

Even Big Band old-timers applaud

By BETTE SMITH
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The crowd of more than 2,000 mostly older people looked dubious when the youthful musicians 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.

They all speak the same language musically so Fletcher has had no trouble fitting in with the young group.

The members hold fulltime jobs or attend college, but all aspire to be fulltime musicians when the group becomes better known.

When electric bass player Dean Wise doubles as vocalist, *Moonlight Serenade* transports older listeners back a good many years to more romantic times.

Chattanooga Choo-Choo, sung by Tom Cannady, is greeted with toe-tapping acclaim. *One O'Clock Jump* is the band leader's favorite of the old tunes.

Hall Street 8 has already become familiar to a lot of people who love the music that became famous with the big bands of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman.

REGULAR gigs include Thursday evenings out-of-doors on a portable stage at The Pier. Kathy Fisher, liaison for SPIFFS, says, "They're our biggest crowd pleaser. The sound takes the old timers back to before World War II. The young

musicians put their hearts and souls in this music."

The group also has appeared at Disney World, at the Bath Club for New Year's Eve and July 4 celebrations, at Tyrone Square, the Country Dinner Playhouse and Le Club where they were videotaped in a sales promotion for *Tierre Verde* time-share condos.

They also play for private parties and can be reached at 526-2208.

For some of the members, Big Band music came naturally.

"My parents have always listened to it so my ears have been trained," says Kampka.

His father was a member of the Air Force Drum Corps, his mother plays piano and was a clarinet player in high school. Three younger sisters are musicians, too.

"We appreciate this music. Some of us in the group listen to rock and roll, but this music is more pleasing to us. What we're doing is very technical and takes knowledge of style. It's more of a challenge. I'm dedicated to Lawrence Welk," explains Kampka.

Benny Goodman has been the idol of Mark Gould, Hall Street 8 tenor saxophone player. Gould has been devoted to the Big Band sound since about the age of 8, when he first played a rented clarinet.

"I have a pretty big library of Benny Goodman and also Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller. I don't like rock and roll. I never have. This is what I grew up with," says Gould whose knowledge and record collec-

tion have been helpful to the group.

RECENTLY Hall Street 8 took advantage of its first opportunity to play in a huge ballroom and taped the session to study for any needed changes in technique. It was only a practice session in St. Petersburg's Coliseum, but it was an opportunity Terry Kampka has waited for impatiently.

"The Coliseum is one of the finest in the country. One of my goals is to play there someday," admits Kampka, who goes there to dance and to listen every Saturday night that he isn't busy.

He believes his group is ready to play in the Coliseum although it is smaller than the bands scheduled there regularly. "A lot of the people who dance there also come to The Pier to hear us," he says.

Bill MacDonald, manager of the Coliseum, says, "I'm very enthusiastic to see this group of young people get together. I think Terry has a lot of initiative. If they keep up this goal of being a successful Big Band sound, I'm sure they'll attain it."

He also says, "I've told Terry it's a lot more work to keep a big band. You've got to keep expanding. A lot of innovations have taken place in the last four decades. Music is livelier. You can't just stay with the original arrangements. Everybody has changed in 40 years."

Terry Kampka agrees. He says the group's music consists now of approximately 200 tunes. "Sammy (the drummer) is constantly writing charts (scores). We're always polishing the sounds."