



Entrepreneur's passion for timeless music grows into a major entertainment company

Big Band Entertainment

AT A GLANCE

Primary Product/Service:.....
LIVE JAZZ & BIG BAND ENTERTAINMENT,
ARTIST MANAGEMENT, BOOKING & MUSIC
PRODUCTION SERVICES

Top Local Executive:.....
KELLY CREIGHTON, VP OF OPERATIONS

Local Employees:..... 20+

Year Founded:..... 1999

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If his clients feel like they're at the old Copa Room at the Vegas Sands Hotel, it's not an accident, says Big Band Entertainment founder Ned Fasullo. For the past six years, BBE has featured live top-quality vocal jazz, big band standards, and the hits of the Rat Pack in hundreds of regional venues.

"There's nothing like standing at the foot of a stage and seeing 17 guys in tuxes playing authentic versions of tunes that never go out of style," says Fasullo.

The Baton Rouge native founded BBE, a full-service booking agency and event production company, in 2000. A popular performer himself, Fasullo has headlined at numerous public and private events across the United States, including three years of performances as lead vocalist with the Nelson Riddle Orchestra during their "Salute to Sinatra" tour. Today, he still sings, but turns down many gigs to concentrate on BBE's growth.

Big Band Entertainment is home to several performers, including Baton Rouge "Jazz Diva" Mary Beth Broussard and jazz vocalist Hugo Andricain. Broussard specializes in the hits of Peggy Lee, Ella Fitzgerald and other swing era female vocalists. Andricain, like Fasullo, sings favorites from Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Bobby Darin and others. Classically trained, he's also a big name in wedding ceremony and funeral singing. Fasullo said singers can be booked alone, with a few instruments, or with a big band orchestra of up to 22 pieces.

BBE also features professional musicians like trombonist Andy Pizzo and the Andy Pizzo Project, saxophonist Duane Huff and the Duane Huff Trio, and trumpeter Erik Morales.

VP of Operations Kelly Creighton Fasullo has aggressively marketed BBE's booking services and event management and has grown the business substantially throughout

the region in the last three years. Weddings and private functions are the company's bread and butter, but BBE also produces musical entertainment for corporate events, charity benefits and private entities. The company's acts have played at weddings in several states and at big-name functions for the Baton Rouge Symphony, General Health System, and the City of Baton Rouge. Ned and the six-piece "little big band" perform 5 or 6 times per year at local watering hole Phil Brady's.

"A lot of detail goes into the production," says Ned Fasullo. Staff consult with each client, whether they're brides or CEOs, to select how many and what types of instruments to use and which vocalists fit best. BBE creates a tailor-made song list from the company's selection of hundreds of authentically arranged big band standards. The list includes everything from "Anything Goes" to "Witchcraft."

"People always come in and want to hear familiar songs like 'In the Mood' or 'The Way You Look Tonight,' which are great," says Fasullo, "but we also show them some of the less-played hits that end up being huge show-stoppers and very memorable."

Fasullo and BBE's musicians are big supporters of downtown Baton Rouge's revitalization—perhaps, he says, because they've played at nearly every venue and reception hall in the neighborhood. Now BBE is seeking investment partners to open a Rat Pack-style supper club downtown. Fasullo's idea is to mimic the clubs of the '50s that made Sinatra, Martin, and Darin household names.

"This music is so timeless and appeals to so many generations," Fasullo notes. "The market is ripe to bring back a big place that could be used for receptions, live entertainment and ballroom dancing." ●