

Big bands brewing at pub

By PETE MORTENSEN

Staff writer

For the last two weeks, the New Holland Brewing Co. has been a center for the good-time music of a bygone era, swing music.

The brewery's "Swing Into Spring" concert series has featured a different swing group every Thursday of April, and will wrap up May 6 with a special Tulip Time performance.

Though the venue has had Thursday night jazz performances for some time, swing and the larger ensembles that play it are a new feature, said Dave White, the venue's general manager.

The pub sought out the groups "just to be a little bit more eclectic to differentiate ourselves," White said. "We've been doing jazz for quite a while, so we thought we'd get a little bit more variety, draw some more of the local people."

Though swing is predominantly known as the popular music of the late 1930s and early 1940s, the fun, lively dance music has enjoyed several other forays onto the pop charts, including a bizarre resurgence in the late 1990s that saw so-called "jump" acts like Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, Royal Crown Revue and the Cherry Poppin' Daddies top the charts.

The long-term appeal of swing, and the non-commerciality of most jazz following its peak, is easy to explain, said Paul Sherwood, the leader and drummer of the Rhythm Section Jazz Band, a nine-piece "little big band" which plays at 8:30 p.m. May 6. The group is made up of members of the Grand River Big Band, itself comprising players from the Grand Rapids Symphonic Band.

"Jazz evolved in the South as a dance music, and at its height with the Savoy Ballroom and all the hotel ballrooms around the country flourishing, people would go out for dancing to the hotel ballroom," he said. "They'd go out for a night of dancing, and this band would be pumping out good, danceable music."

Tonight, visitors to the pub can take in Jive at Five, a local septet which will be joined by national vocalist and recording artist Mollie O'Brien, a regular on NPR's "Prairie Home Companion."

Mark Schrock, the guitarist for the group, said swing music stirs great nostalgic feelings for the generation born in the 1940s and '50s, as well as their parents.

"For baby boomers, it's like stuff we grew up listening to — our parents were listening to it and dancing to it," Schrock said. "I grew up with Glenn Miller in the house. Most of us in the band are in our late 40s, knocking on 50 and we grew up with this stuff. Why it continues to be popular, it's upbeat, it's fun, it's fun



Contributed

SWING: Jive at Five is playing tonight at the New Holland Brewing Co. as part of the pub's "Swing into Spring" series.

What's on

WHAT: Swing Into Spring: Swing jazz groups at New Holland Brewing Co.

WHERE: New Holland Brewing Co., 66. E. Eighth St.

WHEN: 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. tonight (Jive at Five); 8 to 11 p.m. April 29 (Otsego Jazz Ensemble); 8 to 11 p.m. May 6 (Rhythm Section Jazz Band)

COST: No cover

INFO: (616) 355-6422 or www.newholland-brew.com

to dance to."

The only true big band set to play the Brewery during the swing-centered series is the Otsego Jazz Ensemble, a 17-member group with members from Holland, Kalamazoo and many stops in between. They'll play the brewery April 29.

"Most of us, in, like the big bands, enjoy the big sound," he said. "Some of the people will also play in smaller groups, combos, things like that, that enjoy that form of jazz. Most of us get a real charge of just being in the midst of a big sound like that."

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