

Like a Fine Wine

In 1972, four Rutgers alumni who formed the band Looking Glass were on top of the music charts with their hit single "Brandy (You're a Fine Girl)."

There are catchy songs, and then there are catchy songs. Mention the early 1970s hit single "Brandy" to somebody old enough to remember it, and she'll walk away with the song's chorus lodged in her head until day's end. Written by Elliot Lurie—one of four Rutgers–New Brunswick alumni (three of them frat brothers) who formed the band Looking Glass—the single sold close to three million copies and topped the *Billboard* charts for a week in August 1972.

The band recorded the song seven times before they got it right. "Brandy"—based on the name of Lurie's high school sweetheart Randy—tells the story of a musician torn between his love for a life at sea and his love for a barmaid. Released as the B-side of "Don't It Make You Feel Good," the song was overlooked (as was the A-side, for that matter) until Harv Moore, a Washington, D.C., disc jockey, took it up as a personal cause.

After years of playing covers and their originals at frat parties and bars in the New Brunswick area, Looking Glass was signed to Epic Records by the legendary Clive Davis. The band, appearing on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* and at Carnegie Hall, never came close to matching "Brandy's" success. And by 1973, Lurie had left for a solo career. He was replaced, but the band soon fell apart.



Members of the band Looking Glass from its album (from left): Elliot Lurie RC'70, Larry Gonsky RC'70, Jeff Grob CC'85, and Pieter Sweval RC'70.

In 1995, Looking Glass reunited to perform "Brandy" and "Jimmy Loves Mary-Anne" at a Madison Square Garden concert. In 2000, "Brandy" was part of the sound track for the film *Charlie's Angels*, for which band members and Pieter Sweval's estate each received a royalty check of \$30,000. (Sweval died of AIDS in 1992.) The members of the band also receive the modest sum of \$4,000 each year for the general use of the song. Says former drummer Jeff Grob, wistfully: "If only liquor commercials were allowed on TV."

— Bill Glavin



What a Difference a Generation Makes

Where the former members of Looking Glass are today.

Larry Gonsky RC'70 (keyboards): teaches music in the Morristown school district.

Jeff Grob CC'85 (drums): after playing with the hard-rock band Starz, returned to school and earned his landscape architecture degree. He works for Stantec, which contributed to the redesign of Route 18. He still plays locally with Richie Ranno's All-Stars.

Elliot Lurie RC'70 (lead guitar): manages actors and recording artists, including Corbin Bleu of *High School Musical* fame, in Los Angeles. He worked as an independent music film supervisor and executive vice president of music at 20th Century Fox.

Pieter Sweval RC'70 (bass): played with Starz and the disco band Skatt Bros. before dying of AIDS in 1992. Royalties are donated by Sweval's family to AIDS research.