



Reprinted from Baton Rouge City Social, December 2004.

## Where Angels Fear to Tread:

By Susan D. Mustafa

Ned Fasullo did not grow up with musical inclinations. He listened to Frank Sinatra on the radio with his mother and four sisters, but he had no dreams to become a singer. He did take piano lessons for about four years when he was young, but quit when his teacher found out he was playing by ear because he couldn't read music. Ned doesn't even think he's a great singer. Singing was just one of a long list of hobbies until he decided on a whim to begin a band. And Ned has always been a man to go where angels fear to tread. In fact, he approaches everything that way.

"I just decided to do it one day. I knew I could sing a little bit and decided to give it a try," Ned said.

Ned sent an e-mail to members of the Baton Rouge Jazz Ensemble expressing his desire to start a band. He then downloaded a bunch of Frank Sinatra songs and began learning them. He got a small group together and two weeks later played his first gig at Maggio's. After honing his skills at local restaurants for eight months, Ned decided it was time to form a big band.

"I regrouped and set goals," he said. "I auditioned piano players, kept my original bass player, and went back to the Baton Rouge Jazz Ensemble for horns. I told people I had a big band before I actually had one. I started booking weddings, and it grew from there."

More surprised than anyone at the demand for his Sinatra-like sound, Ned soon found himself opening shows for the likes of Harry Connick, Sr. and playing at bigger and bigger venues. Collecting female fans in the 60-plus demographic was also a surprise for the young man whose almost shy grin is indicative of someone unused to so much attention.

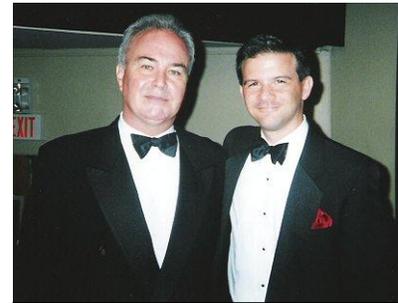
"People say I resemble a young Frank Sinatra, but I don't think so. And I don't think I sound like him. That's not what I'm trying to do. This is not about people who sang songs. It's about great arrangers who made beautiful music," he explained.

With standards from Tony Bennett, Sinatra, Bobby Darrin, and Sammy Davis, Jr., Ned and his 17-piece Fabulous Big Band Orchestra take their audience on a journey back to a simpler time when singers crooned their love. "There is a vacuum for this type of music," Ned said. "There are few big bands that float around this area, but not many. I think I was in the right place at the right time."

To date, Ned has recorded three studio CDs and two live CDs. His latest, *Ned Fasullo—Live at Casino Rouge*, was recorded at a show in July in Rhythms Lounge in the casino. Featuring standards like "I Only Have Eyes For You," "My Funny Valentine," and "Mack the Knife," the CD showcases the range of Ned's abilities.

"Working with Casino Rouge helps us so much. We're the missing genre that rounds out their schedule." Ned will return to Casino Rouge to perform on December 13. This show will feature trumpet players from Catholic High's jazz band.

Ned is a featured vocalist with the Nelson Riddle Orchestra under the direction of Nelson's son, Christopher, and will begin touring with the orchestra in January. Nelson was Frank Sinatra's bandleader for 22 years. Also working on putting a Dean Martin type show together for Cox Cable to showcase The Fabulous Big Band Orchestra, Ned's "hobby" is keeping him very busy.



Christopher Riddle & Ned Fasullo

Chris is the son of legendary Sinatra arranger Nelson Riddle. Ned performs regularly with Chris and the Nelson Riddle Orchestra.



During the week when he's not at his job as a sales representative for Transformyx, Ned can be found singing on Thursday nights at Vincent's Italian Cuisine in the piano bar on Highland Road or at DeAngelo's Pizzeria on Coursey Boulevard twice each month. And his four-year-old daughter, Mary Joy, has been known to offer her rendition of "It Had to be You" on some of these occasions.

"I don't even use a mike at Vincent's. I have a big voice. Sometimes they have to tell me to keep it down," Ned laughed.

Ned's CDs are available at The Compact Disc Store on Jefferson Highway or online at [www.nedfasullo.com](http://www.nedfasullo.com). And Ned has a special treat exclusively for *City Social* readers. Visit Ned's website and be the first to hear some of the new releases from his upcoming CD. You will also be able to access a video of Ned in North Carolina with the Nelson Riddle Orchestra. Just type in "city" for the username and "social" for the password to take advantage of this very special preview.