

Carlo Mastrangelo, a Doo-Wop Voice for Dion and the Belmonts, Dies at 78

By DANIEL E. SLOTNIK, APRIL 6, 2016, The New York Times



From left, Carlo Mastrangelo, Dion DiMucci and Fred Milano of Dion and the Belmonts.
Credit Laurie Records

Carlo Mastrangelo, an original member of [Dion and the Belmonts](#), whose baritone vocals undergirded the group's harmonies on a string of doo-wop hits like "[No One Knows](#)" and "[A Teenager in Love](#)," died on Monday in Boynton Beach, Fla. He was 78.

The cause was cancer, said Warren Gradus, a current member of the Belmonts.

Mr. Mastrangelo grew up in a mostly Italian neighborhood around Arthur Avenue in the Bronx. He played drums, wrote songs and sang, often on street corners or in subway stations, with his Roosevelt High School classmates Angelo D'Aleo and Fred Milano.

They formed the Belmonts in the mid-1950s, taking the band name from the avenue where Mr. Milano lived. (The neighborhood is also called Belmont.) Dion DiMucci, another boy from the neighborhood, joined the group as lead tenor in 1957.

In 1958 they released their first hit, "[I Wonder Why](#)," an upbeat earworm that began with a memorable wordless vocal by Mr. Mastrangelo.

"You hear this kind of nasally bass coming out of Carlo Mastrangelo," Mark Rotella, author of "Amore: The Story of Italian American Song" (2010), said in an interview with NPR in 2010. "And it sounds like the revving of a car engine."

"I Wonder Why" climbed to No. 22 on the Billboard singles chart. The group reached No. 5 with "[A Teenager in Love](#)" in 1959 and No. 3 with "[Where or When](#)" in 1960.

"He actually arranged some of the vocals, and Dion learned a lot of his scattin' from Carlo," said Mr. Gradus, who joined the Belmonts in 1963. "So Dion took a lesson from him."

Mr. DiMucci left the group in 1960 for a solo career; as Dion, he had a string of hits including "[Runaround Sue](#)" and "[The Wanderer](#)." The Belmonts continued to chart with hits like "[Tell Me Why](#)" and "[Come On Little Angel](#)," but Mr. Mastrangelo left in 1962 to pursue a solo career of his own.

In early 1959 the Belmonts toured with Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper. Mr. Holly's drummer got frostbite during the tour, so Mr. Mastrangelo filled in. Mr. Holly, Mr. Valens and the Big Bopper, whose real name was J. P. Richardson, died in a plane crash on Feb. 3, 1959.

In 1971 Mr. Mastrangelo released an album with the progressive rock band Pulse. He continued to play in a variety of ensembles and occasionally performed with the Belmonts, sometimes along with Dion.

Mr. Milano [died](#) in 2012. Mr. D'Aleo still [performs](#) with the group.

Carlo Mastrangelo was born in the Bronx on Oct. 5, 1937. He lived in Boynton Beach with his wife, Lucille, who survives him. He is also survived by three sisters, Margie

DiDio, Martha Onofrietto and Anna Gaudio; a daughter, LuAnn Mastrangelo; two grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter.

Correction: April 7, 2016

An earlier version of this obituary misidentified the city in Florida where Mr. Mastrangelo died. It is Boynton Beach, not Tampa Bay (which is an area and not a city).