

# St. Some Jazz Times



## Dharhan *Big Band*

### THE GROWTH OF JAZZ

In the past two months, our Big Band Jazz performed for the largest audiences in the past seven years. What started as a weekly throw together ensemble, turned into a full blown, sold-out concert for 850 people followed by a second annual desert gig for 500. Now it's a decrescendo.

### A FEW GOODBYES AND AN INTERNATIONAL DAY

This band is so dynamic. Hopefully, we won't pull a *Commitments* and decrescendo to a breakup. Several of our founding members are leaving us and some have left recently. Besides Jazz, not much else is newsworthy except a falcon.



Thank  
You,  
Doug!

## SWITCHING DOUGS? DOUG STEPS IN TO SAVE THE BAND

Just two weeks before the greatest gig in the seven year history of the Dharhan Big Band, Doug sat in on drums. Not only did he make it possible for us to play, all eyes and ears were on the drums for the very first number.

Doug's entrance was a difficult transition, matching the beat from the featured video. The concert opened with a huge screen and no live band. Our hit desert video from last year was featured until Doug started up live half way through. As the screen rose, the band finished the song Sing, Sing, Sing live.

Doug mastered that opening and the rest of the evening as if he'd been playing with us all along. It was quite a show.

Ithra, the name of the concert hall in the cultural center, seats 850 people. We sold them out. In fact, this was the first musical performance to ever sell out the venue. The place was packed!

Up on stage, we couldn't see anything but bright lights aimed directly at us. We didn't really care. All we could think about was nailing every song.

I had the opportunity to solo on In the Mood and The Pink Panther. Ughh. I hate the tenor solos in In The Mood. Hopefully, it sounded OK. I

really tried to nail it even though it makes me cringe.

From what I hear, my featured tenor solo in The Pink Panther was spectacular. Whew, at least I had a solo in one of my all time favorite songs.



## SOMEONE HAS TO SNAP... SOMEONE HAS TO FOCUS...

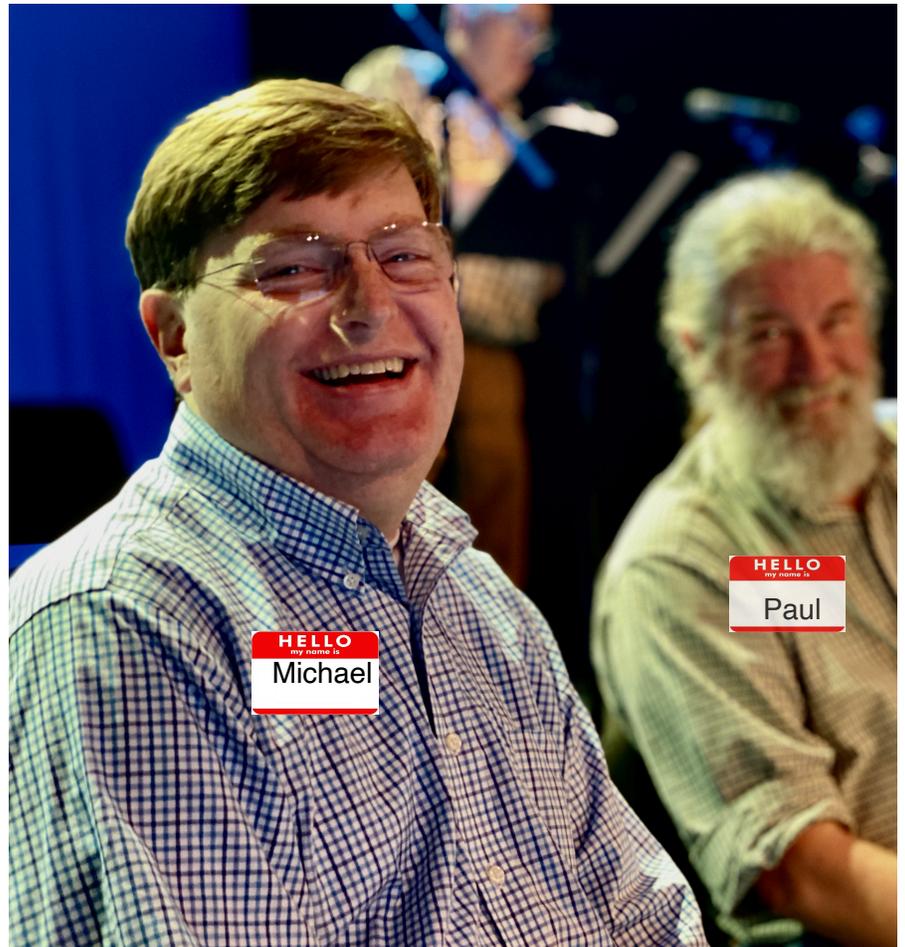
I really don't envy Michael. It's not easy being the band leader for a motley crew of amateur musicians that love to have fun while they are playing! Michael's patience was severely taxed leading up to the big concerts.

My guess is Michael feels under-appreciated leading the band. No one else wants to do it. Michael is the direction. He calls the shots. We couldn't do it without him. Two hours a week. Maybe one gig a month. January and February were intense like no other time. Thank you Michael.



### FLYING FINGERS

Van is a fantastic keyboardist. He's modest when you talk with him, but Van can really play anything in any style.



## "AS FAR AS I KNOW, THE ITHRA GIG IS STILL ON"

My next door neighbor, friend, and switching off lead Bone with Michael is Paul. Paul is also the imagination behind the most recent bonanza of DBB milestones. The desert gigs, last year's videos, and the Ithra concert were all dreamed up by Paul.

Saudi culture centers around the idea of little planning, throwing something together minutes before, and a lack of notice. Granted, music events are something Saudi has not embraced for many years. In fact, music events were pretty much outlawed for the past fifty years.

When Paul first pitched the idea of playing at the Ithra concert hall, earlier in the year, we all backed the idea but left it up to Paul to arrange. As we neared Christmas break and all of us prepared to travel out to the four corners of the earth, Paul kept saying the same thing - "as far as I know, the Ithra gig is still on... but we cannot announce anything until it's official with Ithra". The gig was announced for January 23. The gig wasn't even announced on FaceBook until January 6th. Amazing. We commenced practice with a new drummer on January 9th.





## 2ND ANNUAL JAZZ IN THE DESERT - JANUARY 24TH

The empty picture above filled up with around 500 friends and families to hear our band play again. This was the day after the Ithra gig. Imagine some bedouin camel herder walking along in the desert and coming across the event? Yes, this was our second desert gig inspired by *Blazing Saddles*.



Valentine's Dinner for 200 seats was sold out a few days before the date. It was, perhaps, Rich's last gig.



## AND I'M FEELING... GOOD!



**Hans is the Ultimate MC for our Big Band, but he's also our long standing Vocalist. He's a total "HAM" on stage!**

A week before the sold out Ithra gig, we announced our intention to play in the desert again. Last year was only word of mouth and a total hit. Almost 200 people attended. This year would probably be even bigger. We just couldn't announce it because we still had hopes Ithra would offer to give us a second concert gig.

That didn't pan out. Ithra never gave us the nod. So out to the desert! The caravans of camping families in 4x4 vehicles started arriving early in the morning sun. We had the "stage" set up by 1:00pm and started playing just before 1:30pm. Wow. Just look at all the people!

Remember, this was just a few hours after we nailed a filled concert hall. Everyone in the band was feeling loose and worry free. I felt like I had

already eaten the buffet and looked forward to the dessert table! (Desert: dessert - play on words? catch it?)

No police showed up. No camel herders appeared. It was all just excellent jazz and happy go-lucky people having fun in the sun.

I didn't stay much longer after the gig. In fact, I barely helped break the set. However, a lot of families ended up staying overnight and camping in the desert.

Whatever happens in the months that come, there will be a lot of expectation for the third annual desert gig. Jazz in the sand is quickly becoming a "thing".

You should come join us. Saudi just introduced a 14 day tourist visa. Hah. See you next desert gig.



## FROM FOUNDER TO GRADUATE - DBB SAYS GOODBYE TO BRETT

He has a personality bigger than the Bari sax he played in his last gig. Brett is one of the founding members of the band. Not one session or social event went by without Brett sharing one of his “stories of old”. He told me stories about almost every former player, especially the sax players.

Brett is leaving a lot bigger hole than past founders. No, not just because he is such a big guy. Rather, he was the social leader of the DBB. Almost every weekly practice and all gigs ended up at his house. (Engineers are excellent beverage craftsmen.) Brett made everyone feel right at home with movie nights, singing in his back yard, and impromptu parties.

Brett is also one of the only people I’ve met overseas that left country with the attitude of giving away stuff rather than “selling” and “saving a buck” on a used grill or damn potted plants! Finally, someone else like me.

## RICH WILL BE MISSED BUT NOT THE THOUGHT OF HIM IN BIKER SHORTS!

Practice will certainly be different without Rich’s sense of humor and peanut gallery comments. Also one of the founders, Rich has been a cornerstone of the band for years.

When he wasn’t training other British jet pilots, playing trombone in our band, or biking 50miles, I’d see Rich wander into Hobby Farm on weekends for breakfast with his biking crew.

Rich leaving is another added blow to our decreasing number of band members. It’s

getting weirder and weirder. We are in the middle of a giant decrescendo.

It’s not all bad news though. Yeliz just played her first gig as female vocalist. She is an amazing singer. The Valentines gig proved that! 200 people sat down to eat, drink, and dance Valentines night.

Steve is the music teacher from one of our other schools. He commutes once a week to practice with us on Bari sax. He’s an excellent musician that seems to play almost anything. Awesome!



**trombone player, Iron man biker, pilot instructor, proper British jokester, photographer, band official business manager, and all-around great guy**

Jan. 24, 2020

# Dhahran Big Band

Jazz in the Desert!  
25°43'20.3"N 49°29'15.5"E



## HO HUM! WORK!

Technology continues. We have meetings. I teach classes. We investigate new devices and solve new problems. There is a parent night coming up. We just finished international week. Teachers are using more and more

technology in the average week. Life is busy. Peach, Katherine, and I finished our meetings about meetings. Now we are meeting about defining our “playbook”. Nuff said. Agenda. All by design.



Cheri and I playing with a green screen

## WORRIED? ANYONE?

It's crazy these days. The virus is going around the world. Airports are closing. Countries are shutting borders. Wow. Will I get to go to the Maldives at the end of the month? Sure hope so.

Everyone is talking about it. Everyone is watching. What's going to happen next? Life still goes on in the desert. Our weather is at its best right now, but I'm ready to go diving again. “Get me outta here!”



Katherine, Peach, and I, the Techies of our school



## Yes, I'm Holding a F\*\*\*\*\*g Falcon!

February ended with a full week of our school's celebration of Internationalisms. All week long, our students wore their colors, learned about each other's countries, and looked forward to the parents and teachers putting on the Walk of Nations.

The Walk of Nations at DHS is similar to other schools I've worked at, but there's a lot less alcohol. I ran a green screen photo booth for four hours but I snuck away for just enough time to hold a Saudi hunting Falcon for a few minutes. Awesome.