



In The Mood, a 1940s-era big band musical revue, makes a tour stop Thursday at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Mainstage in Benton Harbor.

Photos provided

IF YOU GO

- ▶ **WHAT:** In The Mood
- ▶ **WHEN:** 7 p.m. Thursday
- ▶ **WHERE:** Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Mainstage, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor
- ▶ **HOW MUCH:** \$35-\$49
- ▶ **CONTACT:** 927-1221 or www.lmcmainstage.org
- ▶ **ARTIST INFO:** www.inthemoodlive.com

In The Mood ready to 'Sing, Sing, Sing'

Musical revue makes tour stop Thursday at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center

By **JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO**
HP Features Writer

BENTON HARBOR — When pianist and band leader Bud Forrest had the idea to form In The Mood, a 1940s-era big band musical revue, he turned to arranger and composer Vic Schoen, one of the seminal creators of the swing-era sound.

"I said, 'Vic, this is what I want to do. Would you be willing to help me out?' and he said, 'Absolutely,'" Forrest says by telephone from the In The Mood tour bus traveling just outside Youngstown, Ohio. "He was the real deal. He was the arranger and conductor for the Andrews Sisters for years, and went on to be the music director for both Universal and Paramount. You might not recognize the name, but he was an icon in Hollywood. A number of songs in this show are directly a result of his work, and I'm very proud to be able to continue that."

While Schoen died in 2000, at least part of his musical legacy actively can be heard in Forrest's In The Mood show, which makes

a tour stop Thursday at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Mainstage in Benton Harbor and Nov. 12 at the Morris Performing Arts Center in South Bend.

The brassy, singing and dancing musical review pays tribute to Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman and the big band greats of the '40s with songs such as "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "Sing, Sing, Sing," "Tuxedo Junction," "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," and — of course — "In the Mood."

With a cast of 19 — 13 members of the String of Pearls Big Band Orchestra, and a six-member In The Mood Singers & Dancers — Forrest says the show is more than just a concert. Through medleys, it recreates defining moments from the happy-go-lucky era before World War II, to the start of the war when conscripts were going abroad to fight, to the glimmers of hope that the war would be won and loved ones be reunited.

"It's like a theatrical retrospective of the music and the great American songs that gave our country so much spirit during the late

1930s and of course during World War II," he says. "There's no real story to the show, the music is the story."

Forrest, the creator, producer and pianist, is a former Juilliard student who earned his bachelor's degree from Ithaca College in Ithaca, N.Y., and did graduate work in music at Catholic University in Washington, DC.

He first got a taste for big band music as accompanist to the Singing Sergeants, the official chorus of the United States Air Force, and has spent more than 30 years as pianist performing at political functions. In 1993, World USO selected In The Mood to be part of the official entertainment for the 50th Commemoration of World War II. Since then, the show has played in 48 states with tours in Canada, Europe, New Zealand and Australia.

"In the 1940s everybody was listening to big band music in juke boxes, at dance halls, etc.," Forrest says. "The music carries a lot of memories, but there's so much energy in this music that people still respond to them today. These melodies are timeless. Here they are 70-80 years old and they are still with us."

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