

"I'm Lynda Appell Kohn. I too am a proud daughter of Dave Appell. He was a composer, musician (trombone, guitar, keyboards) vocalist, sound engineer, arranger and A&R man during his long career. He is greatly missed and appreciated. I want to express sincere gratitude for all who helped my father with his final body of work"



Dave Appell: An Appreciation.

Dave Appell is forever linked to some of the biggest hits from the Golden Age of Top 40 – and for good reason! From the late 1950s to the mid-60s, he was a driving force behind the signature sound from Philadelphia-based Cameo-Parkway records.

Dave's legacy is etched in gold and platinum hits like: "Let's Twist Again" and "Limbo Rock" for Chubby Checker; "Don't Hang Up" and "South Street" for The Orlons; Bobby Rydell's "Wild One," Dee Dee Sharp's soulful dance classic "Mashed Potato Time," the biggest 70s hits by Tony Orlando and Dawn and others.



"Professionally, I didn't realize how amazing he was until after his passing," says Roz Appell. "My Father didn't brag...he was very humble. It really was like a normal life at home and around the dinner table each night. I learned later how untypical that kind of life is for most musicians."



It may have seemed normal at first, but eventually her Dad's world came into focus. "I guess I was about 12 years old and Dad was conducting the orchestra at Dick Clark's summer shows on the Steel Pier in Atlantic City. People like Bobby Rydell, Dee Dee Sharp and Freddy 'Boom-Boom' Cannon would come over and my

sister Lynda and I would hang out with them!”

Dave’s quiet, self-effacing nature belied the fact he sat in the upper echelon – the royalty of pop music hit makers. Where others spent time singing their own praises, Dave let the music speak for him. “Music,” he would often say, “is something I do.”

Roz explains while her Dad could have comfortably stayed the course as a studio musician, he instead selected song writing and arranging as a path which would provide stability for him and his growing family. “His work at Cameo-Parkway Records afforded him this amazing opportunity to write, score music and conduct. Bobby Rydell once told me what a quick and talented writer Dad was. My Father wrote Bobby’s hit “Wild One” in less than two hours during a limousine ride they shared. It blows my mind at how seemingly easy it was for him to do this. It never seemed like work for him.”

Making it look easy is often cited as the hallmark of a consummate professional. That probably explains (at least in part) why Dave Appell was and always will be admired as a forward thinking musician, producer, recording engineer, and songwriter – and as a guiding hand in the studio. Dave quietly inspired (and is revered by) scores of musicians and performers.

Paul Shaffer (David Letterman’s former sidekick and music director) was inspired at about age 11 while growing up in Fort William, Ontario, Canada, when he first heard those hits by Dave Appell while watching Dick Clark’s “American Bandstand” on TV. “His music really smacked me between the eyes when I was a kid! There was something about these tunes that really grabbed me. I never forgot the feeling of ‘South Street’ and the way that song rocked, or the way Dee Dee Sharp sang – this was really gospel music emanating from Philadelphia!”

That also explains the simple genius of Dave Appell; his ability to instinctively identify and weave pop music tastes across diverse music genres. Open your hymnal, folks!

In the 1980s, when David Letterman began his late night foray on NBC, Shaffer paid homage to Dave Appell by playing “South Street” (and other Appell songs) as bumper and transition music on the show. “I thought it was important to play that, to make a statement which said, this is what I and my band are about. The Philly sound that Dave Appell started was certainly close to my roots.”

Roz Appell recalls the music that inspired Paul Shaffer (and countless others) was first stimulated by trends and events happening in the Philadelphia area. “South Street is here in Philly, big hit, I think Kal Mann (Dave’s writing partner at the time) might have been the person to coin the word hippie. He and my Dad heard about the kids in nearby Bristol, Pennsylvania doing a dance called The Bristol Stomp. Kal checked it out; Dad put it to music, next thing you know everyone is singing ‘The kids in Bristol are sharp as a pistol when they do The Bristol Stomp.’ This was a remarkable time when rock music was a wide open field.”

It’s interesting to note that the man known as one of the driving forces of early rock and roll began his career with noted Big Band and Jazz orchestras fronted by musical giants like Jimmie Lunceford, Benny Carter and Earl “Fatha” Hines in the 1940s. By the 50s, Dave



began fronting his own group, The Applejacks (originally The Dave Appell Four.) Check out the 1956 Alan Freed movie "Don't Knock the Rock," Dave and his group are featured prominently. They were the studio band for Ernie Kovacs' wildly popular TV and Radio shows – and they were the first big beat act to play Las



Vegas. And by 1958 Dave and his Applejacks struck gold with a novelty instrumental called "Mexican Hat Rock." From there, his stock rose to the stars with a succession of gold and platinum hits, including music for TV and film.

By the mid-1980s, as Dave approached his mid-60s, he could have deservedly looked over a triumphant career, delighted in his memories and retire from the music scene

and be content to have made his mark doing what he loved most. One hitch. That wasn't the Dave Appell way.

Instead, he chose a new chapter; writing and compiling, over the last 30 years of his life, what would become a prolific catalog of original compositions. His musical efficacy as sharp as ever on what he called his "jazz thing." From this abundant output of jazz-tinged songs eventually came this CD. Over the years when friends and acquaintances asked why he hadn't slowed down, Dave often remarked it was "because I hear music in my head 24-7."

Roz Appell smiles, "Yeah, Dad was tinkering all the time on the piano. He was always creating; right up until his health prevented him. He loved jazz, especially jazz-fusion and he felt this style was one he could fit into. This man absolutely lived to make music!" Until about 2013, Dave continued writing songs, even

arranging them in his home studio. Eventually he called on his friend, veteran producer and songwriter Billy Terrell, for his opinion and advice for the best ways to pitch and release this new material. Terrell had been producing jazz and smooth jazz projects as far back as 1995.



"I loved the music and his marvelous melodies in particular. Every song stayed in your head which is rare for this genre." As Terrell continued advising Dave on the evolution of his music, taking it from concept to finished piece, he repeatedly suggested recording the music from scratch with live musicians. As Billy recalls, Dave was elated with the results. "We rounded up some the finest musicians in the area and began recording. We assembled a great mix of talent from various genres, too."

The project took on a life of its own. The titles recorded for this CD are balanced between smooth, groove and Latin jazz flavors. Terrell says, "Dave seamlessly and expertly blended these three genres together, all due to his incredible sense of melody." As a result, this music, played by a new, regenerated group of Applejacks, brings Dave Appell and his music full circle.

The album boasts a collection of veteran musicians, young students from the Philadelphia School of Music, Drexel University and Temple University and modern jazz masters like Steve Beskrone (bass), Vic Stevens (drums), George Young (veteran sax player who goes back to the late 50s with Dave Appell at Cameo-Parkway), Hector Rosado (percussion) and Demetrios Pappas (solo artist, now

Smokey Robinson's music director and pianist) to name a few.

Veteran musicians are a tough bunch to impress. But when Billy Terrell put the call out to perform on new material written by Dave Appell, words like honor and privilege were repeated as these marquee musicians jumped at the chance to contribute in some way to this stage of Dave's musical heritage. "I'd already had respect for Dave's work when I first met him in the 90s," proclaims Demetrios Pappas. "Dave was a pretty impressive guy. When I went in to play the solos, he'd scat sing these wonderful melodies that were in his head. Then I'd have to figure out how to transcribe and play them on piano! He had great ideas and a ton of talent."

For musician Vic Stevens, he was most impressed at the latitude Dave Appell gave musicians at recording sessions. "Dave knew what he wanted, yet he was open to ideas. Sometimes I'd say hey, check this out and sometimes he'd go for it. But he'd always say: 'show me what you've got.' He never dismissed you. It's so cool to work with a guy like that."



During sessions for the new Applejacks CD, producer Billy Terrell found an unreleased gem tucked in the vaults: "The Man on the Sliding Trombone." Recorded in the 50s, it's a mystery why it never saw the light of day! The original instrumental sounds fresh and vibrant. Perry Artese was enlisted to write first-ever lyrics and, I think you'll agree, singer Paul Jost rose to the occasion with a perfect vocal performance on this swinger! "I'm always honored to work with great

people," said Jost as we discussed the song. "I was especially honored to work with Dave Appell. Seeing him in his later years still composing, playing and arranging was such a thrill. The joy he exhibited during these sessions was inspiring to me."

Both the original instrumental and the new Paul Jost vocal version are included here as bonus tracks. It really does bring things full circle for Dave and his music. And, yes, Dave Appell is the "Man on the Sliding Trombone!"

Roz Appell looks back with fondness at her Dad and the love he poured into his music. "He could absolutely knock me out with what he'd write; the melody, the structure of the music. Sometimes when Dad had an unfinished song, he'd sing the lyric or harmony to me on top of the track. His vocals and the music he created was thrilling for me to hear. My heart would just drop! This music is his lasting legacy."

Paul Shaffer beautifully sums up the man, his music and courtly manner. "I was so thrilled when I finally got to meet Dave Appell. He was everything I'd hoped he'd be. He had heart and you can hear that heart in the music he created. He was a gentleman and such a wonderful and magnanimous person from whom this brilliant music emanated."

Welcome to the next generation of The Applejacks...and the continuation of Dave Appell's legacy of music.

Jim Raposa
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