

Deon Jackson

Deon Jackson was an American soul singer and songwriter. He was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on January 26, 1946, and passed away from a brain aneurysm on April 18, 2014, at the age of 68.

Jackson performed in vocal groups and as a soloist in high school. In addition to singing, he played the clarinet and drums. As a student at Ann Arbor High, he formed a vocal group called the Five Crystals, who auditioned for both Tamla and Maximilian. Nothing clicked until 1962 when Ollie McLaughlin, a disc jockey for WHRV in Ann Arbor, caught the Five Crystals singing at a school concert. McLaughlin had already produced Barbara Lewis and Del Shannon, and would soon produce the Capitols of "Cool Jerk" fame.

McLaughlin chose to work exclusively with Deon, which caused the group's break-up. He became the young singer's manager, and recorded two singles on him for Atlantic, neither of which was a success. Jackson, meanwhile, inspired by the Civil Rights movement, had written a song called "Love Makes The World Go 'Round." He hated the song and tossed it aside, but eventually recorded a demo and sent it off to McLaughlin.

Deon's friend Edwin Starr ("War," 1970) was present at the session, as were Thelma Hopkins and Joyce Vincent--the future female part of Tony Orlando & Dawn. The demo sat around for another year until McLaughlin released it on his Carla label. The single reached #11 pop and #3 R&B in early 1966, and has since become a favorite of the Beach Music scene in North and South Carolina. Deon Jackson made the Billboard Hot 100 twice more, with "Love Takes A Long Time Growing" (#77, 1966) and "Ooh Baby" (#65 pop, #28, R&B, 1967). In 1969, he was invited to the Command Performance before the King of Portugal. Also there were Frank Sinatra, the Supremes, King Curtis, the Sweet Inspirations, and Ike & Tina Turner.

Shortly thereafter, Jackson left the record business. For much of the early '70s, he played the piano in such New York City nightspots as Nathan's and Matt Snell's. He later moved his base of operations to Chicago where he worked with special needs students while continuing to perform in various clubs.

His memorial service was held in Ann Arbor on May 2, 2014.