



R.A.G. ⚡

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SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH BRANDON TOMASELLO

STEREO

BRANDON TOMASELLO



MY KIND OF SWING



Arranged by **ED VEZINHO**
Conducted by **MIKE NIGRO**

Brandon Tomasello is a special breed of singer and thank God there are performers like him around to keep certain genres of music alive. You see, Brandon is a big band type of singer who beckons influences to the likes of Sinatra for example.

We'd call them "crooners" and it's something that you just don't get to hear much of anymore which is really quite sad since it's such a charismatic and alluring style of music in general.

"In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning" is a single that was performed by Brandon and done with such a perfected swagger and style that it's almost intimidating.

The song bangs away with a heavy handed and gorgeously arranged big band feel and the sound is absolutely nailed.

And that's really the thing here. In order to get that genuine crooner style, you have to have a ton of people in play. There has to be an authentic sound that matches the aesthetic at least nearly perfectly.

On top of that, you have to have the right character and approach to your vocals when singing this stuff. You can't just go up there and do a Jim Morrison thing or sound like a kid in a psych-rock outfit.

You have to sound like it's a different decade all together. Genuinly. And Brandon pulls it off without a hitch.

This was so impressive and outstandingly done that it made me go to all the rest of his material and though there are plenty of covers of the greats, they are done so well you'd never guess it was done now.

With the release of such a great and unique single, we wanted to touch base with the artist to see what the idea was behind this one.

Here's what happened.

RAG: Okay! So, let's start with "Wee Small Hours of The Morning". This single has a genuine classic big band crooner feel to it! Where did this track come from?

"Wee Small Hours" is very special to me. This particular arrangement was written by Billy Byers in June of 1965 for Frank Sinatra and the Count Basie Orchestra. Backtracking a bit to July of 2019 - I had found out that most of Byers' arrangements had been donated to the Library Of Congress, and decided to do some digging. The Library put me in touch with Billy's son Bryant who gave me permission to access the collection. We ended up finding 14 arrangements written for Sinatra and Basie, 6 of which were never formally recorded! When I finally decided to record my album, I knew I wanted one of Byers' unheard arrangements to be included on it. We went with "Wee Small Hours" because it had that classic Big Band ballad feel.

RAG: I'm hearing some great styles on this release. Who are some of your biggest musical influences?

Frank Sinatra is at the top of my list. I also listen to Michael Buble, Steve Lawrence, Ella Fitzgerald, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Bobby Darin, and Tony Bennett. When I sing, I think about their phrasings, intonations, breath control, etc., in hopes that I am presenting their songs in a way that would make them proud.

RAG: Who did you collaborate with for this? How did you find the band to perform the song?

It took a lot of people to make this a reality. It started with my Musical Director / Drummer Mike Nigro. We have been working together for the last 10 years. He has always encouraged me to get my own arrangements written, as well as to step out of my musical comfort zone. Mike introduced me to Ed Vezinho who wrote all of the arrangements for the album, with the exception of Billy's arrangement, of course. Our Bass player, Andy Lalasis introduced me to our recording engineer, Randy Weaver. Randy took great care to record this album the old fashioned way to keep the authentic big band sound. My very good friend, Merrill Kellem, who was a very close friend of Mr. Sinatra, introduced me to Chuck Granata who is Nancy Sinatra's producer. I asked Chuck if he would produce the album and he immediately came on board. The band is made up of some of the best musicians on the east coast - these guys have played with everyone, including Sinatra himself! Mike Nigro has been contracting these greats for my live performances for the last 10 years, so it was only natural to call them in for this project - it is an honor to be able to regularly perform with these amazing musicians who have become friends.

RAG: So how did this all begin for you really? When did you fall in love with making music?

I never wanted to be in the entertainment business. When I was a Kid, I wanted to be a fighter pilot in the Air Force. When I realized that would not be a reality, I decided I would be a Funeral Director! (Logical Switch right?) I was getting ready to go to Funeral Director school when my best friend, Stephen Garbesi, and I opened a small production company. He knew I had some singing ability because we were both graduates of the "Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School" where we were Musical Theater Majors. We built a small recording studio in my grandfather's office, and he made me record "Fly Me To The Moon" as a sample which lead to a demo C.D, which lead to a residency at Resorts Casino in Atlantic City.....and we've been plugging away ever since! I'm very glad that Stephen pushed me to make that C.D. The feeling of performing on stage with a live orchestra behind you is truly an amazing experience!

RAG: What's next for you as an artist?

Hopefully more recording! I love performing live, but recording is a whole different animal. Mainly because it's permanent. Once you release that recording, it's there forever, so you have to make sure you're on your "A" game. Maybe a Christmas album will our next album.

RAG: What inspires you to write a song?

I wish I could write a song! I have never been able to.

RAG: What are you doing when you're NOT working on music?

Flying Airplanes! As I said before I wanted to be a fighter pilot, however since I wasn't able to do that, I decided to get my private pilots license. I even find myself signing "Come Fly with Me" to myself as I takeoff!

RAG: Who are you listening to right now?

Definitely all of the artists I mentioned earlier. It doesn't get any better than them!

RAG: Are you doing live performances?

Since the pandemic, things have been slow. I will be performing with the Ocean City Pops in Ocean City, NJ on July 20th, 2022. We are also working on the 2023 season.

RAG: This single seems like a big undertaking. What kind of advice might you have for other up and coming artists out there?

Get people involved who have done it before, know all of the risks and benefits, and treat each "no" more like a "maybe". It is a VERY big undertaking so it's important to surround yourself with the BEST. The first thing Mike told me when we first went into the studio was to watch the clock. Time is money, and the clock seems to tick much faster when you're in the studio. You need to know when to move on. The most important thing to remember is to have a team that is strong in the areas you are not.

RAG: Before we go, what would you like to say to fans of the music?

This is the greatest music ever written and it is the greatest music that will ever be written - it's the whole reason it's survived through so many generations. It is my deep privilege to carry the torch to the next generation.