

The Four Seasons are so strong now, and so confident of their strength, that the common goal of Don, John, Gerry and Lee and of Frankie Valli as well is for the four to be able to record and tour independent of Valli. "It's been almost like a double life for me," Frankie says of recording with the Seasons while making his own singles and albums. "What we're hoping for is to get the Four Seasons where they can exist completely on their own. At the same time, I'll be able to put more emphasis on my solo career."



was individually. Warner Brothers was giving the producers (Frankie and Bob) 9 %. The deal went down like this:  
1. The producers got 6 % :  
2. The Four Seasons got 3 % :  
3. Don and Gerry (lead singers) each would get 1 % :  
4. Lee (the pianist arranger) got ½ of 1 % :  
5. I singer/guitarist would get ½ of 1 %

All Bob told me was of my ½ of 1 %. This sounded less than satisfactory to me and I told Bob so. His reaction was of disinterest. I pressed on a bit further by asking "What are my options?" Answer: "You could NOT do the album." It was clear that I was apparently of little importance. The fact that we all had been putting our hearts into our work and truly loved performing and doing our best meant nothing to them. I was not living under the false impression that I was unique and could not be replaced. I simply believed that I was a member and had some say. Wrong again. The relationship never improved and there was no love lost when the breakup came." This was the reality of the music business...it is a business designed to make money. But sometimes it was financially beneficial when TV performances were done... "Back home we did the Mike Douglas Show quite often mouthing our recordings and being interviewed. So often that it got to be routine. The money was always good. The original showing and the first repeat would be full pay. The second repeat ½, the third less. But then the appearance would be used so often that there was always a little more throughout the year. These little extras were good as our base pay was not so hot." This was typical of the types of contract that existed in the industry and was derived from the Warner Bros deal Bob Gaudio had struck. John's comments reveal a naivety that many recording artists have experienced. From the 1960s through to the 1990's artists received a miniscule percentage of sales income. Record companies argued that they carried all of the risk, and the production and promotion costs but research of any industry analysis of the period shows the huge profits and salaries earned by Record Companies and their executives. It was just the accepted way. No artist could promote themselves as they can



Three Four Seasons plus backing singers. Left to Right, Kim O'kelly-Leigh, Lee Shapiro, John Paiva, Hali Burton, Gerry Polci, Sandra Chriss

today(2010). Only today are the public aware of the greed and corruption that prevailed within the record business. Books like **'Dirty Little Secrets of the Record Business'** by Hank Bordowitz show how the business **"deteriorated from one that showcased the performer's creativity and individuality".....and "fouled its own livelihood-through shortsightedness, stubbornness, power plays, sloth and outright greed"**

So what was really going on with the group....and did anyone care about the fans? A Goldmine article again tried to portray to the fans the plans for the group to be independent.... **"In truth, since Valli co-owned with Gaudio the Four Seasons name, he wouldn't really be sev-**

**ering his ties with the group. However, the Four Seasons without Valli on record or stage would be an entirely different entity. From April until October Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons packed houses across the United States and Great Britain with Valli's "farewell" tour. Valli explained to reporters that he could no longer bear the rigors of the road and by splitting off he could concentrate on his solo career. Further, he did not want to "stand in the way" of the momentum created by the new Four Seasons band.**

**The public got a preview of the new sound with the release of the "Helicon" album. 90% of the lead vocals were done by Polci or Ciccone. The ninth and last track, added in April, was "Down The Hall". Valli didn't even participate in its recording. Polci sang lead on this song, with background vocals limited to Ciccone. The album was progressive rock but possessed enough harmony to carry the Four Seasons trademark. Each of the six members was individually pictured on the back cover and identified."**

The group were happy with what they had done on **'Helicon'**. John Paiva totally believed in it and in their performances. It was however Bob Gaudio's **'concept'** and they used their talent to deliver it very competently. Lee Shapiro is somewhat more philosophical about it... **"..... although we were all glad to be creating more adventurous and intricate music, the lyric**

content wasn't Bob's best (in my opinion). That said, if Helicon had been a big hit, we would have all been "trail blazers". In hindsight, we all commented that we would have liked to have followed up the style of "Dec. 63". But, we bore no risk, creatively or financially. Who wouldn't have followed Bob's lead? Quite simply the 70s "4 Seasons" were an outlet for Bob Gaudio's writing and production talents and we were all too happy to be a part of it. We were actually quite enthusiastic about all the new stuff Gaudio wrote but, in the end result, it just didn't sound like we had made a hit. I believe making a hit was secondary to Bob at that point. He was more concerned with making a creative statement which can be a risky venture. If it works, you're a genius. If not, you hold the bag."

1977 on tour—Photo courtesy of John Paiva

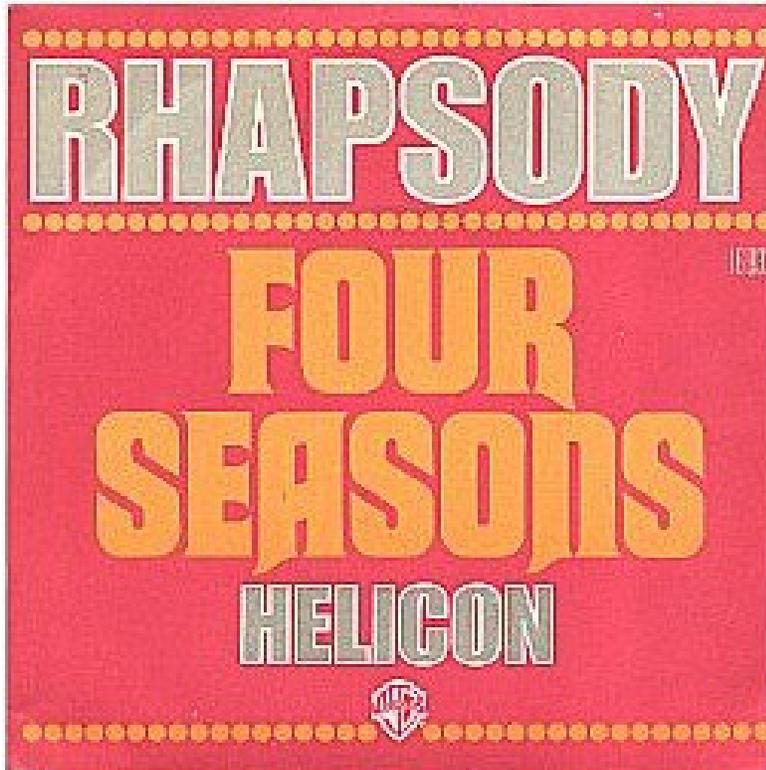


Once again words that echo the Chameleon album quotes from Bob Gaudio himself back in 1972. Although it was 1978 he once again just wrote from his creative perspective at that time and didn't look for a hit in what he wrote.

And at the time the promo for the split was being pushed by them all..... as Gerry Polci said on Capitol Radio London when asked...  
***"Have you thought about that day when you go out alone?"***  
***"What's happening***

now is that we're promoting our latest album which is the "Helicon" album and we've got some very, very good reaction from it. And so, being afraid to go out, as long as the people realise what they're getting. If they know that Frankie's not gonna be there, and if they know that we're gonna do material that we do by ourselves, there's less of a chance of getting any repercussions from Frankie not being there. We're all very excited about it. The situation has come about over the past four years. I've been a Four Season for the last four years, doing Four Seasons material, watching the thing grow and evolve into a, as Frankie says, a situation where other people are singing leads and the instrumentalists are much more featured. In the "Helicon" album it's much more prevalent than any other thing that has been recorded by the Four Seasons.... we believe in what we're doing and we believe in the material and like I said a lot of help from Bobby and Frank that has helped us along a great deal."

Goldmine again looked back on the album release in the 1980s..."**Helicon**" sold very poorly. Fans felt that Warner-Curb missed a sure bet by not releasing "Rhapsody" as its single release, instead going with "Down The Hall". "Down The Hall" made most charts but never broke big."



The group gave their 'take' independently of Frankie Valli when they were interviewed in Holland for an article which appeared in the Winschuter Courant on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1977 entitled 'The Four Seasons – A Hard Working Group'

*"Gerry please tell us...Are you content about "Helicon?"*

**"No, not at all. You never are, I think, because you are obliged to make some compromises. But we are most content about the direction we've got into. It all started with the "Who Loves You" album. Helicon is the next step. The record is a mixture of moods. More rock than ever. Now we have to wait to see what this record is doing. If it's not successful, then we will try and put out music in a different way. We make and**

**play everything by ourselves. We believe in our music and that is the reason we will be successful. At least, that's how I think about it..... "We are working very hard to show we are the group who is appearing on stage is the group on the record, if you know what I mean".**

***What is Frankie's part on the Helicon album?***

**Gerry: "He sings perhaps 10% from the songs and you can hear him on the background. I sing, let's say 53% of the songs on the Helicon LP. Now that Frankie wants to go his own way, we use the abilities we have in the group. Frankie Valli and the 4 Seasons was a bit too much for one stage, what's why we split. Frankie as well as the 4 Seasons deserve their own career's". Gerry, being 25, is not the youngest Season. Lee is. "You can see that" Gerry says. "With these guys we have been playing for four years now. We are part of the evolution, that's why we hold the name the 4 Seasons". When I was asked to join the group I knew the group very well, of course. In the United States the 4 Seasons are as popular as the Beatles. To me, it was a unique chance to reveal myself to this music".**

**The 4 Seasons needed some time to develop themselves. Gerry Polci is content now and says the group is more instrumental than they ever were. "The Band is playing better than they ever did. It's very nice to see that our Helicon LP is tip of the week on your Dutch radio station. After Holland we are visiting Germany, Paris, Australia and New Zealand and after that the hospital I'm afraid. It is a very tiring life, but we enjoy it and that is very important. In June we are going back to the States to work for our new album. To make a record and to appear for our public are two worlds apart. I like to be in a studio. During a record session you have to strive after absolute perfection. To appear is for the excitement" The group appeared in a solo format several times during the summer.**

The question was one Gerry and the group were aware of....**“Would the American audience accept us in our new style.”** His thoughts were....” **They knew the group since 1962 with Frankie as lead singer. All at once, they saw a totally new group. We gave promotion concerts in five big towns, like New York, and Chicago. Frankie only was there to open the shows and to introduce us. I think it was quite a success. “December 1963” sold very well in the States. 2.8 million copies, not bad is it not? In this way we proved the 4 Seasons can sing in another way. If the audience accept us, then it’s okay, if not then we are movin’ to Holland!”**

But would the mass audience accept them? Perhaps in Europe (with enough promotion), but the Partnership still saw their primary market as the USA and things were not looking good there at all. The instability in the Record Business was going to make the next few years a roller-coaster.



Warner Bros Promo-Photo for the NEW Four Seasons in preparation for their launch

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