

Q: Who is The Ron Smolen Orchestra?

A: This question is rarely asked because most clients already know who we are or what we do. However, for those of you that just discovered us via our website, we offer this explanation:

The Big Band sound is no longer dominated by big names with national prestige. Instead, many local bands carry on this tradition with unique personalities, regional prestige, and the desire to entertain for the public.

The Ron Smolen Orchestra (RSO) is based in Chicago, Illinois, They are one of the last traveling Big Bands under the direction of a personable, entertaining leader.

For years **Ron Smolen** has always described his Orchestra as a Variety band. But he now takes a page from **the history of the Big Band Era** and describes his Orchestra as a "**Crossover**" band.

Q: What exactly is a "Crossover" band

A: The Big Band Era featured many regional bands. Most were created as Dance Bands that primarily performed for local dance venues and Ballrooms.

Famous orchestras like that of Glenn Miller, and Sammy Kaye are excellent examples of "**Crossover**" bands. They too played dance music for Ballrooms, but also offered a wider musical variety. On successive nights, they could play Dance Music, Swing out at Clubs, and perform the many styles and requests required for a private party. By offering a wider variety of musical styles, they doubled and tripled their booking opportunities which in return brought them Name band status.

Q: What kind of music do you play.

A: **The Ron Smolen Orchestra** does everything mentioned in the paragraph above. They present a unique "Big Band" style by combining their own specialized music arrangements, with classic arrangements from the Big Band Era. Plus, with the ever-changing music scene, they will also add a touch of Country, and /or Pop. The RSO motto states – "**Every Night is New Years Eve.**"

We try to make every event a good-time party atmosphere and a truly memorable performance for everyone attending, no matter their age.

Q: Where have you performed?

A: **The Ron Smolen Orchestra** has appeared in 14 states and has also been heard on radio stations from coast to coast, Canada and worldwide on the Internet.

Past Engagements include appearances at historic Ballrooms, Theatre stage shows, and countless public and private appearances at Hotels, Resorts, Casinos, State Fairs, City and County Fests, Parades, Dinner Dance Clubs, and Big Band Weekends. More information is available on our web site.

Q: Will you play requests?

A: Yes. At every engagement, we conform to the event by observing the attendees and by catering to the needs of the audience. We always try to accommodate requests in addition to our regular performance material. While we are always willing to work with the client by accepting advance requests, we will occasionally limit requests to the arrangements at hand. That's because we want to make sure you hear the professional orchestra that you hired, not a bunch of Musicians sight reading material.

99% of all are engagements are booked because people have hired us for who we are, and what we do, and not for who they want us to be.

If you have your heart set on a special song that is not in our library, our musical arrangers are always available to create a special arrangement at a nominal fee.

Q: Will everyone like this music?

A: Well...there is no one universal taste in music (or anything else). However, having done hundreds of events over the years, we are extremely well received and recommended by the vast majority of guests and clients. We hear some interesting comments over and over such as: *"Big Band music is not our favorite but we stayed to the very end, danced and had so much fun"* or *"It was so refreshing to have a band that was not so loud. We could actually carry on a conversation in the same room; how refreshing and different from the typical wedding band"*. We feel our entertainment factor, energy level, sincerity and respect for your guests transcends musical taste.

Q: Will the younger people dance to this music?

A: Absolutely. Of course, anyone can dance a "slow dance" to our ballads and while many people refer our up-tempo tunes as "swing" most people we observe dancing are not "swing dancers" but they sure are dancing and having fun.

Many times, we hear from young brides who are attempting to persuade their parents to hire us for their wedding (rather than vice versa).

We are the first choice for several "Dinner Dance Clubs" year after year after year.

A very prestigious fund raiser in Milwaukee, has rehired us for several years now and have even eliminated the disc jockey that used to follow our act. We were informed it was specifically the younger people who did not want the disc jockey, and requested hiring only our orchestra for the entire evening.

Many clients still hire a disc jockey to alternate with the orchestra to cover the more modern styles of music. We find this mix popular in many areas where we perform, and have no problem working a DJ.

Q: Your schedule page does not list many public events.

A: Our Public performance schedule is greatly reduced. But that does not mean we have less bookings. Actually, we have less public performances engagements because we are already booked due to an increase in Private Engagements, with many of those being Weddings.

Q. My event planner tells me this size orchestra is “too big” for the room (or number of guests).

Please talk to us if your event planner, hotel caterer (or anyone) tries to dissuade you from hiring the music you want

A: This is usually incorrect. We can fit in a space against the wall 12'x16'. We have performed parties in very crowded rooms and for very small gatherings (one party had 20 guests). Compared to a DJ, we have more people, but we are much lower in volume, and we are never “too big” for any party.

And, as far as number of guests versus number of musicians, **if we were The Guy Lombardo or Glenn Miller Orchestra, the question of reducing the size of the Orchestra would never be asked.**

Our arrangements are custom made; many transcribed from the original recordings (at considerable time and expense). **We are a 10 piece Orchestra.** Our arrangements were written for our orchestra size and instrumentation. As the evening progresses, the audience will enjoy a variety of musical styles. This is much more interesting and entertaining to the average party guest.

Think of your music as an “entity”. The Beatles, for example were four musicians. They didn't leave Ringo (the Drummer) at home, and perform with less because the room was small or there were fewer guests. Nor did they add more musicians to perform in a large arena for thousands.

Remember, as your guests leave, they will never comment on how much fun they had because the room was set up in perfect proportions but they will remember, for a long time, the entertainment and the human element of guests, performers and their host.

There are “orchestras” who can perform with whatever number of musicians you (or your party planner) may think you need (usually up to whatever your pocketbook will bear). Beware of these bands. They must use very simple “arrangements” to be so flexible in size and in our opinion offer little excitement. Their “arrangements” tend to all sound the same.

Q: I do not know if our entertainment budget can allow us to spend this much.

A: Experts usually state, “The band makes the party” or “give your guests good food, drinks and a very good band and cut corners elsewhere.”

Although we have 10 people to pay after our performance, we are the same price as some much-respected 4 or 5 piece “wedding bands.” Yes, there are cheaper bands (and some are worth it). Moreover, there are more expensive orchestras (sometimes at only a fraction of our size). Our focus is to entertain and make people happy, at a cost to cover our payroll and expenses. **For those clients who must have a smaller orchestra, we do offer a trio and quartet. Inquire regarding details and prices.**