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World.” They won their third Grammy award in 1971 for best vocal duo.

Another facet of the Carpenters golden-oriented career is live concerts—the re-creation of their record sound to live performance and the men who do the booking.

“Fortunately, our type of chord voicings are fairly easy to reproduce accurately in live concert performances,” explains Richard. “Recently we bought an Eventide Digital Delay, which turns the voices sung into it into a pseudo dubbed sound.”

The unit has an instant on-off switch and is activated by a Carpenters’ sound technician when a sustained multi-harmony phrase comes up. “There’s a slight lag between the voices put into it and the sound coming out,” says Richard, “but it’s really a remarkably clean effect.”

Careful use of sound equipment, particularly some new electronic devices, is also vital to expanding the Carpenters concert vocals. “During the two years I was spending all my time trying to get record contracts for Spectrum and then the Carpenters, I attended a lot of concerts to study performances,” says Richard. “One of the biggest problems I noticed was singers moving out of the microphones’ best range.”

According to Richard, the pick-up range on most vocal microphones is so narrow that even the slightest moves by a singer changes the overall sound. He uses a uni-directional Shure microphones with cardioid pattern now and makes it a prime rule that nobody moves away from their mike range during a show.

“We never have two people on one microphone,” adds Richard, “because it’s a waste of time. If a singer is just two inches from the microphone, the fullness of the voice can change drastically.”

Richard says that his sister has two voices—a lead voice with a range of about an octave and a fifth, and a falsetto, almost a soprano sound not like the big, round sound she uses on lead. It’s great for harmony.”

Karen says she doesn’t do anything special to care for her voice. “The one thing that wipes you out,” she says, “is getting no sleep. But the road takes its toll on my voice. It wears down like the amps, electric piano and our minds.”

One of the first people to hear the Carpenters perform in concert is their first—and only—agent, Dan Cleary of CMA. “Their first concert was at Valley State Northridge,” recalls Cleary, “and it was no comparison to the places they play today. But even then it was easy to tell there was something special about Richard and Karen, and the way they related to the audience.”

Cleary says his “emotional involvement” with the Carpenters is a very special one. “I saw them from the beginning when Herb Alpert invited everyone to an A&M soundstage. When I first heard about them it was difficult to picture a pretty young lady behind the drums and singing . . . it was almost offensive. But their sound created a special feeling that it didn’t make a difference then.

“In all honesty, when I first saw them I felt they were the most unique musical acts I’ve been privileged to see,” he continues. “There was no one else at that time to compare them to. They had an indefinable aura . . . Herbie had that, Karen and Richard had it then and obviously still do. Little did I know then how much they would develop, especially Richard in making the world aware

of his very fine arrangements and composing abilities.”

Cleary doesn’t like the word “booking” when explaining the Carpenters growth since he met them a little over three years ago.

“I feel it’s more career direction than it is merely selling someone,” he says. “Things happen as the result of planning. Sherwin Bash made a monumental contribution in their lives. He, as we all have, has done things always with a purpose. I’ve always felt that just ‘booking’ them truly wouldn’t be providing the type of service they deserve.”

Cleary feels that the Carpenters sound “can take them just about anyplace they want it to because they’re in such control of it. He explains, “there’s no specific groove for them. They can play anywhere, touch any element. They’ve grown and expanded so much. Theatrics have become a highpoint of their presentation as well as the music.

“Karen’s moving out from behind the drums has meant fantastic growth. Also, they’ve matured on a business level. They’re demanding now more than ever, and they have the right.

“Like anyone who is aware of what they want to do, they’re becoming more and more aware, they are going to be demanding because they have very specific ideas. Because they care about themselves, in that way they’re demanding. If they weren’t, I would feel that I did not make the contribution that I should have.”

Another person involved in the concert progress of the
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