

# Nino Tempo

## Picking Up The Tempo

by Brian Gari

Nino Tempo's new album, *Tenor Saxophone*, can be found in the jazz section of your local record store. If the name is familiar but you're not certain about the genre in which the album has been placed, you're not to blame. To most record collectors, the name Nino Tempo is almost always matched with that of April Stevens, his sister. Together they placed eight singles on the charts in the '60s, one of which, "Deep Purple," reached number one in the fall of 1963.

Born Antonio LoTempio January 6, 1935 (or 1937, according to other sources) in Niagara Falls, New York, Tempo started in show business as a child when his family moved to California. He landed parts in such films as *The Red Pony* and *The Story Of G.I. Joe* but his main interest shifted to music when his father gave him a saxophone at age 10.

Tempo played in dance bands at school and landed a part in the film *The Glenn Miller Story* while still in his teens. He began doing session work and was signed (as was his sister, albeit to a separate contract) to RCA Records in 1959. (April's recording career actually began in 1951.) That contract didn't yield any hits and Tempo continued to play sessions, for everyone from Phil Spector to Frank Sinatra to Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme.

It was while playing a Bobby Darin session that Atlantic Records became interested in Tempo. With April Stevens he cut numerous singles and albums for Atco, of which "Deep Purple," previously a number one hit in 1939 for Larry Clinton and his Orchestra, was the undeniable peak. A follow-up, "Whispering," just missed the Top 10 but by 1966 the brother and sister team were off the Atlantic roster and signed to White Whale, where they charted with the Spectroresque "All Strung Out."

Tempo continued recording as both session musician and artist throughout the '70s but kept a low profile until now. Signed again to Atlantic, Tempo hopes to pick up where he left off over 20 years ago.

**Goldmine:** You recorded the new album in New York. In the '60s you almost always cut on the West Coast.

**Nino Tempo:** Right. Well, being that this was a jazz album, I felt like let's get a nice fresh start and New York has the most incredible jazz players in the world, so I decided let's come here.

**Goldmine:** When was the last time you cut a record?

**Nino Tempo:** In the '70s I cut a dance record ("Sister James," A&M 1461, in 1973). It really wasn't jazz and I had to stick to certain kinds of licks. (Ed. note: Tempo cut several other records with the band 5th Ave. Sax, but only one charted.)

**Goldmine:** The only disappointment concerning the new album is that it didn't have any songs you wrote on it. You wrote "All

Strung Out" and "I Can't Go On Livin' Baby Without You," the two singles you charted with on White Whale in 1966 and '67.

**Nino Tempo:** Yeah, on "All Strung Out" I got this idea. "I just can't get enough of you baby..." It was Phil Spector-influenced and written for the Righteous Brothers. They won't cut the song to this day! It would have been such a smash for them. The title came from a friend of mine who was talking about another musician who was all strung out. I thought it was a clever title so I took drug-type lines and added the word "baby" to throw it off. All the words were there, but it was a love theme with

subliminal catchiness. The no-intro start was right from "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling." Bones Howe did the wonderful mix on it. Gee, I wonder if I should re-record that one?

**Goldmine:** Definitely!

**Nino Tempo:** I mean on sax. I've written a lot of songs, but they were mostly Top 40-oriented and this was a jazz album. I never even dreamed of "All Strung Out" until this moment!

**Goldmine:** There are rumors that Phil Spector helped produce your stuff. Is that true?

**Nino Tempo:** No, No, sir. It was a combination of me, Jimmie Haskell and Ahmet Ertegun. April and I would work it out at the piano first and then call in the arranger Jimmie Haskell. Jimmie would then tape us to get the general feel and then he'd go and make an arrangement. The falsetto came from working with Ray Johnson. I didn't even know I had a falsetto until I tried to imitate him on a part one day.

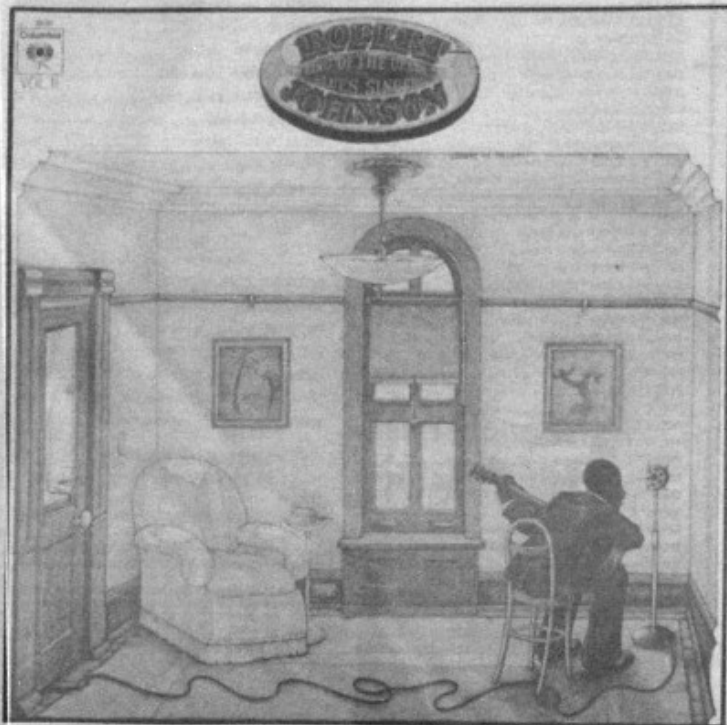
**Goldmine:** Do you get to see April these days?

**Nino Tempo:** Sure. She lives about a mile

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| label      | record # | title                                    | value  |
|------------|----------|--|--------|
| 78 singles |          |  |        |
| Vocalion   | 03416    | Terraplane Blues/Kindhearted Woman Blues | 300.00 |
| A.R.C.     | 7-03-56  | Terraplane Blues/Kindhearted Woman Blues |        |
| Vocalion   | 03445    | 32-20 Blues/Last Fair Deal Gone Down     | 300.00 |
| A.R.C.     | 7-04-60  | 32-20 Blues/Last Fair Deal Gone Down     |        |



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imitating the backgrounds on the record.)

from my mother. I'm always goin' out to see my mom and April is right there.

**Goldmine:** You know that?!

**Goldmine:** Is April her real name?

**Nino Tempo:** No. The family name is LoTempio and Carol is her real name.

**Goldmine:** When you cut your first things at RCA in the '50s were they instrumentals?

**Nino Tempo:** Vocals. They were crap. I was looking down at rock 'n' roll. Then I started to respect it and recorded better quality songs.

**Goldmine:** I understand you cut a song called "I've Been Carrying A Torch For You So Long It's Burned A Great Big Hole In My Heart," which is the longest title of any B-side.

**Nino Tempo:** Up until a few years ago. Ahmet went crazy when he saw that title!

**Goldmine:** Did you know that Brian Wilson cut a version of "Deep Purple"?

**Nino Tempo:** No! I know Brian, but I didn't know he cut that song.

**Goldmine:** He must have been influenced by you because on "The Man With All The Toys"...

**Nino Tempo:** Whoa...Whoa... (He starts

**Nino Tempo:** I knew right away. By the same token, John Sebastian and I were talking at a breakfast one day and I told him how much I like "Daydream." He then tells me he took the whole concept for the song from our version of "Deep Purple!" I said I got the idea to do "Deep Purple" that way from "Hey Baby" by Bruce Channel. April suggested "Deep Purple" and my doing this yodeling interpretation. We had a friend who lived nearby who was kind of our barometer. She listened and had tears in her eyes. She even loved that speaking part. That was because I couldn't remember the words and April was feeding them to me! The recording of it was done in the last 14 minutes of our session.

**Goldmine:** Who played on it?

**Nino Tempo:** Glen Campbell played guitar. The drummer was Earl Palmer. Ray Johnson played piano. I don't remember the bass player. The Blossoms sang background and we cut it live. I played harmonica as an overdub.

The harmonica player never showed up. Ahmet asked if I could play. I said I'll try. I didn't know how to play well enough to do all the licks so Ahmet said play what you can. He'd point and I'd play a part, could!

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# Nino Tempo and April Stevens Discography

by Jeff Tamarkin

| label                                 | record# | title   | year |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---|------|
| <b>singles</b>                        |         |   |      |
| <b>April Stevens and Henri Rene</b>   |         |   |      |
| RCA                                   | 4148    | I'm In Love Again/Roller Coaster                                    | 1951 |
|                                       | 4208    | Gimme A Little Kiss, Will Ya, Huh?/Dreamy Melody                    | 1951 |
|                                       | 4283    | And So To Sleep Again/Aw, C'mon                                     | 1951 |
| <b>April Stevens</b>                  |         |   |      |
| King                                  | 1271    | Hot Tamale/Treat Me Nice  | 1953 |
|                                       | 1287    | How Could Red Riding Hood/You Said You'd Do It                      | 1953 |
| Imperial                              | 5626    | Teach Me Tiger/That Warm Afternoon                                  | 1959 |
|                                       | 5666    | In Other Words/Jonny  | 1960 |
|                                       | 5761    | Love Kitten/You And Only You  | 1961 |
| Contract                              | 429     | Love Kitten/You And Only You  | 1961 |
| King                                  | 5826    | How Could Red Riding Hood/Soft Warm Lips                            | 1964 |
| Verve                                 | 10661   | Story Of Love (Pt. 1)/Story Of Love (Pt. 2)                         | 1971 |
| <b>Nino Tempo</b>                     |         |   |      |
| RCA                                   | 7424    | 15 Girl Friends/Loonie 'Bout Junie                                  | 1959 |
|                                       | 7647    | Ding-A-Ling/When You Were Sweet Sixteen                             | 1959 |
|                                       | 7694    | Jack The Ripper/(B-side by Pete Rugolo)                             | 1960 |
| Unsted Artists                        | 256     | Lipstick On Your Lips/What Is Love To A Teenager                    | 1960 |
| Tower                                 | 369     | Boys Town/Boys Town (Sing-Along)                                    | 1967 |
| <b>Nino Tempo and April Stevens</b>   |         |   |      |
| United Artists                        | 272     | High School Sweetheart/Ooah (That's What You Do To Me)              | 1960 |
| Alco                                  | 6224    | Sweet And Lovely/True Love  | 1962 |
|                                       | 6248    | Paradise/Indian Love Call   | 1962 |
|                                       | 6263    | Baby Weemus/Together We'll Always Be                                | 1963 |
|                                       | 6273    | Deep Purple/I've Been Carrying A Torch For You So Long That I       | 1963 |
|                                       |         | Burned A Great Big Hole In My Heart                                 | 1963 |
|                                       | 6281    | Whispering/Tweedle Dee  | 1963 |
|                                       | 6286    | Stardust/1-45   | 1964 |
|                                       | 6294    | Tea For Two/I'm Confessin' That I Love You                          | 1964 |
|                                       | 6306    | Who/1 Surrender Dear  | 1964 |
|                                       | 6314    | My Melancholy Baby/It's All Over                                    | 1964 |
|                                       | 6325    | Honeywell Rose/Our Love   | 1964 |
|                                       | 6337    | Coldest Night Of The Year/These Arms Of Mine                        | 1965 |
|                                       | 6346    | Teach Me Tiger/Morning Till Midnight (A-side by April Stevens solo) | 1965 |
|                                       | 6350    | Swing Me/Tomorrow Is Soon A Memory                                  | 1965 |
|                                       | 6360    | Think Of You/I'm Sweet On You                                       | 1965 |
|                                       | 6368    | King Kong/That's My Desire  | 1965 |
|                                       | 6375    | Tears Of Sorrow/I Love How You Love Me                              | 1965 |
|                                       | 6391    | Hey Baby/The Poison Of Your Kisses                                  | 1965 |
|                                       | 6410    | Bye Bye Blues/King Kong   | 1966 |
| White Whale                           | 236     | All Strung Out/I Can't Go On Living Baby Without You                | 1966 |
|                                       | 241     | The Habit Of Lovin' You Baby/You'll Be Needing Me Baby              | 1966 |
|                                       | 246     | My Old Flame/Wings Of Love  | 1967 |
|                                       | 252     | I Can't Go On Livin' Baby Without You/Little Child                  | 1967 |
| White Whale                           | 268     | Let It Be Me/Wings Of Love  | 1967 |
| MGM                                   | 271     | Ooh Poo Pah Doo/Let It Be Me  | 1968 |
| Bell                                  | 13825   | Wanting You/Falling In Love Again (A-side April Stevens solo)       | 1968 |
| Bell                                  | 769     | Yesterday I Heard The Rain/Did We Or Didn't We                      | 1969 |
| Bell                                  | 823     | (Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay/Sea Of Love (Medley)/Twilight Time | 1969 |
| MGM                                   | 14266   | How About Me/Making Love To Rainbow Colors                          | 1971 |
| Marina                                | 507     | You're Losing Me/Darling You Were All That I Had                    | 1972 |
| A&M                                   | 1394    | (Where Do I Begin) Love Story/Hoochy Coochy Wing Dang Doo           | 1972 |
| Alco                                  | 6897    | She's My Baby/Tomorrow Is Soon A Memory                             | 1972 |
| A&M                                   | 1443    | I Can't Get Over You Baby/Put It Where You Want It                  | 1973 |
| A&M                                   | 1674    | You Turn Me On/Never Had A Lover                                    | 1975 |
| Niagara                               | 1635    | What Kind Of Fool Am I/   | 1976 |
| Chelsea                               | 3052    | What Kind Of Fool Am I/You And Only You                             | 1976 |
| <b>as Nino Tempo and 5th Ave. Sax</b> |         |   |      |
| A&M                                   | 1461    | Sister James/Claire De Lune   | 1973 |
| A&M                                   | 1499    | Roll It/Hawkeye   | 1974 |
| A&M                                   | 1532    | Come See Me 'Round Midnight/High On The Music                       | 1974 |
| A&M                                   | 1625    | Don't Stop Now/Gettin' Off  | 1974 |
| <b>as Nino</b>                        |         |   |      |
| Epic                                  | 50294   | I Want To Spend My Life With You/For The Good Times                 | 1977 |
| <b>albums</b>                         |         |   |      |
| <b>April Stevens</b>                  |         |   |      |
| Imperial                              | 12055   | Teach Me Tiger  | 1959 |
| Audio Lab                             | 1534    | Torrid Tunes  | 1959 |
| Liberty                               | 10225   | Teach Me Tiger (reissue)  | 1984 |
| <b>Nino Tempo and April Stevens</b>   |         |   |      |
| Alco                                  | 33156   | Deep Purple   | 1963 |
|                                       | 33162   | Sing The Great Songs  | 1964 |
| Camden                                | CAS 824 | Program   | 1964 |
| Alco                                  | 33180   | Hey Baby!   | 1966 |
| White Whale                           | 7113    | All Strung Out  | 1966 |
| <b>Nino Tempo</b>                     |         |   |      |
| Atlantic                              | 82142-2 | Tenor Saxophone   | 1990 |

## DEEP PURPLE NINO TEMPO & APRIL STEVENS



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Goldmine: Where'd you record it?

Nino Tempo: Radio Recorders — the annex. The building's still there but not the studio. We got a Grammy for it; unfortunately it was a year before they were broadcast on television.

Goldmine: Are there any unreleased tracks?

Nino Tempo: Yes. Maybe they could go on a reissue CD.

Goldmine: Did you play on any other rock records besides Spector's?

Nino Tempo: I played on some Jeff Barry productions. We did the remake of "All Strung Out" with John Travolta that charted. I also played on Dion's *Streetheart*.

Goldmine: Have you ever performed with April again since the old days?

Nino Tempo: Not much. Occasionally at

Bill Medley's club. We'd like to do some more.

Goldmine: Would you like to record with April again?

Nino Tempo: Sure. I'm sure April would be interested as well.

Goldmine: Were you inactive before this new album?

Nino Tempo: As inactive as you could be for about 10 or 15 years. I was Don Costa's favorite so he would always hire me. After his death things got very quiet. I became involved with a partner in buying and selling houses after fixing them up. It was at Nesuhi Ertegun's funeral that Ahmet heard me playing and came back to me a short time later with the album idea. The album features songs I really love. This is thrilling for me to be back.

Goldmine: What are you going to do next?

Nino Tempo: I don't know; I don't want to jump into the ring with the rest of the saxophone players. I don't want to become another guy in line.

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afraid to open their mouths. There's very few willing to open their mouths so Jesse Helms took the heat. Even the most biased writers say he sure seems nice to the people he has personal contact with, he does have blacks on his staff so he's not a total bigot. They [writers, et. al.] disagree with his position but partly because of the way he's been presented. And of course he does talk in the Old South vernacular.

I agree with you, Jesse Helms shouldn't be the one...no one person [should be]. And that's why I say I don't think it should be up to Jack Valenti [president of the Motion Picture Association of America]

and that tiny little group to be the arbiters of what's acceptable in the movies either. They are really funded and promoted by the movie industry. It's supposedly policing itself but since all the salaries are paid by the movie industry guess who they're gonna be leaning toward. And Jack Valenti is a personal friend; we've had some personal correspondence about this. I said, "Jack, I wouldn't have lasted six months in your job if by some freaky chance I had been appointed to it."

I would've tried to be the advocate for the public, not for the movie industry. I would've said to the movie industry, "Let's see if we can do some good in our society."