

“Fresh Talk” - Anyway

by Ann Smith (N. TX Rep)

Even though there was no scheduled “Fresh Talk” session this year at the convention - and the female counterpart with the wives of former Freshmen didn’t materialize - we still had our own version at a late night bull session with Vince and Curtis. We were able to hear their views on what’s happening with the Freshmen and ask them a lot of questions.

Curtis was very enthusiastic about what’s coming up in the future with the new management, IVI (International Ventures, Inc.). Without any specifics, he told of their long term planning that spans a number of years. He’s sure it will pay off and asks us to be patient if there’s something we want to see happen right away and yet it takes a while. Remember, they’ve been managers for Mel Torme and George Shearing - and have done a lot for both of them.

One of the participating fans said to Curtis that his trumpet sounds as smooth and sweet as a flugelhorn. Curtis assured us that he works at making it sound that way.

One piece of news that was a surprise to most of us is that they’ve switched around the voices again. Vince now sings the third part, instead of the second, and finds that range most comfortable and suitable for his voice. This change started when Curtis entered the group, singing the second part - his first official performance as a Freshmen being the Jerry Lewis telethon on September 3rd (according to IVI).

Vince was asked at some point how he decided to go into music. He said that he started in junior high with drums, piano, and clarinet. Did you get that? This is the guy who plays bass, trombone, and guitar for the group. He did say that the bass was his primary instrument - that he has the most experience and the most training on the bass - and that’s how he made his living (before becoming a Freshman). Also, in case you didn’t know it, Vince was a big Four Freshmen fan for a long time before becoming a Freshmen himself. He said he got hooked on the Freshmen when he was 15. For that matter, so did Greg Stegeman. Greg said it all for me (in one of his Fresh News articles) when he referred to the Four Freshmen as “the group I’d been obsessing over since I was 15 years old.” That’s three of us who have been Freshmen fans since age 15; perhaps it’s a significant age range to target. The music clinics that the Freshmen conduct at various schools should do a good job of reaching this age group and those close to it.

In a separate conversation, Greg said that it was the travel that got to be too much for him and led him to retire from the Freshmen. He said it was the planes, cars, hotels, and restaurants that he couldn’t take any more. Also, he said with profound feeling that he hated so much to leave the group and would miss it terribly - and will do what he can to stay involved with the Freshmen. The great news is that he assured us that he will, indeed, continue to arrange for the Freshmen - something a number of us, no doubt, had been wondering about. This is wonderful news since he does such gorgeous arrangements, such as the following on the “Still Fresh” CD: “Moonlight in Vermont,” “Where Do You Start,” “Unforgettable,” “More Love,” and “Meaning of the Blues.” By the way, at last year’s “Fresh Talk” session, Bob Flanigan paid him a huge tribute. Bob said

that, to him, three of the all time great arrangers are: Pete Rugolo, Kenny Albers, and Greg Stegeman. Ken and Greg were both sitting with him at the “Fresh Talk” panel table at the time and were able to receive this accolade in person. Ken Albers was, unfortunately, unable to be with us at the convention this year, due to his health. So I’m sure he’d appreciate having us wish him well and remember him in our prayers. Former Freshmen, Bill Comstock, and his wife, Susan, have both sufficiently recovered their health to be able to be with us at this year’s convention, after missing Colorado Springs - see their picture in this issue of “Fresh News.” They look great - happy and healthy. We wish the same for Kenny Albers.

The two Freshmen at our late night impromptu “Fresh Talk,” Vince and Curtis, spoke of writing original music for the group to perform. Curtis is good at writing lyrics; Brian likes to write songs, according to Curtis; and Vince does arrangements. Also, Brian has two beautiful arrangements on the “Still Fresh” CD: “Close Enough For Love” and “Once In A While.” We heard a sample of “September Song” which Vince is in the process of arranging - and it sounds wonderful. Is that any surprise to anyone?

Curtis astounded us by saying “The music is not the hardest part of our job.” This he repeated, for emphasis. He referred to setting up equipment and waiting for a sound check as being among the many hassles they have to go through before the singing. Both Curtis and Vince said that getting to perform the music is their reward. They surely would want to add travel snafus to their list of difficulties after their trying trip home. First of all, the vehicle they were being transported in to the airport broke down on the way there and left them stranded on the side of the road. After getting that worked out and finally getting to the airport, their flight was canceled, waiting for a bolt to be flown in for their plane. They spent a big chunk of the day just sitting in the airport waiting for another flight. Poor guys! They looked so tired. Plus it messed up other plans they had when they got home. They expect things to go much smoother in the future with IVI at the helm. We all appreciate so very much all that they go through to bring us the music we love so much.

Chairman’s Chat

David Bentley, Chairman & CEO FFS, Inc.

The 2001 Convention at Bowling Green was a seminal event. The Four Freshmen are back as never before. These four young men - Brian, Curtis, Vincent and Bob - have the talent and discipline to go far, and it was a thrilling Saturday evening as we witnessed emerge a never-before seen quality.

Their eagerness, energy and the nuances with which they sang reminded me of the very, very early groups: passionate, keenly cognizant of having a ball with their developing act, and very aware that indeed something unique is being created.

We are the lucky recipients of this music, and our own passion to help them succeed by filling seats when asked is the current objective of the society.

I am honored to be your Chairman and welcome any and all comments. This is certainly an exciting time.