

Meet the Band

our history



Blue Moon Big Band 2001

In February 2001, Blue Moon hosted its second event in Towson, "A Valentine's Weekend Swing Dance." It was the final Blue Moon Big Band performance for bassist Gary Richardson and tenor saxophonist Shannon Loy, who each had decided to cut back on their schedules. A few weeks later, drummer Marty Knepp invited Roland Dorsey, a bass player from Abingdon, MD, to sit in at a rehearsal. Dorsey's feel for the music was an instant fit to the Blue Moon sound, and he joined the band that evening. With the departure of Loy on tenor sax, Geoff Stewart rejoined the band the same week.

The band performed at about a half dozen venues during the first two months of 2001. During the stretch, bandleader Rob Leonard had been continuously approached with inquiries as to why he no longer played with the band, and instead only served as bandleader and master of ceremonies. Finally giving in to the audiences' requests and the coaxing of a handful of the band's members, he picked up his trumpet and stepped in front of the group as a soloist for the first time in nearly three years, at the band's annual dance at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in mid-April. The bandleader's first appearance as trumpet player since June 1998 was highlighted with solos on Gene Krupa's "Boogie Blues," Glenn Miller's "In the Mood," and the band's penultimate closer, "Two O'clock Jump."

One of the most frustrating things for Blue Moon's bandleader was the difficulty in finding good arrangements of certain songs. Then he found Myles Collins, a band leader and arranger in Kent, England. Rob ordered a vocal arrangement of "Bei Mir Bist Du Shoen" -- not just any arrangement, though. He wanted the arrangement that the Benny Goodman Orchestra and Martha Tilton performed at Carnegie Hall in 1938 during the famed concert that forever changed American jazz. Collins' arrangement was perfect, note for note, and soon Blue Moon Big Band was increasing its library once again with titles such as "Route 66," "Stuff Like That There," "Straighten Up and Fly Right," and other wonderful Collins arrangements. By the end of the year, the band had added nearly two dozen charts from the England-based arranger.

Blue Moon's partner ensemble, Li'l Bit of Blue, was still growing in popularity in the Washington DC / Baltimore area, and had put several wedding receptions on the Spring and Summer calendar. During the last weekend of April, vocalist Teresa Leonard appeared with the quintet for the first time, adding a new dimension to the already successful all-star ensemble, which now included David Cosby on guitar, Eric Byrd on piano, Gary Richardson on bass, Marty Knepp on drums, and original member Andrew Mitroff on reed and flute.

On May 1, Blue Moon Big Band celebrated the beginning of its fourth year since its humble beginnings in 1998.

Early in August, bandleader Rob Leonard and vocalist Teresa Leonard traveled to London to meet Myles Collins, the music arranger with whom they had been conducting business over the past several months. It was the first time meeting in person, as all business had previously been worked out via email and the Internet. At Pepy's Bar, near the Tower of London, Rob and Teresa finally met Myles, a perfumer by trade. During the meeting, Myles delivered his latest arrangement for the band, the Latin classic "Sway," which was ironically played over the bar's soundtrack just minutes after the exchange!

In September, Towson University music major Katie Grimm joined Blue Moon's sax section on tenor. A month later, on October 13, Blue Moon Big Band teamed up once again with The Colgan Brothers Band, this time for a "Rock & Swing Into the Night" concert at the 700+ seat amphitheater at the Hagerstown Community College in Maryland. The two bands shared the same stage for four non-stop hours of classic rock and big band music.

On December 7, the band released its third recording, *"Nice Work if You Can Get It,"* a 20-song collection of swing, blues, and big band tunes. The band sold nearly 300 copies by Christmas!

In 2001, the band adopted Glenn Miller's *"Adios"* as its closing song at performances.

