

1966

You Can Tell the World album cover

Westside Four

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STEREO

THE WESTSIDE FOUR

YOU CAN TELL THE WORLD





THE WESTSIDE FOUR

Side 1
 YOU CAN TELL THE WORLD
 FOUR STRONG WINDS
 SUMMERTIME
 BEANS TASTE FINE
 TRY TO REMEMBER
 TAKE THIS HAMMER
 THE GREEN LEAVES OF SUMMER

Side 2
 MOON RIVER
 AUTUMN LEAVES
 I BELIEVE
 ALMIGHTY GOD OF OUR FATHERS
 STANDIN' IN THE NEED OF PRAYER
 ETERNAL LIFE
 AMERICA OUR HERITAGE

There are thousands--probably hundreds of thousands--of youthful combo groups playing guitars and belting folk songs, beat, "protest," and swing, from the understated elegance of La Jolla's ocean-fronted desert to the fake pastorate primeval of Martha's Vineyard, from the real estate promoter's dry Everglades to the houseboats anchored in Puget Sound. It was arrogant, presumptuous--and in bad taste, besides--for Iowa high school sophomores to emerge from the rich loan of the cornlands brazenly aspiring to sing songs, strum guitars--and sell records.

But the beginning was not nearly so grandiose: A couple of high school sophomore boys, fooling around in the band room of Maurice-Orange City High School (Orange City, Iowa), worked up a version of "Surf 'n' Safari," a 1962 hit. They found two more members for their quartet--and the West Side Four was born (they all lived, more or less, on the west side of Orange City). Then they were juniors, and one of their number left. They found a replacement, and another departed. They replaced him--and suddenly they were in college and still singing, still playing, for larger and larger audiences in Orange City, Cherokee (Iowa), Sioux City, Denver, Minneapolis, Winnipeg, Cleveland--and New York.

It is difficult--maybe impossible--to classify the West Side Four: They do religious numbers like "Almighty God of Our Fathers," "popularized" religious songs like "I Believe," and pseudo-folk, "hobo" songs like "Beans Taste Fine" (one of their best). They sing fundamentalist songs of Negro origin like "You Can Tell the World," and romantic love songs like "Try to Remember." And when you think you may have pegged them and their style and their *raison d'etre* they come on strong with "Take This Hammer" in which a Negro slave work song evolves into a profound cry for freedom, points the way and the means to the brave, new world, and (simultaneously--quite a trick in any *metier*) laments the loss of home, family, and love.

Some social historian, writing ages and ages hence, might postulate that the West Side Four exceeded its social prerogative, reached beyond its potential, or even aspired beyond its social heritage. I would disagree: I believe the West Side Four--consciously or unconsciously--has expressed the aspirations of Americans (Californians, New Yorkers, Floridians, Washingtonians--and Iowans) for the great future that lies before them and which they can find if they look deeply into their own hearts and seek in the obvious depths of their own splendor.

C. D. Roland

Pianist: Kathy DeJong

Photography: Keith Hook
 Clothes by L & K Clothing