
Sounds just like old times
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The Register-Guard
Published: Monday, April 2, 2007

For the Jazz Minors, 30 years don't mean a thing, 'cause they've still got that swing.

More than three decades have elapsed since seven local boys ranging from 13 to 17 years old - their name being a play on their underage status - first formed a traditional Dixieland Jazz band.

The Jazz Minors' authentic New Orleans sound soon garnered a national following - they hit the road in 1977, traveling from San Francisco to Orlando, Fla., playing for President Jimmy Carter at the White House along the way.

That summer, they landed a job at Disneyland. Some members made the move to Southern California, while others opted to stay in Oregon.

The trappings of life drew them apart, and separated by geography and time, the original band members never played together again.

Until Sunday, when they all took the stage again at the Eugene Eagles Lodge, delighting a packed house that responded with a standing ovation - a pleasant surprise to the musicians, who had little time to practice for the event.

"After 30 years, we had four hours to prepare for a three-hour gig," trombonist Scott Wadsworth said.

But under their old leader, trumpeter Rusty Stiers, the guys - Wadsworth, Brad Roth, Mark Curry, Jon Brand, Tim Cline and Dale Dial Jr. - quickly hit all the right notes.

"We grew up learning to play together," explained Roth, the banjo player. "You count off the tune and you hear a melody, and it's like a flood. There's a musical connection."

The seven originally hailed from Thurston and Churchill high schools. The reunion came about after Brand, the bass player who still lives in Eugene, sent an e-mail to his former mates asking if they'd be interested in playing at a monthly concert hosted by the Traditional Jazz Society of Oregon.

"Everyone was like, 'Yeah! Let's party,'" Stiers said. "This is the most authentic band I've ever played with."

Though the name Jazz Minors is no longer the most accurate description - most are in their late 40s, and Wadsworth is a grandfather - the band kept the tempo Sunday afternoon, running through a litany of their old favorites before closing with a song called "Tiger Rag."

More than 50 fans gathered around the stage, dancing and cheering as each man went through his solo.

"That was our theme song," said Cline, who plays the piano. "It felt pretty much like

old times. It was a weird thing; I never anticipated being able to experience that again."

Roth's mother, Beverly, said she could not believe it had been 30 years since she last heard her son play with the Jazz Minors. She had to drive her son, the "baby" of the group, to every show.

"When they practiced (on Saturday), it just kind of clicked," said Beverly, who now lives in Monmouth. "It was just like they've been playing forever."

While Brad Roth lives in Orange, Calif., and the other men are scattered about Oregon, they say now that they've reunited, they're talking about doing shows as often as they can.

"It feels pretty certain this will happen some more," Wadsworth said.

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