

# Bob Crewe Story - Revisited



## Ultimate Album Compilation Bob Crewe Presents.....

The sheer range of material that Bob Crewe produced is unbelievable. He was writer/co-writer on 917 songs according to the BMI listings and if you add to that the work of Charles Calello and Bob Gaudio, you will guess that our collecting of tracks has a long way to go. With the range of songs we have found we can group tracks and styles to some extent and for 'Seasons' Connections Volume 4 we have picked out some of the Northern Soul styled tracks to give this mix an up-tempo upbeat sound that some say is our best mix yet. Perhaps Bob's best known song on the Northern Soul scene is our opening track, 'Break-out' (New Voice 811) by Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels. It has become an anthem in the clubs of England. But how did Bob Crewe come to produce such a brassy, punchy soulful sound? Mitch's bio tells us much. "With Ryder, it wasn't attitude or public outrage or politics that generated the charge you could simply hear it in the music. Ryder hit during the mid-'60s when AM radio was going through a golden era courtesy of Motown, Stax, the British Invasion, Aretha, JB, and any number of garage band one-hit



wonders. But no one on the radio then could match Mitch and company for pure visceral excitement, no one else could make the hair stand up on the back of your neck and a wild-eyed gleam creep into your eyes because you just know that SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN. The records worked because they perfectly captured the kinetic frenzy of the live performances that had been the group's stock in trade since they first joined forces in Detroit early in 1964. Born William LeVise, Jr., Ryder was performing as Billy Lee in a high school band called Tempest before turning heads in a black Detroit soul club called the Village. They joined forces as Billy Lee & The Rivieras and by mid-summer had attracted a fanatical local following that caught the ear of Motor City DJ Bob Prince. Prince began booking Lee & The Rivieras as an opening act at a club/casino north of Detroit, but their live performances were so potent that the unrecorded group was soon headlining over major Motown artists. Prince then arranged for The Rivieras to record a tape in Badanjek's basement, and that

demo brought 4 Seasons producer Bob Crewe to a Detroit performance where The Rivieras opened for The Dave Clark Five. They torched the hometown audience for 90 minutes, Crewe was hooked, and in February, 1965, the five Detroit teenagers relocated to New York City and bided their time for a few months playing Greenwich Village clubs for survival money. What followed was a wild two-year ride through the star making machinery of the record industry that brought them fame but no fortune and tore the group apart in the process. Not that the first Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels single, "I Need Help", exactly set the charts afire. That waited until late 1965 when "Jenny Take A Ride!" climbed to #10 as The Wheels welded Chuck Willis' "C.C. Rider" to Little Richard's "Jenny, Jenny", and cannily tossed in an advertisement for their live show along the way. That approach bordered on becoming a formula, particularly after "Break Out", the first attempt at a bigger, brassier sound, only made it to #62 and the ballad "Takin' All I Can Get" barely cracked the Top 100. Late in 1966,

the "Devil With A Blue Dress On" & "Good Golly Miss Molly" medleys exploded over the airwaves and indelibly stamped the high energy Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels sound on anyone within an earshot as they hit #4 on the charts."

'Break-Out' was a Gary Knight, Herb Bernstein composition that should have fared better than the 5 weeks it spent on the Billboard chart after its release on 28th May 1966. At least it gained a cult status with the Northern audiences.



*Bob Crewe With Bob Gaudio at the recording session for 'Can't Take My Eyes Of You'. Courtesy George Showerer Library*

Whilst Bob Crewe was finding a

dynamic sound in the mid sixties, Charles Calello was being recruited by artists other than the Four Seasons to bring his arranging and conducting talents to their music. Clara Ward was to benefit with an album "Hang Your Tears Out To Dry" Verve 5002 in 1966.

Born in Philadelphia on August 21, 1924, Clara Ward is widely acclaimed as one of the greatest soloists in gospel history. Touring the country with her backing group, the Ward Singers, she propelled gospel out of the church and into the nightclub, where glitzy costumes and pop-style performance gave the music glamour and commercial appeal never seen before in gospel music.

The single we feature here was 'The Right Direction' (Verve 10412). A Schroeck-Loring composition it features a great guitar and brassy intro to what was to become another Northern Soul dancer's anthem during the 70's. Clara's positive upbeat vocal makes this song easily likeable.

In the context of 'directions' and Bob Crewe's unique ability as a producer working with Charles Calello we found evidence in compiling this collection of how they worked together from Charles Calello himself. At the time of many of these recordings the influence of competing labels was having

an impact. Charles again from his interview with Stuart Miller in 2003:-  
**"The same time that we were making records, Motown was making records. So we listened to Motown records and we tried to emulate the Motown records. And imitating the Motown records, because we didn't have the same players, and because we didn't have the same electronics or the same sound, we were in pursuit of trying to get that sound which we never were able to duplicate. But in the process we created our own thing. So we always had a reference point whenever we went into the studio. We didn't go in blindly, looking for all of the ideas in the studio. We had a concept and tried to follow that concept and in the process maybe arrived at a different direction, but had a definitive direction when we went in.**

**If you understood the personalities, the arguments between the two Bobs, Bob Gaudio being very mechanical and methodical and Bob Crewe being off the cuff, you put those two elements together and there was always going to be some kind of friction. Well, very**

**early on, I'll tell you something I learnt from Crewe. Bob asked me to do something and I said, "You can't do that Bob". He said, "Charles; if you can't, someone else will". So, there was no musical thought that Bob ever had that I didn't try to create to give him what he wanted in a particular area. So if I went into the studio and he said, "Charles, the strings should go down" and I thought he was going to make a mistake, eventually after making a lot of records with him, I realized that he really had a direction and I would try to help him accomplish what he was hearing. And watching Gaudio and Crewe work, Gaudio being extremely non-flexible and Crewe being somewhat flexible, Gaudio also knowing that this was primarily his brain child, if he thought the idea was working he'd let it go. "**

Back to the early years now for an example of how the experiments found a new direction. Although Hal Miller and the Rays (frequently The Four Seasons) were not achieving much success with their releases, their up-tempo **"On My Own Two Feet' (Amy 909)** should have been a

hit. Complete with typical Crewe drum intro and Hal's falsetto end it is a very danceable track again reflecting the positive feel to many of the tracks on this selection. This is not surprising given the writing team of Crewe, Rehak and Rambeau and the Four Seasons punchy backing.

Bob Crewe occasionally took an opportunity to produce soul flavoured tracks on labels like Cameo Parkway. His solitary single with Dee Dee Sharp was to produce a wonderful piece of feel good girl sound that matches anything he was to do later with the Toys and the Rag Dolls.

**'Good' (Cam Park 335)** was a Crewe composition. Dee Dee sings "It coulda, shoulda, woulda been good" with gusto whilst a superb female harmony backing group chants "Goody, Goody...Goody, Goody". This 1964 single is just superb!

Wade Flemons was on Vee Jay when The Seasons were on that label, and in 1964, just before the labels demise a Bob Gaudio – Frankie Valli

Production saw **'Watch Over Her' (Vee Jay 587)** appear. Another Northern Soul track defined by the dancers at Wigan Casino in the mid 70's, this Gaudio – Valli penned song features the Four Seasons on backing vocals on a good bouncy and catchy song about losing your girl to your brother.

Another dancer complements this mood as we feature Tracey Dey's ska outing on **'Ska-Doo – Dee Yah' (Amy 908)**. Bob Crewe was always experimenting and taking the West Indian ska sound and wrapping this in a pop dance arrangement by Charles Calello was an original and entertaining idea. The song was a 1964 Crewe – Calello composition which just rocks along.

Our opening track description showed that it took a more raucous 'live' type of performance by Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels to get chart action but since when did the charts reflect only the best music. The 'B' side of 'Takin'All I Can Get' was the intense and soulful **'You Get Your Kicks (Out Of Hurtin' Me)' (New Voice 814 and 830)**. Another Gary Knight – Bob Crewe composition this brassy mid –paced song with high pitch screeches from one of the 'Wheels' works very well and again fits our Northern Soul flavoured mix. Released 1 July 1966 it entered the Billboard Chart on 10th July at 100 and went out the

next week.

We've already heard the soulful voice of Chollie May on Volume 3 and here we feature the 'A' side of her Gaudio – Valli Production in 1964. **'You Will Never Get Away' (Gold 212)** was a rare Calello penned song which just rocks along. Probably backed by the Rag Dolls or the Angels, Chollie does this great song and arrangement full justice. But why are Charles Calello penned tracks so rare? Charles said of his writing capability:-

**"Writing songs to me was something I always liked but never seemed to have the time to do. It wasn't something that I actually pursued as a course although as I got older, I started to write a lot more as the projects became more project based. But I never had a song that became successful enough for people to really hear and go and cover although there's a lot of songs that I did write that I truly love. But it was not in my opinion my foremost area where people would know what it was I did."** It is a shame this track didn't get him the recognition or we might have seen more Calello penned songs.

Staying with Charles Calello's work, we found him 'moonlighting' over to Golden World Records to help on a Steve Venet – H. Miller production of the Reflections **'You're My Baby (And Don't You Forget It)' (Golden World 19)**. Could this be the Hal Miller we all know and love? It was a Venet-Sawyer-Miller composition. A Detroit based 'garage band' the Reflections had cracked the Top Ten with '(Just Like) Romeo and Juliet' in 1963 which later became a big Northern Soul hit. Charles' arrangement of this song uses drum intro and handclaps ( a familiar part of Crewe and Four Seasons productions) to drive a great dancer with a catchy song. Another superb track.

We've featured a few Shirley Mathews tracks on previous Volumes and from the opening Four Seasons 'Rag Doll' like drum beats and the girls chanting "Ooooh Ooh Ooooh Ooh, Ooh Ooooh , He Makes Me Feel So Pretty" we were hooked. **'He Makes Me Feel So Pretty' (Amy 910)** is another catchy Crewe-Rehak-Rambeau composition that Shirley just wraps her infectious voice around and makes you feel good. Chiming bells and an intense harmony build up to complete the mix of another

Charles Calello arrangement.

Back to our old friend Hal Miller and the Rays(aka The Four Seasons) on an early 60's single **'Are You Happy Now?'(Perri 1004)**. A Bob Crewe , Sid Bass composition, Crewe uses the Seasons in a chanted backing of "Yea, Yea, Yea, Yea" . This is a creditable outing for the group as backing vocalists.

To keep our soulful feel to our mix we once again returned to the intense vocal style of Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels 1966 single **'Takin' All I Can Get' (New Voice 814)**. Another original Knight- Crewe penned song this almost shouted, selfish vocal is underrated. It captures a style also found on the other Mitch Ryder tracks in this compilation. Mid-tempo but with a Northern Soul style.

A more melodic mid -tempo song from the Reflections was to become a minor hit in the UK for The Ivy League. **'Poor Mans Son' (Golden World 20)** was a Reeco/Venet Production, arranged and conducted by Charles Calello. It entered the Billboard Chart 13th March 1965 and reached #55 going out after 5 weeks. It was written by Hamilton-Bratton-Savoy-Venet

We've previously featured Shirley Ellis and to pick up the tempo again and to return to Northern Soul anthems we chose **'Soultime' (Columbia 44021)**, an absolute stormer on the Northern dance floors in the 1970's. Produced and Arranged by Charles Calello it was released in February 1967. It entered the Billboard pop chart 25th February 1967, went out after 6 weeks having reached #67; ( BB R&B #31 :CB Pop #67 CB R&B #25 ). This remains an awesome piece of 60's soul.

The identity of The Bitter End Singers was at first a mystery but Bob Gaudio's association with the Bitter End Club and the sounds there provided a clue. Links with the sound of a number of groups that appeared there are more than coincidental. A group called the Serendipity Singers hit the charts briefly in the mid-60's and made their contribution to music through folk, pop and even some show tunes. The Serendipity Singers became more noticeable following a performance at the Bitter End in New York's Greenwich Village. They appeared on the scene shortly after groups such as Peter, Paul and Mary and the New Christy Minstrels had

helped to make folk music popular. The Bitter End Singers appearance at the club was to lead to our next track. The group had had an LP on Mercury records in 1965. It is titled "Through Our Eyes" and was their second LP for the label. Following their appearance Bob obviously saw their sound for this track as a way of breaking into the charts.

**'Everybody Knows My Name' (Atco 6433)** was an excellent song with message lyrics which reflects upon the life of fame and fortune. Written by Bob Gaudio it is referred to in 'Jersey Boys', the Broadway Musical about the Four Seasons and was recorded by the group on the 'Working My Way Back To You' album. This version uses a folk styled arrangement and rolls along in the genre that became popular for a year around 1966 for the likes of the New Christy Minstrels and Barry McGuire. Produced by Bob Gaudio it was arranged by Bob Bower, who also co-produced the earlier album with Fred Weintraub. (It is believed his brother was one time manager of the Seasons a few years earlier) Fred also wrote the liner notes and says that he was in the audience for the first performance by The Bitter End Singers. They sang all types of songs in their own unique style. The group members at this time were female vocalists : Vilma Vaccaro, Tina Bohlman, and Nancy Pridd and male vocalists: Lefty Baker, Kenny Hodges, and Bruce Farwell. Bob Bowers did not sing with the group. Returning to our Northern Soul theme we found , Shirley Ellis's album **'Come On Sugar Let's Shing-a-Ling (Columbia LP 9479)** provides further evidence of Charles Calello's superb ability as an arranger and producer in 1965. The superb soul ballad **'Yes I'm Ready'** penned by Barbara Mason has long been recognized by Modern Soul aficionados and this track has had great moments at the Blackpool Mecca club nights. It just seemed right to retain that slower soul intensity with **'Wild Child' (New Voice 826)** by Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels on this Crewe written and produced gem. The lyrics capture the teen image of the time of a rebellious heart trying to find their free spirit which Mitch doesn't want to change. Great guitar, intense vocal and harmony backing make this a good listen.

Back to Charles Calello again and the last of his arrangements for the Reflections was **'Comin' At You' (Golden World 20)**. The 'B' side of 'Poor Man's Son' the track repeats their infectious style on a Hamilton – Savoy group composition. Great group vocals again on a track that bounces along with lots of energy from the same producers (Reeco-Venet).

The identity of the Candy Girls has long been a mystery, but with Jean Thomas's help we now believe the

Seasons fans. **'She Ain't Lovin' You' (Date 2-1514)** by the Distant Cousins features well known writers L.Russell Brown and Ray Bloodworth. His biography states...." **During the 1960s, Brown was a member of the U. S. Army. While in the service, he was one half of a team called 'The Distant Cousins' that toured Europe for the Army. After his service discharge, he and Raymond Bloodworth formed a team that knocked around New York City, mostly playing the Folk Scene in**

**Bob Crewe Presents.....'Seasons' Connections Vol 4**

1	Break-out	Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels
2	The Right Direction	Clara Ward
3	On My Own Two Feet	Hal Miller and The Rays
4	Good	DeeDee Sharp
5	Watch Over Her	Wade Flemons
6	Ska Deo Dee Yah	Tracey Dey
7	You Get Your Kicks	Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels
8	You Will Never Get Away	Chollie May
9	Your're My Baby(And Don't You Forget It)	The Reflections
10	He Makes Me Feel So Pretty	Shirley Mathews
11	Are You Happy Now	Hal Miller And The Rays
12	Takin' All I Can Get	Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels
13	Poor Man's Son	The Reflections
14	Soul Time	Shirley Ellis
15	Everybody Knows My Name	The Bitter End Singers
16	Yes I'm Ready	Shirley Ellis
17	Wild Child	Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels
18	Comin' At You	The Reflections
19	Runaround (Baby, Baby)	The Candy Girls
20	She Ain't Lovin' You	Distant Cousins
21	I Can't Take It Like A Man	Ben E King
22	Deep Dark Secret	Dee Dee Sharp
23	Out In The Sun	The Beach Nuts
24	Pushin' A Good Thing	Barbara Lewis
25	Up And Over	Jay Traylor
26	Is He Really Mine	Shirley Mathews
27	The Clapping Song	Shirley Ellis
28	Baby's Gone	The Rag Dolls

group to be Mickie Harris on lead, with Jean and Ellie Greenwich on harmony backing. **'Runaround (Baby, Baby)' (Rotate 5005)** does provide a stunning vocal sound. The 'Seasons Connection' is quite contrived as the song was written by Tudanger-Ventura (Steve Tudanger was a member of the 4-Evers who were produced by Bob Gaudio) and was an Eddie Newmark - Bill Ficks Production. It was arranged and conducted by Charles Fox (who worked with the Seasons at Vee-Jay) so there are probably enough connection there. However the song and vocals from the girls are quite superb on a great melody. Returning to the 'garage bands' and a group comprising of songwriters who would become well known to Four

that city's Greenwich Village area. Songwriter and record producer, Bob Crewe heard his work, and took Brown under his wing. ...Working with Crewe, Brown composed his first Million-Seller, "Sock It To Me Baby", which was a huge hit for the group 'Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels.' Following that, Raymond Bloodworth and Brown wrote "C'mon Marianne" which was one of 'The Four Seasons' greatest hits. "We will feature more by these guys in our next volume but this hard edged rocker written by Crewe-Brown-Bloodworth was arranged by Herb Bernstein and has a stronger 'garage band' sound than their other material. A great dancer. I came across the next track, **'I Can't Take It Like A Man' (Maxwell 800),**

several years ago when Northern Soul DJ Richard Searling used to rave about it on his Jazz FM Radio show. Not realizing, at the time, it was a Crewe production it is now a favourite on the scene. Great lyrics are supplied by L. Weis and J. Williams with Ben E, bemoaning the fact that he is 'just a working stud'. Poor guy!! Wonderful building vocal and arrangement that is quite unique. This is from Bob's late 60's period on the Crewe/CGC/Maxwell labels when his innovative arrangements created some superb music for Lesley Gore, Ben E King and Oliver. An adult contemporary volume in the future will feature more of this 'organic' pop style.

make up the male vocal side on this adaptation of the West Indian tune 'The Banana Song'. The song works amazingly well with Jean accompanied by Angels Peggy Santiglia, Phyllis "Jiggs" Allbut, and Barbara Allbut.

Another track we became aware of on the Northern Soul scene before we knew its roots was '**Pushin' A Good Thing**' (Atlantic 2255) by Barbara Lewis. Even Barbara's compilation questions whether or not Ollie Mc Laughlin produced it or maybe Bob Crewe did, as it is a Crewe - Linzer - Randell composition. A very, laid back soulful song with reputedly the Dells on backing vocals the track was recorded in Chicago on 22nd

September 1964 and reached #113 on the Billboard chart, it has been recorded by several other artists who have achieved success with it on the Northern Soul scene but this is the original. Staying laid back on another Northern Soul anthem we feature

and best hits, the recently revived, as a jingle, '**The Clapping Song**' (Congress 234) by Shirley Ellis. Written by Lincoln Chase, this 1965 single entered the Billboard chart on 20th March 1965 and reached #8 going out after 9 weeks. We think this ideally complements our dance mix theme on this collection.

Closing this set is a great sadness but with it we feature the last track we have by the Rag Dolls, '**Baby's Gone**' (Mala 499). This Linzer - Randell track had an outing with the Toys (see WESD 226 - Bob Crewe Presents ... The Dynavoice Story) but to us nothing matches Jean Thomas's soaring falsetto lead on a great song which shows Bob Crewe's production and Charles Calello's arranging skills to perfection.

**Compilers Note:** From a personal perspective and as the Collectors group compiler on this series, I have to confess that this selection of tracks was based on a personal love for all the songs and performances, so forgive me for indulging myself in this celebration of Bob Crewe's work and that of his associates. If I have stretched the 'connections' a bit I am sure you will forgive me as this mix of tracks is hard to dislike. Thanks to my colleagues for their support.

**Chameleon Collectors Group Note:** Not all of the body of researched tracks is up to the standard here but we will let you know when we are doing this work simply to satisfy the 'completist' part of our research. Enjoy this latest set and who knows what gems are waiting to be discovered on future volumes. We will always try to vary the mix of male, female and group tracks to keep the sounds interesting and as Bob himself tried every trick in the book to generate something for the listener to get hooked on; there will be lots to enjoy. .... **Note;** This article is based on research via the internet. The music is only available on vinyl via e-bay and on some commercial CD's and we found out about it by contacting collectors. For further information on these tracks contact the following e-mail addresses.

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*Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels*

The 'B' side of Bob Crewe's Cam Park outing with Dee Dee Sharpe, '**Deep Dark Secret**' (Cam Park 335) is a real Northern Soul rocker on a little known Rambeau- Rehak composition. It is so obscure that when it came to light recently even Ed himself couldn't remember writing it and he didn't recall it at all when he heard it. It fits well with the tracks here and makes you want to get on the dance floor.

We had to stretch the 'connections' a bit to include the next track but it was so upbeat, positive and fun that we wanted to include it. '**Out In The Sun**' (Bang 504) by the Beach Nuts features our female Four Seasons heroine Jean Thomas (of the Rag Dolls) on one of the sessions she did for producers Robert Feldman, Jerry Goldstein and Richard Gottehrer who

'**Up and Over**' (ABC Paramount 10845). This was a solo effort in 1966 by former lead singer of Jay and the Americans (1958-62), Jay Traynor. Another Bob Crewe and Gary Knight composition and a quite superb vocal by Jay this now famous track produced by D.Lambert is receiving the attention it deserves.

Another visit to Shirley Mathews singles brings back the girl group/soul sound on the Crewe-Santos-Quinn composition '**Is He Really Mine**' (Amy 910). With a quietly spoken intro the song breaks out into a strong mid-tempo arrangement with, to us, backing vocalists who sound very much like The Four Seasons. This is another Charles Calello arrangement on a Bob Crewe production.

Charles again features as producer and arranger on one of his biggest