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European Tour 1974
A&M RECORDS Ltd.

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CARPENTERS BIOGRAPHY

Persistence and attention to detail are hallmarks of the Carpenters' success. With a huge contingency of fans supporting them through the first four years via 14 gold records and 3 Grammy Awards, Richard and Karen Carpenter enter year number five with critical acclaim, also.

At ages 27 and 24, respectively, the Carpenters have developed a prototype sound they've believed in from the beginning and have carefully honed since 1969.

"We've been called sticky sweet, goody-two shoes and squeaky clean among other things by a lot of music critics," Richard once told an interviewer. "To me, a music critic should be more concerned with music than with dress and cleanliness. But as long as they keep bringing it up, being squeaky clean is relative, isn't it, I mean, when we came along in '69 it was right in the middle of acid rock, when all the performers had this negative sort of 'take me as I am' attitude. And then we walk out, just normally clean. I mean, most people shower, right,"

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Technically, the soft but massive Carpenters chorale sound is achieved by Richard and Karen building four-part chords and overdubbing them twice, for a total of 12 voice parts. However, for occasional effects they will expand their harmonies up to 13-part chords covering three octaves. With triple overdubs, this gets a total of 39 voices and can be heard more extensively on their "I'll Never Fall In Love Again."

Critics have termed it "commercial"; the Carpenters take pride in it.

"It is commercial to a point," says Richard, "but when you believe in what you're doing like we do, and it happens to turn out a success, what could be better."

The Carpenters' musical evolution began in New Haven, Connecticut, where Richard began playing the piano at age 12. At 16, he was studying classical piano at Yale, and faking his age as 22, doing gigs at local jazz clubs.

After the Carpenter family moved to Southern California, The Carpenter Trio was launched in 1965. Karen became "interested" in music to get out of gym class. The initial group, a jazz-pop instrumental act, with Karen just playing drums, won the first prize at the annual Hollywood Bowl Battle of the Bands.

But the success was short-lived. The trio was unable to survive amidst the rock rumblings of '66.

Spectrum was Richard and Karen's next musical venture. Richard added four Cal State University at Long Beach buddies, along with Karen on drums and singing a few tunes. They played a few Southern California clubs,

but became a casualty of the hard rock battle after a date at the famed Whisky A-Go-Go in Hollywood.

The group disbanded, but Richard and Karen started pushing their unique sound in new directions.

Karen, by this time, had been singing under the tutelage of Cal State University at Long Beach teacher Frank Pooler. The duo soon emerged with a new sound - a soft, upbeat harmony - that reflected the influence of the "three B's" whose music they admired: the Beatles, the Beach Boys and Burt Bacharach.

They took their sound to the garage recording studio of musician friend, Joe Osborn at the controls, Richard and Karen blended their voices into four, six and eight parts. With the tape that resulted, they made the rounds of various record producers. "It will never sell" was the echoing verdict. Then came their well-earned break.

The tape was given to Herb Alpert - the leader of the super-successful Tijuana Brass - and Alpert thought the tape was great. Richard and Karen were signed to an A&M contract.

The Carpenters first album was "Offering" from which the single "Ticket To Ride" was released. It got to 54 on the Billboard charts and "hung around for a long time", according to Richard. The second LP was "Close To You", which has sold almost 4 million copies.

The Carpenters track record is one of the most remarkable of the 1970's. Their lowest charted Billboard single since "Ticket To Ride" was 12, with 10 more singles

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to date reaching the top 10 and 9 of these becoming million sellers. They have five gold albums, their entire output except for the "Offering" debut which has since been retitled "Ticket To Ride".

It was Alpert who introduced them to their first smash, Bacharach-David's "Close To You," for their second LP.

Richard has been writing songs throughout his career, but until recently the Carpenters big hits were written by other writers. Recently, though, Richard has had three top ten hits - "Goodbye To Love", "Yesterday Once More" and "Top Of The World".

Collaborating with Richard through the years has been his college friend John Bettis, whom he met at choir class in 1967.

The Carpenters newest album is also a product of Richard. It's entitled "The Singles 1969-1973" because he doesn't like the term "greatest hits".

Following the "Close To You" success came "We've Only Just Begun" and then "For All We Know" from the motion picture "Lovers and Other Strangers". Along with being their third consecutive gold single, the tune won an Oscar for best song of the year (1970) from a movie.

In quick succession came "Rainy Days and Mondays", "Superstar", "Hurting Each Other," "It's Gonna Take Some Time", "Goodbye To Love," "Sing", "Yesterday Once More" and "Top Of The World".

Along with their Grammy Awards - won in 1970-1971 - the Carpenters have had a television series on NBC-TV, have been the subject for "This Is Your Life", and are one of the biggest drawing powers in concert, and in Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe.



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