

# The Four Freshmen in Maryland

By John D. Fluck, FFS Maryland

On April 29th, the Four Freshmen made a too-rare appearance in the mid-Atlantic area, performing to a large, appreciative crowd at the Chesapeake Arts Center in Brooklyn Park, Maryland, a Baltimore suburb. Sponsored by the Performing Arts Association of Linthicum, the group presented more than 22 selections, ranging from old favorites to new arrangements from the *Great American Songbook*.

Looking dapper in matching pin-striped grey suits, the guys were in great voice, singing much of the concert around one microphone with just guitar and bass accompaniment. As usual, Curtis's trumpet and flugelhorn solos were both inventive and inspired, and Vince's bass and whistling solos were crowd-pleasers.

From the Four Trombones album, we heard *Angel Eyes*, *You Stepped Out of a Dream*, and *Guilty*, and selections from the Four Trumpets album included *Easy Street*, *Give Me the Simple Life*, and *Graduation Day*. The newer arrangements included *Skylark*, *Something's Gotta Give* and *That Old Feeling* from the *In Session* album, and *Star Dust*, *A Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square* and *I Can't Believe That You're in Love with Me* from their forthcoming CD.

All in all, it was a lovely way to spend a pleasant Sunday afternoon, which left everyone hoping for a return engagement in the near future.

## Four Freshmen in Norman (continued)

"We have some younger fans that really appreciate what we do. I like to refer to us as we're kind of like the espresso of vocal groups, meaning that sometimes it's an acquired taste," he said, laughing. "The people who appreciate our music have a more refined pallet in listening to music. Especially the younger people who really appreciate what we do."

Though much of what the group does is based off of the original group's vision, Ferreira said the four hope to continue to record music, perform live and expand their fan base.

"Any musician's goal is when they share music is to get it out to as many people as possible, and hope that they appreciate it," he said. "Not just for the money or for fame, but to make sure they are able to express their music."

# Four Freshmen's Unplugged Music at Royal Room Brings Out Beauty of Vocal Arrangements.

By David A. Frye, Special To *The Daily News*

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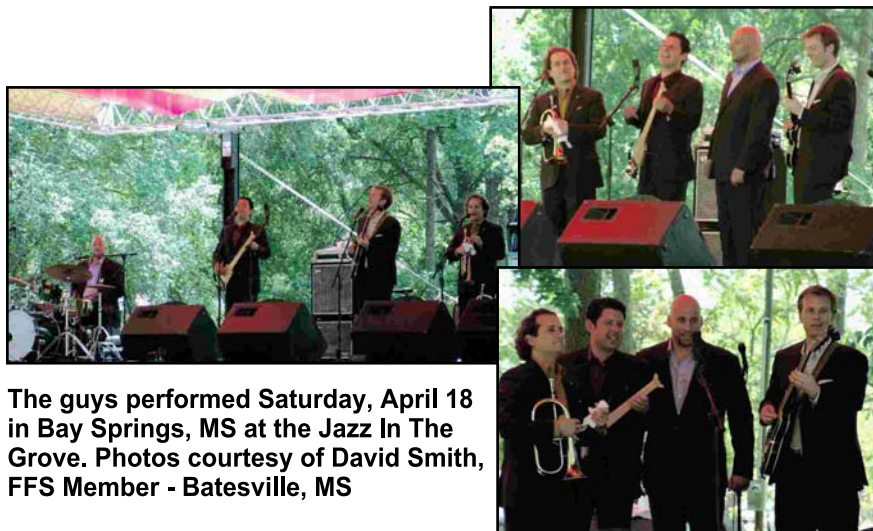
With their return to the Royal Room at The Colony Wednesday night, the Four Freshmen confirmed that the classic sound that has been making audiences beam for more than 60 years is alive and well and as fresh as ever.

The original concept of this self-contained group of four musicians, singing a super-tight, ultra-hip four-part harmony over a foundation of straight-ahead jazz, dates to 1948, and with the current bearers of the flame comfortably at the wheel, there doesn't appear to be an end in sight. The 2011 Four Freshmen - guitarist Brian Eichenberger, bassist Vince Johnson, Curtis Calderon on horn and drummer Bob Ferreira - have been performing together under the brand since 2001, and in that time they have taken the franchise to a new level by remaining true to the original while applying that gold standard to some select new material.

After warming up the crowd with a few standards such as *Young and Foolish* and *Angel Eyes*, the quartet changed things up in a way that was truly old school, lo-fi and borderline magical. Reconfiguring at the edge of the stage around one lone microphone, the four presented a series of its best-known numbers and some future fresh chestnuts - blending their voices and the accompaniment naturally, with just a hint of amplification. This "unplugged" effect brought out the true beauty of those classic vocal arrangements and allowed each of these journeyman musicians to shine, both individually and as a group. Trumpeter Calderon had the greatest advantage in this setting, playing completely off-mike and tastefully blending into the natural mix.

Overall the mood was light and upbeat, with some entertaining banter between the songs. On the rousing *Plenty of Money and You*, Ferreira laid down a light but solid beat by using the brushes on a music stand - trading off solo eight-counts in the middle section with Johnson, who artfully scat-sang along with his solos on an electric fretless bass.

Among the highlights were the sweet samba hit, *Poinciana*, and new arrangements by Eichenberger of two tunes that, surprisingly, were never attempted by the original Freshmen: Hoagy Carmichael's *Stardust* and the classic *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square*. Both were downright electric, inducing chills throughout the Colony crowd. Rounding out the evening were simply gorgeous readings of Freshmen signatures *It's A Blue World*, *Day By Day* and *Route 66*. Considering the overall strength of the current lineup, the combination of the Four Freshmen with the intimacy of the Royal Room is a near-perfect match.



The guys performed Saturday, April 18 in Bay Springs, MS at the Jazz In The Grove. Photos courtesy of David Smith, FFS Member - Batesville, MS