

News Interview:

Interviewer: What inspired you to start the orchestra?

Johnny: First of all, there is nothing like a big band with strings. The sound is very dynamic and I have always loved that kind of musical power. Also, I have noticed over the last few decades that more and more artists are using more pre-recorded back-up tracks and samples, and are eliminating music played live by real musicians. And personally for my own taste, I like to hear singers actually sing and sing melodies, so one of our goals is to help promote live music.

Interviewer: What inspired the name 67eventy 8 for the tribute orchestra?

Johnny: Well, we mostly pay tribute to the songs of the 60s, 70s, and 80s, but we also do songs as far back the 50s and as current as the 90s and 2000s. But trying to include all those decades in the title would make it too long and cumbersome.

Interviewer: Usually, you only get to hear strings playing in a symphonic orchestra performing classical music, so why did you include a string section?

Johnny: There is a rich history of string sections backing popular songs as far back as the 30s but you never seem to hear it in popular music anymore, so we wanted to include the great sound a string section can contribute in the popular song genre. On top of that, having the string section opens up a whole new world of song considerations and arrangement possibilities that you just would not have without the strings.

Interviewer: Who is the band leader and who wrote the show and did the arranging and writing?

Johnny: I am the director and I wrote the show and do about 90% of the arranging. But I have also gotten help from a few local people with arranging and misc. work. I have tried to write new and fresh arrangements which are adaptations to the original songs, but if I am not inspired by a song to bring something new to it, I will look for something else. There is such a huge history and catalog of songs now, there is no reason why any group should have to perform any material that is weak or used as a filler. Every song should be a show stopper.

Interviewer: What kind of audience would like this?

Johnny: The orchestra has a soulful personality and does a lot of soul and funky hits. But we also do some middle-of-the-road pop songs, big band, classic ballads, and some rock, so the show appeals to a very wide audience. The only thing we don't do is country or any acid or heavy rock, because the club scene is saturated with country and rock groups. You really don't get to hear the kind of music we are doing in the music scene any more, which is that big horn and rhythm sound with a lot of vocal harmonies. Add to that a string section and you got a fantastic sound that encompasses most of the great attributes of music. And if you like to dance you will love our presentation because all the songs we select have great dance rhythms. But if you want to just sit back and enjoy the show you can also do that, because it is mostly written in show medley form and moves along quickly.

Interviewer: Where are the singers and musicians from?

Johnny: Many of the players are local from Butte county, but some are from as far north as Redding and as far south as San Francisco. They are all very talented and with such a large band it gives me the ability to feature all of these different singers and musicians, which keeps the show very interesting and full of variety.

Interviewer: Many of the tribute groups do the music of a particular artist exclusively. Why did you decide to do a tribute to songs instead of one single artist?

Johnny: Because most hit groups or artists of the past, only had four or five great hit songs, unless you are talking about a few artists like Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson or the Beatles. So, after the tribute group does those four or five hits, the rest of the night is made up of fillers or songs that were not that popular by that artist. Since The 678 Tribute Orchestra does a tribute to songs, it allows us to cover the biggest hits by many great artists from the beginning to the end of the show. So every song is a mega hit that most people are familiar with and there are no fillers. And the show starts off and gets better and better until the very last song. Also, it is not only more fun for an audience, but I think it is also more musically interesting for the musicians to be able to perform that larger variety of songs and varied styles.

Interviewer: Where do you perform with such a large group?

Johnny: Well, naturally we need the larger venues for their size and of course the larger audience to be able to cover the cost. But most artists will tell you they enjoy the larger venues better, because the stages are roomier and designed better with enhanced sound and the appreciation level from an audience is a little more intense and that is always more fulfilling to an artist.

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