

Paul Combs' pocket big band

Nine-piece ensemble explores and performs jazz from the forties to the present

“Little big bands have returned,” according to *Downbeat*. “Nonets and tentets are suddenly back in the limelight.” The Paul Combs’ Pocket Big Band, founded in Boston in 2001, today finds itself in the vanguard of the return of the nonet to jazz.

Lead by Paul Combs, music educator, composer and performer, the Pocket Big Band is a nine-piece jazz ensemble that has many of the orchestral qualities and power of a big band while maintaining the musical intimacy of a small combo. The instrumentation features Combs playing alto sax and a collective of eight other Boston-area jazz musicians playing tenor sax, baritone sax, two trumpets, trombone, piano, bass and drums. Vocalist, Lydia Fortune often appears with the band, adding versatility to their repertoire.

According to Combs, “from the time the band was formed in November 2001 through the present, we have developed a repertoire that reaches across the modern era of jazz.” Band members, under the direction of Combs, include Jody Bregler, Jim Cameron, Bob Coviello, John Doherty, John Fransoza, Don Hemwall, Wayne Mogel, Jim Pastore.

“This is a nine-piece powerhouse with an outstanding jazz book,” wrote Ted Belastock in *Quarter Notes Magazine*. “The group is tight, swings as an ensemble and features fine solo performances by all.” Neither a retro-style band, nor a swing revival showcase, the Paul Combs’ Pocket Big Band presents modern mainstream jazz without going for the double-breasted two-tone suit look. Audiences don’t seem to mind the band’s low-key fashion style. They come for the quality of the music and the excitement the band generates with its high energy sound.

The Pocket Big Band has performed at Ryles, Cambridge MA; the Acton (MA) Jazz Café; Union Blues, Worcester MA; the Press Room, Portsmouth NH; The Amazing Things Arts Center in Framingham, MA; The Center for Arts in Natick, MA (TCAN); The Performing Arts Center of Metro-West, Framingham MA; The Roost, Amesbury MA; and Club Liquid, Leominster MA, among other venues. Paul Combs’ Pocket Big Band also appears most Sunday evenings from 6:00p -10:00p at the Chit Chat Lounge, 103 Washington Street, Haverhill, Massachusetts. The band can also be heard on Sea Breeze Records “Live at Chit Chat” CD, catalog SEAB-3073, www.seabreezejazz.com.

Paul Combs is listed on the Massachusetts State Touring Roster (www.matchbook.org) and New England States Touring Roster (www.nefa.org)

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