

a euphemism for street-harmony singing. As they began writing together, they melded these interests into a populist rhythm & blues – so populist that when brought to publishers Hill and Range by fellow Brooklynite Otis Blackwell, the pair was farmed out to write hits for Philadelphia teen idols Fabian (“I’m a Man”), Bobby Rydell (“I Dig Girls”), and Frankie Avalon (“Two Fools”).

It was only when they penned the endearing “A Teenager in Love,” and it was pointed to Dion and the Belmonts as a guaranteed hit, that the pair established credibility to match their commercial appeal, along with commissions to match their talents. Shuman’s musical arrangements, which reflected time spent at the Palladium Ballroom, doing the mambo and cha-cha-cha, provided the perfect foundation for Pomus’s crafted lyrics on some of the greatest hits for the Drifters (“This Magic Moment,” “Save the Last Dance for Me”) and Elvis Presley, for whom they wrote “Surrender,” “Suspicion,” “Viva Las Vegas,” and the indelible “(Marie’s the Name) His Latest Flame.”

Described by legendary publisher Freddy Bienstock as “a free spirit” who “couldn’t be tied down to Doc,” Shuman headed to Europe in the mid-sixties, following up his big hit for Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas (“Little Children”) by cowriting for the Hollies and the Small Faces. And then, while vacationing in St. Tropez, Shuman heard the great French chanteur Jacques Brel and “saw the light.” As he later explained, “The only time I’d heard such virility in a voice was in black singers.” Shuman set about translating Brel’s dissolute lyrics into English, with the composer’s consent, before launching *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, at New York’s Village Gate in 1968 – with himself, the former high school lead, in a starring role. His translations were quickly recorded by Scott Walker, David Bowie, and Dionne Warwick.

After a successful seven-year run, Shuman decamped to France for good, where he became one of the country’s most celebrated performers and songwriters. He was in the process of launching a new musical in London’s West End, appropriately entitled *Save the Last Dance for Me*, when he passed away in 1991 at the age of 54.

Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich

Through the 1960s, the songs of Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich stood as the epitome of pop. They eschewed the (relative) social commentary and Broadway arrangements of their fellow married writing couples (Goffin and King, Mann and Weil) for topics that suited their own personalities: deliriously dizzy pronouncements of love, loyalty, lust, and – on those rare occasions when their artists, almost entirely female-fronted, needed a change of tact – loss, too. The tunes were, typically, similarly upbeat, and none the worse for it. Not only did Barry and Greenwich write some of the most blatantly commercial songs of that decade, but some of the most enduring, too.

Both Jewish, both born in Brooklyn, they nonetheless had markedly different upbringings. Jeff Barry (né Adelberg, born 1938) spent his in a one-room apartment with his mother, sister, and grandfather, a donated turntable, and some big-band 78s that hinted at a greater world beyond his impoverished Flatbush neighborhood. Ellie Greenwich (born 1940)



found herself, at the age of 11, moved from inner Brooklyn to the new suburbs of Levittown, Long Island, where she tuned into rock & roll radio, formed a vocal group at high school, started writing songs, and signed to RCA at age 17.

Though her solo recordings didn’t chart, Greenwich soon hooked up with Leiber and Stoller’s publishing company at the Brill Building, was assigned a writing partner, and delivered Phil Spector one of his first hits, “(Today I Met) The Boy I’m Gonna Marry.” In her own life that guy turned out to be Jeff Barry, who had parlayed his love of country music and a sole connection in the music business into a successful writing career; with the Top Ten “Tell Laura I Love Her” already under his belt (“I feel that I got lucky really early, and without much adversity,” he explains modestly), he, too, was signed to Leiber and Stoller’s Trio Music.

The couple’s subsequent writing partnership with Phil Spector defined the Wall of Sound: nine consecutive A sides for Spector’s Philles label included “Be My Baby,” “Da Doo Ron Ron,” “Then He Kissed Me,” and “Christmas (Baby Please Come Home).” In the midst of the girl-group era, they even scored their own hits as the Raindrops, Barry’s remarkably deep voice and phonetic syllables forming a distinct foundation for Ellie (and her sister) to sing excitedly about “The Kind of Boy You Can’t Forget,” among others.

For Greenwich, it was a dream adventure: “I was young, it was exciting, and I cried when I heard my songs on the radio.” And it got better. Leiber and Stoller established Red Bird Records in early 1964, brought Greenwich and Barry in as partners, and enjoyed an immediate Number One with their “Chapel of Love” by the Dixie Cups. When Greenwich took a meeting with a Long Island acquaintance, George Morton,

the result was the signing of his own girl-group discoveries, the Shangri-Las, the cowriting of "Leader of the Pack," and another 1964 Number One, just a month after Manfred Mann's cover of their "Do Wah Diddy Diddy" also topped the charts. No wonder that when Jeff Barry heard the Beatles for the first time, he thought, "I'm not intimidated."

Barry and Greenwich converted their songwriting successes into their own publishing business, signing Neil Diamond and producing his first several hits. They also reunited with Phil Spector to pen the epic "River Deep, Mountain High" for Ike and Tina Turner. But their successes came at the expense of their marriage. Barry partnered with Don Kirshner to produce, for television, first the Monkees, and then, the Archies; his composition "Sugar, Sugar" was the biggest-selling single of 1969. Ellie Greenwich was thrust, somewhat uncomfortably, into a solo career in the 1970s; she later enjoyed greater rewards, of all kinds, with the musical based on her life, *Leader of the Pack*. Sadly, Ellie Greenwich passed away in August 2009, shortly before her induction into the Hall of Fame was announced. Jeff Barry has continued to produce and write, for television, film, and stage, while also enjoying considerable success with the country music that he loved so much as a Brooklyn child.

Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil

No other American songwriting duo can claim such consistent success over such a persistently long period as the married couple Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, whose treasure trove of classics stretches across five decades and includes the most frequently broadcast song of the twentieth century, "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling."

Barry Mann, born in 1939, was a product of the same Brooklyn Jewish neighborhoods as Mort Shuman, Neil Sedaka, and Carole King. Taught piano from a young age, turned on to rock & roll by Alan Freed, and highly self-motivated, as were many of his generation, he dropped out of architecture school to try his hand in the flourishing music business, both as singer and composer. A successful cowrite for the Diamonds led him to the young Don Kirshner at Aldon Music, which was already home to the partnerships of Goffin-King and Sedaka-Greenfield. There, Mann met Cynthia Weil, born in 1940 and raised on the Upper West Side. Weil's love of Broadway musicals had found her singing her way through college in Manhattan nightclubs, adding her own lyrics to Cole Porter songs, and in turn, to Aldon's door at 1650 Broadway.

Around the time of their meeting, Mann charted under his own name with a Gerry Goffin cowrite, a humorous reflection on the lyrics of the era, "Who Put the Bomp (In the Bomp, Bomp, Bomp)?" Yet within months, the new couple had composed "Uptown," which, as Mann noted, "broke a barrier" for "being different than what was being written before." Seized upon by Phil Spector for the Crystals, "Uptown" led Mann and Weil to similar, equally poignant and poetic, lyrical excursions with "On Broadway" and "Only in America" (each cowritten with Leiber and Stoller).

At Aldon in the early 1960s, Mann and Weil enjoyed a close friendship and rivalry with Carole King and Gerry Goffin, throughout which time "we were so busy going on to the next



thing," said Mann, that "we didn't realize we were part of this golden era that would live on in history." Mann and Weil wrote many hits with Phil Spector, including "Walking in the Rain" and "He's Sure the Boy I Love," as well, of course, as that eternal Righteous Brothers classic. With its almost tragic lyricism, appropriately epic melody, and grandiose arrangement, "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling" topped the charts in early 1965, a time at which the British Invasion was affecting many Brill and music building writers. Yet Mann and Weil thrived under the changing circumstances, writing not only the Animals' "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" (originally recorded, and in a fine version, too, under Mann's own name), but also the garage-rock staples "Kicks" and "Hungry" for America's own Paul Revere and the Raiders.

The couple partially credit their enduring success to affording each other the creative freedom to write with other partners. But they have also demonstrated an amazing ability to surf the musical globe together, penning hits across the decades as diverse as "Blame It on the Bossa Nova," "Make Your Own Kind of Music," "Here You Come Again," "Just Once," and, from the movie *An American Tail*, "Somewhere Out There." "I always thought of Carole and Gerry and Cynthia and myself as the link between old Tin Pan Alley and rock & roll," Mann says. "But I don't want people to think that's where we remain."

Indeed, in recent years, the pair have enjoyed writing for soundtracks and the stage, while Mann has embarked on a successful photography career and Weil has expanded her penchant for lyrics into children's books. In August 2011, Barry and Cynthia, currently entering their sixth decade as professional partners, will celebrate fifty years of marriage.