

2005 FFS Amsterdam Convention

Jack Morrison

Hats off to Henny Grote (Chairman), Palle Christensen, Rob van Alberda, Jan Smeding, Rein de Graaff, Pascal Aartman and their entire committee for making this year's Four Freshmen Society Convention such a great success.

Music is an important focal point of having a convention. First to hear that special Four Freshmen harmony, and then to enjoy the sound of "GOOD" music in general. This year's convention was filled with all of the above and in spades. There were more hours of music provided than at any previous convention. Thursday's night headliner was an 80-year-old songstress named Rita Rey. She is often referred as the first lady of jazz in (Netherlands) Europe. She was indeed very entertaining. Rein de Graaff (the musical director of the convention) followed with his own trio along with a young, very talented lady singer named Francien van Tuinen. Many of you may remember Rein who has performed at past Conventions. This was followed by Rein leading a jam session with Yaz Ichuura on trombone (Japan) and Barry Aldrous (UK) on clarinet. This went on past one in the morning.

Friday night we experienced the pleasure of hearing Frank Sinatra (or I should say a Frank Sinatra sound alike - Pascal Maertens) backed by a young nine piece band called the "Young Sinatra's Big Band". It was great hearing that Sinatra sound and all those great big band arrangements that was part of the Sinatra mystique. Closing your eyes, you could imagine Frank being with us! It was now 10:30 and we were all ready to hear "OUR GUYS"! It gets repetitious to say how good they are, so I only say the next one hour and ten minutes flew by in milliseconds. No new arrangements, just a nice mix of old and newer arrangements. Newlywed Brian does such a nice job moving the Freshmen forward with his arrangements and lead vocals. Next, more jamming again till after 1 AM.

Saturday night was a special treat, as we were bussed to the Concertgebouw, a 19th century concert hall with great acoustics. After hearing the New Millennium Jazz Orchestra perform, the audience of over 1500 people were treated to a great performance by the Freshmen. Bob's "More Love" solo was a big hit with the crowd. I felt Vince sounded better on the trombone than I ever recall. And when the orchestra returned to play with the Freshmen for the last five numbers, Curtis seemed pumped up and really let loose with his trumpet (perhaps he wasn't going to let the trumpet section of the Orchestra show him up). I asked Curtis after the show about this and he said that at so many smaller venues he feels he has to hold the sound down a bit, but said in this Big Hall he could let it all hang out. Vince ran out of breath on one of his whistling solos - must be the first time for this. His bass was damaged when unloading at the Concert Hall but Vince did a beautiful job on the one he borrowed from the Orchestra.

This convention provided all the favorite things we all seem to enjoy. Such as, sing along of the wannabies, led by Yas. The group seemed to grow with each session, finally with over 40 of us harmonizing along with Ross, Sue and Vince on Saturday

afternoon. The "Fresh Talk" session was popular too. This included frank answers by some of the Freshmen when asked "When did you first fall in love with the Freshmen sound and when did you first hear of the Freshmen?" "I did not hear of the Freshmen until I was called for an audition" or "It took me many months after becoming a Freshmen before I really loved the sound." Wow - frank answers. THEY ALL SAID THEY DO LOVE THE FRESHMEN HARMONIES NOW VERY MUCH!

General Comments -

I was told there were approximately 50 people registered from the US and about 100 Europeans. They did sell individual tickets each night the Freshmen performed. So audience grew from 120 first night to over 200 the second night.

Ross was giving his usual hug and warm greeting to everybody who walked into the hotel.

Bob Flanigan looked better and more relaxed than anytime I have seen him in past few years. Also, he wore his hair a little shorter.

Europe and the U.S. both have many excellent jazz musicians.

The Holiday Inn - Amsterdam was a very nice hotel.

The Committee put together a booklet with a history, pictures and facts about the Freshmen. They also made a large color poster with all the CD covers of Freshmen recordings. I hope these will be available from the Music Mart. If so, be sure to get a copy as you will really enjoy having it.



Palle, Ross, and Yas presenting the poster with all the CD labels



Six Freshmen as the panel in Fresh Talk.