

Timepieces

Four Seasons Stories from the past



'Motown Unreleased—37 years of myths and mis-information : Part 1

When Frankie Valli scored a Nr 1 hit with **My Eyes Adored You** in 1975 it re-introduced him to a lot of fans who only knew of the groups and his solo work from the 1960s. The period at Motown had been a lost and experimental period with the singer and his song-writing partner **Bob Gaudio** searching for a new sound and direction for the groups traditional sound. Fans suddenly wanted to know about the 'missing' years when the **Four Seasons** sound had been lost.

Fans quickly collected the few tracks that had surfaced during the early 70s and rumours started to surface about unreleased material when Valli told the story of how he bought the master to **'My Eyes Adored You'** when they left the label. Motown had failed to promote the more progressive sounding **'Four Seasons'** and in desperation

they had left the label. The sudden success in the UK of the 1972 song **'The Night'** from the exploratory **'Chameleon'** album was a big surprise except for those that had made it a cult dance hit on the UK's Northern Soul scene.

When a NEW Four Seasons line-up struck it big in 1976 with the **'Who Loves You'** album the group had really found a new **'sound'**, the debacle of their time at Motown was put behind them.

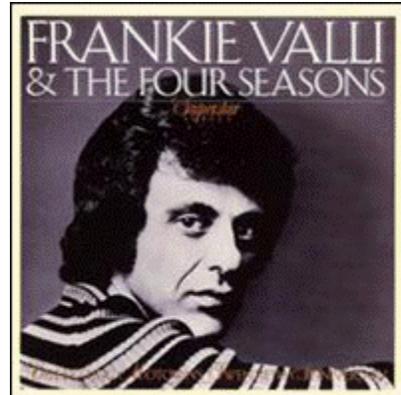
Motown in an attempt to cash in on a departed band who they never paid royalties too issued a hotch porch of a collection titled **'Inside You'**. With that being



the title song and with a few previously unheard but very good tracks fans began to think that more may exist.

Bob Gaudio when interviewed by (John Riley (UK fan club President) in 1977 was asked about the unreleased tracks from the experimental period of 1970 to 1974. John told us.... **"I asked Bob Gaudio about these tracks many years ago and he told me that most were unfinished, needed vocals completing and so on. He also said that Motown never wasted anything, so it was most likely that they had been cannabilised and backing tracks used in other things. I don't think there are 30 finished tracks waiting for release."**

Well based on that response we all accepted we had all of the music. But whilst Motown could have clarified the situation nothing further emerged. Bob's story was accepted. Why wouldn't it be.? We had no reason to think that he would not wish to cash in on the groups period at Motown if anything remained of value.



Fast forward to the 1990s and as Northern Soul DJs started to find lost classics in the Motown vaults, it emerged that their vaults of thousands of tapes were poorly indexed and that no definitive lists of tracks was available. Although this may to some extent have been a hype to keep collectors interested, the label used its back catalogue to plunder the Northern Soul and collectors groups with unheard tracks in wonderful anthology CD collections but nothing emerged re the Four Seasons. The group was not a mainstream **'soul'** sound and it was the 60s Motown period that was the classic period. Their session list at Motown seemed non-existent. That was until the emergence of the www and the **Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**, Motown tribute web site.

Suddenly it appeared that there was a list of tracks which remained in the vaults at Motown. A list of 48 tracks was made available and this wetted the appetite of UK Motown collectors which by the late 1990s had become a good market for the unreleased tracks trawled from the vaults. When the Four Seasons UK Appreciation Society approached Motown Universal UK re these and a possible 2 CD collection of released and unreleased tracks, the prospect of finding out if this collection contained any **'lost gems'** became more real. Paul Nixon researched the vaults list.....But the Four Seasons Partnership soon scotched any hope of this with these comments re.....***"various concerns Bob and Frankie had about this reported 2-CD release, including some basic problems as to whether Motown still retains the right to the previously released masters and the basis upon which they would now assert the right to what were nothing more than demo vocal tracks by Frankie on musical tracks cut for other Motown artists for which Frankie was never paid and never approved for commercial release. Many of these "works" or "demo" tracks were not even in the proper key and they were never intended for commercial release and would be embarrassing and harmful to Frankie if released at***

this time. I know this will not make you or other members of the fan club happy....."

And he closed by saying.....

These are indeed exciting times for Frankie and Bob. They appreciate all the past support of their small but vocal and effective fan clubs and hope that support will continue. But you must trust that they have a definite business plan in mind to best promote Frankie's career, both as a concert performer and recording artist.

Clearly as we can demonstrate this was mis-information and whilst appreciation of the fans was voiced this remains an organization that does not embrace the fans wishes. Looking back over 35 years, it never has.

Harry Weinger the Motown Universal CEO who had produced great anthologies of past Motown artists like Marvin Gaye and The Spinners was willing and did talk to Bob Gaudio re a release, but this didn't achieve anything and it was clear the Four Seasons Partnership didn't want to know nor did they consider this period of their work to be of any value.

But with the success of Jersey Boys everything changed and now we have all of the groups and Valli's back catalog available on CD. The Partnership cashed in.

Of course not owning the Motown catalogue meant that for the Partnership, the royalty contract had to be negotiated for a release but fans once again were surprised that when Motown announced a **'Motown Years' 2-CD** set that no **'unreleased tracks'** would appear. Harry Weinger said of the release....." ***As for unreleased tracks, there may be some tracks which were worked up, or tracks voiced by FV for demo purposes, but in no way were they slated for, or finished for, release. I respect that.***"

Harry was correct. Motown had not **'slated'** any of the tracks for release even though some were worthy of single release. And as for them being complete, well we now know that is stretching the truth. Apart from final mastering we know many were. Back in 1974 Motown simply didn't believe in the group and as a result they left the label taking just one **'master'** with them.

Why was this? Surely if tracks existed then Bob Gaudio and Frankie Valli would want these released? Why wouldn't they? And are these tracks simply demos? Well it is only through our in-depth research over the last ten years that reasons for this have become apparent.

Bob Gaudio was the driving and managing force of the groups work since 1966 after Nick Massi left and the songwriting team of Sandy Linzer and Denny Randell departed. He had continually clashed with Bob Crewe re the groups production credits and by 1966 was in disputes re the direction and sound. Isolated and with less collaborative support as a songwriter and producer after the key team depar-

tures he had led the group through catastrophic commercial releases like **Genuine Imitation Life Gazette**, **Half and Half** and **Chameleon**. All albums that **'bombed'**. That conflict and competition between the Bob's continued throughout the 70s until the groups collapse as a music force in 1982 as described in our series **'The Rise and Fall of the NEW Four Seasons'**

Motown was a period when the Four Seasons basically ceased to function as a group with high rotation of new members.....all employees..... with the only constant support coming from Joe Long, Nick Massi's replacement (after Charlie Calello's brief stay) in 1966. Gaudio continued to quote that he was writing from **'where my head is'** during these times and of Valli trying any and every producer at Motown to get a sound and a potential hit, whilst Motown's inept and distracted management (Berry Gordy's 'Lady Sings The Blues' movie with Diana Ross being a quoted example) meant no cohesion or belief in anything they produced in their studio sessions. Even the **'Chameleon'** album was a **'mix of colours'** with regard to style and identity rather than a coherent concept album. The tracks were selected from the first 15 tracks recorded at the label. There are 7 tracks from those sessions which Motown's own press release says are ready for the new album but have never been released.

But today as 2010 ends and we slide into another year....37 years on from our recollections of their departure from the label.....we begin to realise the truth. Yes the group did experiment at Motown and some of that can be heard on the **Chameleon** and **Inside You** albums. But what was left behind were not incomplete tracks and demos. Some maybe, but Crewe and Gaudio were perfectionists and would not have left good work incomplete. Now we can prove this and re-examine the late 1973 sessions.

Bob Crewe was back after an album for the late great Bobby Darin. The Bob Crewe sessions of tracks for a new album in 1973 were a re-convening of the old elements from the 60s to attempt to re-create success. Nick Massi returned to add to the vocals. Charles Calello returned to write the arrangements and Crewe and Gaudio started to write together even though they found it impossible to work together in the studio. The other new group members were young and accomplished performers like Gerry Polci and Lee Shapiro. Lee then a musical novice straight from college recalls the sessions..... **"Yes, I was on those fall 1973 sessions and I remember the songs. Nick Massi was our vocal coach on the sessions for Hickory and Charisma. He taught us all our vocal parts. He was an amazing vocal arranger. Bob Gaudio wasn't there. These were Crewe's sessions. They were all completed sessions and we signed contracts, so any stories that the sessions were not completed is mis-information. I was only 20 and I was stunned at Bob Crewe's aura. He was the most animated, in control, producer I had ever seen. And being at Media Sound, where every hit I knew had been made was overpowering. Valli's voice was amazing and he was a unique vocal talent. I'm almost sure Charlie Calello, my mentor, was the arranger. Bob Crewe actually stood on the console during the playback, jubilantly dancing to the track.(on Hickory I think) He fostered a modus operandi that every track should sound like a**

hit. When he was in the room, everything did seem like it was a hit. He turned the analogue knobs up and boogie'd away. These tracks you have found are all from those sessions"

Bob Crewe was writing at his best again as '**Listen To Yesterday**', '**Inside You**' and '**My Eyes Adored You**' emerged and with a new writing partner from '**The 11th Hour**' Kenny Nolan stunning lyrics emerged like the previously unheard song '**Hymn To Her**'

"When my love touches me and takes me to her skin, she melts my cold in her and loves away my sins, my very own Madonna, I'm glad to lean upon her and feel the glory of the reason of my own existence"

With the surfacing of old cassette recordings of such songs we can now see the mis-information that has been fed to fans since the 1970s. Only now can we see how good Bob Crewe's identity with the traditional but evolved 1960s Seasons sound was.

This song is classic Four Seasons at their best with Valli's soaring falsetto and the Four Seasons anthemic backing. The song surpasses many that would emerge on Private Stock in the next 4 years. What a loss this track has been.

But at the time they left Motown the strategic direction was to take Valli down a solo, no-falsetto route. These harmonic masterpieces simply didn't fit the business plan. As we understand it today, unless the release of this material is going to benefit Bob Gaudio in some way he doesn't want it to be released. To us suppressing such quality productions is almost unbelievable. But now we can share this one with the fan community. Of course as lawyer Peter Bennett will still be telling us....." **Many of these "works" or "demo" tracks were not even in the proper key and they were never intended for commercial release and would be embarrassing and harmful to Frankie if released at this time.** "

Well we don't agree that these '**demos**'(?) in any way harm the reputation of Bob Crewe, Frankie Valli or the group: Quite the contrary. So why has it been 37 years of myths and mis-information? Perhaps because Valli's pursuit of a solo career was at the expense of the identity and sound of The Four Seasons? You be the judge as now the evidence of the 1970s sessions starts to emerge. **It is just good to still be here and be able to celebrate with all fans a new Four Seasons single!! It is just like 1974 all over again.**

**Happy New Year 2011.... JUBILATE DEO as the Seasons sing!
Enjoy.....'Hymn To Her'. More unreleased soon!!**

