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Arizona's Music Resource

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## Swing - Swingtips

By Warren Channing

Swingtips...a favorite band among swing enthusiasts, dancers and jazz lovers alike. While the current swing phase is sweeping the nation and cities are scuttling to find a decent swing band, Phoenix has already made its mark with the Swingtips. The band is enjoying as much popularity here as they do in the rest of the States, especially the western states. The band plays at several venues in town including, but not limited to, The Backstage, The Rockin' Horse Saloon and The Rockin' Rodeo. They have also begun to spread their music around Arizona to places such as Flagstaff and Tucson. Not only that, they have been on several tours along the west coast including stops in San Diego, Los Angeles, Palm Springs, Seattle and Tacoma. Although they haven't played there to date, their music is heard over the airwaves in the likes of Eugene, Oregon. In addition, they were also filmed in their vintage baseball uniforms (part of their first set show) by MTV in Las Vegas at the Hard Rock Hotel. The Swingtips already have a nationally distributed and marketed CD, entitled "Let's Play Some Ball," which sports mostly original tunes. They have recently finished another CD exclusively for the holiday season, called Santa Swings. The CD release party for the Christmas album was held at the Rockin' Rodeo this past November 1 and was a blast! Both albums have much to offer and have not left the fans disappointed.

Although the band is quite busy lately, LINK was lucky enough to get an interview with the leader of the band, Kregg Barentine.

### The Genesis of the Band

As with most bands, their genesis does not seem to fit into

They choose different types of songs, which lend themselves to different types of dances. The band even goes so far as to come early and pay attention to the dance lessons, which usually preface a live swing show, to observe the levels of the dancers who will be in attendance at the show. They then take that into account when up on the bandstand later that evening. In other words, their tempos are almost different every show and the songs they've written or arranged are done so with enough compositional technique to accommodate that. They next pick a key, which will allow all the players in the band to perform well on their particular instrument and keep everything tight. When they choose to do a standard, they listen to the original recording for material and ideas on how to venture from it without being too distasteful. They like to contribute something new each time they do a standard. Each arrangement includes a lot of new music when compared to the original. This is one factor that sets the band apart from the many contemporary bands on the scene who strive to completely copy what has already been done. For a good idea of this concept, check out their arrangement of "Little Brown Jug" on their first release. It has completely different sound than the one most of us are familiar with (the Glenn Miller version for all you non-swingers). Kregg does most of the arranging for the band although their trombone/harmonica player, Mark Witt, also contributes. The Swingtips music definitely has an older tinge but the lyrics are one of the things which keeps them in the 90's, so to speak.

The subjects they deal with are a little more modern in orientation when compared to the songs of this type in the 1930's and 40's. The pictures they paint are slightly

a nice, neat package of an answer. The idea started with Kregg himself. He traces it back to 1992 when he won a Zony award for a 1930's-1940s swing revue entitled The All-Night Strut. The show was well-received scoring accolades from audiences and critics alike. He was soon offered the opportunity to play as one of the youngest members with the Glenn Miller Orchestra, which he took. Kregg decided to start his own swing band when he returned from his 2-year stint with the Orchestra. Kregg said when they first started trying swing nights at resorts and the like on an irregular basis he primarily attracted an older crowd. He then met up with Paul Maranto and some of the other swing dancers, and together they started to build the scene we have here today.

#### Choice Material

Kregg's first response to the question of, "How do you choose the songs you play?" was tempo. With the kind of audience they play to, primarily dancers, tempo is of paramount importance. He is familiar with the types of dances being danced and understands the integral parts the beat and tempos play in that symbiotic relationship.

more "edgy" and continue to set them apart from other schlock swing bands. A good example of this is "The Business End of the Barrel", from their first CD, or "Bad, Bad Christmas Boy", from their latest Christmas CD.

The Swingtips have a website, [www.swingtips.com](http://www.swingtips.com), where you can keep updated on where they play gigs, learn about the background each of the players, purchase CD's and merchandise and even download pictures to paste on your wall or whatever you please. You can hear their latest CD at a listening station in Virgin Records at the Arizona Mills Mall. The Swingtips also has a hotline number, (602) 208-2794, and a mailing list for fans that want to keep up-to-date on the latest happenings concerning the band. For all you musicians who are ready for a booking agent and production company, Kregg owns and operates A.I. Productions here in town and is always happy to speculate with new people concerning music and business affairs. That number is (602) 218-9799.

Until next time...swing hard.

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