



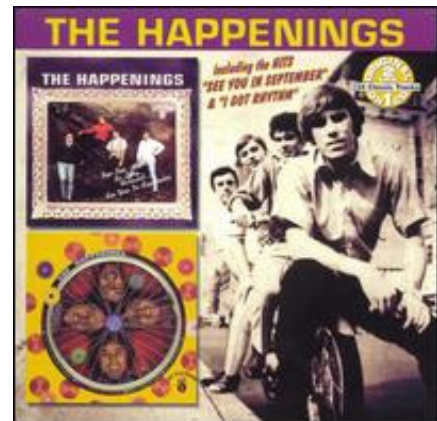
As the late sixties drew to a close so did the music buyers love of harmony groups. They were all seeking a different way to wrap their harmonies into a more progressive sound. One of the groups that, during this period, promised so much with their great talent was the Happenings. As Jay Warner described them in The Billboard Book of American Singing Groups 1940-1990..."With a pop style that seemed to fall between the FOUR SEASONS and the TOKENS, the Happenings gave new life to old standards"

Originally formed in 1961 as the Four Graduates they hailed from New Jersey and developed a versatile barber shop/doo-wop/jazz style and they sang on several Laurie/Rust sides. They also provided the 'Four Seasons' styled back-up on many of Bob Crewe's early 60s productions although no-one can identify which ones as Bob recorded them separately from the artists.

But when they signed up with the Tokens label B.T. Puppy Records in 1965 they would be groomed into a group that re-worked oldies using their versatile vocals. Bob Miranda's lead vocal was the key to their sound and their several hits from 66 to 68 are well known and can be found on their albums from that period **'The Happenings/Psycle' Collectibles CD-7499 at www.oldies.com.**

They disappeared from the charts from 1969 onwards but didn't stop recording. In fact this period would produce some very good original and innovative work.

As Bob Miranda told us they felt there was more to them than just a group that re-worked old hits. Their original songs had never been promoted strongly or their diverse style developed. **"Basically, we're talking around 69 and we were pretty fed up with the Tokens (our producers). The arguments were always about, them not wanting to change the formula, which did work for us for a while. The formula being, take a song that's already proven it could be a hit and put our spin on it. I thought that we'd**





milking this long enough and we needed to have original material, whether it came from us or not. So there was a creative stand-off for a while, until Jubilee came to us and said "Why don't you just use our studio and produce something yourself." This offer gave way to the 'Piece of Mind' album. The studio was crap but we almost didn't care. We wanted to know what we were made of, I guess. Every other session was with studio musicians, this would be only us playing everything. Dave Libert and I wrote all the songs and produced the album. We struggled with the quality the studio was putting out but we did the best we could. Some songs I wrote myself and some we wrote together. My fave on there, is "New Day Comin". I wrote this song in 45 minutes at the studio. Another was "Imagine", our answer to Good Vibrations, only not as commercial sounding. All of the songs were about what we were feeling at the time about the world and also that we had a sense of humor too like "Cold Water". We just put ourselves out there, even the cover is a photo of me naked (which caused a riot when my wife saw it). Then we thought, why not really make the pieces come out of my head like a puzzle. After we thought we had finished the album, Jubilee said they didn't hear a single in there. The next night I went to see the musical HAIR in New York and heard "Hare Krishna" and "Where do I Go". I had the idea of putting them together and that became the one and only single from the album. The album didn't do anything. I'm not sure why. The times they were a' changing. Jubilee had lost its clout and some of its executives too. Who knows! But it was by far the most original thing the Happenings ever did."

'Piece Of Mind'(Jubilee JGS-8028) is for the Happenings what 'Sgt. Pepper', 'Pet Sounds' and 'Genuine Imitation Life Gazette' was for The Beatles, Beach Boys and Four Seasons respectively. It is a watershed in expression of their artistry, and what they wanted to say. A concept album as good as many of the late 60s, it has variety, comment and strong arrangements with superb vocals.

The Tracks

Opening with "Where Do I Go /Be In"....a medley from 'Hair', it immediately signals a new direction for the group's sound. "It brought them back to the charts for the first time in a year" says Jay Warner, "but at No 66 became their last charting song". The progressive style continues with 'Heartbeat' a moody vocal by Bob set to an acoustic

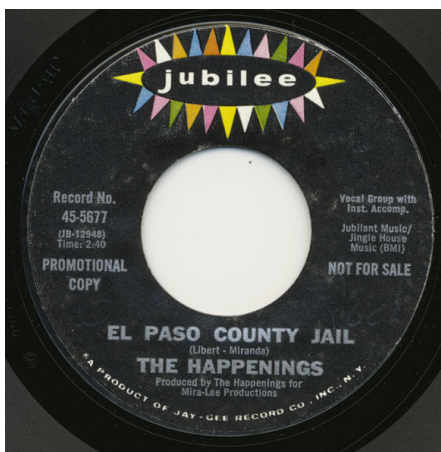
backing before the harmonies, electric guitar and strings break out. The pace varies and the song is a good blend of rock style with harmonies. The style switches to a fast pace rocker for **'Living in Darkness'** with a strong harmony hook and slow middle section, but it isn't long before the fun side of the group emerges with the bouncy **'Cold Water'**...blending jangly piano and jazz styled vocals. A church organ intro leads into the anti-racist **'Be My Brother'** with pleading vocal from Bob and then the plaintive **'New Day Comin'** tells us that a **'change is taking place'** ...both tracks catching the mood of the year. It was after all the year of change heralded by the festivals...and **'Woodstock'** was the most notable.

Side 2 and **'Imagine'** catches also the questioning stance of the days youth....**"and time it-self upon the shelf I think I just imagine"**.....whilst the group is **"trying to find a groove we can stay with"**. A complex ringing guitar and harmony piece...this is perhaps their most progressive track on the album. But the album never keeps itself too serious for too long and **'Lets Do Something'** cheerfully calls for us all to make the world a better place....the eternal call for change...**"yesterday just doesn't work today"**. Strong pace and good harmonies make this a very uplifting song. This mood gets even higher with the chirpy **'Piece of Mind'** . It almost sounds like a commercial jingle. A hippy, party song. Then with a return to the driving rock style the group expects that the **'Freedom'** proclaimed 100 years ago should be seen. **'Don't You Think Its Time'...."to let it show?.....to understand?....to hold out a hand?"** But to leave us all with a warm close, the album concludes with one of its best melodies and my favourite track, **"We're Going To Make Them Care"**. Classic Happenings - on one of their best harmony numbers. **"We'll sing and we'll shout it, no doubt about...we're going to make them care"**

A diverse and innovative album it is a surprise and a pity that that it didn't bring the group more success....but only one single shows the lack of vision amongst the Jubilee executives. It was also the year of the 'super-group' and perhaps an old styled harmony group evolving into a new format was not going to catch the ear of the new music fans.

I first heard this album during the 80s on a tape from Ray Nichol and at first thought it far to progressive for mebut on long drives across the desolate moors of the Penines from Chester to Leeds for business meetings it became essential listening: spiritually uplifting even. It remains a superb example of blending the traditional American harmony group style with the more progressive rock sound of the late 60s whilst keeping a sense of humour: A sort of 'caring', harmonic, semi-rock 'concept' album. As a self-penned and performed album it is a classic of its time.

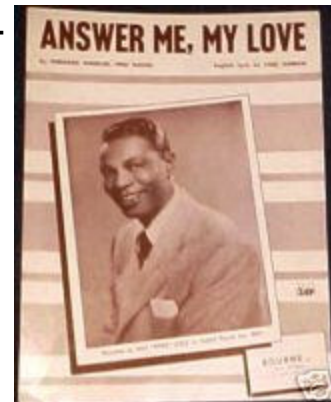
Discoveries



Although it was their last album it was not their last recording as we discovered with a collection of **'Lost Tracks'** on singles which came out during the following 8 years all of which contribute to the diverse sound that is the Happenings.

After the failure of the **'Piece Of Mind'** album the group stayed with their more progressive style for their next single. As Jay Warner commented in the Sequel 1994 CD compilation (NEM 690)....**"their next 45 (Jubilee 5677) in September 1969 reflected their new direction. Billboard Sept 20th issue made the 'El Paso County Jail', a special merit spotlight pick" ...stating".** The group made a comeback on the Hot 100 with their **'Be-In/Where Do I**

Go” medley and they should continue to ride high with this exciting piece of rock material.” Although another Libert-Miranda composition and a great song and performance it failed to register. The B side **‘Won’t Anybody Listen’** was also another harmonic delight....but clearly nobody was listening! Maybe the old formula would help, record executives probably thought as they returned to the old hits for a re-worked classic. **‘Answer Me My Love’ (Jubilee 5686)** would get some success as they selected the former Nat King Cole song (which peaked on the Billboard chart at # 6 in 1954) for a stunning interpretation, laced with Bob’s falsetto. Bubbling under at 115 in January 1970, however was the best it could achieve.



Another change of style beckoned and the harmonic rocker **‘Tomorrow, Today Will Be Yesterday’ (Jubilee 56980)** attempted to get them closer to the rock styles of the charts. Backed with the even harder sounding **‘Chain Of Hands’...(also on Jubilee 5702B)**...this was also a style The Four Seasons experimented with at the time with ‘Whatever You Say/Sleeping Man’

but no-one could take a former 60s harmony group trying to be a rock group...too much ‘baggage’ from the 60s perhaps. Even a re-work of the modern day Van Morrison classic **‘Crazy Love’ (Jubilee 5702)** failed, although brilliantly performed. It echoed back to the style of the **‘Piece Of Mind’** album and deserved a chart place.



And as we drifted out of 1970 the line-up changed when a new guitarist John Paiva joined the group and Dave Libert decided to call it a day. John started as bass player as Bernie LaPorta was still playing lead guitar, then Bernie left a time later. John recalls the time. **“I returned to Boston and giggered around town with various things and was offered a band leader gig with Herb Reed and the Original Platters (later changed to Herb Reed of the Original Platters.) While this all was going on I had become friends through various gigs playing with them opposite The Happenings. The Happenings had a few hits under their belt and had been around for a while. We got along rather well and the guys would come over to visit whenever up from Jersey. A day after the offer to work for Herb Reed, I did an audition for The Happenings on bass guitar. I fancied playing with these guys even if on bass. The audition went well and they said they would love to have me along. I called and canceled Herb. He was displeased and I’m not proud of going back on the deal, but the fact was that there was little chance of getting anywhere giggering for them and in the Happenings I**

saw a possible future. The year 1971 with The Happenings was great for me. It now consisted of Ted Clancy and myself on guitar, Frank Marcario on drums, and Danny on bass. Bob and Tommy were singing their ever-loving hearts out in front”.

A brief relationship with Four Seasons arranger Charles Calello and change of name to the Honor Society brought **‘Sweet September’** which is amongst several track we will feature in our next article which will focus on their super rare tracks ...lost B sides and their other lost

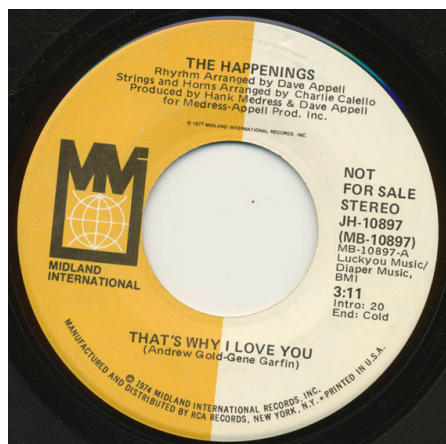


recordings in the 1970s also under other names. Charles did however arrange a re-working of 'Beautiful Dreamer' with new lyrics by Irwin Levine and Gary Knight, entitled '**Lullaby In The Rain**' (**Jubilee 5712**) but this high octane production also failed to catch any ears, even with the production efforts of Irwin Levine and L. Russell Browne well known for his Four Seasons and Frankie Valli songwriting efforts. The laid back B side '**I Wish You Could Know Me (Naomi)**' although melodic and well performed was the beginning of the end for the group as a recording entity with Jubilee and their final recording was the excellent '**Make Your Own Kind Of Music**' (**Jubilee 5721**). A better version than that by their former producers The Tokens.

Two singles for Big Tree brought no success even though '**Me, Without You**' (**Big Tree 153**) adds to their reputation of great performances. There are a number of unreleased tracks from their Jubilee and Big Tree periods and we are confident that some of these still exist. '**Goodbye Mr. Sun**' and '**Young Girls**' represent the best of those which surfaced in 1994 and we'll search for more for our next review of their rarities.

By the end of 1973 John Paiva had left to join the Four Seasons. Although Bob Miranda kept the group going, nothing would be released by them for a few years.

Gathering and remixing these songs produced a surprisingly varied and entertaining compilation that puts their 70s material in better context than their other CD compilations. It just remained for us to find the excellent '**That's Why I Love You/ Beyond The Hurt**' (**Midland International 10897**) from 1977. An great way to finish this '**celebration**' compilation of what we believe is a '**class act**'.....and one that is still performing and sending the crowds home happy in 2008. **More soon on the rest of The Happenings 'Lost Tracks'**



Ken Charmer: January 2008
The Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons UK Enthusiasts and Historical Group

References:
The Billboard Book Of American Singing Groups 1940-1990, Jay Warner: Bubbling Under The Billboard Hot 100 1959-2004 , Joel Whitburn: Sequel CD NEM 690 The Best Of The Happenings

Thanks to the following for their contribution; Bob Miranda, John Paiva, Martin Roberts, Stefan Wriedt, Mike Edwards, Ray Nichol