

BRIAN EICHENBERGER'S POP MASTERPIECE

by Wayne Corey
FFS Wisconsin



I like Ike. A lot.

Whoops, make that “iKE.” The name of Brian Eichenberger’s new project may have had some twists and turns on the way to “iKE” but the music on “One” is a straight-ahead joy to hear. And yes, the name is spelled with a small “i” and capital “KE.” iKE. Brian says it was sort of a nickname, “Back in the day...”

It was going to be a five player band and be called Eich Five. But there were never really five players, and there was never really a band. Amazon.com sells the CD by Eich Five, but the name on the CD quickly morphed into “iKE,” as “iKE” it has remained.

One is a pop/rock album. Let there be no misunderstanding: a member of the Four Freshmen has written and recorded a pop/rock album and it is filled with absolute musical joy. Brian says it’s comprised of ten of his best original tunes. The music may come as a surprise or a shock to some Freshmen fans, but it just demonstrates again the remarkable array of talent that exists within the Four Freshmen group #22.

Your reviewer is not an expert on pop/rock, but I know good music when I hear it. Hoping to overcome an obvious personal bias when it comes to work by any member of the Four Freshmen, I enlisted the analysis of

two people whose ears and tastes I really respect. They concurred. “One” is all killer, no filler.

Brian wrote all of the songs and plays most of the instruments. Group #20’s “Still Fresh” CD documented his keyboard chops. “One” offers conclusive proof. We also hear him on multiple guitars and bass. Twin Cities musician Tait Cameron does the drums and percussion work, while CD producer Jon Herchert adds guitar on three tracks. Rebecca Sorensen is the added voice on “Ghost Band.”

Brian can write and perform pop/rock music at an extraordinarily high level. With Herchert, he has also brought remarkable engineering and production skills to this project. Noted rock writer Susan Masino cited “great production” that, combined with the songwriting, makes the album “very commercial.”

“He’s got a couple of hits on here,” Masino told me. She should know. She is the author of the definitive biography of AC/DC, “Let There Be Rock” and counts the late Wizard of Waukesha, Les Paul, among her many musical friends.

Four Freshmen fans believe they know what Brian sounds like and, indeed, we do. But this is different music with a different sound. Like many artists, Brian appears influenced by much of the music he has heard through the years. Expert ears hear other influences when they listen to “One.” Sting, lead vocalist for The Police, is most often mentioned. Repeated listening to the CD suggests influence from numerous pop performers including Jack Johnson and Prince. Brian may have been influenced by many, but there is nothing in the music that is derivative. The end result is a distinctive sound that is distinctly “iKE.”

Favorite “One” tracks are in the ear of the beholder. Susan Masino picked “One Thing,” “When You’re Gone” and “Anybody Out There.” Singer Christopher Corey, after months of repeat listening, named “If I Gave You My Heart” and “Still,” the latter a lovely song about a relationship of many years. This writer is fond of everything on the CD but I especially enjoy “Still” and the rocking “Rebecca.”

Any analysis of Brian’s CD must include a comment on the final track, “Ghost Band.” Yes, it is obviously about Brian’s day job, so to speak. The opening line says, “Way back before we were born, we used to be really big.” His tongue remains firmly in cheek for the remainder of the track about “the sound that never dies.” Some Freshmen fans chuckle when they hear “Ghost Band.” Others may not. Personally, I think the song is a lighthearted look at Brian’s main musical life since 1996. Thanks to FF group #22, the Freshmen sound is “the sound that never dies.”

“One” can be purchased through www.iKEmusic.com for \$10 or downloaded for \$5. It’s a bargain! “One” is a stunning accomplishment, the opening solo volley from an artist and concept that this listener hopes will lead to much more. We want Brian in the Four Freshmen beyond any doubt. But this writer also wishes him the solo success that his immense talent deserves.

Note: The author wants to thank Susan Masino and Christopher Corey for enthusiastically lending their ears and expertise. A version of this review was published at the Four Freshmen-Wisconsin Website, www.madison.com/communities/4fresh.



ARTIST’S NOTE: Of course my tune “Ghost Band” is supposed to be a joke. I’ve listened to my share of Randy Newman and Don Fagen over the years, so that tongue in cheek humor vibe wore off on me a little. I wrote most of that one on the bus during a Japan tour we did a few years back. I was looking for a lyrical idea for this sort of “halloweenish” tune I was working on, someone had said something that day about the FF being a great “Ghost Band” ... I thought that was funny, the idea of this band of ghosts on stage rocking out - and it just fit, so I went with it.
Best,
Brian