

'Blue Moon' Convention (continued)

Bob also mentioned in passing that "We'll Be Together Again" was written by Billy May on back of a menu at El Rancho in Las Vegas.

Asked about his favorite instrument, Vince Johnson said after earlier learning piano and other instruments (trombone, etc.), he now prefers whistling..

Ross Barbour's favorite Four Freshmen song? "I Get Along Without You Very Well."

Bob Flanigan and Autie Goodman picked as their favorite Freshmen numbers "We'll Be Together Again" as their choices. Favorites of others?: Brian Eichenberger, "There Will Never Be Another You," and Rod Henley, "Angel Eyes." Vince Johnson said there were too many to pick from. Curtis Calderon declined to pick a favorite and Bob Ferreira said he leans toward "Invitation" as his choice.

Bob Ferreira said in response to a question that the Four Freshmen much enjoy meeting fans immediately after a show, but wanted them to understand how important it was for the Freshmen to keep healthy and their voices in shape when they're touring so they're able to give each show their best. Thus, at times they may have to pass on meeting fans to avoid catching or passing on a "bug." He asked for understanding.

To the surprise, and pleasure, of fans present, ex-Freshmen Greg Stegeman called from home just as "Fresh Talk" was ending to greet everyone and express regret at his having to miss the gathering. Rod Henley took the call on his cell phone and held it next to the mike so all in the room could hear him.

"What a great convention. I gotta tell you guys, usually there are people that say they are the biggest fans of this or that. Or they say they are the group's #1 fan (even though hundreds may claim it), but I do think Ray just might be our #1 fan. It's a close call with lots of our fans, but I may have to give it to Ray!"

"Thank you Chaz, Gael, Jim and any others involved in this year's convention. It was spectacular. Ever since the convention committee was formed years back, each convention has gotten better and better." — Curtis



Palle Christensen, Wayne Corey, Yas Ichiura.

Friday Night Scenes from Atlanta

Friday night's Four Freshman concert (separately reviewed in this issue) was the first of two performances by the Freshmen at the convention and featured the very hot 17-member Georgia-based GPC Jazz Ensemble to open the show. That group then did 11 numbers with the Freshmen. When GPC concluded, Bob Flanigan was first to jump up to lead the standing ovation for GPC.

Earlier, Bob jokingly requested during the show the Freshmen do 'Surfer Girl.' To Bob's surprise, and perhaps the audience's, the Freshmen complied with an improvised and abbreviated instrumental version kicked off by Curtis Calderon.

In announcing the "Five Trombone" arrangements being premiered that night, Bob Ferreira told the audience the Freshmen also were working on an arrangement of "Thriller" (the Michael Jackson smash hit). The audience sat silent (perhaps stunned?) before Bob cracked a smile. (In today's terminology, we'd just been punked.)

The Four Freshmen opened the second half of the show with an informal improvised instrumental version of 'Tequila' to help speed everyone's getting seated. It accomplished its purpose.

Other Atlanta Scenes

Ross Barbour told fans gathered to sing Friday at the afternoon "Wannabees" session that "In This Whole Wide World," the next song up, was written on a notecard, then tossed on the floor by the composer who was working with them after he had played only a few bars on the piano. He apparently didn't think it was of Freshmen caliber. The Freshmen, however, immediately took to it and collectively rushed to pick the card up, saving it for what become one of the group's best-loved tunes.

Freshmen lead singer Brian Eichenberger was spotted around noon Friday heading out of the hotel for a run and sporting his new summer look: short (and naturally dark) hair.

Thursday's opening event was a "jam session" open to all attendees. On stage were a number of talented musicians, among them Bob Flanigan, Ross Barbour, Autie Goodman, Rod Henly and Ray Brown, all making appearances to sing (Ross, Autie and Rod) or just speak (Bob and Ray).

Ross sang one number, 'Georgia,' with lyrics he altered to salute the convention host state and Four Freshmen fans.

Flanigan told the audience in his brief comments -- which included his thanks to them for all of their support-- 'I don't sing anymore, play anymore (pause) but I DRINK!' As the audience laughed, he then held up a glass of water.

Ray, who served as the evening's MC, told those urging him to sing that he no longer does due to a bout with mouth cancer.

The Freshmen's Saturday night show in Atlanta ending the three-day convention, was sold out as of early Friday.

A popular gathering place for fans during the day was the "Club 113," a hotel meeting room used during the convention for socializing, perusing offerings at the Music Mart table and tables of other record dealers, talking with hosts of the 2010 convention about plans for that Annapolis, Maryland, event, bidding in a multi-day silent auction for mainly Four Freshmen items as a fund-raiser for the Atlanta convention budget, picking up convention apparel ordered in advance, and just snacking on free popcorn. (The original Club 113 stood in Ft. Wayne, at 113 Washington Blvd., where the Freshmen, then called the Toppers, had their first professional gig.)

A number of fans arrived over several days before the official Thursday start of the convention, renewing friendships from past conventions and just visiting in the area. Four Freshmen "Ambassador" Ross Barber often could be found in the lobby near the hotel entrance daytime on Wednesday and Thursday, warmly welcoming arriving attendees as he does every year.

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