

# Meet <sup>the</sup> Band

*our history*



## Blue Moon Big Band 2000

In 2000, Leonard's bands played nearly every weekend from March through the end of the year. By now, both Blue Moon Big Band and Li'l Bit of Blue had become highly sought-after wedding and dance bands. In addition to playing at venues such as the York Country Club in Pennsylvania, Baltimore's Pimlico Race Track, and the Glen Echo Spanish Ballroom several times each throughout the course of the year, Blue Moon had earned a strong following of swing dancers.

Among them was John "Psychoboy" McCalla, the owner of a Maryland construction company who was known throughout the area as the most energetic dancer on the floor. Psychoboy just wanted to dance, and he latched onto the straight-ahead style of Blue Moon. Soon, the band and the dancer would hook up, with Psychoboy giving hour-long dance lessons and then Blue Moon swinging the night away. The relationship was a hit from the start, and the two would work together on a handful of occasions by the end of the year. A year later, Psychoboy and his partner, Heather "The Feather" Coyne, were named the 2001 American Lindy Hop Champions.

On May 9, the band was once again spotlighted on the NPR program, *"Swingin' Down the Lane."* This time, host and producer David Miller selected Blue Moon's version of *"Caravan"*, which joined a line-up of music from Natalie Cole, The Airmen of Note, The Ray Anthony Orchestra, and the BBC Big Band.

In October, the members of Blue Moon decided it was time to take a cut at hosting their own dance. And so, with a full moon on Friday the 13th, Blue Moon Big Band filled the 6,000 square foot dance floor at the Towson American Legion Post 22. Joining the band once again was the Colgan Brothers Band from Pennsylvania. Teaming with Teresa Leonard on a handful of classic vocal quartets, the CBB was a tremendous hit with the dance audience. Each of the singers also performed a few solo tunes with the band, bringing a new dimension to the music of Blue Moon Big Band.

At about the same time, drummer Marty Knepp joined the band, bringing a new feel and energy to Blue Moon's rhythm section that the band had been seeking since its beginning. Straight-ahead on the standards and grooving on the West Coast charts, Knepp completed a rhythm section that would become the staple of the band's driving sound. Shortly after, saxophonist Steve Szyjka, a music student at Towson University in Baltimore, auditioned with the band and stepped in as the new lead tenor player, a tough role to fill considering the talent that filled the other chairs in the sax section -- a section that had at times been referred to as the "sweetest sounding sax section on the east coast."

In 2000, the band adopted *"Two O'clock Jump"* as its closing song at performances.

