

*Biography*

# CARPENTERS

With more than 30-million singles and albums sold, three Grammy awards, 17 gold records and thousands of packed concerts throughout the world, a new phase and era for the Carpenters has begun.

"Our new album--*A Kind of Hush*--and our new show express our change of attitude," says Richard, the musical genius of the Carpenters. "We have new outlook, there's a new feeling of happiness and enjoyment. . .we've begun a new Carpenters era."

The Carpenters, entering their seventh year as a musical entity, look back at '75 as a year of change. "But the issues are settled now and it's become easier to create again," explains Richard. An indication of Richard's statement is the Carpenters' eighth A&M album, which Richard produced with Karen as associate producer. As on all previous albums, Richard also did all the orchestrations and arrangements. He also wrote three tunes with his long-time writing partner, John Bettis.

Richard, who penned the duo's hits, "Top of the World," "Goodbye to Love," "Yesterday Once More," and "Only Yesterday," says that "the new tunes came easy like the aforementioned hits. I write on inspiration and I'm really pleased with the new tunes, especially 'I Need to Be in Love.'"

From their first huge hit, "Close to You," to the latest, "There's a Kind of Hush (All Over the World)," Karen and Richard have assembled a body of recorded work as consistently entertaining and tasteful as that created by any of their con-

temporaries. They can look with pride upon their career, which has combined exceptional music with phenomenal sales and ever-growing critical acclaim.

Possibly, the name of the Carpenter's first group, Spectrum, best describes their music today.

"Our music covers quite a bit of the musical spectrum," says Richard. "We feel there is something for just about everyone, especially in the new album. On stage, we're still recreating our record sound but we're now communicating with the audience through talk, staging and production."

Karen (26) and Richard (29) were born in New Haven, Connecticut, where Richard began playing piano at age 12; four years later, he was studying the instrument at Yale. In 1963, the Carpenter family moved to Downey, California, and Richard continued his musical education at U.S.C. and Cal State University at Long Beach. High-schooler Karen developed an interest in the drums, mastering the rudiments in a few weeks. She and Richard and a bass-playing friend, Wes Jacobs, formed the first of three Carpenters aggregations, a jazz instrumental trio that placed first in the Hollywood bowl "Battle of the Bands."

Richard soon disbanded the trio in favor of a group that would emphasize their mutual growing love of lush harmonies. Spectrum included four additional members, all Cal State students (including John Bettis) performing original compositions in elaborate choral arrangements.

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After a year of desultory response from clubowners, record companies, and hardrock fans, Spectrum was abandoned in favor of a duo made up of just Richard and Karen, which achieved through overdubbing a harmonic blend like that of Spectrum's. Demonstration tapes of the new sound were recorded in the garage studio of a friend, the well known session bassist, Joe Osborne.

After another year, the Carpenters were able to get their tape to Herb Alpert, co-founder of A&M Records, who immediately signed them to his label and gave them the freedom and encouragement that enabled them to realize their amazing potential.

Karen Carpenter's singing has roots in a rich American tradition of entertainers who are able to create a strong identity within a very commercial form. She descends in direct spiritual if not stylistic lineage from the best of the swing era's bigband vocalists, such fine Fifties bestsellers as Kay Starr, and the cool, elegant Top-40 stars of the Sixties like Dionne Warwick. It is the lot of such singers to be underrated by critics even as large segments of the public adopt them as their own. Their voices, constant presences in our daily lives, tends to be taken for granted. Happily, Karen Carpenter is gaining in

creasing recognition as one of the finest popular stylists of the 1970s.

Here is how *Rolling Stone* described Karen's on-stage sound in its cover story on the group: "Out comes that unique and wonderful voice, exactly as on record, expressing fascinating contrasts: chilling, perfection with much warmth, youth and wisdom."

Richard, of course, adds his voice to the group's vocal mix, but his indispensable role is as the Carpenters' dominant musical intelligence. Choice (and often composition) of material, arrangements, and eventual production, are all supervised by him, and his taste and attention to detail result in live and recorded performances of universal appeal.

In an oft-quoted remark, Richard credited his musical influences as "the three B's: the Beach Boys, the Beatles, and Burt Bacharach." This peer respect has proven mutual, with figures from Bacharach to Paul McCartney expressing their admiration of the Carpenters sound.

The Carpenters have made their music an unforgettable part of our lives. Their millions of fans would seem delighted to continue their enthusiastic support for as many more years as the Carpenters care to enthrall us.

