

WHO'S WHO AT THE MUSIC FAIR

FRANKIE VALLI & THE FOUR SEASONS

Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons are a musical institution if ever there was one. Who today doesn't recall with a smile—and an endearing nod to innocence and nostalgia—such rock and roll greats as "Sherry" (the group's first blockbuster), as well as "Dawn," "Rag Doll," and "I've Got You Under My Skin," to name a few of the dozens of superhits that have regularly appeared on the uppermost reaches of the national charts over the years.

Between 1962 and their last album as a group two years ago, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons have sold more than 53 million records. So

many hits are included in this period, in fact, that their "An Evening of Solid Gold" show lasts nearly two hours.

Changing musical tastes and styles over the years haven't changed the music of the Seasons. It's always refreshingly unique and much in demand. A case in point: In contrast to the British uprising and influence in music in the mid-sixties, noted music authority Jim Nettleton commented in a documentary that the Seasons were "the one American rock group that consistently rode out the British storm with their unique sound; the sound that heavily influenced th

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vocal styles of many rock artists."

In 1967, Frankie Valli, in addition to his position as the group's lead singer, stepped out for a solo effort. The single, "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," became a national sensation, and a million-seller. This proved that Frankie was an individual talent to be reckoned with while retaining his identification as a group member.

which seemingly came out of nowhere and quickly reached the number one spot on the charts. The album, "Closeup," gained wide attention, especially in the discotheques which soon made a favorite out of the album's 10-minute high-energy cut, "Swearin' to God." Popularity forced Private Stock to release an abbreviated version as a single and this, too, soared up the charts.

Both in solo and group efforts, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons earned 17 Gold Records, including nine singles and eight albums.

1975 turned into a banner year for Valli in the solo department once again. Signed to the newly-formed Private Stock Records, Valli recorded a single, "My Eyes Adored You,"

Although the group's style and enormously popular sound has not changed, the group's personnel has since its formation. Original members Bob Gaudio and Tom De Vito decided to forsake the spotlight in order to concentrate on the behind-the-scenes activities of the recording business. The four new additions are Lee Shapiro, Gerry Polci, Don Ciccone, and John Paiva. Lee Shapiro became a member of

Programme Information at the Westbury Music Fair, Long Island, NY for March 1976 when Valli and the Seasons Performed.

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the Seasons family in March, 1973. The arranger and keyboard player, Lee feels very strongly that there is still a place for their brand of music which has kept abreast of the industry both lyrically and by musical innovation as well.

Don Ciccone sings baritone and plays bass guitar. A professional since 1960, he was formerly lead singer with The Critters and wrote many of their hits, including "Younger Girl" and "Mr. Dieingly Sad." He is currently writing for the group and has been a member of the Seasons since January, 1974.

Gerry Polci sings tenor and displays a strong jazz influence as the group's percussionist.

John Paiva, the newest Season, although he has been with the group on tour since 1971, sings bass and plays guitar.

Frankie Valli, of course, is the toppling to this pleasing, hit-making confection. Capable of singing baritone and soprano (he has a vocal range of three-and-a-half octaves), Frankie doesn't play an instrument now, but—trivia nuts take note—he performed on drums when he started his musical career in the fifties.

Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons will continue to record and perform for their appreciative and admiring public. Right now, as ever, the road is straight up the record charts and into the history of pop music.



FRANKIE VALLI
and
THE FOUR SEASONS

WESTBURY MUSIC FAIR

Lee Cuhler and Shelly Green

Present

FRANKIE VALLI

and

THE FOUR SEASONS

plus

STEWIE STONE

THE GOSPEL according to Frankie Valli, chapter one, expounded in the dressing room of the Apollo, Manchester.

Frankie and the Four Seasons have almost completed their British tour — Wolverhampton tomorrow and that's it. Finished. This is their last tour together. Let Frankie explain:

"Come September, myself and the Four Seasons will be going in different directions. Since 1966, I've been travelling constantly and living two lives. It's taken its toll. I want to slow down. Get more into producing. I'll still perform, but not so much, perhaps 50 or 60 days a year. More cabaret, I'd like to play Vegas. I'm going to write a book too — about my experiences in the business."

Cattle

So, what will the book reveal? Has it all been rosy in the garden? "Let's say I've enjoyed audiences for 14 years. But there have been things from the business point of view that I haven't liked. All people should be treated like people, not cattle."

"Audiences are the most important part of any show. They should never be taken from granted. If you do, that's real bad taste. The audience tonight were dynamite. We always get the same reception in this country. I think it's because of the kind of show we do. It's fun — and we care."

"No, I wouldn't call what we do a rehearsed act. We approach it as professionals. You have to love what you do and love the people who come to see you do it. We do the old numbers, the medleys of the old hits because that's what the people come for."

Problems

"If they want something else they'll let us know. They don't want to hear an evening of completely foreign material. They pay their money and deserve to get what they expect."

"Once I get out on the stage, I find it pretty easy. Audiences have a way of stimulating us. We just get out there and have fun. We don't sing about the world's problems. Everyone knows these problems exist, that the air is polluted, that the government are doing it



VERY VALID

Frankie Valli (left) is splitting with his group the Four Seasons (below) at the end of their tour. He's going to fulfil a few ambitions — one is to write a book about the business. Interview by JIM EVANS

all wrong. They don't want to come and hear us telling them about it all. That's why we have a voting system. But I think people should research their candidates more.

"Jimmy Carter? He's a refreshing change. And that's what the country needed. He came down to the peoples' level — that's as far down as a diplomat can go. After the Nixon business, the people needed someone they could have faith in."

"The democratic system we have is the only one. But there must be incentives. The poor mustn't be overtaxed and the middle classes shouldn't be made to carry the rest. I understand the taxes over here are pretty tough, exorbitant. The top rate of tax in the States is 50



per cent. But over here they're so high, the incentive disappears. I'm sure the American tax structure is the best."

Mr Valli obviously has a lot to say, a lot of opinions. But fate must intervene, in the form of his managers — "Five more minutes, OK." Great, eight hours travelling for a 20 minutes

interview. So, better fire off a couple more questions before the manager blows for full time.

Your favourite song, Frankie? "I don't really have one. You either like a number or you don't. As long as I like it and it fits, it's alright. I like to have continuity on my albums. Whatever I was doing at

the time was my favourite. If I'm working on a new project then that is my favourite."

"I wouldn't call Sherry' or 'Big Girls Don't Cry' my favourites, but they seemed so right at the time. I'm not ashamed of anything I've done." Enter manager, exit reporter. Here endeth the lesson.



Wintry Seasons

UK Melody Maker

April 17th, 1976

FRRIENDS and acquaintances had been whispering for so long about how the Four Seasons were a critically unrecognised force in rock, a sort of older generation Beach Boys, that I'd actually begun to believe it.

"December '63" seemed an honourable enough pop single, and it was nice to see Frankie Valli looking so cool on that TOTP film clip, hiking the studio cans up to his ear in time to deliver his immaculately phrased contribution.

So you could say that I was vaguely optimistic about the Four Seasons' London gig, although their choice of venue (the Palladium, with all its MOR associations) and support band (the irredeemably awful R & J Stone) seemed ominous.

But the Four Seasons were truly grim: a soulless, meticulously choreographed Las Vegas cabaret act. Puppet master Bob Gaudio sat in a box near the stage, and one could almost see the strings attached to Frankie Valli.

Flanked by horns and massed violins, all of which made the appropriate lush noises, and with a trio of girls whose main function appeared to be the decoration of three bar stools, the Four Seasons moved automatically through such

deathless material as "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," "The Way We Were," "Silence Is Golden" and "Our Day Will Come."

Frankie Valli expressed the now traditional American visitor's platitudes about how wonderful it was to be in our country, and how especially wonderful it was to be at the Palladium, and he put in the obligatory plug for his current album. His singing, however, due to a throat ailment, wasn't all it might have been. There was no strength in his delivery, and when, as in "Rag Doll," he remarked "I'm getting too old for this," one could only concur.

Even harmonies, which presumably are universally regarded as the trademark of this particular band, seemed

to be uninspired, and were merely weaker repetitions of recorded statements. Sometimes Valli would attempt to sing both back-up and lead vocals in the same song. Ob-

viously that's fine in the studio, but it presents certain problems live.

Curiously, drummer Gerry Polci was more imposing than Valli. I wasn't enamoured of his drum style (sort of surrogate pop Buddy Rich), but he was able to sing confident lead lines while holding down a solid rhythm, and, perhaps predictably, "December '63" (on which he's predominantly featured) came across with more authority than anything else played all evening.

The old hits — "Sherry," "Walk Like A Man," "Big Girls Don't Cry" and "Rag Doll" — were compressed into uncomfortable medleys, although nothing was quite as irksome as "Let's Hang On."

Still, the audience clapped when Valli asked them to, and, at the end of the show, gave the Four Seasons a 75 per cent standing ovation. — STEVE LAKE.

USA The Plain Dealer September 6th, 1976

Well seasoned performance

The Valli sound is still a winner

By Paul Mooney

At first it didn't seem to be my night.

When I arrived at my usual seat in the Blossom Music Center pavilion Saturday, it was roped off to make room for the sound control board of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

After an usher led me to another seat, I suffered through 40 minutes of incredibly stale and tasteless toilet-type humor from a warm-up comedian called Stewie Stone.

And when Valli appeared, his first crack was: "We do not do shows for reviewers; we do them for people."

But, despite my exile, I can only report one thing about the concert: My ears adored it.

Valli's merchandising of upbeat rock music becomes a montage of listening pleasure. Frankie is a seasoned veteran, with the group celebrating 14 years of sound service.

The 39-year-old singer's enthusiasm for his work seems to overcome the misfortune which seems to dog him when he visits this area.

When he arrived for performances here last November, his sequined white western leisure suit was stolen at the



Clockwise, from bottom, Frankie Valli, Gerry Polci, Don Ciccone, John Palva, Lee Shapiro.

airport. And Saturday, he said, he was battling the flu.

The audience of 11,000 was treated

In Review

to the heights of the Four Seasons' successes from the last decade, starting with "Sherry" in 1962.

Lead singer Valli has not been affected by age. He possesses a rich but nasal-hard baritone voice which is distinctively engaging as it walls through "Our Day Will Come," "Swear to God," and "My Eyes Adored You." In "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," the hit that established him as a soloist in 1967, Valli does a nice job of building from the soft ballad to the big sound.

Valli should really tell the audience more than the first names of the three women singers in his troupe. The Seasons — drummer Gerry Polci, pianist Lee Shapiro, guitarist John Palva and bassist Don Ciccone — are all introduced with their surnames intact, and I am sure the women — Gale, Sondra and June — have last names, too. They also sing quite well.

"Who Loves You," "December 1963," and "Let It All Begin" were among the more recent hits heard. Polci sings well in "Silver Star." Valli's good-natured stage presence keeps the evening relaxed.

Group Sound Gone Stale

FRANKIE VALLI AND THE FOUR SEASONS and STEWIE STONE. At the Valley Forge Music Fair, Devon. Through Sunday.

By MATT DAMSKER
Of The Bulletin Staff

AFTER COUNTLESS seasons of success as one of America's most consistently popular vocal groups, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons will be separating once and for all later this month. Not surprisingly, the group's current engagement at Valley Forge Music Fair is bound to call forth appropriate sentiment from all concerned, although last night's opening performance proved less a sentimental high than a sadly vivid demonstration of a group sound gone stale.

If this seems harsh, the fact remains that Valli and the Seasons are calling it quits, having concluded, apparently, that their "reunion" in 1975 — with the briefly soloed Valli joining four new Seasons — has proved less than ideal. On one hand, Valli's voice — a wiry, emotive tenor still capable of sure glides and piercing falsetto — has mellowed considerably and no longer flows so mercurially with the strenuous high harmonies demanded by the classic Four Season material.

It's also apparent that the Four Seasons — Don Ciccone, John Paiva, Gerry Polci and Lee Shapiro, on electric guitar, keyboards, bass and drums — see no real future in devoting most of their onstage time to an increasingly nostalgic package of Valli's best-remembered vehicles. Last night the energy and inspiration they brought to such decade-old chestnuts as "Rag Doll," or even the more



Frankie Valli

... still with 4 Seasons

recent "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You," seemed woefully below par; behind Valli, the group displayed about as much style as a band that makes its living playing sweet-sixteen parties.

However, things did pick up considerably during the show's final segment. Minus Valli, the Seasons offered some strong examples of the tougher-sounding pop-rock with which they hope to further establish themselves. The best of these newer songs, "December 1963 (Oh What A Night)," which features Valli in a secondary capacity, was one of last year's biggest hits. Indeed, if nostalgia were not so much a part of what Valli and the Seasons have become, they might have more reason for sticking together than for making the final break.

On the face of it, that's a fairly perverse thing to do. After all, Valli's voice is the sound which made the Seasons famous. Imagine a Led Zeppelin album where you can't hear Jimmy Page.

And yet, the strongest tracks here are the title song, and the opener, "Silver Star", which even surpasses it. Both lean heavily on a twitching, light-footed rhythm, topped off with floating, wispy harmonies.

The result is something akin to a New Sound, more than which few pop musicians can hope to achieve.

Credit is due in this respect to the inevitable Bob Gaudio for

his production and writing, and the funky octopus Gerry Polci whose percussion work is of Motown standards.

A barely less impressive example of their work is "December 1963 (Oh What A Night)", which struts along as exuberantly as a Disney Street parade.

But if the major tracks were out as singles, the album could be largely dispensed with. The rest of the songs could be covered by The Osmonds with barely a crochet adjusted. Which would be nice for the Seasons and The Osmonds, but less fun for the rest of us.

Bob Edmunds

★ Scene
★ in
★ Titbits



Fog-Frankie blowing

FRANKIE VALLI is to quit the Four Seasons in September after nearly 20 years with the top American vocal group. The singer, whose amazing fog-siren falsetto voice has been in the forefront of scores of hit records by the legendary Seasons, has finally decided that he wants to be alone . . . almost.

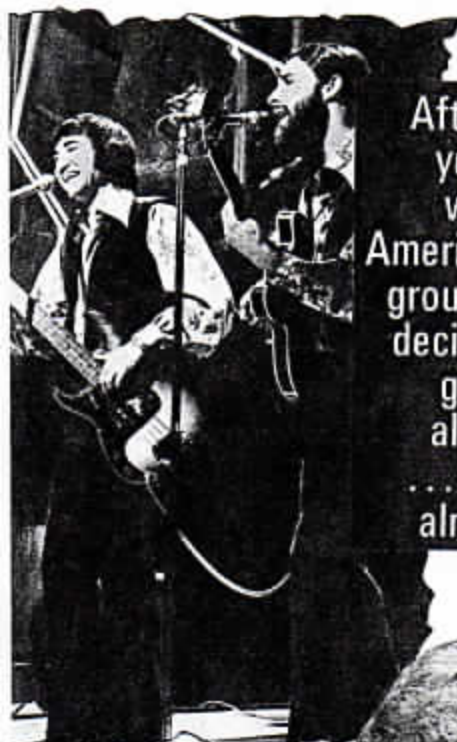
Because travelling everywhere with Frankie when he turns solo star in the autumn will be his second wife, Mary Ann—coincidentally the name of one of the group's biggest hits.

"I was introduced to her by friends," said Frankie who was in London recently to play a series of farewell dates with the group at the London Palladium, "and was instantly swept off my feet."

"She's breathtakingly beautiful and it's going to be great touring together. Mary Ann is as necessary to me as razor blades . . . and I have to shave very often!"

Frankie is now 40, but firmly believes that his best years are yet to come. "Age isn't as important as it was," he insists.

"Today's young ladies are not marrying very young men; they're looking for



After 20 years with America's top group, he's decided to go it alone ... well, almost



Frankie Valli, centre, with the Four Seasons, who he has been with for 20 years. "I'll shed a few tears when I shake hands with them for the last time," he says

siren is solo

by Gordon Coxhill



maturity, someone who's been around and knows where he's going. I simply grew apart from my first marriage and now I'm a new person, personally and professionally.

Terrible wrench

"I'm finishing my commitments with the Four Seasons and I guess it will be a terrible wrench when the final day comes. We've got our place in pop history secure with hits like *Sherry*, *Walk Like A Man*, *Rag Doll* and my personal favourite, *I've Got You Under My Skin*, and I'm emotional enough to shed a few tears when I shake hands with them in a

dressling-room after the last concert. "But they'll carry on there's no doubt about that. I've built the group so that it always had more than one lead singer. Hell, they'll chalk up lots more success and I won't be missed at all after a few weeks.

Frankie, who has already scored solo record success and dedicates his latest LP, *Valli*, on the Private Stock label, to Mary Ann "for her soul and inspiration", explains that he is leaving the group because he was in danger of becoming schizophrenic.

"I was living the full-time lives of two people," he said, "I was faced with the

choice of playing safe and seeing out some more good years with the group, or taking a chance on broadening my appeal to a wider audience.

"And, of course, there's the selfish reason. At 40 you like to make a few decisions without asking four other guys if they agree."

The Four Seasons were always one of the most professional of pop groups, surviving the Merseybeat onslaught in the mid-1960s and never anything short of polished and well-turned-out on stage. It was something Frankie was very hot on.

High standards

"People pay a lot of money to come and see you," he says, "and they deserve a show with the highest standards.

"I figure you'll never be a great artist while you take the audience for granted—which a lot of today's groups do.

"Sure, they are making good music and some of the young songwriters are brilliant, but it strikes me a show should be rather more than a string of hit songs and 10,000 decibels.

"Elton John is an example of somebody who cares about his audience. They are never bored or let down by Elton, because he cares."

Then Frankie confessed that for years he has been a "clothes addict"—unable to walk past a men's clothes shop without getting out his wallet.

"I came from a poor environment," he said, "and always had patches in the backside of my denims. All I got to do in those days was window-shop and swear that one day I'd make it inside.

"When I started to make money I became a freak about new things to wear. Shoes, ties, suits, shirts... anything that I could rush home with, rip off the wrapping and try on.

"At one time I was throwing away unused hats because I bought so many. I couldn't possibly wear them before

they went out of fashion. A thousand dollars a time? Boy, that was no trouble at all."

Massive success over so many years has made Frankie Valli a wealthy man. Why does he need to carry on touring when he admits he wants to spend more time writing songs and producing records for other people?

"It sounds soft, I know," he said, "but I have a great love of people. I like meeting them in the street, I like seeing them filling a theatre. There is enough of the ham in folk like me to make us carry on long after we've made our pile.

"Look at Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley. Both of them carried on because people started to ask who was going to take over. They wanted to show they were still the tops.

"I've got an endless love affair with an audience."

And, from September, Frankie Valli doesn't have to bother with a five-way share of the applause.

