

Viva, The Four Freshmen Group #22!

Yas Ichiura, FFS Japan Rep

It was a fantastic week plus for me while the Four Freshmen were touring in Japan. What more can I expect? They performed 3 nights in Tokyo and 4 at other places in Japan. I followed them all 3 nights in Tokyo.

Compared to previous FF groups, they shifted more on vocal harmony than instrumentals, but that never means they are poor instrumentally. All of them are really excellent instrumental players. They often sing only with bass and guitar accompaniment, a clear contrast to when all of them play instruments. Tears filled my eyes when they sang "Their Hearts Were Full of Spring" a cappella (no microphones, completely acoustically).

It is strange to say, but unison parts are more stable and clear than before, consequently harmony parts produce a thick and warm sound, which has been a trade mark and uniqueness of the Four Freshmen since they started in 1948.

They continuously introduce completely new songs and add old FF songs that are new to the current group, besides FF traditional songs. Have you ever heard "You Call It Madness, I Call It Love"? It is Brian's arrangement and very beautiful. I love it. Michiko loves "Early Autumn," arrangement by Bill Comstock.

Curtis is really a good trumpet/flugel horn player, playing softly or sharply and melodically. He plays guitar and piano, as well. He started studying violin half a year ago, so he told me. Other guys are also high standard instrumental players and I want to hear some tunes by the guys solely instrumental. Isn't that a good idea?

FFS Japan held a welcome reception on 30th of November and some 50 FFS members and friends had a great time with the GUYS. They sang a few songs for us and Vince and Curtis joined a Jam Session at the party.

It was lucky for me that they were not too busy and I could guide them for shopping and walking around in town. Furthermore, they were so generous to visit our home for dinner one evening, prepared by Michiko. It was a great honor and pleasure for us. In this way, I could share a long time with them and talk about various matters in person. The guys are my idols and super singers/players on stage, but once I am with them off stage, they are nice, intelligent, friendly humorous and happy young guys. I felt like they are my adopted sons. It was my typical reaction to say thank you so much, when people were how impressed with the guys to me. Because, I felt so happy that they appreciated my SONS, whom I'm very much proud of.

Curtis accepted my invitation to the rehearsal of The Big Band of Rogues, where I play bass trombone. He is a super player, who reads and plays any new music perfectly. His jazz solo is also good indeed and band members were so much enchanted and inspired by his playing and personality. Just one week after the rehearsal, Curtis joined the big band again at a concert and

played through entire performance as jazz trumpet player. (I hope he didn't hurt his lips.) Brian also joined the concert and played bass for a few tunes and sang "I've Got You Under My Skin" to more than 200 audience. All people, including band members, were thrilled by Brian and Curtis.

I want them to make a new CD of the current group through the right distribution channel as soon as possible, then they will be exposed much more in the world. It is a big pity that those understanding & appreciating high quality music just don't know the current Four Freshmen only because they have never heard them now.

I think the current group is the very best since I heard them in person the first time in 1964 in Tokyo. Thank you Brian, Curtis, Vince & Bob for providing such a great Freshmen Sound and joy of our life.

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