

Timepieces

Four Seasons Stories from the past



What Goes Around Comes Around.....

It was 1978 and after an exciting 3 year period that had seen the UK Appreciation Society blossom, we were left in limbo as the Four Seasons Partnership suddenly and unexpectedly announced the disbanding of the group. To this day no real explanation has been given for this decision and bearing in mind the hard work that had gone into constructing the group in 1973 and 74 it always seemed to me a disaster. Funny how things come around and as I was researching the story of the groups 'Rise and Fall' during this period I discovered I had asked the questions back then....and in Newsletter Volume 3 Number 12 – July 1979.....under the title.....

How To Get it Right Then Blow It – Or Another Look At Missed Chances By Ken Charmer



“As we face with our usual sense of anticipation at the possible re-emergence of the 4 Seasons it is worth reflecting on how the group have failed to maintain the brilliance that emerged in the “Who Loves You” album of 1975. To fully see the picture, it is necessary to perhaps consider the years of failure with Philips since 1968 and also with Motown. Many fans believe that the groups best work was produced during this period as exemplified by the “Half and Half” album and singles such as “Where Are My Dreams” and “How Come”. Classic tracks were scattered through this period and they could and should have been hits. It is obvious that under the inspiration of Bob Gaudio, the style and sound for the future was developing. 1973 and 1974 saw the establishment of the balance; greater vari-

ety in the vocals with additional lead singers; strong harmonies inherent always in the groups work; all wrapped around modern, distinctive songs with a new approach to arrangements. The “Who loves You” album appeared in December 1975 after the enormous success of the “Who Loves You” single and what an ironic coincidence that perhaps the groups best track from the lean years “The Night” had six months earlier taken them back into the UK charts at number 7. This sound was right. Tracks were good listening, danceable and with effective lyrics. This was surely the best album since the early 60’s maybe not to the fans who had struggled through the early 70’s with the group but this was an album to appeal to so many of the record buying public. Even on first hearing “December ‘63” was a guaranteed hit to anyone. But so was “Storybook Lovers” and maybe even

“Mystic Mr Sam” and “Emily’s Salle De Danse”. The groups follow up tours and the success of “Silver Star” emphasised the strength of the album and the quality of the group but even then there was the hint of lost direction. The rumours of an instrumental album to follow, some say recorded and shelved and then Frankie’s hints at disassociating himself from their work.

Things didn’t progress. No follow up album, just two tracks on an album which was a failure as a project (“All This And World War II”). A modestly successful single “We Can Work It Out” emerged from it but the obvious impetus was gone. The long period without a new album would never be recovered. “Helicon” was supposed to be the reinstatement of the groups sound. The songs were not as strong, the sound was more heavy with less disco influence. Something was missing. Frankie was leaving – The Seasons alone didn’t make it.

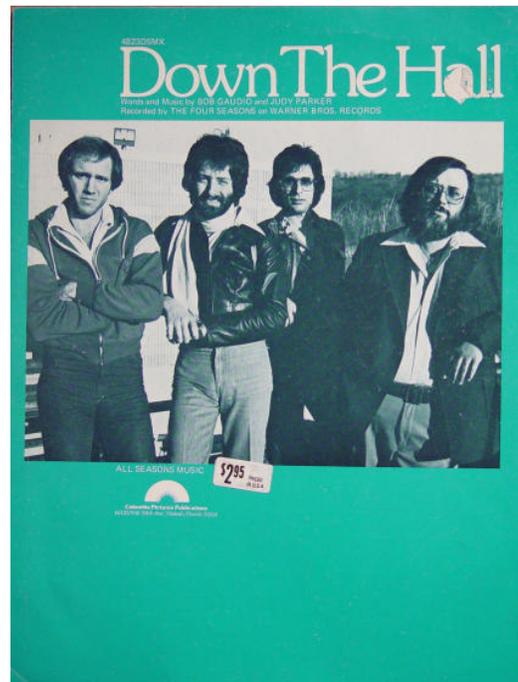
How had it gone wrong? Perhaps they were all unable to handle the success. Frankie’s solo successes had maybe convinced him here was his future as a solo performer. The groups insistence (Gerry’s more than anyone) on developing their own “new” sound and direction was perhaps misguided. Was the loss of Joe Long’s influence after 11 years a major factor? Maybe there were other reasons.

Now we hope they have all realised the error of their ways and the successes of 1975/76 will be repeated.”

Alas although Don Ciccone and Gerry Polci re-joined a new line-up, any success was short-lived and the aftermath of that decision brought no success.

The fan club Newsletters show that no explanation was given for the disbanding of the group. And speaking to some of the former Four Seasons recently it appears they were as surprised as us. The plan to launch them as a NEW group was developed in 1975 and Frankie Valli had distanced himself from the line-up as he pursued his solo career. But the investment in the group was left to the group themselves. No management support...no song-writing for them.....Frankie and Bob and the record company simply pulled the plug. The aftermath was a downward spiral to the wind-up of the fan clubs and personal disasters in Frankie Valli’s life would follow by 1982.

Was it that Bob Gaudio lost interest in the group with the Neil Diamond production option a higher priority? Or had he simply lost the urge to find a new direction for the group....or maybe he just didn’t like the direction that Gerry and Don wanted to take the ‘sound’. It was a mystery then and 30 plus years later, former group members don’t appear to understand either



Listening today to ‘Helicon’ it is clear that the direction Bob and the Seasons took was not right ...either for the long term fans or the ones that had ‘tuned in’ to ‘Who Loves You’. The fact that the group liked the ‘Helicon’ material but Warner-Curb didn’t was a problem. Then when the company execs couldn’t ‘hear a single’ and forced Bob Gaudio to write a song targeted at the fans the breakdown was happening.....’Down The Hall’ failed to re-capture the magic of ‘December 63’ (even though it did reasonably in the UK charts at No 34) and ‘Rhapsody’ wasn’t a ‘Who Loves You’ although the formula Bob used can be seen and heard on the tracks. But song writers are not magicians all of the time and the pressure to promote, help manage and write for the group appears to be not what Bob Gaudio wanted

There are more questions than answers but by piecing together what we do know from interviews, articles and newsletters we’ll explore the background for the fans and group members in our forthcoming series...’The Rise and Fall of The NEW Four Seasons’. But one thing is clear and that is ‘time’ has proved this was the last great period in the Four Seasons history and without it, “Jersey Boys” just wouldn’t be the same...**Ken Charmer**