

THE DOCTOR IS IN! NEW KEVIN STOUT CD IS MUST LISTENING!

by Wayne Corey, FFS Wisconsin

It's two in the morning. Your eyes burn from the casino smoke. Your tongue is thick from the booze. The blackjack dealer is friendly, but he should be. The house has been winning all night. You were going to quit when you were ahead, but you never got ahead. Taking a break from the table, you drift into the lounge of the Las Vegas hotel. And on the bandstand you find your winners!

The five-piece group on the bandstand is violating a sacred Vegas rule; they are so good that you forget the tables, sit down and start to pay close attention to the music! Your short break turns into an extended listening session. This is the musical power of The Kevin Stout-Brian Booth 5. And if the Las Vegas-based quintet is not currently featured in a Vegas lounge, their "Good Pals" CD proves that they should be. This CD puts you in the Vegas lounge of your fondest musical dreams!

"Good Pals" is a remarkable body of straight ahead jazz. With bebop influences throughout, the playing is superb. We know from his years of brilliant trombone work with the Four Freshmen that anything by Kevin Stout will demonstrate great chops. "Good Pals" doesn't disappoint. Brian Booth, on the other hand, is a name new to most Freshmen fans. His sax work teams with Doc's trombone to create some marvelous musical mayhem? These good pals make some great music together.

However, the strength of the new album may not be the musicianship. The leaders bring amazing compositional skills to this outing. Who knew? These guys have written a group of songs that will stand the test of time alongside some of the great classics of the jazz repertoire. A lot of today's jazz musicians think themselves to be composers. Such confidence is often misplaced. But Brian Booth and Kevin Stout write great songs. The songs have strong melodies and insistent rhythms. And I predict this will not be the last album on which these songs are performed.

Several album tracks are based on chord changes from great standards, as Mark Holston's excellent liner notes point out. Kevin's "Ocurrio a Mi" uses Caribbean rhythms around the chord structure from the Freshmen classic, "It Could Happen To You." "Por Seguro" uses the chords of Charlie Parker's "Confirmation" to take us on a hot trip to Cuba. "Otie's Rhythm Swing" is the Booth composition that opens the album. A hard boppin' song, it uses the changes from "Just Friends," but you need to pay close attention to pick up on that fact. Booth's "A Confidential Infatuation" uses the changes from "Secret Love" somewhat more obviously. But, again, it is a swinging song that stands on its own merits. Doris Day never sounded like this!

A samba rhythm is used on "My One and Only Love," a Stout arrangement of the album's only non-original song. It is dedicated to Kevin's late mother.

The rhythm section of Joey Singer on piano, Tom Warrington on bass and John Abraham on drums really propels the music constantly forward. Some of Singer's solos are especially noteworthy. The album has a few too many bass solos for this reviewer, but any bass solo longer than two bars is too much for me, so that's a personal quibble and does not at all detract from my admiration for this album.

Kevin says "I like to think of the album as being an uplifting experience. I hope to make people feel better as a result of having listened to it." He has succeeded! "Good Pals" is great music. This CD is available from the Four Freshmen Society Music Mart and, trust me, you want to own this album!

UPTOWN VOCAL JAZZ QUARTET SCORES WITH NEW CD

Four Freshmen Society members will also want to dig "When the Sun Goes Down," the new album from the Uptown Vocal Jazz Quartet. Uptown opened for the Freshmen on the Friday night of our August convention in Reston, Virginia. They introduced several songs from the album at that time.

The album is a mix of old and new. "Love Walked In," "Deed I Do," "A Night in Tunisia," "Birth Of the Blues," and "He Beeped When He Should Have Bopped" are jazz classics. The arrangement to "Tunisia" - renamed "And the Melody Still Lingers On," is of special note. Dizzy Gillespie probably has the angel choir working on this chart!

Uptown may remind a listener of a cross between Manhattan Transfer and The Mel-Tones. In the final analysis, however, they really sound like no one but themselves. The Uptown Vocal Jazz Quartet wowed the audience in Reston. They will do the same for you on your home or car stereo.

As Four Freshmen fans we want to keep great jazz and great vocal harmonies alive in the 21st century. We can help accomplish that goal by supporting the outstanding artists who are making wonderful music for us in 2002!

New State Rep

Larry Thren, E. PA

LVTCO@aol.com