

The Rise and Fall of the NEW Four Seasons 1966 to 1977 - Introduction

Some people became fans of the Four Seasons the first time they heard them, others just grew into them..... Today new fans are discovering them as a result of the show 'Jersey Boys'. But what is it that changes your appreciation of an artist from merely collecting a few songs you listen to, to wanting to know about all of their work. Well in my case it was the realization that there was really something more to the group and their music than the early 60s hits. Now everyone can see and hear this in the musical 'Jersey Boys'

But I decided it was necessary to write about the past, because their music and it's influence on our lives is something we don't really control. It is perhaps instinctive. However, understanding it's creation helps us know who we are and why we relate to it. I thought that this work might help put the music and it's place in the lives of fans in a better documented context. And, it might counter the myth of the show 'Jersey Boys' which is a commercial vehicle rather than a musical and band biography. As well as that I wanted to correct some aspects of their story which could otherwise remain hidden.



My discovery of the 'Chameleon' album and joining the UK fan club was the catalyst for this research back in the 1970s. What I was to learn in the late 70s was that 'Chameleon' was just a part of a 'new' direction that Bob Gaudio had embarked on for the Four Seasons back in 1965 when Nick Massi left the group. Writing and researching the Seasons story with George Ingram and other Four Seasons fans, as well as former members of the group over the years has enabled me to understand the context of 'Chameleon' in this process. And using the interviews with Bob and Frankie, the words of others and the history of the groups recordings we can trace the driving creative ideas of Bob Gaudio and Frankie Valli's response, along with the contribution of the other group members who have offered their stories and opinions. There are peaks and troughs and not everyone behaves well. It is a story much like the one in Jersey Boys with the ups and downs of record companies, good and bad luck and trust and betrayal. But then isn't that what rock'n'roll has always been about.?

But there is another reason for this attempt at a biography of sorts. In the book 'Jersey Boys' Rick Elice says that.....

"There are fictions in Jersey Boys that we created because the surviving members of the band did not want the real story to be told in a completely frontal way. There may have been certain relationships that they didn't want to re-ignite or agitate. And then there were issues that remain between Bob and Frankie, between Frankie and Tommy, between Tommy and the other two guys. Some things were out of bounds. We didn't necessarily know what these were until we wrote them and then were told, "No, you can't use that". Even so our original contract of intent with them was a warts-and-all version of their story. It would be a rags to riches story with specific landmarks from their lives and careers... There was a lot of concern between Bob and Frankie early on, before the play opened in La Jolla, that the fans would not tolerate some of the liberties that we were taking in terms of organization and chronology of events.It was our contention that if the play were well made enough fans would buy into the show for it's own sake and not get hung up on the fact that we were taking dramatic license."

Well he was right on the first part that we bought into the show for the sake of theatre. After all the years since the 70s with occasional albums and tours we were just glad to find a way back to the music in a 'live' form. But I for one got hung up on the dramatic licence. I walked out of the theatre after a summer performance in London hearing fans saying**"Did you notice how they changed history in the second half of the show?"**.

Respected writer Charles Alexander recognizes it too..."***There is no hint of Valli's severe hearing loss that left him nearly deaf for many years until some operations helped ease the ailment. The most significant historical inaccuracy is that the play has Massi and DeVito leaving the group at about the same time when every fan knows that Nick left years before Tommy did. Fans may quarrel with this jumbled chronology, but they should understand that this is drama, not history.***"

And there lies the key. We all agree that the show is just a fantastic creation....and none of this work is intended to counteract that. It is just that the real timeline needed to be told some time, someplace and so this is one attempt to set just part of the record straight based on what has been written and said in the fanzines. But ultimately it is focused on the music, its creation and the role of the Four Seasons group members. **"Its always been about the group"** said Valli in a July 2009 interview for the Boston Globe. The contribution each one made during the period that represents the second half of the 'Jersey Boys' show should not be overlooked. They have I believe been given too little credit for the success that was achieved.

"The Rise and Fall of the NEW Four Seasons"

therefore attempts to document the musical and personnel development of the group from the time Bob Gaudio decided to take a classic Frank Sinatra standard and give it a whole new sound in 1965, to the abandonment of the most successful line-up in the groups history in 1977. (and the aftermath)

It is an ambitious aim and may not be realized . It will effectively be a bookbut it will be produced in self-contained chapters based on what we have in our archives. In this form it can be edited and updated as new information comes to light.



The over-riding result of our research and writing does demonstrate the tremendous drive, talent and perseverance of Frankie Valli and Bob Gaudio. A belief in their creative talent and in Frankie's still incredible voice. Examining this period leads me to judge this as their greatest achievement. Of all the groups from the 60s who had a resurgence in the 70s only the Four Tops came close to matching the NEW Four Seasons.

The Rise and Fall of The NEW Four Seasons traces the changes, influences and the creative direction of Bob Gaudio and the group until 'arguably' the eventual collapse of Bob's creative drive in 1977. We'll search out the stories behind the ebbs and flows of their music reflecting on their place in the changing music scene. And we'll be honest but sensitive to the conflicts and issues but it will be what we believe is a balanced story..

One other thing that shines through this period ,and will be reflected in the story, is the loyalty of the groups core fans who supported them and bought their records. Ultimately they would be let down and the fan clubs like the group would fall apart. The Partnerships lack of rapport with the fans over the years may be because of their 'shady' past and the need to protect the commercial appeal of the group. But maybe that did more harm than good. Jersey Boys commercial success would indicate the past didn't matter! But this story is about respect and friendship. Between the fans and The Four Seasons. This project is a big piece of work but even if we only complete a few Chapters....it will be worthwhile.**Casey Chameleon**