

**FRESHMEN STILL PACK 'EM IN ON
PACKER PLAYOFF DAY**
(Hartford, Wis., Show Review (Jan. 20, 2002))
by Mike McCoy, Wis. State Rep

Memo to fans of the Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers: Your teams may have lost in the NFL playoffs not because of anything they or their opponents did or didn't do. They may have lost because of - are you ready for this? - a Four Freshmen jinx.

That's not my analysis. It was offered by Bob Ferreira to those in the audience Jan. 20 for the second of two shows at the Schauer Arts & Activities Center in Hartford, Wisconsin. Bob mentioned between numbers that the Freshmen had performed in the Chicago area the night before, noting it was the same day the Bears lost to the Philadelphia Eagles to end Chicago's magical season. Then on Sunday, with the Freshmen performing the second of two shows deep in Packerland, he alluded to the big loss the Packers took in a game that afternoon versus the St. Louis Rams. He wondered aloud whether there might be a connection. But before anyone who thought he might be right could begin moving toward the stage (but without torches as the theater has a "no smoking" policy), the Freshmen quickly pointed out that they were flying home the next day - through St. Louis.

There was audible relief from the crows (and perhaps the Freshmen), and more than a few chuckles as the guys resumed wowing those in the audience with their musical artistry.

Earlier in the day, at the first show, Bob came up with a new way to get screams from the audience, in addition to those from appreciative fans following his always-tender rendering of "Love Dance." With the Packer-Rams game starting about the same time as the matinee show, Bob prepared to announce the latest score when the audience returned from the show's intermission and with the game still underway. Immediately, several fans protested in unison that they had their home VCR's taping the game. Bob quickly relented, but the humorous interplay itself was further evidence of the Freshmen's great drawing power. Imagine, the Packers were in the playoffs for the first time in three years and the Freshmen still nearly filled the house. They did it both shows, attracting close to 1,000 fans of varying ages, including those in high school. That's Freshmen power. It makes you wonder what the Freshmen equivalent of the "Lambeau Leap" might be.

Those in attendance at both shows certainly saw and heard the power of a great vocal group in performance.

The Freshmen were called back on stage after both shows due to the sustained applause, performing a beautiful and mostly a cappella rendering of "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" away from the microphones to conclude the evening show. It was a special moment, and you could sense the connection that had been made that evening between the Freshmen and the audience.

What about the rest of the show? Well, "Route 66" which used to open shows opened the second half this time, with "Day In, Day Out" replacing it as lead-off hitter. Many of the knowledgeable FF fans were hearing "Invitation" and "All Around the World" for the first time, both part of the first half song set. "All Around the World" provides Vince Johnson a great chance to solo vocally and Bob, Brian Eichenberger and Curtis Calderon a chance to have some fun backing him up in a light-hearted way on a tune that stresses a lover's devotion. You'll like the catchy number when you hear it; you'll probably even be singing snippets as you leave the theater, joining Bob, Brian and Curtis in your mind's own backup chorus.

Curtis is doing more solo work on both the trumpet and flugelhorn, varying from tender, quiet, breathy Chet Baker-like touches to rousing, high-pitched, knock-your-socks-off flourishes.

For devoted Packer fans, one number that was in the song list for both shows probably had a different meaning at the second show. Brian's vocally-aggressive "You've Come a Long Way from St. Louis" was all for fun in the first show. With the defeated Packers on a flight home to Green Bay as the guys were performing on stage, the song title probably described the feelings aboard the plane. It had to be a much longer trip home than the one to St. Louis. Brian still had fun with the tune, as did the audience.

Vince continues to draw lots of applause with his whistling and basswork, and Bob lots of laughs at his attempts to "compete" as a whistler.

I'm willing to bet every number the guys worked into the show was a favorite of at least some in the audience, whether new fan or old. Besides those tunes already mentioned, there was "Young and Foolish," "I Fall in Love Too Easily," "Rain," the vocally-challenging "Indian Summer" which Brian explained is hard to get right, "If I Only Had a Brain," "Whole Wide World," and a "you" set - "There Will Never Be Another You" followed immediately by "It Could Happen to You." "Walking My Baby Back Home" concluded the first half.

After intermission, the song list included "Poinciana," "I'm Gonna Go Fishing," another 'you' set ("I Remember You" and "I Concentrate On You"), a "day" set ("Graduation Day" and "Day by Day"), "It's a Blue World," and "After You're Gone" as the closer.

Helping to make the day more special for those attending the show and signing up in advance was a between-shows private tour of the little-known but very impressive Wisconsin Automotive Museum and a sit-down dinner among the museum exhibits. About 80 persons took advantage of the opportunity. Others who missed the announcement or the deadline gathered at the nearby Mineshaft Restaurant, which also served as the post-show gathering spot.

Joining me at the dinner were two friends from Madison, Dorothy and Bob Troller, (we all play in a swing band together) who had just seen the Four Freshmen for the first time and were very pleased with the show. After we ate, they showed me a