



Bob Crewe Story - Revisited

Ultimate Album Compilation Bob Crewe Presents..... 'Seasons' Connections Volume One

sense that they enjoyed their work just wasn't there. It seemed that Joe Long was playing both straight man and comic when he tried to keep the show alive with his comments and barbs, and he came very close to pulling it off.

However, he couldn't do it alone, and that may have put the writing on the wall for him. Nothing in this as meant to be critical or derogatory of any individual, especially Joe Long, who is held in highest esteem. It's just unfortunate that a time had to come when the Four Seasons were no longer exist as they were composed in the early years, their heyday. Joe Long was in many respects, a part of the cement that held that group together, and you can see that there was nothing that he wouldn't do to enhance the group. The days when the group was the most important thing are gone. However, the Four Seasons were something awesome and enjoyable to listen to, and to especially watch. For anyone who grew up with the early Four Seasons, to listen to or see any other lineup except the Frankie, Bob, Tommy and Nick/Joe can be likened to a renowned chef sampling another cook's efforts at his own prized creation. Usually his comment will be "good, but not perfect," or "there's something missing." That early group was truly something to behold. They were truly greater than the sum of the individual parts. It's to them that one has to say "Thanks for the memories." **Joe Szulczewski**



Back in 2001 UK fans of Bob Crewe were enjoying the work of girl group and Northern Soul enthusiasts Mick Patrick and Malcolm Baumgart who persuaded Westside to release the Dynavoice Story in tribute to the the work Bob Crewe did in establishing this label and the wide range of sounds and styles generated between 1965 and 68.

The UK Historical Group has followed all Four Seasons related music over the years and as collectors we have sought out sound-alike tracks from Bob and the other Seasons on a variety of recordings.

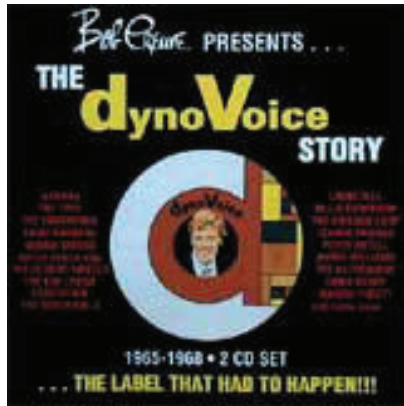
The unfortunate deletion of this great double CD and the limited prospect of release of any other examples of the rare recordings of 'season's' related work seems to have condemned this great music to remain hard to get on CD. This prompted us to review our collections and identify the very best of these 1960's experiments in search of that elusive hit. In the past we have had the Danish 'bootleg' 'Fantastic First Years' CD in 1995 which captured some of the early Frankie Valli recordings before the Four Seasons were created. This featured some 'Seasons' connections but in our view only scratched the surface of what Bob and the guys did together. So under our banner of Ultimate Album Compilations we have reviewed those tracks we have on vinyl which we would most like to

have on CD.

The research focused on the best quality work of Bob Crewe with a wide range of artists during the early part of his career from 1958 to 1965 but focused on some kind of link with the Four Seasons either in sound, writing and production support, or backing vocals. Of course without the contribution of those who took part this can only be a part history. So where do we start?

Obviously Bob's biggest breakthrough was in 1958 with his breakthrough with The Rays and Frank C. Slay Jr. The story goes that..."The Rays were black and from New York. Hal Miller and Davey Jones had formed the group which recorded at Chess Records. There they met songwriters Bob Crewe and Frank Slay Jr (in 1955) who signed them to their XYZ label in 1957 after releases on Chess and Argo. Rock'n'Roll legend has it that while Crewe was riding a train through Pennsylvania, it stopped at a town and the composer spied a couple silhouetted in the window of a house and came up with an idea for a song. He took his idea to Frank Slay. Frank, a Texan who had worked for the British Information Service had met Bob at a party and as the two got on so well together they joined up as a composing team. Bob was to do this later with the young talented songwriter Bob Gaudio to create one of the best song writing partnerships of the sixties. The duo (Crewe/Slay) wrote a ballad called 'Silhouettes' and went into the studio to record it with the Rays. "Silhouettes" with its unashamedly sentimental content would have been wretched schmaltz in a pop crooners hand, but Hal Miller's warm, rich lead and the groups doowahing back-up were able to give the record a rock-a-ballad edge. Bob gave a dub of the disc to Hy Lit, a popular WFIL disc jockey, who took it home to listen to with a dozen others. Legend goes the DJ fell asleep while the records were being spun on his automatic record player and "Silhouettes" got half a dozen spins before Hy Lit woke up to shut off the machine. He was so taken with the song that he took it with him to play on his show the next day. The master was quickly picked up by Cameo and by September 1957 with exposure on American Bandstand

became a hit". On XYZ102 and subsequently Cameo 117 and entered the Billboard Top 100 on 14/10/57. It eventually reached Nr 3 on both the pop and r&b charts. A great start for



track one as the Four Seasons recorded the track immaculately for the 'Big Girls Don't Cry' album featuring their own superb harmonies and Valli's soaring falsetto.

Of course 'Sherry' wasn't the Four Seasons first record. That honour fell to the doomladen and appalling 'Bermuda' with it's staccato chanting and slightly off key vocal. A track Bob must have persuaded the group to do. Well enter the alternative version he produced by Linda Scott on Canadian-American 134. This 1962 version of this early fifties C.Strother song captures a feel which is happier and reflects losing love in the idyllic Bermuda environment. It was released 12/61, entered the Billboard charts 10/2/62 and reached no. 7. Bob Gaudio was experimenting also during this period and contributes regularly to this set. Writing 'Lonely Girl Blue' was one thing but surely that is Frankie Valli's voice singing the hook. Released in 1962 on Coral62314 this has been a long standing argument amongst collectors, it certainly improves the overall track along with the Seasons backing. Maybe Bob or Frankie can tell us?

Another attempt to use Frankie Valli under a pseudonym was the emergence of Scott O'Berle on his 1964 outing (ATCO 6293). Released 4/64 the 'A' side "Cupid's Poison Dart" remains Frankie's poorest disguise on this Capello penned track. The Seasons provide typical harmony backing. An essential Seasons collection!

Diane Renay was probably Bob Crewe's favourite girl singer during the early sixties. He was able to generate some reasonable hits for her

with "Navy Blue" and "Kiss Me Sailor". Looking through her back catalogue we found some great productions which are typical of the songs Bob was producing on the Seasons via the 'Dawn' and 'Rag Doll' albums in 1963/64. The track "Hello Heartaches" on LP 20th Century Fox TFS-3133 in 1964 written and produced by Bob and arranger Sid Bass illustrates the warm sound brilliantly.

Bob Gaudio commented in an interview in 1972 that no-one ever covered the Four Seasons big hits because they couldn't handle the vocal range. Well we found a version of "Big Girls Don't Cry" from an EP(Cameo Parkway 217001) by the Orlons in 1962 were they do a creditable version.

Many people don't know that Bob produced some of the best known soul artists of the sixties including Ben E. King, Jerry Butler and Chuck Jackson. In 1962 a version of "Tomorrow" appeared on the Chuck Jackson "Encore" album (Wand 1009). A track also recorded by Bob on Mathew Reid(who we will return to later) this recording captures the warmth of Chucks wonderful voice in an enjoyable Crewe/Bass song. On "I Had A Dream" Diane Renay again gives an almost perfect alternative version of many songs made for the Four Seasons. Penned by the emerging talents of Sandy Linzer and Denny Randell with Bob, it uses all the harmony and arrangement tricks to be heard on a 1964 Seasons album and Diane nearly hits the falsetto ending. Clearly a strain Frankie would have found comfortable.

Mathew Reid remains a mystery to us but he had some success with a catchy song made up of lyrics from Top Forty songs of previous years. "Faded Roses (The Top Forty Song)" (Scepter 1238 released 7/62) is a typical attempt by Bob Crewe using a Bob Gaudio melody in a novelty approach to getting a hit. The result is quite a listenable performance. Back to Chuck Jackson and the second Crewe produced track to appear on "Encore". This time a Bob Gaudio penned song, "Another Day". With Frankie Valli's falsetto soaring in the background and the Seasons harmony this builds to an intense 'bridge' and then fades out into a nothing ending. A very strangely structured track that has a moody feel not untypical of

Bob Gaudio's writing.

The flip side of the Scott O'Berle 1964 single provides another chance for Frankie Valli to imitate himself perfectly on "You're my Dream Girl"(Sears). Another catchy track with the Seasons trying hard not to sound just like themselves.

Larry Santos was a good friend of Bob Crewe and the Seasons and in an attempt to 'kick-start' his career he recorded as Larry and The Legends and in 2/64 released " Don't You Pick on My Baby"(Atlantic 2220). This innovative arrangement by Charles Calello with sound effects was another driving/marching beat from Bob Crewe with the Four Seasons providing strong backing vocals which somewhat outshine Mr Santos. Written also by this trio it remains another essential Seasons collection.

Johnny Cabott, was another mystery one-off experiment with Bob Gaudio and the rest of the Seasons. Re-working the old classic by Cole Porter

Diane Renay



"Night and Day" (Columbia 42283 released 1/62) was to produce an innovative arrangement with great harmony. Billed as Johnny Cabott and the Group it is really The Four Seasons with guest vocalist! Of all the girl group attempts by Bob Crewe the Rag-Dolls were perhaps the most commercial. Unlike the Toys they lacked any soul edge being pure pop and the reply to "Rag Doll" although too obvious produced a good quality single in 1964 on

"Society Girl" due to the excellent writing of Crewe, Randell and Linzer . All Bob's production techniques and Seasons imitation harmonies by the girls (rumoured to also be the 'Beach Girls' on "Skiing In the Snow"). Another essential collectable.

Van Trevor was another male vocalist who had a release on Atlantic 2175 (12/62) produced by Bob. "Tuesday Girl" (Boulanger) rocks along with a great rhythm track to a catchy tune giving us a typical Bob Crewe production.

Tracey Dey like Diane Renay was a gifted vocalist trying hard to get that breakthrough single and some songs and performances deserve more credit than being lost on dusty old singles .The first of our selected songs produced by Bob on her is probably inspired by the 1960's epic film.

"Teenage Cleopatra"(Beverly) is an unlikely song but works quite well in the girl group style of the time.

The Orions limited work with Bob produced a creditable single based on the "Knock, Knock (Who's There)" joke.(Cameo 332). Released 7/64, it entered the Billboard charts 29/8/64 and achieved a highest position of No. 64. Male lead and female backing bounce this vocal back and forth on the 1964 track written by Bob and Larry Santos.

Another Diane Renay track that



sounds remarkably like a Four Seasons song from the "Rag Doll" album is the Crewe/Lanning penned. "Please Forget Me". Soaring harmonies feature on this melodic mid-paced drum laden ballad. Bob Crewe wrote and produced the



Bob Crewe designed the Toys Classic album cover

pure Four Seasons song "Jane" for Mathew Reid. Opening with an intro reminiscent of their version of "A Sunday Kind of Love" the arrangement and the backing captures all of the mid sixties harmonies we loved by the group. This is an essential example of their work.

On the 'Fantastic First Years' you will find Hal Millers version of "An Angel Cried" with it's dramatic building arrangement. Never one to waste a good arrangement Bob resurrected this Bob Gaudio melody with new words to produce a completely different song "King Of The Mountain"(Wand LP 655). Chuck Jackson handles the vocal superbly to deliver a soulful lead and an intense vocal climax to match the arrangement. Superb.

Bob Gaudio described Bob Crewe's ability to generate enthusiasm and a positive attitude in the studio as a major contribution to the success of his productions but that alone is not enough if the material or artist is not good enough. "Why Start" (L'Heureaux)by Mathew Reid on ABC 10259 (released 12/61) is included here only because of the excellent bass vocal by Nick Massi as the Seasons do their best to lift this track. On Atlantic 2175(released 12/62)

we found the ballad "I Want To Cry " by Van Trevor. Another Boulanger penned song it doesn't match later ballads by Bob like "The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine" but perhaps Bob was working his future arrangements out here. "Dusty" by The Rag Dolls had to be

included as the peak of Bob alternative Seasons sound worked on a girl group, the tremendous marching/stepping arrangement mirroring the lyrics of "Dawn". The obvious reply to one of the Seasons most famous lines 'Dawn, go away from me' has the Rag Dolls singing 'Dusty, take me away from here' , This is another Crewe/Linzer/Randell ultimate Seasons sound-a-like on Mala 493 (issued 1/65, it entered Billboard charts 23/1/65 with a highest position of No. 55).

Tracey Dey again and another Bob Crewe reply record, "Jerry I'm your Sherry" (Vee Jay 467 released 10/62). This the reply to 'Sherry' blatantly copies the song with alterative lyrics. A long established collectable with Seasons fans this track has recently appeared on CD for the first time. Great arrangement though.

Few soul legends like Jerry Butler could fail to produce a great performance on a song as good as "Whatever You Want" (Vee Jay 486). A Crewe/ Gaudio composition this song should have been a major hit. Released 1/63, it entered the Billboard charts 30/3/63 and only achieved no. 68 - but remains a soul classic. The performance speaks for itself.

"Who's That" (Liberty 5560L)is a good example of the high capability of Tracey Dey when the material is good. The arrangement of a Crewe/Gaudio song is a typical drum laden mid-tempo performance with 'sha-la-la' backing to Tracey's solid vocal and well worth inclusion as one of Bob's best productions with her. Released 8/63, it entered the Billboard charts 14/9/63 and achieved a highest place of No. 75

Lenny Henry had a few tracks produced by Bob. "Across The Street" (ATCO 6291)has the honour of being released twice. Recently issued on ACE's 'Getting' To Me' compilation, it is a great soul track written by Crewe/Callelo/Harris with a typical arrangement by Charlie Callelo. Released 3/64, it entered the Billboard chart 30/5/64, and reached No. 75.We close the CD with three of the best. First, the writers favourite track by Tracey Dey, "I Wont Tell".(Amy 912). This soulful Crewe Gaudio composition is a wonderfully arranged track featuring chanting backing of 'oo-mow-mow' . Tracey's lead vocal is powerful and gutsy. Just



Bob Crewe enjoying a drink with friends

essential girl group music with enough soul to match any Northern Soul track. And what an ending! Next the B side of the Johnny Cabott single (Columbia 42283) featuring "the Group" which is of course the Four Seasons. "On My Own Again" tagged as a Bob Crewe composition but surely Bob Gaudio is a contributor. This is pure Four Seasons harmony but amazingly before their first hit 'Sherry'!. We close this 'some of the best of' set with the old Cliff Richard hit "Blue Turns To Grey". This though is the alternative version by Tracey Dey. The song appeared on the Rolling Stones album 'December's Children (and Everybody's)' in 1966 so how did it appear on Amy 917 in 1964? Maybe Tom Crewe's visit to the UK and relationship with Andrew Oldham can explain this! By far the best version of this great Oldham/Richards song this features a terrific arrangement and another quality vocal performance.

So that is Volume One. Was Bob Crewe's production style simply formula based? Did he just re-process this on Bob Gaudio's quality melodies?...and who was Mathew Reid and how did he come to work with Bob and the Seasons ...what did Sandy Linzer and Denny Randell add to the production...or some may say it was all down to Charles Callelo's great arrangements. Well our research will continue and future articles will give you the answers we get. In the meantime there are lots more of these experiments by Bob Crewe, Bob Gaudio and the Four Seasons to be found for Volume 2. Let us have your suggestions and questions for next time. **Ken Charmer : Oct 2002**

Note: This is not a commercially available CD although we wish it was! Thanks to George Ingram, Ray Nichol and Stefan Wreidt for help with this CD/article.

More Crewe

Following on from our recent review of Bob's career we have continued to gather interesting comment on him from various Internet sources and our own archives. From the All Music Guide:

"One of the most successful pop-rock producers of the 1960s, Bob Crewe is primarily known for his work with the Four Seasons, many of whose hits he also had a hand in writing. Crewe also got hits with Diane Renay, Mitch Ryder, Freddy Cannon, and several others. Crewe signed the Four Seasons in the early '60s, at first using them as backup vocalists for other artists. Crucial to the balance of the Four Seasons' arrangements were their sophisticated harmonies, in which both Frankie Valli's falsetto and the backup vocalists had a lot of presence. It's sometimes forgotten that Crewe's Four Seasons discs also adeptly incorporated imaginative touches of other instruments that made them stand out from the pack of other pop/rock records in the early and mid '60s. For instance, there were the heavenly glissandos of "Candy Girl," the tremoloed guitars of "Silence Is Golden," the bells on "Dawn," the space-age organs and galloping rhythms of "Save It for Me" (which perhaps owe something to Joe Meek's production of the Tornados' "Telstar"), and the sad harmonica on "Big Man in Town." "

Whilst from Spectropop we found the following information:

Regarding Diane Renay's new double-CD "Diane Renay Sings Some Things Old And Some Things New" Mick Patrick wrote: "The best tracks on the CD are the FOUR previously unheard BOB CREWE productions: "Live And Learn" (not the Joey

Heatherton / Lesley Gore song but a great Crewe original), "Big City Boy" (written by Crewe with Eddie Rambeau), "See How They Run" (the Toys' song but with a very different arrangement) and "Teach Me Tonight" (a duet by Diane and Crewe), all mastered from Diane's own one-of-a-kind molybdenum acetates". Visit Dianes site and you can hear some of these these tracks.

New Release

I just received a new CD titled "A Tribute To The Four Seasons and Their Sound Vol. 1". This contains 27 sound-a-like tracks, which are listed next page. Some of these have been discussed by this group, but others I've never heard of before. Some are better than others. It's unclear just what the Vol.1 implies. Perhaps Vol. 2 only if Vol1 sells well? Or perhaps Vol. 2 is planned as a collection of sound-a-likes for another group? If you're interested, I purchased this from Rock Goldmine ad. Their order line is 360-769-0456 (9-3 PST). \$18.99 +shipping. They also have a website at www.rockclassics.com, but this item is not listed there yet. I've dealt with them many times over the years, and have always had a good experience. **Jose Sanchez**

Internet News

Deejays could influence songwriters to change their songs around a little...just as a personal favor.

Sherry -- The Four Seasons

1962 Position: #1 Label: Vee-Jay
"Sherry" was the first of fifteen Top 10 hits for the Four Seasons and established their trade-mark sound, Frankie Valli's unique falsetto. The group was new to most of America in 1962, but it wasn't an overnight sensation. Valli (born Francis Castelluccio), for example, had been singing for ten years and had formed the nucleus of the Four Seasons seven years earlier, in 1955. It was called the Variety Trio, then the Variatones, and finally, the Four Lovers. By 1961, the new lineup was in place, taking its name from the Four Seasons bowling alley in New Jersey, where they auditioned for but didn't get, a job singing in the lounge. Their first single, "Bermuda", was released on Gone Records in 1961. It flopped. The group needed a hit to break through. They came up with

"A Tribute To The Four Seasons and Their Sound Vol. 1" - Track Listing

1. A Tribute To The Four Seasons - Society's Children
2. Playgirl - Playground
3. Baby Mine - Mickey Farrell and The Dynamics
4. Cupid's Poison Dart - Scott Oberle
3. Come On - The Devons
6. Where Are You When I'm Lonely - The Stowaways
7. 50 Miles In Twenty Hours - The Blisters
8. Wait A Minute - Tim Tam and The Turn-Ons
9. Candy Baby - Adrian Baker
10. Share Me - The Eccentrics
11. Cheryl Anne - The Madisons
12. Last Time (I'll Cry Over You) - Rudy
13. Hey Summer - Stephen Crane Village - Feat. Bobby Valli
14. I'll Walk Alone - The Faces
15. Your Baby Ain't Your Baby Anymore - Paul Da Vinci
16. Don't Pick On My Baby - Larry and The Legends
17. Candy Andy - The Shoestring
18. Kimberly - Tim Tam and The Turn-Ons
19. Big Town - The Fraternity Brothers
20. One Plus One - The Expressions
21. Sleep Sleep Sleep - The Demotrons
22. Love Sick Beggar - Tony Sara
23. Rag Doll Boy - The Prophets
24. You've Got A Bomb - The Cyclone III
25. Little Angel - The Skunks
26. Cheryl Ann - Tim Tam and The Turn-Ons
27. Valerie - Playground

one that was easy to write, but harder to name.

THE STORY:

One afternoon in 1962, Bob Gaudio, who had sung with the Royal Teens before joining Frankie Valli's Four Lovers, was getting ready to go down to a Four Seasons rehearsal. Before he left, he sat down at a piano for fifteen minutes. The music for an entire song came out. He didn't have a tape recorder in those days, so he quickly wrote down some words and made up the title, "Terry", as a way of remembering the new melody. He didn't intend to keep the lyrics, but when he got to rehearsal, everybody liked them. Only the name needed to be changed.

At that point, the Four Seasons' producer was Bob Crewe, a singer-turned-songwriter/producer who worked with acts like Bobby Darin, Freddy Cannon, and Danny and the Juniors. The group called up Crewe from rehearsal and sang Gaudio's new song, "Terry", to him over the phone. Crewe was wild about the song, but the name became an issue. They almost changed it to "Peri", the name of the record label Crewe worked for (Peri was also the name of the label-owner's daughter). And they

almost changed it to "Jackie" (a tie-in with Jackie Kennedy, who was at the height of her popularity). But in the end, Crewe rejected both of those ideas, and they stuck with "Terry" a little while longer.

One of Crewe's best friends in the music business was Jack Spector, a top-rated deejay on New York's WMCA radio. They'd known each other for years, before either was in the big time, and now in New York the two would hang out sometimes, eating hot dogs at Nathan's in Brooklyn. One day Crewe excitedly told Spector about this new group he wanted to record, and their great song, "Terry". As Spector recalled: "I said, 'Hey, dummy! Don't call it 'Terry'. Make it 'Cheri'-that's my daughter's name.' He said, 'Oh, no problem.' It was that simple. I'm sure that if you ask him today, he may have forgotten about...why it was called 'Sherry'. But this was just an offhand remark that happened in early 1962."

Subsequently, Crewe left the Peri label, signed the Four Seasons to the Chicago-based VeeJay Records, and financed the recording session of what was now "Sherry." The record made its way to WMCA and was reviewed in a deejay meeting-where

songs were picked for airplay. Spector had given the song its name, but he'd actually never heard it. "We listened to it," he recalls, "and everybody said, 'Oh wow, what a different sound. Listen to this guy with the falsetto, he's unreal. Who is that guy?'" Nobody knew who he was. Everybody thought they were a black group at first." WMCA, whose audience was building rapidly, started playing the record, and soon the station's chief rival, WABC, picked it up as well. "Sherry" quickly broke out of New York and rose to #1 in the nation, launching the career of the Four Seasons and making Jack Spector's then-three-year-old daughter a part of rock 'n' roll history.

Did you know?:

Shannon Gaudio is Bob's son. His daughters are Lisa Gaudio D'Amica and Danielle Gaudio Lalezar. He also has 2 grandchildren. Shannon works at Universal Records and is talking to Bob and Harry Weinger about the possibility of issuing the Motown unreleased tracks.

And Finally a question for Joe Long:

John Riley:

Just a quick question about live performance of "Saturday's Father" - I assume you must have done the song for a while when it was a single release - if so how did you handle on stage the section of the song that is a recording of children playing? These days the technology available would no doubt make that no problem, but how would it have worked in the late 60's?

Joe Long:

Actually, we never performed "Saturday's Father" on stage. However, we did other songs that used tape sounds, that were executed by our sound man. For instance, when we did "Tell It To the Rain", we would have thunder at the appropriate time. The kids in "Saturday's Father" were Bob's and Frankie's. We were at Bob's house, doing some work. The kids were outside playing. Bob and I grabbed a portable tape machine, and followed the kids around while they played. We then edited the tape down to what we needed. We did Saturday's Father on the Kraft Summer Theater. But, we sang live to pre-recorded tracks, so the kids were already there.