



The Carpenters

An Offering

By Marilyn Botheras

Ask anyone if they like the Carpenters and they will probably say no! Ask them if they have one of their albums in their collection and they will probably say yes! They might even say they like all the songs on the album. It is interesting to note therefore that The Carpenters music has been reviewed as "bland middle of the road pap muzak" suitable for playing only in a lift or supermarket. Whilst The Carpenters music was generally ridiculed by music critics the general public continued to buy their records in their millions. One album, *Now And Then*, was being reviewed and it included a track called *I Can't Make Music* which promoted the remark "They certainly can't" from one critic. Music though they definitely could make which appealed en masse. The public couldn't articulate why but they knew. If their music didn't suffer from the sharpened point of a journalist's pencil then their whiter than

white image, built up incidentally by the press, did.

Richard and Karen Carpenter started out as two youngsters wanting to make music to the best of their ability which meant perfection as far as they were concerned. One prospective album track *Why Don't They Understand* warranted 48 takes and was still never released. What has been proved beyond all doubt is the longevity of The Carpenters music. Their compilation album *Only Yesterday* was the fourth best selling album in the UK in 1990 and reached triple platinum. This was a remarkable feat if only for the fact that *Only Yesterday* was the sixth compilation package released by A&M in the UK. The album had been released in response to the film, *The Karen Carpenter Story*, being shown on TV, prompting a resurgence in The Carpenters popularity. Half the album's purchases were made by under twenty five year olds discovering their

music for the first time.

Richard and Karen Carpenter were born in New Haven, Connecticut and brought up in a music loving home where records owned ranged from classical to big band and from early influences Les Paul and Mary Ford to Spike Jones and his City Slickers. It was Les Paul and Mary Ford who initiated the overdubbed sound that was to become a Carpenters trademark.

When Richard was eight he was given accordion lessons but gave these up in favour of the piano four years later. He took part time tuition on classical piano at Yale University. Armed with a few chords his teacher had taught him knowing of his interest in pop music he and two older friends started playing in clubs. Richard had to pass himself off as being twenty and admits the group's efforts were pretty awful which he can prove as he still has a tape they made one night. Richard showed obvious talent for music and it was felt that a move to the Los Angeles area would help his progress. Dad Carpenter found another job and in 1963 the family moved to the Los Angeles suburb of Downey.

KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

The Carpenter family had not been in Downey for many days when they stopped at Furmand Park to ask for directions. The ground keeper noticed their Connecticut number plates and asked if they

were new in the area. Mom Carpenter told the gentleman of Richard's musical talent and that they had moved south because they felt he had a future in music. Nip the groundsman told the family that a talent show was held in the park every Sunday afternoon and suggested that Richard should perhaps perform there. This he duly did performing *Exodus* and *Dizzy Fingers*. Karen came on stage later to sing *The End Of The World*. At the end of the show Richard was approached by the choir director at Downey Methodist Church. He informed Richard that the church needed an organist and could he play at two weddings the following Saturday for which he would be paid \$30.00. Despite the fact that Richard had no experience playing the organ he was told that with his talent he would easily learn. Richard went on to play at church services even having the ability and perhaps audacity to play *Beatles* music during offering and the opening and closing of a service without it sounding out of place which, incidentally, he got away with. The local newspaper ran an article about a sixteen year old being the new organist at the Methodist church and after the article appeared three men came looking for Richard, as they were a group of musicians in need of a pianist. The new group rehearsed a few numbers and eventually got some bookings. For the next few years Richard would also be asked to perform with other groups as pianist.

Richard attended Downey High School as a senior and he wanted to opt out of gym lessons so decided to gain entry to the school band which would exempt its members from gym. Despite the fact that the piano did not feature in a marching band he made his bid and was asked whether he could play trumpet. Richard had bought an old trumpet at a jumble sale a few years earlier and said he could play. Whilst he was waiting to get his band card signed he sat down at a piano, started to play and was fortunately never asked to prove his trumpeting abilities as the band director decided he wanted Richard to play piano in a class project. The project was to be a concert performance of *Rhapsody In Blue* which he worked on for eight months. He had also joined a group run by the band director playing piano. The band would play surf music, chart hits and standards for hours on end in the clubs or at dances and weddings. However, as the group got better the bookings got better. Karen had also started at high school and also wanted exemption from gym. Richard suggested Karen play the Glockenspiel having expressed no preference herself and arranged with the band director her inclusion. It was whilst playing in the band that the drums began to interest her. As a child she would always be drumming tabletops and chairs with her fingers in time to Richard's piano playing or records. Karen decided eventually that it was going to be drums for her and her parents, as supportive as ever, drove miles one Sunday looking for a music shop that was open so they could purchase a set for her. She played for about a year before taking formal lessons. Karen had a perfect sense of time and strong wrists - two important qualities. There was no hint in the early years of the wondrous singing voice that was to become so distinctive and unique.

KAREN FINDS HER VOICE

Whilst Richard's main or only interest may have been music, Karen it would seem did not show any aptitude or particular enthusiasm initially although she knew her high school choir director wasn't very good and the choir itself sang out of tune. The discovery of Karen's voice came about by accident almost. Richard was interested to hear how Karen would sound but she had a tiny little voice. It was pleasant and in tune but was not outstanding. The songwriting talents of Richard were beginning to surface and he had written a song in G and asked Karen to sing it in G. All of a sudden "The Voice" came out although it was a little untrained. There was no vibrato and the voice was also fairly innate, but after six months or so it had matured and developed.

Richard had by now started further education at California State College. He met several people at the college who were to figure prominently in his music career. He teamed up with **Wes Jacobs** who played tuba and upright bass and with Karen they formed **The Richard Carpenter Trio**. During the months of rehearsals Karen's voice really matured. Richard had also joined his college acappella choir which was directed by **Frank Pooler** and this turned out to be another important meeting. It was Frank who discovered Richard's baritone during a choir

practice and helped Richard develop his voice. Richard introduced Karen and her voice to Pooler who was very impressed and he coached and encouraged her. Through another member of the choir Karen obtained an audition with a small record label - *Magic Lamp*. This was co-owned by **Joe Osborn**, a great studio bassman. The recording studio was Osborn's converted garage. Karen's audition was successful and she was signed to the label. A single was released with *I'll Be Yours* on the A side and *Looking For Love* on the B side. Nothing much came of the single due to the problems of a small record label distributing and promoting the record. Only 500 copies of the song were ever made. In 1966 The Richard Carpenter Trio entered the Battle Of The Bands at the Hollywood Bowl which was open to all non-professionals under twenty one. They performed two jazz numbers, one of which was written by Richard, won the competition and as a result were offered an audition and subsequently a recording contract with **RCA** in late 1966. Four tracks were recorded but on reflection **RCA** felt that jazz singles were not a viable proposition so nothing was ever released and the brief association came to an end.

ACADEMIC PURSUITS

In mid 1967 **Wes Jacobs** decided he wanted to play classical tuba and departed to New York to study at **Julliard** so the Richard Carpenter Trio was disbanded. By this time Richard had decided he wanted to form a vocal group. **Frank Pooler** introduced **John Bettis** to Richard when John was trying to sing a solo in front of his college mates. John was singing acappella and although it was a send up of a college choir song his fellow choristers started laughing. This put him off and he froze, due to his embarrassment, thinking he had gone too far. Richard came to the rescue by offering to play the piano. The offer was accepted and thus was formed a lasting partnership. John was basically a folk singer who knew very little music theory. Richard took John under his wing and offered to teach him more and also introduce him to the vast range of his record collection. Richard has said that for the two of them to start writing songs together was the most natural thing in the world. John feels Richard trained him in music and brought out the best in him and is very grateful for that. A new group was formed called originally **Summerchimes** but then changed to **Spectrum**. The new group included Richard and Karen, **John Bettis** and three other choir members. Two of them, **Dan Woodhams** and **Gary Sims**, later joined The Carpenters road group. The new group made two demo tapes which included several songs that were later recorded by The Carpenters. The tapes were taken to different record labels and although a couple expressed some interest, nothing came of it. The group had a few engagements but it's members then lost interest and it was disbanded.

Richard and Karen didn't give up and although by this time the *Magic Lamp* label was no longer in existence **Joe Osborn's** garage studio was. The Carpenters were formed and new demo tapes were made. It was in the garage studio that The Carpenters' sound was developed with Richard and Karen building four part chords and overdubbing them twice to obtain a total of twelve voice parts. Eventually they developed this to contain thirteen part chords covering three octaves which was then overdubbed three times to obtain thirty nine voices. This sound was most notable initially on their recording of *I'll Never Fall In Love Again*. These tapes were taken around the various record labels again. Some of the record companies showed some interest but only if The Carpenters could make themselves sound like other popular groups and artists at that time such as **Harpers Bizarre** and **Bobby Gentry**. The Carpenters were not prepared to change their style to suit so nothing came of the initial interest.

TALENT SCOUTS

It was now 1968 and although Richard and Karen were still attending college they were also doing casual work at weekends. A new talent show was initiated called *Your All American College Show* and talent scouts were sent to various campuses to listen to performers from each school. Those who were selected represented their school on a weekly nationally televised programme. Heat winner won \$1000.00 and a place in the semi finals. Semi final winners won \$2500.00 and a place in the final where the winning prize was \$5000.00. Richard, Karen and a bassist named **Bill Sissoev** were selected to

represent California State University and won through to the finals. As a result of the television appearance Richard and Karen were contacted by **Tom** and **John Bahler**, two session singers and jingle producers. They were the leaders of a group called **The Going Thing** which performed jingles for the Ford Motor Company and they wanted Richard and Karen to join the group as they were going on the road to augment the advertising campaign. The offer was tempting as the pay was good and both Karen and Richard were entitled to order a new car. There was no other better offer available at that time although a friend of a friend, **Jack Daugherty**, knew **Herb Alpert** of **A&M** and perhaps something would come of that if Jack could get Herb to listen to the tape. This hope seemed to be a long shot so they signed with the **J Walter Thompson** advertising agency. Within days however word came that **Herb Alpert** loved the demo tape and wanted to sign Richard and Karen. Fortunately **J Walter Thompson** let them out of their recently signed recording contract and in April 1969 The Carpenters were signed by **A&M**. Karen's career could have taken a different path had **John Wayne** been granted his wish to have Karen appear alongside him in the film **True Grit**. **John Wayne** had seen Karen appearing in **Your All American College Show** and she caught his eye. The producers however wanted a big name actress.

THE GIFT

A&M gave The Carpenters a free hand to record their songs the way they wanted them to sound so in to the studio they went and the outcome was their first album entitled *Offering*. This album contained mainly self penned songs which were often autobiographical and Richard has said that he always felt that whatever happened he would have to have recorded the album the way it was. He had the album finished in his mind long before he signed with **A&M**. If they hadn't signed with a record company for a number of years their initial album would still have sounded the same. One track *Ticket To Ride* was taken from the album and released as a single. This was a minor hit and reached 54 on the **Billboard Hot 100** staying in the chart for a period of three months. This success was not good enough to recoup the **A&M** investment and Karen and Richard were worried that they would have to go back to recording demos. **Herb Alpert** however had more faith and was prepared to stick with The Carpenters.

As luck would have it **Burt Bacharach** was driving in his car one day and heard The Carpenters singing *Ticket To Ride* and was so impressed that he asked **Gerry Moss**, a friend and the other half of **A&M**, who it was. **Gerry Moss** told him it was The Carpenters and that they were actually signed to his record label. **Bacharach** as a result asked The Carpenters if they would appear at a charity function and perform a medley of **Bacharach** and **David** songs. He also wanted them to perform one of their more obscure songs called *They Long To Be Close To You*. It had been previously recorded by **Dionne Warwick** but **Bacharach** wanted it performed more or less in The Carpenters style without hearing the original version. **Bacharach** had originally wanted **Herb Alpert** to record the song but the lyrics didn't appeal to him especially the line "so they sprinkled moon dust in her hair". Initially the song sat on Richard's piano for several weeks whilst he tried to get the arrangement right. All this time the song was growing on Richard until one day he arranged the whole thing. By now Richard was hooked on the song so in to the studio they went. The song was recorded but Richard felt the title was too long so *They Long To Be* was bracketed and was from therein known as *(They Long To Be) Close To You*. The song was released in the USA in May 1970 and reached number one within six weeks where it stayed for four weeks. The song was then released in the UK in September 1970 peaked at number six and stayed in the charts for eighteen weeks. **Herb Alpert** had asked Richard how he thought the song would do. The reply was that the song would either reach number one or be the biggest flop the **A&M** label had ever known. *Close To You* and 1970 proved to be the turning point for The Carpenters.

GETTING CLOSER

During the lean months between the release of *Ticket To Ride* and *Close To You*, The Carpenters had formed a backing group which was made up with some of the friends they had made during their student days (and who incidentally remained with

The Carpenters throughout their career) and together they spent much time rehearsing. These same musicians remained loyal and played with them at many studio recording sessions. This meant when the bookings started to pour in they were more than ready to perform. After the success of *Close To You* their next album was released also entitled *Close To You*. The new album as a result of increased experience featured a much more polished production with a mixture of self penned songs, cover versions and their follow up to *Close To You* which was *We've Only Just Begun*. They finished the year with two grammy awards - Best New Artist and Best Contemporary Vocal Group. Their album *Offering* was also re-titled *Ticket To Ride* and given a new cover for which Richard and Karen were quite thankful as the original, in retrospect, made them shudder. Richard found the follow up song to *Close To You* when listening to an advert on TV, *We've Only Just Begun* was used in a bank commercial and after The Carpenters had made the song their second hit it went on to become the most popular song to be played at Weddings in America.

1971 saw The Carpenters consolidate their popularity with the release of the singles *Rainy Days And Mondays*, *Superstar*, and *For All We Know* which appeared on their next album called, inevitably, *Carpenters*. Such was the quality and high standard of Karen's voice that often she would go in to the studio to record a trial track for the musicians to work with, only for Richard to discover that no further lead vocal recording was necessary. *Superstar* was one track recorded in this way and listening to the song with this in mind you get some idea of Karen's immense talent. The album also contained the Bacharach and David medley they had perfected and were using in their concert repertoire. By now all their records were turning to gold, although their singles were very much more successful in the USA than the UK. Strange as it may seem one of the most popular Carpenters songs, *Rainy Days And Mondays*, which has become a classic, never actually charted in the UK. The Carpenters also recorded eight shows for NBC in America called *Make Your Own Kind Of Music*. These shows were hour long variety productions and were to be the only series they made due to their ever increasing schedule. The end of the year saw a tour of Europe and their visit to Britain was a sell out including their appearance at The Royal Albert Hall. Their time in London included the recording of a TV special with **Tom Jones**. The Carpenters also released what was to be their only maxi single. This opened out like a Christmas card and contained the tracks *Merry Christmas Darling* (which saw Richard team up with his old mentor Frank Pooler), *Ticket To Ride* and *Saturday*.

TOILET HUMOUR

By 1972 The Carpenters were spending much of their time touring both in the US and abroad in Japan and Australia. Even with their packed schedule they managed to find the time to record and release their fourth album *A Song For You*. This was imaginatively produced and showed The Carpenters sense of humour with a short track discussing their departure to the bathroom. The album also included four tracks *Hurting Each Other*, *It's Going To Take Sometime*, *Top Of The World* and *Goodbye To Love* which went on to become big hits; the last two showing the songwriting talent of the Carpenter and Bettis partnership. However, when *Goodbye To Love* was first released as a single The Carpenters were on the receiving end of hate mail saying they had sold out to heavy rock. Ironically the guitar solo has made the record a classic and the song is very definitely one of the best loved by all fans. The album also featured much more of Richard performing both lead vocals and an instrumental track. With each successive album released, however, Richard was to be heard in the foreground less and less, preferring to leave that job to Karen. Another song on the album *Bless The Beasts And The Children* was recorded for the soundtrack of the film bearing the same name and won an Academy Award. The Carpenters also appeared as themselves in a short film with Tom Jones called *The London Bridge Special*. This film was the sort that was only likely to appeal to ardent admirers of Tom Jones and The Carpenters as, apart from the musical interludes and the comic performances of **Hermione Gingold** and **Terry Thomas**, there was little else of interest.

There seemed to be a touch of nostalgia around by 1973 prompting The Carpenters to include a

medley of oldies in their concert performance. Nostalgia also formed the basis of their album *Now And Then* and their oldies medley found its way onto one side. The Carpenters were also requested to play at The White House performing for the West German Chancellor **Willy Brandt**. Having been built up by the media The Carpenters were now the group to knock for their supposedly "whiter than white" image. Singles released this year were *Sing*, which failed to chart, *Yesterday Once More* which reached number two and *Top Of The World* which hit number five.

BROKEN BRIDGES

1974 was again spent touring considerably with visits to the UK and Japan once more. The Carpenters and producer **Jack Daugherty** parted company probably because he had very little if anything to do with achieving their finished product. There was no time to produce a new album although *The Singles 1969-1973* album was released and in the UK it achieved spectacular success knocking **Simon And Garfunkel's** *Bridge Over Troubled Water* off the top of the album charts. The album eventually spent 116 weeks in the charts with 17 weeks at number one. It could be said that 1974 saw The Carpenters reach the peak of their popularity if the success of their singles is anything to go by. *Jambalaya*, an old **Hank Williams** hit, was released as a single to much criticism - although it became a hit, as did their other singles *I Won't Last A Day Without You* and *Please Mr Postman*.

The pressure on The Carpenters continued during 1975 and the demand for tours and public performances was as strong as ever. The album *Horizon* had been released and reached number one and included *Please Mr Postman* and *Only Yesterday*. The pressure however had taken its toll on Karen and due to excessive dieting, severe mental and physical pressure and overwork she collapsed. There were planned tours to the UK and Japan and these were cancelled. Whilst in the UK they would have appeared in The Royal Variety Performance. Richard, accompanied by **Jon Bettis**, went overseas and via the television and press apologised to the thousands of disappointed fans. At this time The Carpenters also took leave of their manager, **Sherwin Bash**, who had represented them since their early days with A&M. The reason for the split are not clear and although it was amicable it has been suggested that there was a difference of opinion over the management philosophy. **Jerry Weintraub** became their new manager and has remained so ever since then. Richard also took the step of becoming involved in the production of other artists' music when he provided the backing and arrangement of **Neil Sedaka's** new, slower version of *Breaking Up Is Hard To Do*. At the time this was the only song to have been a hit twice over for the same artist in two different versions. Richard has continued to use his talent as a producer with a variety of artists ever since. Another Christmas single was released, *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town/Merry Christmas Darling* furthering the demand for a Christmas album.

HUSH PUPPIES

Two albums were released in 1976. *A Kind Of Hush*, although as classy as ever, didn't contain the big hit singles that their other albums had although it nevertheless reached number three in the charts. Only two tracks were released as singles from this album - *A Kind Of Hush*, which once again showed their ability to make cover versions of previous hits that were arguably better than the original, and *I Need To Be In Love* which became Karen's favourite song. The lyrics contained in *I Need To Be In Love* seemed to convey how Karen felt and the fact that it was written by the Carpenter and Bettis team could lead us to believe that the song was almost autobiographical. The second album, *Live At The London Palladium*, was released commemorating their appearance there (when new attendance records were set) and the huge success of their tour. There had been much criticism of The Carpenters' stage act which had been described as bland at the best. To answer the critics they livened up their act with, amongst other things, an entrance by Richard riding on a motorbike and Karen trying to shed her goody two shoes image by wearing a pair of falsies. They also performed a **Spike Jones** version of *Close To You*. However, the act once again got the thumbs down from the critics although the fans loved it as they had done before the transformation. It would seem that British fans are influenced very little by

critics, preferring to make up their own minds. A performance of The Carpenters in concert was recorded at The New London Theatre and shown on BBC2. In America they completed their first TV special and their guests included **Victor Borge** and **John Denver**.

For perhaps the first time music journalists were united in their critical acclaim for the latest Carpenters offering when their album *Passage* was released in 1977. Ironically the album was not generally well received by the fans and for the first time since the *Ticket To Ride* it failed to reach gold status in the USA. The album saw The Carpenters diversifying with a spectacular performance (recorded live for the album along with other tracks) of *Don't Cry For Me Argentina* from *Evita* and *Calling Occupants Of Interplanetary Craft*. Some of the songs were arranged and orchestrated by the late **Peter Knight** who had also arranged many of The **Moody Blues** songs. Although all the tracks were recorded with the usual meticulous attention to detail the songs chosen for the album never had the appeal of those in the past. This album had been The Carpenters most ambitious project to date. Christmas had always been a special time for The Carpenters and as a result their second TV special featured *The Carpenters At Christmas*. Karen's comic talents were beginning to surface showing how versatile she could be. Calling *Occupants* was released as a single and became their last top ten hit whilst *All You Get From Love Is A Love Song* failed to chart.

WHITER THAN WHITE CHRISTMAS

During the years that followed it is not certain whether Karen's illness affected The Carpenters output and public appearances. All gaps in their careers were put down to a culmination of pressures resulting in them taking a break from the limelight. Much of 1978 was spent in the recording studios producing *Christmas Portrait*, something Richard and Karen had wanted to do for a considerable length of time. Included on the album were the Christmas songs previously only released as singles and some of the songs recorded for their previous TV special culminating in a collection of religious, pop and instrumental music. **Peter Knight** was once again recruited to supply some of the musical arrangements. Two more TV specials were also recorded. The first, *Space Encounters*, was loosely based on the lives of the Carpenters and featured many of the songs featured on their *Passage* album. The second TV special this year and their third to date, was entitled *Old Fashioned Christmas*, and also included the appearance of **Gene Kelly** and **Mom and Dad Carpenter**. Their hectic touring schedule had been curtailed considerably although The Carpenters were invited to appear on *The Bruce Forsyth Christmas Special* in early December. However, due to Richard apparently having the flu, Karen made the trip alone. It appears now that this was the period in Richard's life when his addiction to prescription sleeping pills had reached the point where he needed help. Karen made what was to be her only appearance without Richard. She also had several radio and TV interviews.

Their second singles album *1974-1978* had been released and peaked at number two in the UK charts. Only *Sweet Sweet Smile* was released as a single this year, reaching number forty, although *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* was re-issued.

During 1979 it was reported that Richard was taking a well earned break which lead to rumours that he and Karen had split. In fact, Richard was still recovering from his problems. This was further fuelled by the news that Karen was recording a solo album produced by **Phil Ramone** in New York. In fact The Carpenters never made any break although even at the time of Karen's death it was reported that they had. So strong was the commitment to the partnership that the solo album was never released. Richard was never very keen on the whole idea of the project and perhaps had he been more enthusiastic the album could have been completed. He has admitted that being human he felt threatened by the thought of Karen achieving success with another producer.

GABBA GABBA

As it happened A&M asked Karen and **Phil Ramone** to return to the studios to record more tracks to round the album off. By this time however,

Richard had recovered and was raring to get back to the studios to record another Carpenters album. Months of rest and recuperation had given Richard the time to have the album completed in his mind. Karen perhaps wasn't prepared to go against the wishes of her brother and decided she didn't want the album released. Karen had enjoyed the experience and felt proud of what she had achieved. It appears that everyone except the fans never wanted this album released and it would have been interesting to hear more of the tracks recorded.

During the early part of 1980 The Carpenters completed their last TV special, *Music Music Music*, which also featured **Ella Fitzgerald**, although they were contracted to produce another one. This was a more sophisticated production with Karen performing a duet with Ella. Work on the *Made In America* album had also begun but was temporarily delayed whilst Karen was married to **Thomas Burris** on August 31st. The occasion was an extremely grand affair with an attendance of four hundred and fifty guests. Richard and John Bettis wrote a song specially for the wedding which was recorded and played there and was later included in the new album which was being produced at that time. Such was the renewed enthusiasm from Richard there were so many songs recorded for the album that there were almost enough to fill another. Due to severe technical problems and Richard's attention to detail the album was not released until the middle of 1981.

The release of their new album prompted The Carpenters to make a promotional European tour which included a visit to England in the autumn of 1981. Their time here was spent recording several TV and radio interviews. A final contracted Christmas TV special had to be postponed due to this tour. Having released no singles for nearly three years, *Touch Me When We're Dancing*, *Beechwood 4-5789* and *Those Good Old Dreams* came out within the space of four months although none of them made it in to the charts. The album though reached number twelve and it could be argued that by now many of The Carpenters' fans were no longer in the single buying category preferring to settle for just the albums.

BREAKIN' UP IS HARD TO DO

1982 saw Karen part from her husband and eventually divorce. They had been married for just over a year and no details for the split were ever given. What is certain is that Karen's struggle with anorexia had obviously reached the point where she had finally realised she needed professional help. Karen moved to New York and spent several months in hospital. She was said to have been very distressed at the break up of her marriage and her final months cannot have been particularly happy ones. Whether she had been cured or not is in doubt and the methods used were open to question but very little was known about the illness itself at that time. Karen had very much wanted to be home for Christmas, a time of year that meant so much to her and her family, and in November she finally went home. Richard and Karen went into the studios once again briefly and during this time recorded *Now*, the last song that they ever recorded together.

On February 4th 1983 Karen tragically died aged 32. Her cause of death was said to be a heart attack. One side effect of anorexia is to leave chemical imbalances in the body inducing a lack of potassium which can lead to heart failure. The world of music was stunned and tributes poured in from around the world which finally acknowledge the real talent of Karen and The Carpenters. A memorial service was held for Karen and also a memorial concert the following June which involved Richard's collaboration once again with his mentor Frank Pooler and the California State University Long Beach Choir. Richard threw himself back into his work and completed the album he and Karen had been working on. Touchingly entitled *Voice Of The Heart* it included the final song *Now* which was released as a single with Karen's voice never sounding better, it was to be their last hit single for another seven years before *Make Believe It's Your First Time*.

A PRIVATE FUNCTION

Richard married his long time girlfriend **Mary Rudolph** on 19th May 1984 and in contrast to Karen's wedding this was a very quiet private function. Due to the fact that there were seven

unreleased Christmas songs Richard decided to complete another album and once again collaborated with Peter Knight. The completed album was entitled *Old Fashioned Christmas*. Another compilation album was released, this time a double album entitled *The Carpenters Collection* which reached number ten. Richard also spoke of recording a solo album.

During 1985 Richard made several solo appearances performing mainly on piano with orchestras. There were plans being made for a film to be made of Karen's life and although Richard was not keen that this should happen he decided that if one were going to be made it would be better if he became involved. It was decided that the format of the film should be a docu-drama and deal with both the ups and downs of The Carpenters career. It was also agreed that the film should not attempt to gloss over the battle Karen had with anorexia. The decision was also taken at this time for Richard's addiction to sleeping pills to be mentioned in the film. The one and only official video of The Carpenters was also released entitled *Yesterday Once More*. It was initially available only in America. The video contained a selection of The Carpenters songs with the videos either taken from various TV appearances or special promotional films. Although Richard had been working on his solo album, completion was delayed while the A&M studios were refitted. This took longer than expected and by the end of 1986 the album had still not been completed.

August 17th 1987 saw the birth of Richard's first child, a daughter **Kristi Lynn**. The long awaited solo album *Time* was eventually released in August 1987. The album featured **Dusty Springfield**, **Dionne Warwick** and also a newcomer **Scott Grimes**. The track featuring **Dusty Springfield** called *Something In Your Eyes* was released as a single. Neither the album or the single charted. Without Karen's voice, despite the usual high standard of Richard's production, the album failed to make any impact or receive favourable reviews. The album also included a tribute to Karen with **Herb Alpert** performing a Solo on flugel horn. The Carpenters popularity in Japan had always remained high and Richard completed a double CD entitled *Treasures* which was a compilation of some of their classier tracks not released as singles. Several of the songs were remixed for this set and a previously unreleased track *Honolulu City Lights* was also included. Richard continued to perform at charity functions and as guest at a variety of venues.

MAN IN DEMAND

Much of 1988 was spent producing albums for other artists including **Scott Grimes** and **Akiko Kobayashi** who also performed several Carpenters songs on stage with a new group which included old timers **Tony Peluso** and **Bob Messenger**. Richard also completed work on *The Karen Carpenter Story*.

In 1989 *The Karen Carpenter Story* was released in America as a TV movie with Karen portrayed by **Cynthia Gibb** and Richard by **Mitchell Anderson**. Richard served as executive producer and technical adviser and composed the musical score. The film featured twenty Carpenters songs including the 1966 Magic Lamp single *I'll Be Yours* and two previously unreleased tracks. *Where Do I Go From Here* and *You're The One*, which were eventually released on the *Lovelines* album. In America the film was the second most watched TV movie of 1989. The UK had to wait until December 31st to view the film. Richard's second daughter **Traci Tatum** was born in July much to his delight once again. In the meantime the final Carpenters album was released, entitled *Lovelines*. It included four tracks from Karen's unreleased solo album and peaked at number seventy three. The album slipped into record shops almost un-noticed and surprisingly, for an album that contains tracks perhaps not considered quite good enough for release previously, is considered by many Carpenters fans to be the best ever produced. Richard paid a visit to the UK to publicise the album and also the release of a boxed CD set of twelve Carpenters albums. The two Christmas albums had been combined on to one CD and the live album was omitted. Japan also released a 4 CD set entitled *Anthology* which was a representation of all The Carpenters' best music. Once again several songs were remixed and thoughtfully linked together with the ending of one song gently merging into the beginning of the next. The set also includes a semi-live version of the Bacharach and David medley. When the medley

was performed in concert its length was determined at each performance. The edited version was included on the album *Carpenters* and Richard had regretted the decision ever since. When compiling this album Richard remembered that a live performance had been recorded in 1974. Unfortunately some things did not get recorded but thankfully the main ingredient, Karen's voice, did. Richard went back into the studio to re-record the background vocals and kick drum bass and piano. Karen's performance is flawless and this track is a highlight of *Anthology* which is complimented by the detailed cover notes written by Richard himself.

POSTHUMOUS PRAISE

Response to the showing of *The Karen Carpenter Story* in the UK was phenomenal with both the singles albums popping back in to the charts. In response to this renewed interest A&M decided to release a new compilation album entitled *Only Yesterday* and re-package the *Yesterday Once More* video, re-titling it *Only Yesterday*. The album went almost straight to number one in the charts and eventually spent seven weeks there. It has now been in the charts for over a year. The video also spent much of the year in the top twenty. A single was released to coincide with the video and album and was a double A side, *Close To You* and *Only Yesterday*. With the album still riding high in the charts A&M decided to release the entire Carpenters catalogue on mid price CD and cassette for the first time in the UK. These albums sold steadily and as a result, in time for Christmas, two new limited edition mid price boxed sets, one containing CD's and the other cassettes, were produced. *Close To You* and *Merry Christmas Darling* was released as a double A side single and to the great delight of fans reached number twenty five in the charts. There was a limited edition of vinyl 45's produced which had the cover opening out in the form of a Christmas card to reveal the words of both songs. For the first time also The Carpenters appeared on a twelve inch single with one extra track included, *You're The One* taken from the album *Lovelines*. There was some dismay expressed by fans at the choice of *Close To You* being released yet again although the words of the song were appropriate for the Christmas card. In a recent poll Carpenters fans voted *Rainy Days And Mondays* their favourite song followed by *Goodbye To Love* and *A Song For You*. Surprisingly, though perhaps only to A&M, *Close To You* failed to feature in the Carpenters top twenty.

A&M in London has said that as a result of the renewed interest in The Carpenters, Richard has decided to release a 4 CD set in America which is likely to include more tracks from Karen's solo album, demo tracks, the Magic Lamp single and previously unreleased tracks. A&M UK are waiting to see the response in America before saying whether they will release the set over here. There are no current plans to release anything else. This is bound to result in a large amount of criticism from Carpenters fans who feel that with *Only Yesterday* still selling and a whole new generation of Carpenters fans eager for new releases the set is almost certain to prove popular. Other projects include a book written by **Ray Coleman** which is likely to take up to two years to complete possibly coinciding with the tenth anniversary of Karen's death and which will have the blessing and co-operation of Richard.

COLEMAN'S MUSTARD

Carpenters fans will feel relieved at the choice of author. **Ray Coleman** is a much respected writer with books on **John Lennon** and **Brian Epstein** to his credit and was at one time the editor of *Melody Maker*. **Ray Coleman** also wrote the cover notes that were included in the boxed sets and has always been appreciative of The Carpenters' music.

Richard has said he never doubted the longevity of The

Carpenters' music and this is apparent from the success of *Only Yesterday*. Some people try to read too much into a performer's music. With The Carpenters there was no message only a desire to produce good music that hopefully the public would enjoy. The music was performed with a relaxed easy style that sounded effortless although that's the last thing it was with most albums taking months to complete. Much of their music is timeless and there has never been a voice to compare with that of Karen's and it is unlikely there ever will be.