

The Hit Men—Legendary Performers with Frankie Valli, Carole King, Cat Stevens & More

Saturday, November 11, 2017; 2 & 7:30 pm



Legendary Performers with Frankie Valli, Carole King, Cat Stevens, Blood Sweat & Tears and many others from the royalty of rock!

The '60s, '70s and '80s were a magical era for songwriting, and during that period, artists like Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, Blood, Sweat & Tears, and other big name groups created unforgettable hits that have graced the airwaves and concert halls for generations and are woven into America's consciousness.

After decades behind the scenes, five of the greatest musicians who were instrumental in the success of these fabulous songs have reunited to form The Hit Men. Not Broadway actors, or a tribute band, these guys are the real hit-makers who traveled all over the world, creating music and memories — from Madison Square Garden, Radio City Music Hall and the Hollywood Bowl, to the Sydney Opera House and the London Palladium.

A group of amazing performers, superb musicians, superior vocalists, great arrangers and creative composers, The Hit Men are the hit-makers of the '60s, '70s and '80s — including performing and/or recording members of legendary bands and artists like Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, The Critters, Jim Croce, Cheap Trick, Blood Sweat & Tears, Sting, Cat Stevens, Elton John & Kiki Dee, Carly Simon, and more.

On the road touring as The Hit Men, this brotherhood of musicians relive the magic they created on world stages and in recording studios, bringing audiences a night of hit after hit, after hit — including everyone's favorite Four Seasons songs like "Oh What a Night," "Who Loves You," "Let's Hang On," and more great tunes made even more famous by Broadway's *Jersey Boys*. And they also perform many other timeless hits that they helped make famous — including "Mony, Mony," "Peace Train," "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown," "You're So Vain," "Don't Stop Believing," "The Loco-Motion," and many more.

During their performances, The Hit Men also share behind-the-scenes stories and anecdotes from their days in recording studios and on the concert circuit; it's an entertaining and informative look back through rock & roll history from the guys who lived and breathed the experience.

BIOGRAPHIES

The Hit Men are a collection of hit-makers whose friendships and individual recording successes have been interweaving with each other for most of their lives. The band consists of five legendary performers from Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, Carly Simon, Tommy James and the Shondells, Cat Stevens, Jim Croce, Elton John & Kiki Dee, Carole King, Chicago, Barry Manilow and many others.

LEE SHAPIRO

In 1973, at the age of 19, Lee Shapiro joined Frankie Valli as one of the legendary Four Seasons. As keyboardist/ musical director, Lee toured the world performing classic hits like "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," "Sherry," and "Big Girls Don't Cry." Lee was the musical director and arranger on the multi-million sellers "Oh, What A Night" and "Who Loves You." In the 1980s, Lee collaborated with hit songwriters L. Russell Brown, Sandy Linzer and Irwin Levine, writing music for the hot recording artists of the day. In 1990, Lee formed Lee Shapiro Music, a creative company providing music for advertising and the media. Countless TV themes and commercials were created for NBC, CBS, ABC, Coca Cola, Budweiser, and on and on. In 1991, Lee collaborated with Barry Manilow in the production of his show *Copacabana, The Musical*. In 1999, Lee diversified his talents and created the "must have" toys of 2000 and 2001, "Rock N Roll Elmo" and "Rock N' Roll Ernie" for Mattel/Fisher-Price. Located in New Jersey, Lee Shapiro has been on the NYC music scene for more than three decades. "Leaving Manhattan School of Music at nineteen years of age to become one of Frankie Valli's Four Seasons gave me the opportunity to see the world and perfect my craft. Orchestrations and arrangements were written on planes and in hotel rooms and performed the same night, sometimes without rehearsal." Playing to sell-out audiences in venues such as the London Palladium, The Sydney Opera House, The Grand Ole Opry and Madison Square Garden gave Lee the vehicle to meet and ultimately collaborate with stars ranging from Barry Manilow and Tommy James to the London Symphony Orchestra. In 2010, amid the success of the Broadway show *Jersey Boys*, Lee had a discussion with his friend of 40 years, Frankie Valli. Soon after, he called a group of friends and music industry colleagues, and The Hit Men was formed. "This band consists of five guys who toured and recorded with the legends of the music industry, created hit songs and have been friends for between 30 and 50 years. It truly is 'too good to be true.'"

STEVE MURPHY

Steve Murphy is a drummer/singer/producer/engineer and has been heavily involved in the NY music scene since the late '80s. The artists he has performed and recorded with are some of the most famous and recognizable names in music over the last 60 years. He became passionate about music and performing at an early age. His first big break came in 1998 when he was asked to work as a vocalist in the studio with legendary producer Phil Ramone on a project for Elton John. His voice was featured on dozens of national

The Hit Men continued

commercials including The Army's "Be All You Can Be" campaign. He was a member of The Alan Parsons Live Project touring over 40 countries from '03-'10. He has also toured with Jack Bruce, Eric Burdon and the Animals, Chuck Negron, Felix Cavaliere, Dave Mason, Todd Rundgren, Christopher Cross, Mark Farner, The Turtles, Mickey Dolenz, Gary Puckett, Mitch Ryder and over a dozen more major artists from the '60s, '70s and '80s. "He's the best of the best," said Howard Kaylan of The Turtles; "When Steve is on, there is nobody better," exclaimed Jack Bruce of Cream; "One of those rare drummers that actually listens to the song and plays just what is needed to make it rock," raved Dennis Elliot, the original drummer in Foreigner; "Steve is an exceptional player and a great singer. Best of all, he can do both at the same time...there is none better," raves Alan Parsons. The Canopus Drum Company considers Steve so important to their artist roster, they warehouse kits for his touring use worldwide. Today, Steve is an instructor/educator at the School of Rock in Montclair, New Jersey and has 20 students under his tutelage. He is thrilled to be a member of The Hit Men.

JIMMY RYAN

Jimmy Ryan started playing guitar at ten years old and began performing for audiences at fifteen. By seventeen he had his first recording contract and by eighteen, scored his first hit record as lead guitarist, vocalist and co-songwriter with The Critters. The band began as a high school project and ended up a national phenomenon with three top hits, "Younger Girl," "Mr. Dieingly Sad," and "Don't Let The Rain Fall Down on Me" which Jimmy penned, as well as several chart records including, "Marrying Kind of Love," "Bad Misunderstanding," and "Touch & Go." When the Critters split up in 1969, Jimmy continued his career as lead guitarist, backup vocalist, often arranger, and occasional co-writer with Carly Simon, recording such hits as "Anticipation," "You're So Vain," the Academy Award winning song, "Let The River Run," and many more. He has performed with Carly in two HBO specials *Live From Martha's Vineyard*, and *My Romance* and played on the Carly Simon soundtracks and songs from the movies *Working Girl*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Postcards From the Edge*, *This is My Life*, *Little Black Book*, and *The Falcon & The Snowman*, earning one platinum and four gold records. His working relationship with Carly spanned twenty one years, and they remain close friends to this day. Jimmy has also recorded albums with many other artists, most notably Cat Stevens and Jim Croce, receiving a gold record for each, as well as recording with Rod Stewart, Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, John Entwistle (bassist of the Who), Jim Webb, Elton John and Kiki Dee, The Doors, Matthew Fischer (Keyboards: *Procol Harem*) and many more. When not performing with The Hit Men, Jimmy composes music for film and TV under his alter ego's name, James Ryan. To date, he has scored thirty-eight films as well as award-winning Documentaries for NBC, CBS, two Winter Olympics and the theme for the Paralympics. He has composed music for USA Network, Discovery Channel, APT, PBS, ESPN, Lifetime TV, WE TV, A&E, Showtime, Comedy Central, Food Network, Yes Network, The History Channel, and NOVA Science as well as music for hundreds of radio and television commercials. His news themes are featured on CNBC, NBC News, CBS News, Telemundo Noticiero and ABC News programs. The Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. is currently featuring two films that Jimmy scored. The George Washington Museum in Mount Vernon is featuring five films with Jimmy's music, and Independence Hall in Philadelphia is currently featuring Jimmy's music in their introductory presentation of *The Liberty Bell*. Jimmy is a founding member of The Hit Men and has been their lead guitarist, co-arranger and co-lead singer since 2010.

JEFF GANZ

Born in Washington DC, Jeff became a New Yorker at age 13. A year later, he began performing professionally as a guitarist/vocalist in the Hendrix/Clapton tradition. At 20, Jeff made the decision to master the bass, as it represented the ideal hybrid between harmony and rhythm, guitar and drums. He studied upright bass with renowned bass experts Bill Pemberton, Clyde Lombardi, Homer Mensch, and Derek Jones. To build a more solid foundation on the electric bass, he turned to the highly respected guitarist and film composer Ira Newborn and jazz giant Jeff Andrews. Jeff also studied piano and drums. Jeff has toured and recorded with such legends as Johnny Winter, Roy Buchanan, John Lee Hooker, Gerry Mulligan, Laurie Anderson, Lou Reed, Tito Puente, Chuck Berry, Joe Morello, Melvin Van Peebles, Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes, Dr. John, Larry Coryell, Eddie Money, Jim Dawson, Christine Lavin, Marilyn Michaels, Cheap Trick, Vanilla Fudge, and Blood, Sweat & Tears. Jeff's resume reads like a who's who of popular American music. He has occupied the bass chair on television, in concert and on CD for such artists as Rita Moreno, Howard Levy, Melanie, Al Cohn, Johnnie Johnson, The Village People, Billie Joe Royal, Marvin Hamlisch, Cleo Laine, Liza Minnelli, Clint Holmes, Andy Williams, Kenwood Dennard, and Ben Vereen, amongst many others. His freelance credits include movie soundtracks, Broadway musicals and national television commercials. He appeared on Grammy-nominated recordings with Johnny Winter and John Lee Hooker, as well as the Tony Award-winning original cast album of Roger Miller's *Big River*.

RUSS VELAZQUEZ

Born & raised in the Bronx, New York, Russ is an award-winning and Emmy Nominated Composer/ Singer/Arranger/Producer for TV, Radio and Film. A first call session singer & guitarist for over thirty years, he has performed on thousands of recording sessions singing on hundreds of National, Regional & Local Radio & TV spots covering a wide range of genres and styles. Some of his clients include Burger King, Coke, Diet Coke, Pepsi, Dr. Pepper, Disney, McDonald's, Sprite, Hasbro, Mattel, Fisher-Price, UPS, FedEx, Budweiser, ESPN, Cheerios, Pizza Hut, Bubble Yum, Dodge, Ford, US Army, Gillette — singing alongside Michael Bolton, Luther Vandross, Patti Austin, Vickie Sue Robinson, Lisa Fischer, Jocelyn Brown and Marc Cohn. Russ has also worked and performed with many diverse artists, groups and celebrities — Sting, Carole King, the Ramones, LL Cool J, Korn, Patty Smyth, Jimmy Webb, Linda Eder, Sophie B. Hawkins, Elmer Bernstein, C&C Music Factory, Andrew Gold, Phoebe Snow, Martin Short and Mike Meyers. He has performed on *The Tonight Show*, *David Letterman*, *SNL*, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, *Good Morning America*, to name a few. Russ just recently worked with singer Carrie Underwood and Academy Award-nominated director Wes Anderson. He is a 3 time Emmy nominated Composer/Arranger for his work on *Sesame Street*. Russ has composed, arranged, produced and performed on several very popular TV Themes: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2003 & 2008*, *Sonic X*, *One Piece*, *Home Delivery*, *Panwapa Island*, *GI Joe Sigma 6*. Russ also has appeared on Broadway as one of the lead singers & guitarists in *Rock & Roll the First 5000 Years* and was one of the original lead singers and producer, arranger of the popular children's group The Sugarbeats and is currently touring with The Hit Men as well as continuing his session work.