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Heavenly Harmony Concert XI

By Pamela Homer

UGHA & PGHA's latest "Heavenly Harmony Concert XI" held in Langhorne, PA on March 15, 2008 should have been a scene of joyous harmony, jointly hosted by Mr. Lee and Ronnie I. Tragically, Ronnie I. passed away March 4, 2008, just 11 days before the show that he assembled. It was a touching note of sadness not seeing Ronnie on the stage. It was gratifying to see his staff still there, working the UGHA table. Mr. Lee gave an emotional speech about Ronnie and asked for a moment of silence to honor UGHA's founder and sole president of the organization's 32 years. Even more heavy hearted was a note to the attendees, written by Sandi Italiano and read by her good friend Robin Robbert. All of the performing groups acknowledged Ronnie. One fan commented that the groups appeared to sing with more emotion that night and perhaps this song lyric says it best. ...

"There are so many memories to treasure, so many joys to recall;
But moments that brought us most pleasure, now hurt the most of all."

[5 Crowns - 1953]

We felt sad, but perhaps the best way to honor Ronnie I. was with heavenly harmony. Little Isidore & The Inquisitors opened and closed the show in dynamic fashion. They sang many of their well-known songs such as "Woo Woo Train," "Oceans Apart," and "Bongo Stomp." Amy Ortiz, singing as "Little Isabella," led an emotional "Dry Your Eyes." "Little Leopold" (Angel Rissoff) performed "Jitterbop." Following Little Isidore on stage was Baby Washington, who performed brilliantly. Her group, The Enchanters, sang well but could have provided more vocal backup. Baby Washington did several songs but "The Time" was a favorite. The Paragons were powerful singing "Florence" and other tunes. Next, I stood and clapped for The Continentals, who were superb singing "Dear Lord" and "Fine, Fine, Frame." The Encounters sounded top notch singing "Don't Stop." It was appropriate that they sang this song as it was recorded in Philly and co-written by Billy Carlucci (of Billy & The Essentials) in 1963. There was a fabulous "battle of the groups" between The Paragons & The Encounters singing The Jesters' songs. It was an enjoyable evening with so many great groups but it was also a melancholy time for friends of Ronnie I.