

'When You're 'Hot', You're 'Hot'!

There have been times in pop music history when a singer and producer find a sound that is just outstanding . But for it to happen twice is special. We tell the story of how two producers who worked together alot and are legends of 60s music achieved this with the same very special trio of backing singers to create, separately, classic 60s sounds. These girls can today rightly be labeled....The Jersey Girls.....as their sound and their background complements that of the Four Seasons portrayed in the Tony Award winning musical "Jersey Boys".

With two artists and within a year, during the 1960s, this is the story of how three girls gave them and us some of the classic sounds of the decade. Harry Young takes up the story.....

"The thunderbolts began on 3 September 1965 when Lou Christie recorded 'Lightnin' Strikes', 'Baby, We Got To Run Away', 'Cryin' In The Streets' and 'Trapeze' at Olmsted Sound Studios, 80 West 40th Street, New York City. Producer / Arranger Charles Calello supervised the earth-shaking session. Calello had previously arranged key Lou Christie Colpix tracks, notably 'Have I Sinned' and 'Merry-Go-Round'.

Lou's Colpix backing group, The Tammy's, effectively broke up when Cathie Owens married 28 August 1965.

So Denise Ferri (b. 2 June 1944, Newark, New Jersey), Bernadette Carroll (Bernadette Dalia, b. 21 June 1945, Linden, NJ) and Margaret 'Peggy' Santiglia (b. 4 May 1944, Belleville, NJ) magnificently executed the backgrounds on Lou Christie's Calello-produced MGM sessions.

Enthusiastically interacting with Lou, the trio sang three part harmony with Bernadette on high, Peggy middle and Denise low. Alternately, the girls sang or spoke in unison, forming one super-voice of unparalleled strength and flexibility. Notice their incomparable poodle yelps in 'Cryin' In The Streets' and rhythmic cautionary throat clearing in 'Jungle' ('Ah ah ah ah / Baby break free!').

Denise and Peggy had been members of The Delicates, recording for Tender, Unart, United Artists and Roulette. Bernadette had been one of The Starlets on Astro and a noteworthy solo artist on Julia, Cleopatra and Laurie (Party Girl). Denise supported Lou Christie on his Pepsi-Cola commercial ('Come Alive, You're In The Pepsi Generation'). Bernadette did the publisher's demo for Hold Back The Light Of Dawn. Peggy, having backed Lou on Roulette (How Many Teardrops) also sang with The Angels on Smash (My Boyfriend's Back). "

Then when Bob Crewe was producing Frankie Valli's second set of solo tracks in early 1966 he wanted an alternative backing combo and not the Four Seasons to provide vocals. Who better to create an exciting backdrop to Frankie's vocal than these 'hot' Jersey girls? Bob had worked with the girls previously on his Dynovoice label



Internet interview with Denise Ferri

Hi Denise ...Thanks for contributing to this article and answering some questions for us.....

How did you get hired for these sessions backing Lou and Frankie?.....

(213 and 220) releases in 1966. Bob Gaudio had produced 'Give Her Up Baby/ Come Closer' and 'We'll Be Makin' Out/Lucky Day" as **Jessica James and The Outlaws** with Lou Christie on backing vocals for this latter A side. So with Charles Calello now signed up exclusively to Columbia...he set about the sessions with Frankie and the girls and Herb Bernstein arranging. Three classic sounds would come out of these sessions.

'Cry For Me' (**Smash S-2015**) is one of the previously little heard and least appreciated of Bob Gaudio penned songs which is now featured every night in Jersey Boys. In the play it is used to show the Four Seasons coming together for the first time on a song written by Bob Gaudio before 'Sherry'. Although it is unclear when Bob wrote this song it probably post-dates that 'theatrical' timing as it first appeared on the 'B' side of a Chollie Maye 45 (Gold 212) in 1964 with the same structure and an arrangement by Charles Calello. This version by Frankie however achieved a totally different feel. The opening by Frankie soon moves on to the verses with the girls 'ooo-ooooh' harmonies and their 'don't cry baby' chants lifting this ballad to great heights. A superb and often over-looked song. The other outstanding female backed song from these 1966 sessions was the excellent song '**The Proud One**' (Crewe – Gaudio), a subsequent hit when covered in the 70s by The Osmonds. The original by Frankie was actually released in October 1966 (Philips 40407). The girls join this piano backed opening with their 'do-doo's' before Frankie sings with an ache in his voice as he proclaims he is '**not the proud one**' with superb harmonizing vocals from the girls on the songs main hook, and to close Frankie's falsetto rises up before the dramatic vocal ending with counterpoint chanting from the girls.

But it is the third song that sets their vocal style apart as a key piece of music history. The song '**You're Ready Now**' (**Smash S-2015**), released in March 1966, backed with 'Cry To Me' appears in the **2007 Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons 'CD box set 'Jersey Beat'** and I was privileged to write the sleeve note for that set. (see next page)

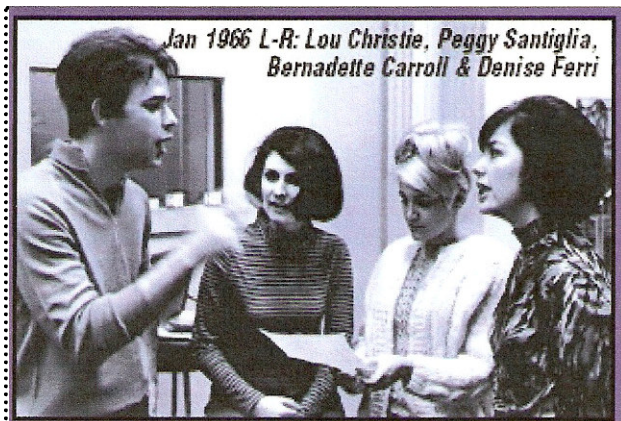
Charles Calello confirms the special feel of these sessions and adds...."**I don't think I could add anything to what you already know except that whenever Peggy, Denise and Bernadette showed up the guys went wild. They were just very stereo-type Jersey Girls and "hot" looking too.**"

This Northern Soul anthem starts with the girls call to everyone to get on the dance floor....'**you're ready now...you're ready now**'....repeated until Frankie's opening verse ..."**when I saw you, you were too young, to hang around where the hippies hung, to swing and dance where the swingers swung...but you're ready now**" and the arrangements of xylophone and brass carry us away. Then the counter chanting between the 'Jersey Boy' and the 'Jersey Girls' in the break just destroys our resistance. When you're 'hot' you're 'hot'!

Although on the 1971 tour of the UK the Four Seasons did this number live...it just didn't work. The backing vocals couldn't be created without ...the Jersey Girls. Nobody has successfully covered it and one listen tells you why...it is perfect. It is a track that only worked because the arrangement, the singer and the backing came together to create a unique synergy.

Now their sound is a part of club history and will never die. The 'Jersey Girls' who played such a key part in creating that sound with both Lou Christie and Frankie Valli deserve to be recognized.

Compiled by Ken Charmer with the help of Harry Young, Charles Calello and Denise Ferri July 2007



Denise. We were all very close to the Four Seasons and Charles Calello.... so we were hired mostly through them for the mid 60's sessions. We just loved working with Charlie...we did quite a lot of work for him.....even a fantastic session with Patty Duke.

What had you been doing prior to these sessions?

Denise. Prior to these sessions I was doing lots of demos for Tommy Devito of the Four Seasons, as well as commercials.....the one I am most proud of is the Shop-rite can commercial which ran for seven years...I was also earning my teaching degree.....in Early Childhood Education..

How did you create the similar sound in the studio with these two artists.....

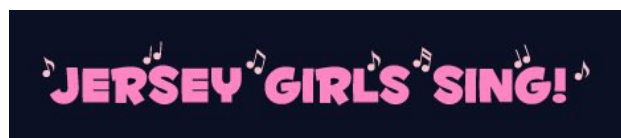
Denise. I really can't say, except we had great timing, and had a lot of energy..... and harmony came naturally to us. We sounded great with Frankie Valli and Lou Christie, because somehow we had the ability to take on the tone of their voice.....which resulted in a great, strong sound.

How did you find working with Bob Crewe.?

Denise. I remember working with him with Frankie Valli. Bob knew the sound he wanted. He may have been somewhat instrumental in getting the counterpoint vocals with Frankie together...but then we naturally sang that way.....after all we are the Jersey Girls...ha ha..

How do you recall your work during those years

Denise. I am so honored to have been part of Rock and Roll history..and helping in creating a sound that made hits..I love singing, and I especially loved being a "back-up singer"



Denise Ferri



You're Ready Now (Crewe – Gaudio)

Jersey Beat 2007 (R2—74852)

by Ken Charmer

“Of all artists played in UK dance halls in the 1960s and '70s Frankie Valli is one of the most surprising. Most so-called Northern Soul hits, pushed by clubs in the North of England, were by black artists, and back then artists had to be black to have “soul.” But from the opening chants of the Angels on backing vocals to the brassy throb of Herb Bernstein’s arrangement and Bob Gaudio’s piano break, this track had us caught in its mesmerizing chanting and compulsive drive. So much so that it became an early classic play at Manchester’s Twisted Wheel club and has remained in the Top 100 Northern Soul plays ever since. It resurrected Valli’s flagging career in 1970 when, pressured by UK fans, Philips re-released the track, and it climbed to #11 in the British charts. The Seasons toured the UK in 1971 and 72, pulling in ecstatic audiences at every venue. The tour spawned the Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons UK Fan Club (www.seasonally.co.uk), which remains strong to this day. The UK can still hear the “soul” in “You’re Ready Now.””



BERNADETTE CARROLL
LAURIE RECORDS



Bernadette, Peggy and Denise in the studio with Lou Christie