

Philadelphia Doo Wop Festival

By Pamela Horner

The Third Annual Philadelphia Doo Wop Festival took place on August 9, 2008 at Penn's Landing. It was another enjoyable show blessed with majestic weather. The show was once again held to benefit the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service & Educational Center. Charlie and I arrived a little late but we heard that the Street Corner Five opened the show with a great medley of The Dubs' "Don't Laugh at Me" and "No One".

Some of the acts were more "Oldies" oriented and not exactly Doo Wop. Ed Marra sang a Buddy Holly tribute. Billy Harner, a Philly institution, sang a long but energetic set. He did all his Philly favorites including "She's Almost You" and "Sally Sayin' Somethin'." Frankie Lafaro, a veteran of many doo wop groups, sang a great solo medley of Sinatra songs. Billy Carlucci from Billy and the Essentials sang with a back-up track. He sounded fabulous. He did his renowned version of "Maybe You'll Be There" and closed with "The Dance is Over".

Many doo wop groups returned from previous years. John Jones and the Norristones were back this year for another great performance. Now and Then (with Brian Utain from The Temptones) were also back and sounding first class. Reunion from the Jersey Shore and always superb was back for a third year. Cornerstone with Golden Voice Harry did a lengthy set of diverse material, including a Motown medley. I especially liked their version of The Cornelius Brothers' "It's Too Late To Turn Back Now". They looked and sounded great in peach colored vested suits and white shoes. The Continentals strikingly dressed in red jackets with white pants and shoes, now contain a former member of the Shells. They opened up with "Picture of Love" and moved on to "Baby Oh Baby", singing all their big songs except "Dear Lord." It seems they ran out of time. Their bass-led, show-stopping song, "If You Didn't Mean It," was sung by Bill Carey. He had previously been with the Four Fellows (*Triboro* label), Victorians (*Selma* label) and more recently with The Danleers. Lead, Danny Hicks and the entire group were happy to take photos with us.

The headliners of the show were The Skyliners from Pittsburgh. They've had along career and this year marks their 50th anniversary. Jimmy Beaumont talked about how he sang on The Alan Freed stage shows. They opened their set with the standard "Pennies From Heaven". Donna Groom did the lead on "I Can Dream Can't I." After an enjoyable performance, they ended with "Since I don't Have You".

Hosting the show were Lou Costello of 92.1 WVLT and King Arthur of WNJC (1360 AM) in Camden, NJ and www.destinationdoo.com. Philadelphia radio personality Harvey Holiday also made a guest appearance on stage.

All in all it was fabulous day attending the concert, seeing old cars and getting together with old friends. To view photos of the festival, visit our website, www.classicurbanharmony.net

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