

to really open up their ears and ultimately, inspire and motivate them to rise to that level. Next, I talk about general concepts like swing interpretation, intonation, solid time awareness, and phrasing together. With limited time available I wasn't able to dissect each of their charts but concentrated on pointing out the things they did that worked and also the areas they needed to work on. One wonders if these teenagers are receptive to a stranger's criticisms but hopefully they realize that I really care about what they're doing and grateful that they're trying to do something musical and challenging. The good news is that, by in large, these young vocal students sounded great and want to do it. This speaks well for the future.

The purpose of this article is to stress the importance of Freshmen clinics as a way to build good musicians in the years ahead (hell, we Freshmen fans are all products of jazz education) and quite selfishly, inherit a fan base that keeps this sound alive for all time. I hope that the guys in the current group or I can offer these workshops whenever The Four Freshmen appear in a college setting. The torch must be kept bright and passed on. . .

By Greg Stegeman

Freshmen Finish 60th Anniversary On A High Note

Tonight when the group sang "Please Remember", I knew that every one of the 506 people here at the beautiful, sold out Bankhead Theater in Livermore would remember where they were on New Year's Eve, 2008. The Freshmen had helped open this venue last year and I'll bet they will be invited back every year. I sure hope so because it's only 80 miles from my house in Aptos.

The enthusiastic audience applauded vigorously and so did the fellow next to me. He also let out a loud "whoop" after every one of the 21 songs they sang. There was midtune applause for Brian's guitar, Curtis' trumpet and Vince's whistling, scarce as it was. The printed program touted Vince's whistling. I'm sure old people love the good whistling. They've never forgotten Elmo Tanner's "Heartaches" or Roger Whittaker's "Mexican Whistler", had Vince done his great whistling on "If I only had a brain", he'd have brought down the house.

Curtis professed a special fondness for northern California but said the high house prices kept him from living here. I think I heard him say the same thing at a southern California performance. When he asked all the society members to applaud, he calculated there were about seven. I thought it was more like 11, but I did see several folks signing up in the lobby.

Bob thanked Nancy McKendrie for the dark and light green M&M's she provided in the green room. Bob said that last year he told her green was their favorite. Then Curtis kiddingly said they really preferred red ones.

After the show, the fellows signed CD's and photos in the lobby while everyone enjoyed champagne and desserts provided by the Wente Winery here in Livermore. While I was milling around sipping and polishing off little pumpkin pies, almond snowballs and raspberry strudel, I met Max Vaffner, an old friend of Bob Flanigan who recently moved here from Las Vegas. They met way back when The Four Freshmen were first starting out in Indiana. Max once was a member of Bill Haley and the Comets, then with the Jodimars and later played in house bands, backing up Sinatra and others. All in all, this concert was a perfect way to end the old year and ring in the new one.

By Jim Healey
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