

FRESH TALK by Dick Baldwin (WNY)

The good news is that FRESH TALK will return to the annual convention August 8-10 in Reston, VA. For those who like early detail, mark down Friday AM, August 9, 10-12 noon. Dave & Lorraine will make it so. (And Thanks!) Fresh Talk didn't make the last convo, but I had tapes and the Freshmen were ready. See you at the 14th!

The not-so-good news is that some of those Kenton experts can sometimes become unhappily incorrect. Sorry, but Charlie Parker did play with the Stan Kenton Band on an album, "Stan Kenton Plays Holman Live," (Artistry, 1956).

Now, let's talk.

Did you hear Larry King mention the Freshmen during the BeeGees guest gig on his show in January? Is this an opening or what? Wouldn't Flan/Ross or Group 22 be a smash on that show when Mr. King dabbles in show biz topics? OK IVI.

The last time we met the Frosh was at the Night Town Restaurant in Cleveland Heights, OH, a Thursday, November 15. The 7:00 PM dinner show was packed and the 9:00 PM nearly so in the two-bar, comfy establishment. Talent Manager Jim Wadsworth is a crackerjack for Night Town. He covers all of the bases to make both the talent and the guests happy. Night Town books "five star" jazz acts, truly the best in the business. The Freshmen of course fit. Promoter Jim told it to me straight, "I'd book the FF here every six months." Owner Brendan Ring agrees. (Joshua Redmen February 12 & 13)

After a good meal in front of the bandstand with Pete & Gayle Ciraolo (shared the ride) and Chick & Sue Trafford, we contemplated moving back a little from the action. We did not and paid the price - just very close to the music zone. Bob got his sticks stuck twice in my rice pudding. Curtis asked me more than once to hold his flugel horn when he switched to trumpet. Vince motioned us to move to the left so that he could reach some difficult jazz notes. And, Brian purposely played as loud as he could threatening to use all 18 bass strings.

The truth of the matter is - I (we) probably enjoyed this modern FF group this night more than at any time in recent memory. Four tunes into the first show was Greg's "Young & Foolish" and you were hooked. Naturally, the Freshmen shine in the small jazz club setting; they always have. Night Town was made to order for one of the great jazz acts in the country. Group #22 is in the BIG DANCE! Congratulations, Coach Flanigan.

Now, some short takes....

*Musical sounds helped ease stressful feelings and reduced pain for patients about to undergo common medical procedures reports University at Buffalo researchers. Can't you think of a lot of Freshmen things that would take down stress - Collectors Choice double CD *Voices In Love & Love Lost* would be a nice start.

*From the late Peggy Lee obituary - Sophie Tucker used to say: "You have to have your heart broken at least once to sing a love song."

*Is this the way it was/is? Experts say the first jazz recording dates back to around 1917. CD's hit the market in the early 1980's. And, be careful say some engineers - vinyl and turntables are coming back, big. Were you one of those FF troops back when who changed all of those Capitol monos to stereo? Nice move!

*Paul Desmond CD is on while this piece is taking shape. Wonder what Greg is playing at this moment on the radio? I'm certain cool and straight ahead. Chet Baker?

*One of the delightful big band leaders out there these days is Dave Stevens in Erie, PA. Dave is music chair at East HS in Erie and ready to rebook the Freshmen at a moment's notice. The Stevens Ork is a Kenton-styled ensemble with excellent players from around the area. The Frosh performed with Dave last May and those big band charts were crisp and full. It's a pleasure meeting such as Mr. Stevens, light on ego and boisterous about his band. The orchestra stays together year round, plays the surrounding states and continues to make friends for the music at each turn. Dave is one of the great young leaders in the nation. And, there's a Stegeman touch in the band's book.

*Songstress Vanessa Rubin has a new CD out called - GIRL TALK.

*These ladies can swing - Tierney Sutton (Telarc), Ann Hampton Callaway (After 9), Dianne Reeves (Blue Note), Jane Monheit (N-Coded Music), Karrin Allyson (Concord), and DeeDee Bridgewater (Verve). This is five star stuff. Rated right up there on the same stage is Freshmen family member SUE RANEY (Fresh Sound). Sue's other half, former major league infielder, Carmen, is a class musician in his own right. Are they Reston bound?

*Freshmen concern No. 1 is hardly pedestrian. How do we attract the younger set to the Sound? By "younger" I mean real young - elementary grades. What's the age start when youngsters should know the Four Freshmen? How young is young?

*Canadian Radio, AM & FM, seem to have more respect for jazz than we do. Toronto 91.1 plays nice things all day and night. Toronto 94.1 is especially good Sunday evenings. There's a good deal of Ross-type "memory flogging" too on the other side of the music border.

*Two mags are the basis for keeping up on things. Down Beat hasn't changed in all these years except that it now covers more than jazz. Jazz Times is also a good read.

*Ann Smith, North Texas State Rep., asked in January-February Fresh News "where's Fresh Talk?" It's here, Ann.

*But, the only thing I liked about the Freshmen coverage in the 66th Annual Down Beat Readers Poll was the page position of the FF victory in the final Vocal Group tabulation - under an arty photo of Diana Krall.

Dick Baldwin, 48 Heathwood Road, Williamsville, NY 14221
716-632-7227
rbaldwin@acsu.buffalo.edu