

WINDY CITY WINTER CONCERT WRAP

by Mike McCoy (FFS-WI State Representative)

- - How cold was it in Skokie? By the 8 p.m. show time the outside temperature had fallen from the day's high of 3 above to about 10 below zero, with the wind chill pushing it to around minus 25. Vince Johnson was overheard saying it was the coldest he's ever been. Even Brian Eichenberger, a native of Apple Valley, Minn., now living in Las Vegas, said he was having some difficulties adjusting to the cold.

- - Among the new fans the Freshmen made at the show were those from the Performing Arts Center who were working the concert. At least a couple stood in line with other fans after the show at the table where the guys signed color photos and CD's. One usher even stopped me as I tried to return to the auditorium for the second half of the show, to ask for FFS membership literature.

- - After the show, Vince, Brian and Bob gathered with fans in the adjacent hotel bar. For Vince, the bad news was that the kitchen already had closed for dining room service. When someone pointed out to Vince that there was an IHOP just across the parking lot that appeared to be open, Vince noted he already had had breakfast there this morning. Grand Rapids Jack Morrison came to the rescue - letting Vince avoid a cold walk across the lot - by ordering pizzas delivered to the hotel. The good news for Vince was that, by the time the pizzas arrived the crowd had thinned, leaving him with more to eat.

- - Among the states represented by fans who had traveled from their homes to attend the concert were West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Each state had at least two representatives at the show. Both of the visitors from Pennsylvania indicated they'd be joining the Four Freshmen Society shortly.

- - After Bob's announcement from the stage just before intermission that the Four Freshmen Society had a table in the lobby for those wishing more information about the fan club, the table was swamped. Jack Morrison, Wayne Corey and I were kept so busy (even after we ran out of material to hand out) that I'm not even sure we were the only ones staffing the table.

- - Bob also announced during the show that the Freshmen would be returning to the studio later this year to produce another CD! With so many calls for a Group 22 CD, that's great news indeed!

A HOT TIME IN THE COLD TOWN

by Wayne Corey (FFS Wisconsin)

The big cold January wind howled in off Lake Michigan and met the Four Freshmen head-on in Chicago. The cold wind lost.

The Freshmen warmed up a late-January audience of almost 700 in Skokie's Centre East Theater complex. The crowd responded enthusiastically to a 31 song show that included for fans some predictable selections and some that were much less predictable. A delight for this longtime Freshmen fan was the inclusion of nine - nine! - songs that have never been recorded by any Four Freshmen group.

Four Freshmen Society members in attendance were thrilled by the new material, hoping that most of the new songs in the book can form the base for an exciting new studio album.

Four Brian Eichenberger arrangements of Great American Songbook classics were highlights of the new material. "Skylark," the Hoagy
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Carmichael/Johnny Mercer gem, left the audience breathless with its beauty late in the first set. "Somethings Gotta Give," "My One and Only Love" and "That Old Feeling" were three more new oldies that sound as if they are finding a permanent place in the Freshmen repertoire.

The great Greg Stegeman-arranged uptempo romp on "Young and Foolish," Brian's solo trip down the yellow brick road, "If I Only Had a Brain," Vince Johnson's tour de force on "All Around the World" and Bob Ferreira's stunning take on Michel Legrand's "How Do You Keep the Music Playing" were terrific crowd pleasers. And you may call it madness but "I Call It Love" has been a regular crowd pleaser since added to the book last year. The song has become a concert staple in a short period of time.

"Young and Foolish" and "I Call It Love" will appear on the Four Freshmen Society CD exclusive of the Amsterdam concert. Both songs fairly scream for a first-rate studio tracking in the near future!

"Day In, Day Out" opened the concert with an arrangement somewhat less bold and uptempo than in past incarnations of the *Road Show* classic. Freshmen fans who mourn the absence of keyboards may have a point on this selection. Fans accustomed to the brassy Stan Kenton band treatment by Group #3 find the guitar, bass and drums backing lacking instrumental oomph.

Five songs from *5 Trombones* and three from *5 Trumpets* were joined by two songs each from *5 Guitars* and *Love Lost*. Vince Johnson's scat work was a highlight of a delightful take on "You Stepped Out Of A Dream." Curtis Calderon brought back memories of Chet Baker with his trumpet solo on "I Remember You" as Brian added tasty guitar fills. "Mam'selle" is back in the book after an absence of, what, decades? Curtis swung the solo on "Somebody Loves Me" and "Angel Eyes" was taken at a slightly faster-than-normal pace that worked surprisingly well.

Both sets had closers from *5 Trumpets*. Curtis double-timed the trumpet solo on "Every Time We Say Goodbye" to wrap the first set and the Freshmen smoked on "After You've Gone" to close the second. But if it was the FF take on "There Will Never Be Another You" that had old-time fans buzzing in the lobby! "Another You" has appeared on several albums over the decades in takes that ranged from adequate (*5 Trombones*) to almost unlistenable (*Live At Butler*). The song now belongs, make no mistake, to Group #22. The current FF ensemble has mastered the song and the arrangement. Fans familiar with the historic FF book were delighted with the dead-on vocal discipline all four singers brought to the song at Skokie.

If the Four Freshmen are supposed to sound like the trombone section of the Kenton band, the Group #22 version of "When Your Lover Has Gone" provides a brilliant example. The Kenton influence was unmistakable. Along with "I Could Have Told You," the Freshmen have brought back two songs from *Love Lost* that are wonderful recreations.

The harmonies on "Indian Summer" dazzled Freshmen fans on *In Person*. The harmonies of Group #22 on the same song in Skokie brought aural radiance to an enraptured audience.

The Frosh abandoned their microphones, moved to the front edge of the stage and encored with the acappella version of "Their Hearts Were Full Of Spring." With those warm weather thoughts the audience headed back into the bitterly cold night. Fans from at least six states braved sub-zero temperatures to hear one of the hottest young acts in music today. For a couple of hours the Windy City winter had been tamed and our hearts and heads were filled with the joy the Four Freshmen bring to listeners who truly care about the music.