

THE FOUR FRESHMEN

The Four Freshmen are, in the opinion of many, the greatest jazz vocal group of all time. They've been entertaining us with terrific harmony arrangements of jazz and pop standards since 1948! (You'd think they'd have graduated by now or *at least* be sophomores...)

The Four Freshmen were born at Butler University in Indianapolis, IN in the Summer of 1948. The original quartet was comprised of:

Bob Flanigan	Don Barbour	Ross Barbour	Hal Kratzsch
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Their first professional booking was September 20, 1948 at the "113 Club" in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. And so, a dynasty was born, only to grow and blossom into international artists.

The Four Freshmen Sound

The Freshmen are unique because of the Freshmen "sound". Singing groups at that time had the lead voice in the middle of the chord; the Freshmen was the first male group to put the lead voice at the top of the chord. This led to arrangements that are as distinctive as fingerprints. If you've ever heard a Four Freshmen cut, you'd recognize another -- anytime, anywhere. The Freshmen called their style "open" harmony (as opposed to "close" harmony) because they spread their four voices over the area that a five-part group would cover. Add their unique musical phrasing (more like instruments would play than voices would sing) and the Freshmen Sound came flowing out.

Musicianship

The other thing that made (and makes) the Freshmen unique is their instrumental musical ability. Most singing groups just sing; the Freshmen provide their own accompaniment playing nearly a dozen instruments.

Then

Stan Kenton and his orchestra was a major force in big-band jazz in the '50s. Stan first heard the Four Freshmen at the **Esquire Lounge** in Dayton, OH. Someone told him that there was this quartet that "sounded just like the band." Stan went to hear them and was blown away: Four young guys singing what sounded like five- or six- part harmony and, at the same time, playing a dozen instruments. Stan bugged **Capitol Records** so vigorously that they gave the Freshmen a recording contract in 1950.

The guys cut three singles for Capitol. Sales of the first two were not encouraging.

In fact, Capitol considered dropping them without releasing their third single until Stan Kenton again intervened in 1952. The quartet got Capitol to give them a couple of

copies of their third (unreleased) single "**Blue World**". They gave them to Detroit disk jockeys to promote a Freshman engagement at a bowling alley lounge called "**The Crest**". Within a week Detroit was calling "Blue World" a hit -- and by the Fall of 1952 the Freshmen sound was known all over the world. Capitol re-signed the group and they were on their way.

The group has made more than fifty albums between 1955 and 1994. While the members of the group changed several times over the years, the charts -- and the Freshman sound -- remained true to their roots.

Bob Flanigan was the spiritual leader of just about every Four Freshmen combination until 1992 when he retired (from singing and 'bone playing) to become the group's manager. The new Four Freshmen (the second group without Bob singing lead) sounds -- the same -- and, on some cuts, arguably better than the original group.

Now

The present group started playing together in September, 2001. They are:

Brian Eichenberger

Brian Eichenberger, 24, sings the lead part while playing bass, guitar and piano. From July of 1996 until January 2000, he sang the 2nd part in the harmony with The Freshmen. Now, Brian from Apple Valley, Minnesota has become only the third lead singer in the 54 year history of the Freshmen. Brian got the call to join the Freshmen while studying jazz arranging and performance under Phil Mattson at the School for Music Vocations in Creston, Iowa.

Curtis Calderon

Curtis Calderon, 26, is the "Freshest Freshmen," having recently joined the group. Hailing from San Antonio he began his jazz career in earnest playing trumpet at the age of 11. As a teenager he took lessons from a highly regarded music teacher, "I couldn't wait for my lessons, I took as many as I could. Of course it helped that the teacher was a beautiful female. It was my first crush." From all those lessons Curtis joined the renowned John Marshall High Jazz Band which won many consecutive national competitions. Curtis earned his stripes by going on the road with Russ Morgan's big band. Coming home to San Antonio he was a regular fixture at The Landing Jazz Club where the Four Freshmen's Brian Eichenberger discovered him. Curtis has been featured on over a dozen CDs including "Live from the Landing", on Scat Cat Records.

Vince Johnson

Vince Johnson, 30, an accomplished singer, singing third part harmony as well as playing, bass, guitar and trombone, Vince brings a distinguished resume to The

Freshmen. He received his Bachelor of Music in 1994 from California State University Long Beach and his Masters degree in Jazz Studies from the University of Southern California in 1996. Before joining the Freshmen in December of 1999, Vince worked as an accompanist, educator and performer, which included performing throughout the world for Princess Cruises. .

Bob Ferreira

Bob Ferreira, 31, began singing the fourth part harmony and playing the drums for the Freshmen in 1992. Originally from Seattle, Washington, Bob's introduction to Freshmen harmony began when he studied with former Freshmen Kirk Marcy at Edmond Community College in his home state. Marcy soon had Bob in his college group "Soundsation" singing arrangements by The Four Freshmen, Singers Unlimited, The Swingle Singers, and other top jazz vocal groups. Later, while concentrating on classical voice training at Central Washington State, Marcy recommended Bob for an audition with the Freshmen.

Summary

The Four Freshmen's profound influence on American Jazz and pop singing began in 1948 four students at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana. Hal Kratzsch, brothers Ross and Don Barbour, and their cousin Bob Flanigan created a brand new vocal sound.

They became the first male quartet to use the melody on the top of the chord. Working without written music and choosing notes by ear, they spread their jazz voicing over a wider range than other groups, and they imitated the phrasing and aggressive feel of the big band brass section. Flanigan says, "After we heard ourselves make the sound, we never wanted to sing any other way.

When band leader Stan Kenton heard the group at the Esquire Lounge in Dayton, Ohio, he immediately recognized their potential. At his urging, Capitol Records signed the Four Freshmen in 1950, initiating a string of hits with "It's A Blue World."

The sound track of the movie "Lucy Gallant" introduced "How Can I Tell Her," and the flip side, "Day By Day," became a hit in days. The Freshmen have produced over 70 singles and albums.

The Freshmen appeared with the Kenton Orchestra on the famous Road Show tours and won poll after poll as "The Nation's Number One Vocal and Instrumental Quartet."

Wherever The Freshmen went, they won fans and inspired vocal groups. They played nearly every college in the USA, performing in all fifty states and forty-four countries from Asia to Europe to Australia. Bob Flanigan retired from performing in 1992, but he continues as the group's mentor and personal manager. Present members Greg Stegeman, Brian Eichenberger, Kevin Stout, and Bob Ferreira,

share with Flanigan a strong commitment to the Freshmen tradition of superb vocal sound.