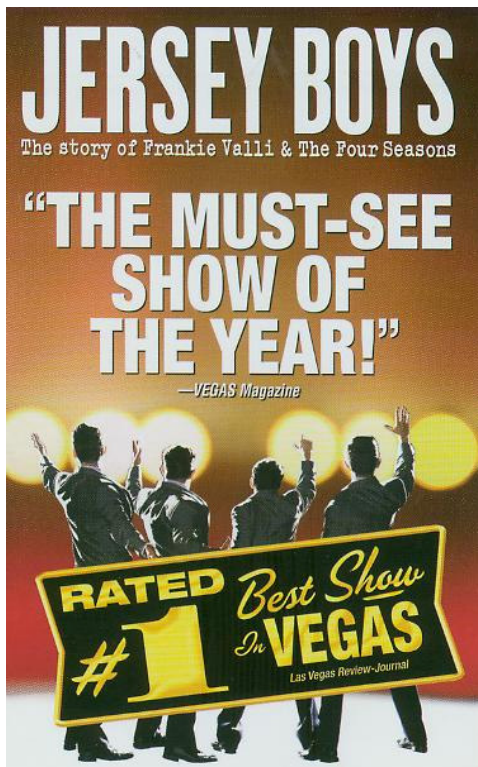
Talking of planes – Demetri told us that Clay Jordan lost 3 guitars on an aeroplane and 3 of his own guitars also went missing! Wonder where they are now? He also tells me that "a teenaged Bill DeLoach witnessed the entire original Woodstock presentation in 1969". He sends his regards and thanks to all.

Joe also told us how Tommy, Frankie and Bob would always be scamming and playing jokes on Joe Cass, who sadly passed away recently following a heart attack. He was a great drummer and played on Genuine Imitation Life Gazette. Joe has also asked me to pass on his regards to all.

Echoes Of The Sixties

Bill DeLoach and his girlfriend, Marilyn James, have a new show which opened at The Green Valley Ranch, Las Vegas on the 19 November and is playing every third Thursday in the month at 8 p.m. We wish Bill and Marilyn every success with this new show and hopefully in the future we may even see it on Broadway. Bill told us they were not allowed to use the name he wanted "Echoes Of Woodstock" but was able to use Echoes Of The Sixties as Phil Spector did not copywrite the name. The show is music from the early 60's telling the story of what happened then. Bill said he liked the Genuine Imitation Life Gazette Album as this was an example of a "news album" – what was going on at the time.

Joe Long emailed me to say "My son, his girlfriend and I saw his show at Green Valley. It was sensational! My son is now a bona fide fan, and wants to see him as much as possible". Joe also added "Have a wonderful Christmas and please give my regards to all".



Jersey Boys – The Palazzo Theatre, Las Vegas

Of course no trip to Vegas would have been complete without a visit to see Jersey Boys at The Palazzo! What a cast! They were brilliant. Now I am a BIG fan of our UK lads as everyone knows, where their friendship and camaraderie just shines through, but the Vegas cast were fantastic. Deven May was so realistic as Tommy DeVito and I thought Rick Faugno even looked and sounded like a young Frankie Valli. Peter Saide, making his US debut with Jersey Boys, played Bob Gaudio and again suited the part perfectly alongside Rick. So well done lads – I thought you were brilliant.

So thanks again to John for everything – hope you enjoy your cruise around the UK next year. If anyone gets the chance to visit Vegas I can highly recommend it. It is big – everything is big – our hotel, The Venetian was beautiful – but big! Even on our last day we were still getting lost in the hotel! And where else could you see the Eiffel Tower, the Canals of Venice, the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, Roman Forums and a Pyramid all in one city – amazing!



We also took a helicopter ride to the Grand Canyon - spectacular! Looking forward now to our next get together – perhaps we can try and arrange this where Frankie is playing so we can get to see Frankie in concert as well – perhaps even an after show party with Frankie, Robbie and the fans? Let's all put our thinking caps on and see what we can come up with!

Me and Joe