

The "TWO" Freshmen - Ken Errair and Don Barbour by Alex Corsello (NY)

When I was young, I would wait patiently for Capitol to release the next Four Freshmen album. After a trip to the local record store, I would open up my new Freshmen album and while it was playing I would read the liner notes. The liner notes always had something interesting to say about the group and about that particular album. Next, I would read the inside sleeve that the record came in. Often with Capitol, the inside sleeve had pictures and references to other Capitol albums. I learned that Capitol had many wonderful artists, Soundtracks, and Broadway Cast albums on its roster as well as the Four Freshmen. One album that always caught my eye on the inside sleeve was one called "Solo Session" with Ken Errair. Another album that I became aware of later on was an album by Don Barbour after he left the group, called "Here's the Solo Voice of Don Barbour." Ken's album came out in the mid-1950's and Don's in 1961. Being such an avid fan of the Four Freshmen and knowing these two voices and their songs so well, I became curious about these records. I was unable to buy them or even find them when originally released. However today, through the wonder of ebay and the Internet, I was able to secure excellent copies of both of these LPs. Don's came all the way from London and is in wonderful condition and in STEREO, no less. Ken's came from Utah and also is in wonderful condition, both record and jacket.

Ken Errair's "**Solo Session**" (Capitol T-807) is a really good album. From its Capitol album number, it appears to have been sandwiched in between **The Five Trumpets** and **Five Saxes** albums. It has wonderful liner notes and good luck wishes from his former colleagues, Stan Kenton and the Four Freshmen. Plus he sings many of the songs he did as solos when he was with the group. Classics such as "Don't Take Your Love From Me" and "Gone With the Wind" are just a couple of the choices on this LP. I was further surprised and happy that Pete Rugolo arranged and conducted the album. Obviously Capitol was happy about Ken going solo and went all out to produce, as only that label could, an excellent well thought-out record. Each song displays Ken's beautiful voice. The only trouble I have with the LP is any minute, such as in Ken's version of "The Nearness of You" from Voices in Modern, I expect to hear Bob, Don and Ross coming in for a particular part of the song. As good as Ken was, I miss his three partners when I hear this album. Other than that, I will always be baffled why this album didn't propel Ken into that upper echelon of solo artists, given the era it was released.

I wasn't sure what to expect from Don's album Here's the Solo Voice of Don Barbour (Capitol ST-1716). By its number, it seems to have been released around the time of Stars in Our Eyes. Before I received it I assumed that Don sang and played guitar on this record. I was wrong. Don has a beautiful orchestra conducted by Bob Bain, who would later go on to arrange for other Capitol artists such as Nancy Wilson and Sandler & Young. Don's voice is in good form here. Two surprises were a new version of "Baltimore Oriole" and from Voices in Love, a solo version of "While You are Gone." Like

Ken's album, at any moment I expected Ross, Bob and Ken to chime in. But that is just me. Others who listen to these albums may not have that issue! The album notes are poignant. They described how this album was finished just six weeks prior to his untimely death. This solo album truly must have been a labor of love for Don. He sang at his own tempo, in his own keys and didn't have to worry whether his solo fit the ensemble. The liner notes placed high hopes on this recording, but I am not sure what would have happened had Don lived as far as his solo career is concerned. Waiting around the corner were The Beatles and Beach Boys, so there is no telling how Don's career might have fared given that kind of competition.

Each of these albums held promise for Ken and Don. However, most members of any group that leave and go solo always seem to have more to overcome. No one single member appears to be any greater than the group itself. Even stars like Diana Ross can never really climb out of the shadow of the Supremes. Nor can any of the Beatles. Whether it was poor timing or lack of substantial promotion by the label, these two recordings, while entertaining and interesting, unfortunately didn't seem to get anywhere near the Billboard charts. It would be great if the Four Freshmen Society could get a copy of the masters and make CD's for all of us. True Four Freshmen fans would want both of these albums as part of their total collection. After more than forty years, they finally are a part of mine.

Diamonds Favor Freshmen Dick Hatfield, Ohio Rep

The Diamonds did their excellent show at Lemon Bay High School auditorium in Englewood, Florida, January 13th. Kathy and I spend January and February here.

Their appearance was part of a six-show Performing Arts Series which, this year, includes the Artie Shaw Band and Cab Jivers, led by Cab Calloway's grandson.

In the times I've seen the Diamonds they always speak reverently of, and complimentary to, the Four Freshmen. In one of their sets they do a medley in which they impersonate the Four Aces, Four Lads, Four Preps, and conclude with a full version of Freshmen's "Day by Day." Well, this time I got blown out of my seat when Diamond Joey Finetti picked up his trombone and flat-nailed Bob Flanigan's "Day By Day" solo. Man, it was verbatim!

At the break, I had to talk with this cat. He told me he once auditioned for the Freshmen via Fresh friend Jamie Stuart. Also, he seemed to know Stegeman, Beisner, and other former members. Small world, ain't it?

I hope you Freshmen Fans will join me and catch the Diamonds whenever they're in your area.