

Cool Jazz in Hot Massachusetts

Cheley Miller, Vermont State Rep.

Tradition is important in New England. And nothing means summer around Boston like hot, humid, and the Four Freshmen. Recently, the Frosh returned for their annual appearances at the EcoTarium's "Jazz at Sunset" series in Worcester, the Stoneham Theater's "Summer Music" series, and the always-sold-out show at Christine's Dinner Club in West Dennis, on Cape Cod.

On July 5th, in a lovely outdoor venue, the FF returned to the EcoTarium to the delight of the fans they've made in appearances there the past two summers. The group has a strong fan base in the Worcester area. Prior to the show, they appeared on WICN radio for a live interview - another annual event when they're in Worcester. Listeners heard cuts from the new CD, "Live in the New Millennium" as well as an impromptu, a cappella version of "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" - a real treat!

After four days of brutal heat, the elements relented and provided a perfect, breezy evening for almost 1000 enthusiastic fans. It was especially heartening to see so many families at the EcoTarium, exposing young fans to the great Four Freshmen sound. And the Freshmen indeed sounded great in spite of an always-difficult-to-perfect outdoor sound system. New to the play list were "When Your Lover Has Gone," ("a very depressing song," according to Brian) and "Every Time We Say Goodbye," from FF/5 Trumpets. Another new item - Bob has a new drum set, featuring a snare, bass drum, cymbal and high hat, and a high stool that allows him to sit.

The next night, the FF filled the 350-seat Stoneham Theater. Again, technical difficulties with the sound system were frustrating. But leave it to these seasoned pros to turn a liability into an asset. Rather than submit the beautiful harmonies and poignant lyrics of "Indian Summer" to a less-than-perfect audio, the Freshmen stepped in front of the microphones, accompanied softly by Brian's guitar and Vince's bass. Fortunately, the Stoneham Theater is intimate enough to allow this to work. The audience listened in silent awe. Bob's solo verse was more emotionally moving than ever. Then, for the rest of the show, the guys joked with the audience. Curtis brought down the house with every horn solo, and the FF gave one of their most laid-back swinging performances in recent memory.

The final show was at Christine's Dinner Club, a favorite venue for the FF for the past 7 years. They are a perennial sell-out. Folks even come by the tour bus-load for this one. A crowd of around 350 enjoyed another amazing show. The guys were introduced by a special guest announcer, David Bentley, Chairman of the Board of the Four Freshmen Society, Inc. Other FFS notables in attendance at one, two, or all three shows were Lorraine Dellinger and Dave Barnes, membership directors, all the way from Virginia, Northeast Regional Representative Don Boland from Rhode Island, trustee advisor Frank Diorio from Boston, Charlie Messier from Worcester, who single-handedly keeps the fire burning in central MA, and Barbara Dana from Florida.

Many Society members offered tour support in the form of transportation and food. But none was more appreciated than Sonny Ferreira, Bob's dad, who handled the CD sales. People were so delighted to have the new CD available! Sales were brisk at all the shows, but especially at Christine's, where over 40 CD's were sold. Thanks, Sonny!

And the goal for next year? More gigs for a longer tour, to keep the Four Freshmen in beautiful New England for as long as possible!

