Signorello's 'Martini Dance'

By LOU KING
Special to The Journal

LISTEN UP

John Signorello, 'Martini Dance'

Swinging times are back in vogue once again, and Oakton, Va., resident John Signorello and his New York City Lights big band are here to remind us all that it's still cool to be "cool."

A former Radford University lacrosse player and proprietor of a successful information technology company, Signorello is now putting all his energies into recapturing the allure and magic of the bygone days when the words "Chairman" and "Copacabana" really carried some clout.

"This is all I do," said Signorello. "I'm an entertainer."

Signorello's second album, "Martini Dance," is chock full of brassy and boppy arrangements of big-band standards like "Come Fly with Me" and "Body and Soul," as well two original compositions (the title song and "Cool One"), which feature some added '90s energy.

As a singer he's both reverent to the masters and aware of his own smooth style. His version of the Frank Sinatra classic "New York, New York" is faithful and understated, while his delivery on "Besame Mucho" is snappier and more hard-hitting than Nat King Cole's.

His band benefits from thoughtful arrangements by Carroll Skinner, who worked with Frank Sinatra Jr. Van Morrison's "Moondance" sounds like it was written for a 19-piece band, and features strong soloing by pianist Chris Clark and former Billy Joel saxophone player Richie Cannata, who also produced "Martini Dance." Signorello's own songs have more than enough presence to stand toe-

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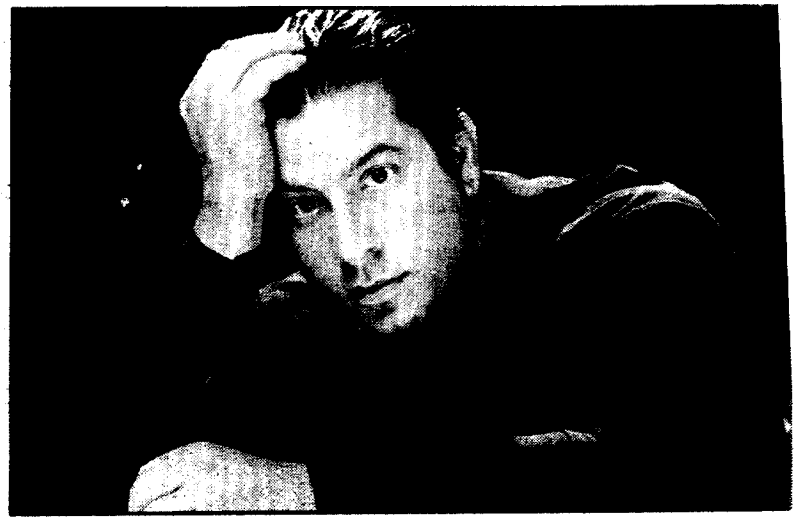

John Signorello performs tomorrow night at the State Theatre.

Signorello brings his 'Martini Dance' to State Theatre

LISTEN from C4

to-toe with the standards, especially "Cool One," an irresistible and swaggering finger-snapper.

What with "swing," "jump" and anything else even remotely associated with the retro-lounge phenomenon having permeated just about every facet of society, it should come as no surprise that musicians are trying to cash in on the trend before it dries up. But Signorello has been working with his band for nearly four years, and he's realistic about his chance for success.

"We're swing-influenced, obviously, and it doesn't hurt having a Brian Setzer winning awards on MTV," he said. "But really, if this music is going to get bigger, it all depends on what the top guys at the big labels decide to do."

Meanwhile, Signorello will take his band out on the road up and down the East Coast. Instead of waiting for a big break, he'll keep working until he creates his own luck.

"We're going to strategically build this into a grass-roots thing, finding some cities we do well in and keep working at it," he said.

Meanwhile, there are already plans for a third album, one that will feature an even broader musical scope. Signorello says fans can look for a little more of the classic pop sound, even mentioning the potential influence of Billy Joel.

"I've got a simple philosophy," he said. "If you work hard, you're gonna grow."

Signorello will celebrate the release of "Martini Dance" with a performance tomorrow at the State Theatre, 22 N. Washington St., Falls Church, Va. Tickets are $10. Call (703) 237-0300 for details. Signorello will also perform from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Freedom Plaza (corner of 13th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Washington). The performance is part of the Downtown Soundtracks concert series sponsored by the Downtown DC Business Improvement District. To order a copy of "Martini Dance," visit www.signorello.com, or call (561) 988-0819.

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