

Acoustix: Another “Faux Freshmen” Group

by Mike McCoy, FFS Wisconsin Rep

Even though three of my passions are the Four Freshmen, jazz, and barbershop harmony, somehow I missed the release a couple of years ago of a CD that combines all three. I'm glad I ran across a copy in the last few days. It's called "Jazz, Jazz, Jazz" and features one of the best known barbershop quartets, Acoustix, accompanied on some selections by the Dallas Jazz Orchestra. If you're unfamiliar with it and wish to consider it for either your Four Freshmen or barbershop music collections, you may want to check it out.

If you're not familiar with Acoustix, they're definitely not four guys with straw hats and "ice cream" jackets just making their reputation singing "Lida Rose," "Sweet Adeline," and other turn-of-the-century (the 20th century) standards. They are among the best-known barbershop quartets performing today and have fans around the world. FF fans who also are members of SPEBSQSA (Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America) probably know them well.

Of the 13 numbers on the CD, Freshmen fans may have a special interest in hearing their treatment of "Day by Day," "Poinciana," "Graduation Day," "It's a Blue World," and "Route 66." Those arrangements on the CD are all credited to the Four Freshmen - and there's even a trombone solo in "Day by Day" that obviously is inspired by Bob Flanigan's on the original.

But you also may be interested in their own treatment of numbers that the Freshmen featured on "Still Fresh," "Straighten Up and Fly Right" and "Unforgettable." (In the latter, the quartet adds two more voices for this number only, and barbershop harmony fans may recognize the names Jim and Greg Clancy of Vocal Majority chorus fame.)

A special section of the liner notes by members of the Acoustix explains that the selections for the CD "pay tribute to a group that has provided inspiration to Acoustix and four-part harmony lovers around the world - The Four Freshmen." After briefly summarizing some of the achievements of the Freshmen, Acoustix notes that they "had the honor of performing with the Four Freshmen in Pittsburgh July 6, 1994. We would like to thank founding member and now Freshmen manager, Bob Flanigan, for his years of friendship and his willingness to provide us some great music to share with a new generation of four-part harmony lovers around the world."

A note from Bob adds: "When Todd Wilson (Acoustix tenor) asked me to listen to 'Jazz, Jazz, Jazz,' I was very honored. After hearing the CD, I must say that it is a great effort by a group of great singers. These guys are also part of the International Championship chorus, the Vocal Majority, and International Quartet Champions of the SPEBSQSA. This CD shows the versatility of Acoustix and should be a part of any vocal group collection. On behalf of the Four Freshmen, I thank them for including these Freshmen tunes on 'Jazz, Jazz, Jazz'."

Two sources are from the Acoustix Web site itself, at <<http://www.acoustix.com>> or 888-448-7849, and also from the SPEBSQSA Harmony Marketplace (which sells to both members and non-members). You can order online at <www.harmonymarketplace.com> There's also a link from <<http://www.spebsqsa.org>> or 800-876-7464. The latter organization also will send you a catalog if you ask.

Enjoy!

New Web Site Focuses on Wisconsin-related FF/FFS Activities

By Mike McCoy, FFS Wisconsin Rep

Fans interested in Four Freshmen and Four Freshmen Society activities in Wisconsin now have a special Web site designed to assist them. It's located at

<<http://communities.madison.com/4fresh>>.

As the Freshmen are booked for appearances in and near Wisconsin, that information will be prominently posted, along with information about any planned pre- and post-show gatherings of Freshmen fans.

There's already information there about the new Freshmen CD, "Live in the New Millennium," including my initial comments about the album. (Other comments can be considered for posting when submitted by FF fans to me at <ffswisconsin@hotmail.com>. Those comments selected for posting will be attributed to submitters by name and city.)

Regardless of where you live, you might want to read the article there about Green Bay, Wis., being the place where the decision was made to call the group the Four Freshmen. Plans are to expand this section to include information about other Freshmen visits over the years.

An "FAQ" (Frequently Asked Questions) area covers such topics as how to find out where the Freshmen are appearing, how to find new and used Freshmen LP's and CD's, and other topics. This section also will be expanded in the coming months.

There are links posted at various locations around the Web site to other Four Freshmen-related Web sites, for those who aren't aware of all that is out there and to encourage them to further explore the wide, wide world of the Four Freshmen.

If you decide to check out the Web site, let me have your comments and suggestions for improvements. If you also have information about FF history in Wisconsin you're willing to share, let me have that, as well. It will be much appreciated.