

Meet the Band

our history



Blue Moon Big Band 1999

The band kicked off 1999 with a series of performances in Baltimore with Chuck Alexander's Friday Night Swing Dance Club, a partnership that would continue over the course of the next year and a half, where dancers poured out month after month to see and hear Baltimore's newest swing band. In April, Blue Moon got its first "big job" when a worldwide medical company out of Florida hired them for its annual awards dinner at the newly constructed Baltimore Convention Center, just across the street from Oriole Park at Camden Yards. The band entertained an audience of more than 3,000 and shared the stage with television's Roy Firestone as the featured acts.

Blue Moon continued to take jobs for corporate events, wedding receptions, and dances. Two churches contracted the group for annual fund-raiser dances, Mt. Hebron Presbyterian Church in Ellicott City, MD, and St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in New Freedom, PA. The band has played every Spring at both churches ever since. More wedding receptions, wine festivals, and private parties would follow, and the band would play more than two dozen events throughout the course of the year.

The band had been receiving a fair amount of air time on local radio stations, primarily an AM station in Baltimore, WLG Legends Radio. But, on February 23, 1999, Blue Moon Big Band received its first national recognition via the airwaves when its vocal arrangement of Gershwin's *"Somebody Loves Me,"* from the band's first CD, was played as part of a big band and jazz segment on National Public Radio's *"Swinging Down the Lane."* The song opened the hour-long broadcast, which also included music from Tony Bennet, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, and the Eddie Reed Big Band, was aired on over 40 radio stations, nationwide.

With the departure of Mark Kelly from the trumpet section and an opening in the trombone line, Tom Jackson and Chris "Moose" Skowronski joined the band. Bassist Gary Richardson also joined the band, replacing David Sayen who spent a short time with the group prior to moving to California. Early in the year, the band also teamed up with the Pennsylvania-based Colgan Brothers Band, led by Pat Colgan, Blue Moon's studio producer. Joining Blue Moon on several occasions throughout the Winter and Spring, the CBB, a classic rock band by trade, added a new sound and style to the Blue Moon repertoire.

During the Summer of 1999, Blue Moon Big Band recorded its second CD, this time a live recording taped during a dance festival in Salisbury, MD. With 18 tracks, the new CD, *"Blue Moon Big Band Swingin' Live!"* offered a raw, live side of the band that conveyed the energy and excitement the band members had for the music they played. Several of the band members wrote off the second recording, though, believing it lacked the polished, high-intensity sound that had made the band so popular. Nonetheless, the recording sold well and Blue Moon Big Band now had two CDs under its belt.

In September, bandleader Rob Leonard and vocalist Teresa Piermatteo were married at the Valencia Ballroom in York, PA, and the natural choice for entertainment was Blue Moon Big Band. The band dazzled the wedding guests for four hours, performing on the same stage as legends such as Benny Goodman, Harry James, the Dorsey Brothers and Glenn Miller. In fact, it was the very stage where Glenn Miller told his band members in 1937, on New Year's Eve, that he was dissolving his orchestra. Of course, the legendary bandleader re-formed the Glenn Miller Orchestra just months later, after

finding that classic "Miller sound."

Rob Leonard was hearing more and more throughout the year that potential clients loved the big band look and sound of Blue Moon, but often could not fit the 19-piece band in certain venues. In response, Rob formed Li'l Bit of Blue, Blue Moon's partner ensemble. Comprising a four-piece rhythm section and reed player Andrew Mitroff at the front, Li'l Bit of Blue would soon become as popular as the full orchestra.

In 1999, the band adopted *"The Party's Over"* as its closing song at performances.

