



# GERRY GOFFIN & CAROLE KING

**I**t's all in the songs. Sure, the bare bones of the story might make a serviceable plot. Budding songwriter has hit song written about *her* by school chum. She cuts answer record about *him*, "Oh! Neil"; tries again with answer record to immortal hit "Tall Paul." "Short Mort" . . . more like "Instant Morte." She meets chemistry student/budding lyricist. They write, fall in love, and the hits keep coming. For three years, from 1961 to 1963, Gerry Goffin and Carole King owned the franchise for the soundtrack of early-Sixties lives. Not convinced? Lamp the list: "Chains," "Don't Say Nothin' Bad (About My Baby)," "Every Breath I Take," "Go Away Little Girl," "Hey Girl," "I Can't Stay Mad at You," "It Might As Well Rain Until September," "Keep Your Hands off My Baby," "The Loco-Motion," "One Fine Day," "Point of No Return," "Take Good Care of My Baby," "When My Little Girl Is Smiling," "Will You Love Me Tomorrow." Unforgettable hits every one (a list by no means complete). You may not remember every artist; you may not *like* every song, but if you spent any time with a radio in the early Sixties, you can hear these songs in your head, hook line and sinker. *Memorable* is the word, and that of course is what pop songwriting in the early Sixties (and always, but especially then, before music became dead serious and then seriously dead-ended) was all about.

G&K may have written in a cubicle, but not in a vacuum. Their peer group is viewed today as practically peerless. But there's a difference: Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil might go sociological on you; Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman were adult rated even when their subject was adolescent; Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller were both sociological *and* adult. G&K (even more than Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich) made it their business to chart the universe of young romance. That's a theme that could be expanded and expounded until the forests run out of trees, but no need — it's all in the songs (really, it's all there in the *titles*). Meanwhile, there's still some plot left.

Colossal success impels publisher to create Dimension, label for G&K songs and, as it turns out, Carole King solo releases. British Invasion cramps the style of Brill Building tunesmithing, but G&K ride it out, via covers ("I'm Into Some-

thing Good") and commissions ("Don't Bring Me Down"). G&K form *own* label, Tomorrow. Company releases perhaps King's greatest single ("Road to Nowhere"), delicate cover of "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" by coyly named Bachs Lunch, three folk-rock marvels by the Myddle Class. No hits, short run, wrong era.

King forms the City with the Myddle Class's Charles Larckey. Lou Adler releases City's sole album, plus a warm-up solo project for King. Next album becomes a thread in rock's rich tapestry. Corners the franchise for the soundtrack of early-Seventies lives: "I Feel the Earth Move," "It's Too Late," "You've Got a Friend." Goffin still crafts hits: "Do You Know Where You're Going To," "I'll Meet You Halfway," "I've Got to Use My Imagination," "Saving All My Love for You." After scaling the loftiest peaks, King's solo career loses esteem. Even an album of updated G&K classics meets the audience only halfway.

Yet it's still there in the songs. It would be too much to ask for G&K to corner the franchise for the soundtrack for Eighties lives as well. They write together now and again, including the recent King single "Someone Who Believes in You." Millions still believe — in the early collaborations and the Seventies soul searchers. Goffin and King songs are built to last. They might well reign until forever.

— KEN BARNES

They can't all be hits, even when the songwriters are as gifted as Gerry Goffin and Carole King. Besides their dozens of unforgettable hits — including, say, the Drifters' "Some Kind of Wonderful," Number Thirty-two in 1961, and "Up on the Roof," Number Five in '62 — G&K penned some superb, inexplicably unsuccessful songs. To name a fraction: P.J. Proby's and Dusty Springfield's "I Can't Make It Alone"; the Monkees' "Porpoise Song" and "I Won't Be the Same Without Her"; and Barbara Lewis's and Dusty Springfield's "Don't Forget About Me."

Then there are those that seem to have earned their obscurity — yet are still some kind of strangely wonderful. "The Kid Brother," for example, recorded by Mickey and Kitty and released on Atlantic in 1959 — one of G&K's earliest efforts, written with Mickey Baker. A romantic couple is incessantly interrupted by the whining demands of the titular sibling; attempts by Mickey to bribe the brat to "get lost" with (successively) a quarter, a dollar and the entire contents of his wallet fail, as did the song, despite Baker's always-hip guitar lines.

Larry Bright served up "When I Did the Mashed Potatoes With You" four years later on Del Fi. Obviously cut strictly for laughs, the song gets the full Drifters treatment — swaying baiion rhythm; castanet-clicking Latin melody; long, wordy verses — all leading up to an ultraromantic sentiment: "I'll never forget the night that we met and I did the mashed potatoes with you." All efforts to preserve decorum are abandoned when Bright Big Bopperishly bemoans all the newfangled, soulless dances — the stomp, the bird and the watusi — that pale in comparison with the mash mosh.

— K.B.