



Fresh News

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FOUR FRESHMEN

by Joella Cain, PALMBEACHER

Many of our readers remember "necking" at 16 in their first car to the radio purring "It's a Blue World Without You." 1952 would be the year, and the Four Freshmen were the hottest group around. The 1950s were simple, innocent, and yes, uncomplicated in many ways. So was the music.

In 1948 four guys from Butler University in Indiana put their natural talents together and formed a group of perfectly blended voices and instruments. It was the last hurrah of the "big bands" playing high school and college venues, and Stan Kenton, who had an innovative orchestra and played these gigs just loved the Freshmen. He promoted them throughout the Midwest, then coast to coast. They became the rage from 1952 to the 1960s, when psychedelic clothes and hippies using four cords to pluck their second-hand guitars replaced this music.

However, there is some redemption with the new Four Freshmen group performing internationally because they have recreated the instrumentation and sound of the original group. Another bonus is that this new group is so talented, even more so than the original. They bring a new kind of presence to the stage.

The Royal Room in the Cabaret at the Colony Hotel in Palm Beach was the location for the Freshmen to strut their stuff recently, and strut they did to standing ovations, cheers and accolades from the audience.

These fab four revitalize a wonderful 1950s sound wave

The boys are young - the oldest, the drummer, being 33. Talent is their middle name, and all four play several instruments, arrange music and generally harmonize like angels.

Brian Eichenberger, who sings the lead, play bass guitar, piano and is a master musical arranger. He is from Apple Valley, Minn., and is the third lead singer in the 55-year history of the Four Freshmen. He is one terrific musician, combining his arranging talents with bassist, Vince Johnson, to create a new rendition of several oldies.

Curtis Calderon sings the second part in the group harmonies and plays a great trumpet, guitar, piano and flugelhorn. He is

from San Antonio, Texas, and is a natural talent. He is the newest member - two years with the Freshmen - and is a jazz buff.

Vince Johnson has a bachelor of music from California State University and a masters degree in jazz studies from University of Southern California. Predominantly a bass player, he crawls inside the instrument and becomes the music during his solo, "You've Changed." This is a new number added to the group recently and arranged by fellow Freshmen, Brian Eichenberger. This number literally stopped the show and held the packed room breathless, then suspended the audience in a time and moment, which only a master musician can accomplish.

The oldest member of the band, in more ways than one, is drummer Bob Ferreira, who worked with the Freshmen for the past 12 years and is 33 years old. A beautiful voice, Ferreira sings the fourth part harmony and plays drums. Hailing from Seattle, Wash., Ferreira studied with one of the original Freshmen at Edmond Community College.

The innovated group bring an hour of nostalgia to the audience with "Poinciana," "Laura," "Graduation Day," "After You've Gone" and many other wonderful tunes played and executed with a blending of voices that carry a myriad of memories to the more mature.

For the younger audience, it's something new.

In the past several years the group has toured Japan, Holland, New Zealand and in the states from coast to coast. Las Vegas is a biggie and is home base for several of the Freshmen.

Rob Russell, who booked the Four Freshmen into the Cabaret in Palm Beach, didn't expect such a rousing reception with standing ovations each show and people returning several nights later to catch the performance again.

Russell gets a sabbatical and closes the Royal Room for a few weeks in May, but reopens May 28. Two shows per evening will continue throughout this summer, but only on Friday and Saturday, with a dinner show around 7 p.m. and the second show around 9:30. Dancing and cocktails in the Polo Lounge after the show finalize a perfect evening. Great entertainers are on the docket and the Colony, even out of season, will be hoping this year.