

'HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FOUR FRESHMEN' TRIBUTE UPDATE

by Mike McCoy, FFS Wisconsin Rep

And now, here's the REST of the story about Brian Wilson, his tape recorder, and his "Happy Birthday" tribute to the Four Freshmen...

In an earlier article in the Fresh News ("Beach Boys" Brian Wilson as Teen, Serenades Freshmen," Oct.-Dec. 2003 issue), I recounted the story of how a pre-Beach Boys' Brian Wilson used a tape recorder set up in his home garage to record himself covering all four parts of "Happy Birthday, Four Freshmen" as he conducted early multitracking taping experiments.

Some time after that article appeared, I got a phone call from Bill Wagner, now living in Sherman Oaks, California, and once the Freshmen's manager before he joined Capitol Records. If my notes of that phone call are correct, he produced 23 albums with the Freshmen, and later many more with many other American musical superstars.

Bill told me Brian used a Sony 300 reel-to-reel tape machine when he made the recording of "Happy Birthday, Four Freshmen." About that time, the machine cost \$500-\$600. How did he know that detail? He helped Brian get the machine after Brian visited the Four Freshmen offices in Los Angeles and, in the resulting conversation with Bill, mentioned not only his great interest in the Freshmen but also his interest in doing some recordings of his own.

Bill was able to arrange a substantial discount that made it possible for Brian to afford the machine, and then ended up delivering it to Brian's home and joining the family for dinner.

Today, you can hear one result of that Wilson-Wagner collaboration on track four of disc one of the 2001 CD set, "The Beach Boys: Hawthorne, CA, Birthplace of a Musical Legacy." It's the recording Brian made of "Happy Birthday, Four Freshmen." (You also can hear part of it online at CD Universe, by finding the listing for the CD, then track four, and then the audio link.)

(You can also check out the original Fresh News article online at www.fourfreshmen.com. It appears on page 16 of the Oct.-Dec. 2003 issue archived at the Web site.)



FRESHMEN'S NEW CD GETS MADISON, WISCONSIN AIRPLAY

by Mike McCoy, FFS Wisconsin Rep

Fans of the Four Freshmen living in the Madison, Wis., area had a rare treat June 6 if they were listening around noon to WTUX-AM (1550) and host Ben Benedetti's weekly four-hour music show, where he directed an extended spotlight on today's Four Freshmen.

In my 50 years as a Freshmen fan, I can't recall a time before today when I was able to listen on radio to six consecutive Four Freshmen numbers. And all of today's cuts featured Brian Eichenberger, Curtis Calderojn, Vince Johnson and Bob Ferreira, from their new "Live in Holland" CD.

The entire Sunday segment on Madison's "Music of Your Life" station ran about 25 minutes, interrupted only midway by a brief scheduled newsbreak at noon and commercials. And Ben also gave three extended plugs to the upcoming June 19 Freshmen show in Woodstock, ILL., and also mentioned the Four Freshmen Society several times.

Selections by Ben from the album were: "Everytime I Say Goodbye," "After You've Gone," "Day In, Day Out," "It's a Blue World," "Day by Day," and "Angel Eyes."

Ben also explained to listeners that the Freshmen not only were doing the vocals, but playing the instruments that were being heard, and he commented about the great harmonies and superb musicianship of today's configuration. And that morning's newspaper also contained a promotion for the 11 am-3pm show which included mention that the "new" Four Freshmen would be featured.

All in all, a very good day for Freshmen fans here. If you live in the area and missed it, listen in future weeks as Ben often features Four Freshmen recordings from over the years, and now can add the "Live in Holland" album to his rotation. As Ben explains it, he features only "music that you remember by the stars we can't forget."

