

Big Band old-timers were skeptical, until the young musicians played

By BETTE SMITH
St. Petersburg Times Correspondent

The crowd of more than 2,000 mostly older people looked dubious when the youthful musicians (most of them from Largo) in pink ruffled shirts mounted the stage at a recent concert in Pasco County. Some asked the leader when an older band would arrive. Many were disgruntled because they didn't believe youngsters could play their old favorites of the Big Band era.

Hall Street 8 got halfway through their opening number, *In the Mood*, when the astonished crowd stood and applauded. It was an impressive sight.

Big bands may be mostly memories, but the Big Band sound is back. Young people like those in Hall Street 8 are discovering the music of their parents' youth.

Radio station WWQT's Jim Stanley, host of the Make Believe Ballroom and station program director, says Stan Kenton probably had a lot to do with the surge of interest in Big Band music. Kenton, only 18 when he formed his own famous band, went around to high schools for years to create interest in the music among band directors.

Stanley believes youthful enthusiasm makes Hall Street 8 better than many other bands around, even some that include veterans of authentic big bands.

A YEAR AGO alto sax player Terry Kampka and his friends began the Hall Street 8, which is now plus 3. Most of the 11 began their music studies at Largo High School with the Largo Band of Gold. They have been polishing and performing their music since the original eight friends first began the group at Kampka's home on Hall Street in Largo.

At ages 18 to 22, the musicians are much younger than the music they play. The exception is their newest member, who is also the oldest. Drummer Sammy Fletcher started as a kid in Grand Rapids when Gene Krupa was the king of drummers.



A part of the Hall Street 8 that plays Big Band tunes.

St. Petersburg Times