

The Rise and Fall of The NEW Four Seasons 1966 to 1977

Chapter 10 –The Collapse Of The Fan Clubs

The cancellation of a planned 1982 tour was the final straw for many UK fans. Years of lack of communication from the Four Seasons Partnership and broken promises re the group and record releases finally took its toll. Many were totally disenchanted

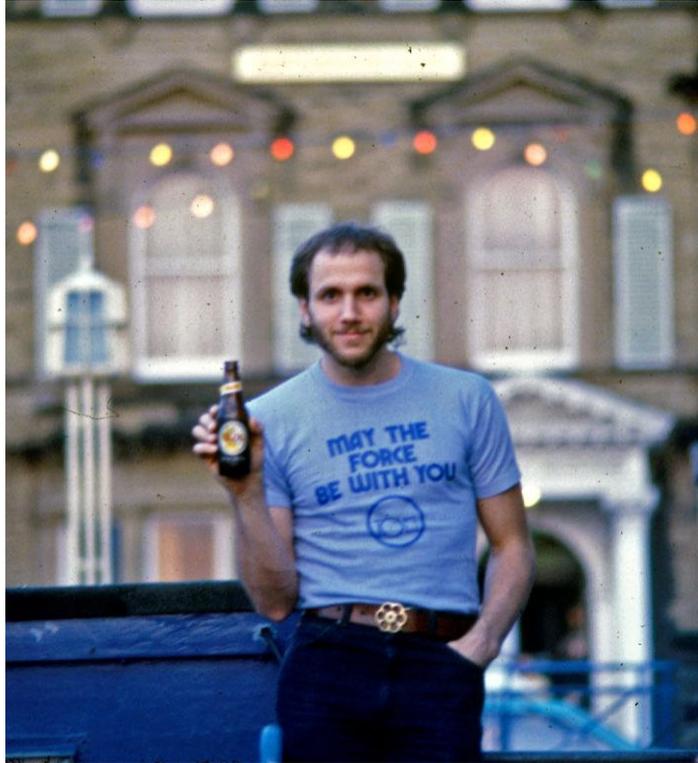
.....” This was our closing comment in the ‘Aftermath’ Chapter.

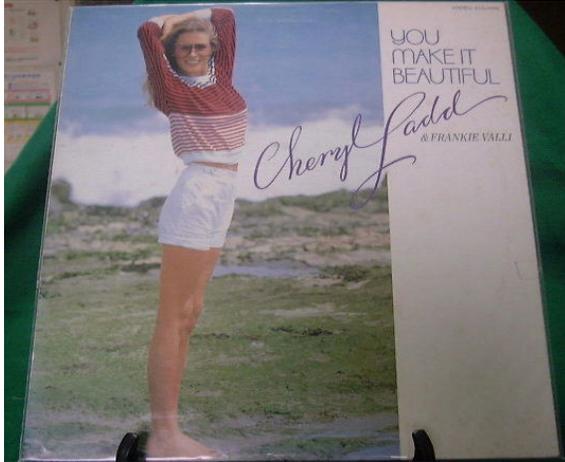
This period was all very hard for the fans to understand and looking back to the UK Newsletter dated April 1982 this makes very sad reading indeed. The March 1982 tour had just been cancelled and in a letter from Peter Bennett, Frankie Valli’s Attorney, dated 11 December 1981, he wrote:

“Frankie is currently under medical care and has been instructed to cancel all remaining dates at least until the end of this year and possibly even into part of 1982, pending a re-

examination by his doctor after the first of the New Year. Frankie’s current physical condition has further been affected by the serious stroke that his father just suffered and the fact that there is a good chance that his father will not survive this heart attack. This illness coupled with the other personal losses that Frankie has suffered due to two other deaths in his immediate family recently left Frankie completely physically and emotionally drained and this would make any extensive touring by Frankie completely out of the question at this time”.

Clearly Frankie had suffered a physical and emotional breakdown and UK fans were obviously very upset by this news. Staff, at a few of the venues, were telling callers over the telephone that the tour had been cancelled because Frankie had cancer of the throat. This, of course, was not true. Frankie had suffered a serious throat infection and had been very ill, which was not surprising considering all he was going through. Frankie developed a bronchial condition which held up work on the new 4 Seasons LP (their first set of totally new tracks in 5 long years since ‘**Helicon**’ came out in May 1977) and eight tracks were awaiting Frankie’s vocals to be finished. A previously recorded new single was scheduled for release in April of that year. It was the duet single by Frankie Valli and Cheryl Ladd {of Charlie’s Angels) called **“You Make It Beautiful/I Can’t Say No To You”** on the Capitol label (which was Cheryl’s recording label). Both tracks were written by Bob Gaudio. There was no news that Valli and the Seasons actually had a recording label.





In view of the cancellation of the tour amongst many other things a 'crisis' Committee Meeting was arranged for the 24 April in Manchester. Lynn Boleyn explains..” **Although the tour was obviously cancelled before our December Newsletter was even sent to the printers we were not even informed that it was cancelled.**” She said in her opening page in the newsletter **“Even the Management Office in London did not know the tour had been cancelled when we rang them to find out what was going on! We eventually received a letter formally advising us the tour was off on the 6 January 1982. There were obviously serious**

matters to be discussed, especially concerning lack of communication as we felt that a Fan Club should be able to give members first hand information ... and not be the last to know what's going on”.

In George Ingram's Editorial in the newsletter he wrote:

“Pending a medical examination it was reported that Valli was not to perform until June of this year; however, this is not the case. Also, it was rumoured that Valli had given the Group notice and had sacked the band; this is not true either. However, as the 4 Seasons Partnership in California seem not to reply to our letters any longer, with no word at all from the Group or Valli or their Management, to all intents and purposes the UK Club might just as well not exist” George's Editorial continued: **“Frankie's physical condition was affected by his father's heart attack (and subsequent passing) coupled with other family tragedies over the last 2 years. Also, last December he changed Management and is managed now by a man called Brian Avnet (who also manages Manhattan Transfer) based in Santa Barbara, California, but I believe he is still retaining long-standing Attorney Peter Bennett. So amidst all the conjecture, rumour, assumptions and absolutely no word from the U.S.A. we're left in a state of torpor and I think we can say goodbye to a tour this year unless a miracle occurs”.** He continued: **“Many members have been becoming very discontented about the lack of record output from the Group and Valli as nothing has been released now for over 13 months. We have written to Frankie's new Management requesting that he and the Seasons release some new product to maintain the interest and I can see no reason why this cannot be done. Furthermore, many groups now use video to promote their records and some utilise the TV for promotional purposes. One only has to look back to 1976 and the success of the K-Tel double album set sales-wise. If one inspects the UK album charts, one can see that the TV advertised LP's are the ones in the Top 10 and Top 20. It may cost a little money to get the thing underway but the dividends obtained would be very beneficial and no losses would result from the venture”.**

So what did the UK fans make of the lack of direction and PR by The Partnership at the time?

Some criticized the choice of releases for the group and Valli and suggested that they were released at the wrong time and those like **'Soul'** that had chart potential were not promoted properly by the group, Valli or the DJ's. The attitude of some of the group members towards their fans was criticized and a situation that happened in 1980 after the Manchester show when a coach-load of USA tourists, who were not even fans, saw the group backstage whilst

members of the Club, even with their Membership cards had to grovel to see the group and Valli backstage.

One commented

“I am becoming very disillusioned with the group and feel that maybe the end is in sight. It has been so long since any major record success and one wonders if Frankie has finally come to terms with

recent events such as his voice loss in some concerts (the last tour proved this point quite well); the lack of new Seasons material; and even Gidea Park’s “Seasons of Gold” sounding more like the 1960’s Seasons than the current group line-up. We have the right to expect more from the group. However, on the other side of the coin Frankie’s personal tragedies over the last couple of years and his Father’s recent stroke has left him totally drained. Unfortunately, Frankie is not a superstar and a cabaret tour (as planned for 1983) with no present record output or success would produce neither ticket sales least of all sales of records. The question is – where do we go from here; can we only look back at past successes with admiration of what it used to be like; is the end finally in sight”?

Looking back at the next Newsletter which is dated August 1982 Lynn Boleyn opens the newsletter with the following sad but not unexpected news:

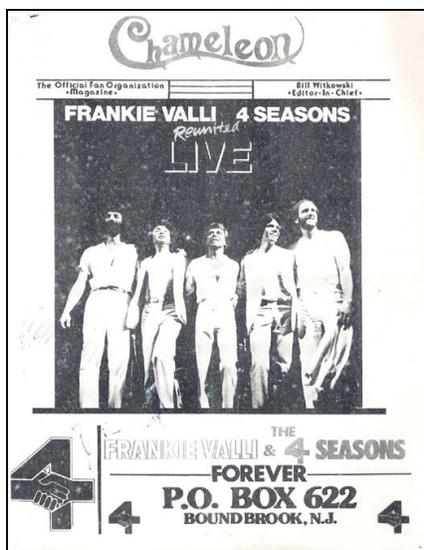
“It is with great regret that I have to inform you that following the Committee Meeting on the 24 April it has been decided to wind down the Society as it stands to a smaller scale and therefore this will be the last Newsletter in its present format”

The decisions for this were given by Lynn as:

- 1. The Committee feels that it has no moral right to take money from our Members for information which they expect but which we just cannot give at the moment due to the continued lack of communications between the Group and the Society. The proposed tour due to start last February proved this to a great extent and no-one knew exactly what was going on.**
- 2. Other-artists, e.g. Barry Manilow and Johnny Mathis meet their fans and keep in close contact with their fan clubs but we have never really had this support from the Group or their previous Management. We have never received any personal messages from Frankie or the Seasons to pass on to our Members, which I personally feel is a great pity.”**

Lee Shapiro's cartoon of John Paiva





The last USA Newsletter and the penultimate UK Newsletter both carried positive news from the tour but by August everything collapsed as both clubs stopped collecting fees and publishing information....because there was no information. As George Ingram said...“all good things come to an end”



Even with the sympathy everyone had for Frankie's loss of 3 family members and health issues it was a case of enough is enough. It was decided at that time that the Society would continue but on an 'informal' basis with shortened News Bulletins.

Shortly after the above meeting a letter arrived from Brian Avnet, Frankie's new Manager, who informed the Society that Frankie would begin a US tour on 10 June 1982 and that he would be recording a new album for a fall release and hopefully do a European tour in February or March of 1983. This was Frankie's 20th Anniversary and the fan club had been going for exactly 6 years, the longest any UK or USA Society for Frankie and the Seasons had been active. The re-constituted USA Fan Club had disbanded after putting out only 1 Newsletter in 1981. Unfortunately this was too little too late!

George Ingram in his 'Final Editorial' stated:

“Well, all good things must come to an end I'm sad to say. After exactly 6 years in operation the UK Appreciation Society is undergoing a considerable reduction in newsletter output to a newsflash/newssheet, type of information bulletin. In future the UK Fan Club will become a U.K. Frankie Valli & The 4 Seasons interest group which will not involve yearly subscriptions. I can only re-echo Bryan Lomas's comments for the most part about the overall situation currently and in the past with regard to a total lack of cooperation from Valli's old management, the apparent, if not total, lack of interest by both Valli and the Group in their U.K. Fan Club since it was first resurrected 6 years ago, and the non-replies to many letters sent to the 4 Seasons Partnership. As a Club providing up to date information we have simply failed and can therefore no longer morally justify charging people money for old information. In the future the Society will cater for the fans themselves and not for promotion of the Valli and the group, future releases or anything of that nature which I believe is neither appreciated nor required of us after 6 years. After the past UK tours, especially the 1981 Tour, the Group at times did not seem to want to know members of the UK Fan Club and so in return we can reciprocate. Only events such as concerts, record releases and related events will be reported in the news bulletins which will come out at unspecified times. Since we are no longer charging any money then there is absolutely no moral obligation for us to put out anything if we don't want to. In this way rather than totally disband the Club, the emphasis has changed and will now cater for long-standing fans, like myself, who will still collect records, information, news, views and we will publish relevant details in future news bul-

letins. After all, one good turn deserves another, especially after 6 years dedication with nothing to show for it - no personal message from Valli or the Group, no encouragement to continue, the loss of many old fans not re-joining the Society, no new 4 Seasons LP of NEW tracks since May 1977 and the action of having to grovel, even I might further add WITH UK Membership Cards, to meet them after concerts. Well, as William Shakespeare once wrote "Enough, no more! Twas not as sweet as it was before!"

As George continued in his Editorial:

"I have enjoyed compiling the Newsletters over the last 6 years and at least I have the satisfaction of knowing that although it may not have been an important thing for the Group or Valli, it has given many members good reading and enjoyment about their favourite group in spite of adversity and lack of information.

I will, of course, still keep up correspondence with my USA friends who have sent me endless info. over the years (which is more than I can say for Valli, the Group or their old Management), and also with Brian Avnet - Frankie's new Manager - who is very progressive and who will hopefully continue to correspond with us. Also, thank you to the many UK fans who have sent me articles, letters, clippings and on-going articles over the years - I do thank you".

Bryan Lomas, who was our Membership Secretary at the time, wrote in this last Newsletter:

"I know that some of you may think we are deserting the Group at a time when they need all the support they can get but they have never once given us any real encouragement to carry on and it is now 5 years since the last LP "Helicon" and many argue that the last 4 Seasons LP was 7 years ago with "Who Loves You". Now as a Fan Club we obviously cannot dictate the output of recordings a group should release and I don't intend to, but they surely cannot expect fans to stay loyal to them for ever without the right encouragement. I did expect some recognition for the effort we put into running the Society and not to be treated as neurotic teenagers when we tried to visit them backstage during the recent tours. It's a shame in many ways the Society has decided to reduce its activities because we formed it due to dissatisfaction with the previous society and now it is being scaled down due to dissatisfaction with the Group themselves.

Since 1964 and the release of "Rag Doll" I have been a fan of Frankie Valli and the 4 Seasons; I will still carry on collecting Frankie Valli/4 Seasons records as long as they are released and if possible see them in concert. I cannot deny the feeling of excitement every time I play "Who Loves You" but that will be as far as I go with the Group."

Other members at the time said:

Jean Kelly of West Ealing, London:

"I am sure most of the club Members feel the same disillusionment as the Committee about the lack of support and more importantly lack of communication shown from both the Group and its previous Management. We all, I'm sure, feel deeply sympathetic towards Frankie for the personal upsets he has suffered recently but aside from this, in which we could understand a little less communication, it is hard to forgive the almost total disregard for the English fans that the organisation has shown. I have been a fan since 1973 but only joined the Society about 18 months ago and must admit I was disappointed with the lack of up to date news the Society could give to its Members. Also, more importantly, on the Group side like everybody I feel the lack of record releases and their promotion is also disappointing. It is great to hear from other fans but I think as an Appreciation Society the Group does owe some "appreciation" towards us as well

If the Group are to persist in being a part-time band with no regard for the fans then as a Club sadly there seems little point in continuing. I feel a little cheated by them and they have certainly gone down a little in my estimations. They will always be excellent performers and I will always go and see them on stage. I shall continue to buy their records because I like their music. They would only have to strike one note and I would forgive them for forgetting we exist (well almost anyway!). But as a functioning Fan Club it does not fulfill its obligations..... It would be sad to see the Club disband so lets hope the Group can work themselves back to a high position in our estimations -nobody should ever undersell their fans”

Alison Knapman of Wallington, Surrey added her comments:

“It’s obvious that some members have indeed become disillusioned with the Group and I think this is a very sad thing. Right through 1981 the Group worked non-stop, they toured extensively (and successfully) attracting many new followers both here and in the U.S.A. They spent sev-



Larry Lingle and Gerry Polci Manchester 1980

eral months in the studio laying down tracks for a new album. When I saw them perform at Valley Forge in October they were terrific even though after the final show Frankie was literally exhausted and had obviously been drastically over-working. I agree communications are bad, before I went to California in 1980 I wrote three times to the Four Seasons Partnership and an American friend even phoned them but without success. Unfortunately Frankie has no time (nor indeed should it be necessary) to personally supervise every single aspect. I know he’s extremely concerned about the state of the American Fan Club; he shouldn’t have to worry about that. He obviously believes that the U.K. Club IS properly informed by the Partnership. In the meanwhile I truly hope that at least some of the members of this Society have enough admiration for the great group that the 4 Seasons are, have been and always will be, and enough loyalty to Frankie Valli, who is a man not a machine, to keep the faith”.

The final comment from our 1982 newsletter goes to Ray Nichol who back then was buying and selling records for the fans:

“It is with sadness I am writing this article in our last Newsletter. The Committee is together regarding our feelings as to what has brought this situation to a head. A lot of things contributed to the decision, mainly the lack of news from the previous USA Management, record releases (thus no hits) and no personal contact from Valli or the Group, i.e. no gratitude from them for helping the successful tours, and no message for every-

one at Christmas. I know I may sound frivolous but every member of the Society has worked hard for their success and a little gratitude could have made it better. I would like to thank everyone who has joined the Society as it has been you that has kept it alive, especially when things have been down. My final thanks go to the Committee with whom I've worked and become very good friends, which itself is worth more than one can say".

So the fan club became totally un-official and self-serving and it remains that way to this day. Perhaps the fan's criticism of The Four Seasons Partnership could be judged by them and fans today as unfair and the difficulties of communication back then can not be under-stated. But there have been plenty of years since and 2 tours in 1992 and 94 which once again everyone supported, shows the Partnerships wish for support followed by the UK abandoned as a touring venue.

Lynn Boleyn's opinion in retrospect is...."**Of course, this was very sad at the time but if we had only done it for the recognition from Frankie and the Group we would not be here today more than 30 years on to tell this story! We've done it over that period for everyone who loves Frankie, the Seasons and the music, and now for the newer fans of Jersey Boys. We have made many, many friends over the years in many different countries and we have also had the chance recently to meet up with friends and past Four Seasons both here in the UK and in the USA."**

Brian Lomas, a committee member at the time, worked hard to help Frankie Valli and the group connect with the fans. Whilst this happened sporadically (at 'live' concerts particularly during the 1980 and 81 tours) , fans who met the group found them often dis-interested. He retrospectively remains with a feeling of disappointment particularly regarding music released since those days."**I regularly have asked why he (Frankie Valli) treats his fans so badly in this respect, it was the fans that kept him going and I have to say he has never respected that or wanted any dealings with them, which is pretty poor in my opinion."**

And Ken Charmer says..."**We were perhaps very naïve back then accepting the 'bullshit' (as there is no better word for it) that we were fed. The disarray of the split, the lack of honesty and open-ness and a clear inability to find a sound and build success, is clear to us all now. The respect we had back then is sorely diminished and today is more for the group than for its management. Today it is what was 'in the groove' that counts. But learning about the music's creation and seeing through the mists of PR dishonesty, is worth pursuing. It is time to tell it like it was, and how we see it in retrospect with the benefit of hindsight. It doesn't stop us from celebrating the groups work or enjoying the excitement and performance of 'Jersey Boys'...even if some of us feel cheated by past experiences"**

All the fans wanted was **trust, respect and honesty** ...clearly they didn't get it.

Amazingly a few held on to the friendships they had made back then and continued to enjoy the past recordings and the stories behind their creation. Many remain friends today and those fans and their interest and recollections have enabled this story to be put together. No '**official**' information apart from the few communications quoted from lawyer Peter Bennett have been used in this story. The rest are quoted from published articles or from former Four Seasons personal recollections. Nothing from the Partnership has been sought in it's compilation. As nothing would be forthcoming. It is purely a fans perspective. Today it is a case of "**the more things change...the more they remain the same.**" The apathy of the Partnership has been palpable to the fans and remains so. As Jersey Boys continues a new myth this story goes some way to correct that.