



Biography

AUGUST 1987

## RICHARD CARPENTER

**A**s one half of the Carpenters, Richard Carpenter was an integral part of some extraordinary accomplishments. 16 consecutive Top 20 hits; 12 Top 10 singles; three Number One singles; 10 gold singles, three gold albums, and five platinum albums: these numbers are incontrovertible evidence that Richard and his sister Karen were one of the most successful musical duos of all time.

As the Carpenter's lead singer, it was Karen who received the lion's share of the attention. But it was Richard, as pianist, singer, composer, arranger, and producer, who was the principal architect of the duo's indelible sound. And now, four years after Karen's death and as many years since the Carpenters' last all-new recording, *Voice Of The Heart*, Richard Carpenter has returned with an album that is full evidence of his talents: *Time*, his A&M solo debut.

For Carpenter, *Time* is at once a continuation, a new beginning, and a look into the future. A continuation of his 18-year association with A&M, and of his relationships with people like Herb Alpert (who plays a flugelhorn solo on the album), engineer Roger Young, lyricist John Bettis, and bassist Joe Osborn, all of whom played major roles in the Carpenters' career. A new beginning because it is his first solo project, one nearly two years in the making. And a look into the future because *Time* introduces an artist of the next generation: 16-year-old Scott Grimes, who sings one song on this album and whose own A&M debut will be produced by Carpenter and Alpert.

Richard Carpenter was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on October 15, 1946. Both his parents were avid music fans, and it wasn't long before Richard had conscious designs on a career in music.

His first hands-on musical experience came when he began piano lessons, eventually studying piano for one year at Yale University. From the start, he took an interest not only in playing and performing but also in the less obvious aspects of music and recording, like arranging and producing. "I noticed early on that some records sounded better than others," Richard recalls. "I was also very interested in knowing who recorded for what label, what label was a subsidiary of what company, and so on. I didn't just want to be in music — I wanted a career in records."

By the early '60s, a small instrumental group that Carpenter put together had come to the attention of a manager who also represented singer-songwriter Gene Pitney, a fellow New Havenite. The group went to New York for some auditions and eventually landed a gig backing up a vocal combo on a single recorded at A&R Studios. The song became a local hit of minor proportions; Richard heard it on the radio once and once only, just as his family was on its way from New Haven to Downey, California, where they moved in 1963.

By 1965, Karen Carpenter had begun singing and playing drums, and the following year she landed a solo deal with a small label, Magic Lamp Records. Richard, Karen, and Joe Osborn recorded as a trio in Osborn's garage studio. Two songs were released by the label; Richard wrote and arranged both of them.

In '66, Richard, Karen and Wes Jacobs won a Battle of the Bands competition at the Hollywood Bowl. Despite their increasing interest in vocals, the Richard Carpenter Trio, as they called themselves, still played instrumental-only jazz. That was enough to land them a deal with RCA Records but the four songs the Trio recorded in '67 (with the bassist, oddly enough, playing tuba) were never released. Undaunted, Richard kept working on the "Carpenters sound," with its heavy vocal emphasis and Karen's lovely alto in the lead.

Richard went on to form a new group, Spectrum, featuring a lineup of guitar, electric bass, drums, and electric piano. They made demos of several songs written by Richard and John Bettis, and although Spectrum

A&M Records Inc  
Press Department  
595 Madison Avenue  
New York NY  
10022  
Tel: (212) 826-0477

A&M Records Inc  
Press Department  
1416 N La Brea Avenue  
Hollywood CA  
90028  
Tel: (213) 469-2411

Continued

called it quits in 1968, the Carpenters sound was steadily crystallizing. Richard and Karen, now calling themselves simply the Carpenters, made a second set of demos, and the tapes found their way to Herb Alpert at A&M. The rest is literally a matter of record: the Carpenters signed with A&M in 1969, and a year later they had their first Number One single, "Close To You."

Since Karen's death in '83, Richard has devoted himself to preserving the Carpenters' legacy, personally supervising the preparation of several albums (including *Yesterday Once More*, the definitive anthology, and *An Old-Fashioned Christmas*, a new holiday album released in '84), a home video package, and other projects. But since June, '85, Carpenter's prime concern has been *Time*.

A&M Studios, scene of most of the Carpenters' triumphs, was also the site of Richard's first solo voyage; in fact, after finishing five tracks in '85, Richard held up production for nearly a year while the studios were renovated. "I'm sentimental, and a creature of habit," he says. "Comfort and familiarity had a lot to do with my working at A&M; what's more, it's a first-class facility, especially now that the renovation is complete."

For longtime Carpenters fans, *Time's* principal revelation will no doubt be Richard's prowess as a singer; he handles the lead vocal on six of the ten tracks, and backing vocals on all of them — including a remarkable 27 voices (nine parts, each triple-tracked) on "When Time Was All We Had," his stunning a *cappella* tribute to Karen.

"I thought about how I would go about this album for a long time before actually getting started," Richard observes. "What direction would I take? Did I want to go strictly instrumental? I decided I didn't, because I've always worked with vocals. Karen was such a gifted singer that I did very few leads in the past; I think I sing a good lead, but my God, very few people sing as well as Karen, so it only made sense that she take the leads. I finally made up my mind not to let that stand in the way — I would do quite a few of the leads, and all of the backgrounds."

A couple of songs, he adds, "really needed to have a female voice," and for those, Carpenter got two of the best: Dusty Springfield (on "Something In Your Eyes") and Dionne Warwick (on "In Love Alone"). "I started thinking about voices I'm really fond of, and Dusty and Dionne came up immediately. I really heard Dionne doing 'In Love Alone,' so I got in touch with her and she said she'd be delighted. Dusty, too, is one of the greats. My management tracked her down; I figured she'd be in England, but it turned out she was in Tarzana, near L.A. She's a real character, too — we had a lot of laughs."

Scott Grimes, a show biz veteran at 16 (he appeared on Broadway in "Nine," and has acting experience on several sit-coms), handles the lead on "That's What I Believe." Of Grimes, Carpenter says simply, "The kid's a star, without a doubt."

Carpenter's other collaborators include lyricists Pamela Phillips Oland and Richard Marx. Meanwhile, besides Joe Osborn, the musicians on *Time* include guitarists Tim May and Tony Peluso, who also played on many Carpenter recordings. "Amazingly, though, there wasn't a single arrangement on the album that called for an oboe!" Richard laughs. "After all the oboes we used in the past, that felt pretty strange."

Clearly, *Time* will leave little doubt as to Richard Carpenter's considerable musical skills. "I understand that the bulk of people who buy any record do so because it hits them in the gut," he says. "They like the tune, or the singer; they don't think, 'Boy, what a great arrangement,' or 'What great production.' Most people don't know what I contributed, and I was always comfortable with that; I knew Karen was the star of the duo before we sold our first record. Our talents complemented each other."

"For me, the main thing has always been the work itself. Of course, I hope this album will do well, but first and foremost is the pride I have in the finished recording. Selling records is great, but simply having the opportunity to make them is even more important. And now that *Time* is finished, I couldn't be prouder of it."