



Big band basks in joyful sound; Calgary's Prime Time Big Band marks 15th year

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With five trumpeters, four trombonists, five saxophonists, pianist, bassist, drummer, guitarist and vocalist, **The Prime Time Big Band** has cut no corners in performing traditional big band jazz for the past 15 years.

Director and trumpeter David Jones, through his travels in Canada, figures they are the only full time working professional big band jazz band in the country.

"All the guys are the best players in the city and some of the best in the country," says Jones, who served in the Canadian Forces Music Branch as a trumpeter and conductor for about 27 years.

"It's all in the common name of playing professional big band jazz."

Although the band has been together for well over a decade, it was eight years ago when Jones decided to take the plunge and see if the city would be able to accommodate a world class jazz big band that has a library of over 600 compositions and an additional 400 dance tunes from almost any modern era of music.

Constantly knocking doors and finding very few venues to house its 19 members, Jones finally found a home at the Ironwood Stage and Grill every second Saturday performing after brunch.

"We knew that there was about three or four clubs in the city that could house us and whether there would be a receptive owner. It started with a small audience and then we developed it," says Jones.

Eventually, corporate and private gigs followed.

Through dedicated fans and friends of the band, the idea to make an album was born and \$160,000 was raised to record their *For Our Friends* CD at the Banff Centre in 2006.

"It's a passion of mine to have an avenue for these great musicians to play on a regular basis."

The rarity of having a band of its size find success is remarkable but Jones stresses that his band is not something run on the side but as a livelihood for himself and the rest of its members.

"We are the only band in the country that plays big band jazz for your listening pleasure on a professional level. Individually, we practice at least two to four hours per day plus two hours per week together. Plus, (members) they are playing other shows as well," says Jones.

"It's a seven day a week profession. Your dentist doesn't work seven days a week."

With about 30 to 40 years of professional music playing experience per band member, it's about 600 cumulative years of music that the band draws on.

"It's experience and we're fortunate to get that because we're working. It allows you to get tighter . . . like a hockey club who play together a lot," says bassist Kai Poscente, who has worked with Jones from the band's beginnings.

"It was about eight years before we actually landed a regular gig. We rehearsed every Monday but we didn't have a venue. A rehearsal isn't the same as trotting your stuff out without stopping and it takes the band to a whole different level. It's something you have to see and hear the sound coming out. It's joyful music, fun and it's got to be a treat to dance to."

The **Prime Time Big Band** will be performing at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue Ballroom on Oct. 31. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$80 and include a dinner and dance.