



NEWS FROM A&M RECORDS

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CARPENTERS ZOOM TO PROMINENCE
WITH NUMBER ONE SINGLE IN NATION

Carpenters are the Number One group in America today with the Number One record in the country today - "CLOSE TO YOU," written by Burt Bacharach.

But it seems that very few people even know who the group is. Sure they had a top single almost half a year ago with the Beatles' "Ticket to Ride," but even then they were a relatively unknown Southern California group.

So here's the real story of how and when and why Carpenters came to be.

The rise of the Carpenters to popular music stardom has followed a relatively linear path from Richard Carpenter's accordion lessons in New Haven, Conn. To a fine summer day in Hollywood when A&M Records received word that the group's second single, "Close to You" had sold its one-millionth copy and risen to number one in the nation. Between those two points, the very youthful Karen and Richard Carpenter have crammed in a lot of musical experience.

Richard Carpenter didn't like playing accordion and soon found the piano more to his liking. He was a smash hit in his high school orchestra and soon made it big on the New Haven party circuit. Before his family moved from New Haven to California. Rich had gained a wealth of experience playing sedate cocktail music in parties, small clubs and dumpy bars.

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Karen Carpenter purports to be three years younger than her older brother. As a typically finicky female little sister, Karen wanted to tag along with big brother Richard on his musical forays. To do that, she not so uneventfully decided to learn to play an instrument, She settled on drums.

Rich and Karen, whose collective family ego overwhelmed the classically trained tuba player they persuaded to play bass for them, formed the Carpenter Trio and started playing jazz on a more sophisticated level. Sophisticated enough, anyway, to win a Hollywood Bowl Battle of the Bands in 1966 when the bass player switched over to tuba for the last song and literally blew the judges' minds.

The Carpenter Trio was signed to a Los Angeles company where they recorded two singles, neither of which were released. With fame so fleeting, the Trio soon became the Duo.

Next stop was a group called Spectrum, fronted by the vocals of R. and K.. The Carpenters played their respective instruments and their friends filled in the holes ably enough so that after a year, Spectrum was being noticed by record companies, audiences and (horrors) maybe even nubile young groupies. The five guy in the group finally came to blows over the latter problem and the group broke up and went to college.

It is near this point that A&M Records bought the services of Rich and Karen. With a contract to wave at everyone's collective nose, two former Spectrum people were lured back into the fold, thus forming a new group which was to be called Carpenters. A couple more musicians were added and it was indeed called Carpenters.

A first album for A&M was recorded in the spring and summer of 1969, released under the title Offering. Out of this came a hit single rendition of the Beatles' "Ticket to Ride." The clever approach to the time-honored Liverpool standard was masterminded by Richard, who laid and lays claim to the group's arranging chores.

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The next step for the budding young group was to get ready to perform again. As is quite common, by studying too much music in college, the members of the group had lost the ability to play their instruments on a stage. The entire band, from Karen on up (or down, as she would have it) could name and identify by date of composition all of Bach's works, but they could not keep a steady beat. It took a couple of months to overcome this hurdle, and by the dawn of the seventies, the Carpenters and their entourage were ready to hit the beloved road.

The Big Day came on February 27, 1970, when the group debuted in a large Southern California club. They then joined Burt Bacharach as a second act on many of his concerts, and he finally gave them one of his songs to get them off his tail and onto their own path to glory. The song was called "Close to You." Karen sang a bang-up version of it and it hopped its way up the charts to Number One in about six weeks.

Not so strangely, the second Carpenter album has subsequently been entitled, Close to You. It is, like Offering, produced by Jack Daugherty, with arrangements by Richard and the group, some pretty vocals and zesty drumming by Karen (who swears she will give up breathing before she gives up drumming to be a torch singer).

Carpenters also includes Dan Woodhams, Doug Strawn and Bob Messenger. Dan is one of the holdovers from Spectrum and bops away on bass guitar for the group. Doug plays reeds, once sang in barbershop quartet and wants to be rich and famous when he grows up. Bob Messenger plays several instruments and has been around. When not playing good music for Carpenters, his job is to keep the kids out of trouble - he's the oldest member of the band. Another former Spectrum member, guitarist Gary Sims, is away in military service.