

Cruisin' "Route 66" to Laughlin Oct. 2002

Joe Smart & Beth Peters

When the Four Freshmen make their annual appearance in Laughlin NV at the Ramada Express, we hit the road from Canyon Country CA and head east toward the central California desert in our GT Mustang.

After a fuel stop in Barstow, Route 40 takes us toward Needles on the Nevada border; however, a sign soon appeared on the right suggesting a detour along "Historic Route 66."



It is approaching lunch time, and shortly after taking the turn-off on Route 66 we spy the Bagdad Cafe. This was the location for a wonderful cultish movie of the same name, starring CCH Pounder, Jack Palance, and Marianne Sagebrecht.



This is a fun place for lunch with a menu that relates to characters in the movie. The owner is an interesting lady who is always eager for an update on the Four Freshmen and has many tales to tell of the world travelers who come seeking the site of the "Bagdad Cafe" movie.

Two and a half hours later we check into the Ramada, get cleaned up and grab a quick supper before the Sunday evening show in the Pavillion Room. (Note: We discovered wonderful "steamers" in the Italian restaurant on the main floor.)

Fall has turned out to be a fulfilling time of year for us "west-coasters" as this is the third time in two months we were able to enjoy the Four Freshmen "live" in different settings. On August 24 we had a picnic and listened to them in Constitution Park in Camarillo, CA. The next week, August 29, was a surprise visit to a classy jazz supper club called Spazio's in Sherman Oaks

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CA, and now in Laughlin NV on October 13. We were in "Freshmen Heaven" so to speak.

We had a chance to chat with Ross and Sue in Camarillo while we peddled CD's for Bob Ferreira. The Barbours live nearby in Simi Valley CA. Ken Albers and his family were there, too. What a group!

Bob Flanigan showed up for the "gig" at Spazio's as did Marilyn King of the King Sisters and Chuck Niles, West Coast Hall of Fame Jazz DJ. The engagement at Spazio's was a first time venue for the Four Freshmen thanks to I.V.I., and hopefully the sold-out enthusiastic crowd will lead to many return visits to the L.A. area.

Meanwhile....back at the Pavillion Room, Flanigan again introduced this group - Bob, Vince, Brian and Curtis - as the best sounding group ever and we sure can't argue. Fittingly, they opened with "Route 66" and continued to light up the rest of the evening. It is exciting to see and hear how Curtis has blossomed or matured since joining the group, and the result seems to be a growing group with cohesiveness in both their vocal and instrumental performances. It just keeps getting better and the crowd at the Pavillion seemed to agree.

What a beautiful night of the finest jazz vocalizing anywhere. The only thing that will make it better is adding "The Meaning of the Blues" back into their repertoire.

Needless to say we "get our kicks on Route 66!"

Note: Beryl Davis was there, too. She was part of the Jane Russell, Connie Haynes Trio!

