

1. The Syd Lawrence Orchestra

Founded in 1967 by trumpeter and arranger Syd Lawrence, *The fabulous **SYD LAWRENCE ORCHESTRA*** has been thrilling audiences in Concert Halls, Theatres, TV Shows and Music Festivals all over Great Britain and Continental Europe for over 40 years. Renowned for its exciting blend of high octane Big Band Swing and Classic Dance Music, the Orchestra's repertoire ranges from the wartime million sellers of the legendary Glenn Miller through the era of the great Count Basie Orchestra to the hit songs of Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald. Count Basie himself described the Syd Lawrence Orchestra as "*So good it should be BANNED!*" and it has recently been voted "Best Big Band in the Land" for the *eighth* consecutive year.

The Orchestra, directed since Syd's retirement in 1996 by Chris Dean, has a repertoire of over 1,200 classic Big Band titles including Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade" and "In the Mood", Tommy Dorsey's "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" and "Opus One", Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing", Artie Shaw's "Begin The Beguine", Woody Herman's "Blues on Parade", Ray Anthony's "Mr Anthony's Boogie", Duke Ellington's "Satin Doll", Bert Ambrose's "Night Ride", Count Basie's "Aprilk in Paris" and "Splanky", Charlie Barnet's "Skyliner", Stan Kenton's "Peanut Vendor", the "Trumpet Blues" of Harry James, "I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm" of Les Brown, the hits of Billy May and Ted Heath's "Hot Toddy".

Hits from the Great American Songbooks of George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen, Hoagy Carmichael, Irving Berlin and singers Frank Sinatra, Nat 'King' Cole, Sammy Davis Jr, Bing Crosby, Tony Bennett, Matt Monro, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Barbara Streisand etc are also featured in the programme.

Chris Dean believes in leading the Orchestra with pace and good humour, performing the classics of the swing era in a way that entertains the audience. "The music is what people want to hear" says Chris, "information they can get in books, they come to a concert to be entertained, not to hear a lecture".

Chris's aim has been to increase the number of young musicians playing Big Band Swing. Recent changes in personnel of the Orchestra have proved the worth of this ambition. The "new blood" of some of today's finest young jazz musicians has brought a new fire and drive to the Orchestra's performances which has been reflected in rave reviews and numerous Sold Out concerts.

In Concert in addition to roaring Big Band numbers and Suites and Overtures no longer performed by any other orchestra, there are vocals from Bandleader **Chris Dean** and Star guest vocalists **Eleanor Keenan** or **Angie Mills**. Also featured within the show is the wonderful close harmony singing of **The**

Serenaders recreating the sound of vocal groups such as The Modernaires, The Pied Pipers and The Sentimentalists. A further attraction is the “Band within a Band” showcasing the jazz talents of soloists within the orchestra and adding yet another dimension to the performances. All concerts have to have a “big finish” and the Syd Lawrence Orchestra is no exception invariably finishing in traditional big band style with a spectacular Solo from star Drummer **Mike Smith**.

When playing for Dances the orchestra’s huge repertoire really comes into it’s own. The music of the Big Bands was originally written as dance music and its life and soul stems from its origin in dance. The Syd Lawrence Orchestra playing for dancing revives the romance, style and poetry of a bygone era, returning these beautifully constructed tunes to their original purpose.

All these elements combine to make the Syd Lawrence Orchestra the most enduringly popular Big Band in Britain today.