

What DownTime?

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The Crate & Barrel store on Brattle Street in Cambridge recently had to pack its glasses and pad its plates when a local lawyer came in to shake the place up.

About 500 people turned out on Nov. 2 to see Boston lawyer **Robert R. Pierce** and the DownTime band play a mix of jazz, funk, and rhythm and blues for an annual benefit for the Cambridge Center for Adult Education.

Pierce, the lead guitarist, back-up vocalist and organizer of the band, says that music is just as important to him as his career in trial practice and intellectual property law.

The DownTime band has opened for James Brown, Chaka Khan, The Four Tops, Tower of Power, and the Average White Band, and Pierce himself has played second guitar for Bo Diddley.

But he says that other members of the band have more distinguished musical careers. Pierce notes that one keyboard player works with Mariah Carey, another female vocalist has sung with Patti Labelle and Roberta Flack, a male singer performed with Bill Withers and Pieces of a Dream, another band member joined Starlight Express in Las Vegas, and the sax player now has the number four release on the Billboard contemporary jazz chart, "Feelin' You."

DownTime attracted enough local notice that Hollywood actor Andrew Shue flew the band out to Montana for his wedding a few years ago, and Pierce recalls that band members had a chance to party after the gig with sister Elisabeth Shue and a host of other celluloid icons.

But organizing the band is no easy task, the attorney says. Because there are so many talented musicians involved who are in heavy demand by other bands, Pierce often has to schedule many back-up players to fill holes as needed.

"My biggest Rolodex card has the names of 15 bass players," he jokes.

Pierce says that law and music have worked well together for him. "We have played at lots of weddings and other functions for lawyers who know me, and I've also gotten legal referrals from being in the band," he notes.

As a result, Pierce does some contract, copyright and trademark work for performers when he is not busy with litigation.

Asked what his next gig will be, Pierce says, "I never know, but we'll play anywhere. Just give me a call."

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