



# Fresh News

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## New CD NOW AVAILABLE Order NOW from our FFS Music Mart



### Liner Notes: Dr. Herb Wong, Past President International Association for Jazz Educators

One would be hard pressed to suggest a poll-winning jazz vocal group other than The Four Freshmen. They have sustained a long career of some 52 years and pushing forward in the new millennium. A unique vocal group, The Freshmen group was born in 1948 while the four founders - Ross and Don Barbour, Bob Flanigan and Hal Kratzsch - were all former students at Butler University, Indiana. Subsequent milestones marked the broad acceptance and grand successes of the group.

The linchpin in jumpstarting its growth, development and exposure was the enthusiasm and catalytical influence of Stan Kenton who loved the group and was confident of its eventual victories and reputation. As a super prominent Capitol recording artist and bandleader, Kenton wielded his strong influence and helped The Freshmen win their own recording deal with Capitol. By the way, it was during the dawn of the group's first records that I became keenly aware of The Freshmen. Like so many ear-poppin' witnesses, I flipped out over *It's A Blue World* in the

summer of 1951, listening to it day and night. Soon I added *Laura*, *The Day Isn't Long Enough* and *Poinciana* among others. Their sound was a gas! And 22 incarnations of the group later, plus the rest of the story, illuminate the resilience of its original concept and the tenacious magnetism of its music and presentation.

Exuberance is a quality The Freshmen express with beautifully blended voices and a generous cache of instruments. First off, it is an ambient element they deliver with ease and potent epiphanous drive. Anyone familiar with them promptly acknowledges this unrestrained joyousness which penetrates every performance. They can massage each note and phrase with particular ease and emotion - making you thoroughly relax or swing with a jump-for-joy response.

The Freshmen persist to be intoxicating, buoyed with exuberance and vitality. What also persists as an enigma is how they can handily sing full-bodied five note chords with just four voices. Simply amazing and admirable! Couple this feature with the ability to play a gang of instruments with striking excellence while singing at the same time - the synthesis of this duality is a knock out! Also, as a self-contained group, they enjoy the dynamics of creative interplay and cohesion.

This latest recorded edition of The Freshmen verifies how well endowed it is in unity and intuitive talent. It also illustrates the concept of paying respectful nods to The Freshmen's historically popular repertoire from the Great American Songbook, without being bounded skill-tight to traditions per se. This frees them to color their songbook with a rich mix of other idiomatic persuasions.

The CD at hand captures the group at its most effective conditions for recording - specifically, a "live" in-person date before a full house of enthusiastic fans on all three days - and being taped at a venue with impeccable acoustics. Bob Flanigan, who continues his dedicated mentorship to the group, had insisted on using the superb on-site advantages of the Annenberg Theatre in Palm Springs for this CD. "Out of three days of taping, I think we got one helluva CD!" cheers Flanigan. "The guys felt and sounded really good and they just got better and better. It's a feeling you can't get in the studio. I'm really excited about it!"

**The Four Freshmen Society, Inc.**  
PO BOX 9804  
McLEAN VA 22102-0804

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