

# Wicked Smart

Continued from page 11

Cimino, the band's founder, placed calls to various North Country musicians. Eventually they recruited David Goldblatt (trumpet), Roy Brewster (saxophone), Michael Martins (trombone) and Bruce Kimball (baritone saxophone).

The band performed together for the first time during an open mic night at the late, great Clam Shell restaurant in Littleton and played their first show soon afterwards on Halloween night at the Peabody Lodge.

"It was packed," recalled Brewster about the first show. "There was really good energy."

In the early days the band played a half-dozen shows a year at local venues. One of those was the Hillwinds in Franconia, where the band set an attendance record during one of their shows.

With each passing year demand for the horn band grew. They received more requests to perform at weddings and corporate events, became (in Cimino's words) the "unofficial house band of the Mt. Washington Hotel" and have played each of Gov. John Lynch's four inaugural balls since 2004.

They currently average about 30 shows per year.

Playing that many dates gives the band plenty of exposure and some extra cash. However band members are not motivated

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*— Wicked Smart Horn Band founder and bassist Joe Cimino*

by fame or fortune. Most hold down full time jobs outside of the music industry. The reason they continue to play together is their shared love of music.

"The main thing is we don't do this to be famous," said Cimino. "We just like to play music together and entertain the crowd."

## STILL GOING STRONG

At first they were just 'the horn band.'

It wasn't until they had played out, and attracted a following,

that they named themselves the "Wicked Smart Horn Band." It came out of a conversation between Jo Cimino's son, Anthony, and the band's original guitarist Mike Reagan.

The discussion centered on the makeup of the band. They noted that some members worked full-time in the music business (the wicked) and the others worked professional jobs (the smart).

"It was like 'the wicked' and 'the smart' coming together," said Cimino.

Brewster said he was unsure how the 'Wicked Smart' label would go over. However his fears were quickly laid to rest. "People loved the name."

Two other innovations followed. Soon after the band formed its members began wearing tuxedos during performances. The first tuxes were used. "They weren't the ones you'd want to take your girlfriend to the prom in," said Cimino. "But they looked good in the dark."

Then, about eight years ago, they added backing vocalists The Hornettes.

Otherwise the lineup has remained mostly the same. The only changes were when Anthony Cimino replaced Dan Kenney on drums and the recent addition of trumpet player Beth Zagst.

"Other than [the drummer] it's pretty much the original band," said Cimino. "It's pretty amazing."

Most band members earn their living outside of the music industry. Brewster is a dentist. Reagan runs an auto body shop. Slim trims Christmas trees. Martins teaches music at White Mountains Regional High School. David Goldblatt is a baker and his daughter, Rose, one of the Hornettes, is a yoga instructor. Another Hornette, Lindsay Adams, works for Garnet Hill.

Meanwhile Cimino and his son run Mojo Music Productions, which runs a recording studio, rents speakers and sound equipment and installs sound systems. In addition Cimino's wife, Maryann, runs a coffee shop (formally known as Mojo Headquarters LLC) in downtown Franconia.

"It's a really diverse group of guys," said Cimino. However he said they shared a common rhythm. "From the moment we started to play it was evident there was a groove."

Members of the band have occasionally taken time off, which led to the creation of a horn band "B Team," a competent and consistent group of fill-ins including guitarist Jeremy Dean and Nick Ciarleglio.

This "B Team" could someday inherit the band. Over the years the band has invested in infrastructure (three sound systems, a truck and wardrobes), incorporated the band, and developed a "Wicked Smart" formula which makes it simple for other musicians to join in.

For some it's only a matter of time before the band is turned over to the next generation.

"The band keeps moving on," said Brewster. "In a way it's bigger than all of us ... I think the future is very open."

In the meantime Cimino said the band plans to release another album and record a Christmas record in time for next year's holiday season. Further into the future, he would like for the band to expand beyond its regional routes and play a venue beyond New England.

"We talk about coming up with a couple of destinations we'd like to go to, like in the Caribbean," said Cimino. "One goal we have this year, as we get older, is to use the band to travel a little bit with our families."

No matter where the Wicked Smart Horn Band plays - at local weddings or in tropical destinations - one thing is certain: They are going to continue having fun one song at a time.

"When we're on stage it doesn't matter where we are or who we're playing for," said Cimino. "It's about the camaraderie and it's about love."

For more information and concert dates see the Wicked Smart Horn Band's web site at [www.hornband.com](http://www.hornband.com).

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