

Big times are coming up for big band jazz



Drummer Rockie Blunt, whose music career in Worcester jazz dates back several decades, will have to sit out tomorrow night's session at the Spencer Country Inn with the Classic Swing Band due to an illness.



Ev Skehan

Big band jazz will be well-represented in the area over the next few days, and there also are some good shows for fans of blues, top-40s, rock, country and folk.

The Classic Swing Big Band plays for dinner-dancing tomorrow night at the Spencer Country Inn, and Wayne Naus' Big Band Express belts out the music of Buddy Rich and others Monday night at El Morocco. These shows should attract good-sized crowds.

The Classic Swing Big Band has appeared regularly for dinner-dance sessions in the main dining room of the Spencer Country Inn, Route 9, Spencer. The band is well-received and plays the kind of nostalgic music that brings out the jitterbuggers, fox trotters and jazz fans who loved the swinging 1930s and '40s.

The 17-piece group with a vocalist plays the sounds of Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Duke Ellington and others of the swing era. It has been a mainstay in the past few years in keeping that great music alive in the Worcester area.

DRUMMER'S ILLNESS

We're sorry to report, however, that the Classic Swing Big Band's

very capable drummer, Rockie Blunt, won't be on tomorrow night's session and probably will be out at least several months. Rockie is recovering from a recent illness and is currently at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.

Rockie, whose music career dates back to the '30s, has been the police reporter for The Evening Gazette for many years. He is one of the few remaining jazzmen who pioneered jazz in Worcester in the days of the old Saxtrum Club. He has worked with such outstanding jazz musicians as the late tenor saxophonist Howard Jefferson and trumpeter Barney Price and has been featured on drums with many big bands and some of the finest jazz combos in the area. Rockie also has led a number of his own orchestras, appearing at clubs and concerts throughout the region.

Rockie has been laying down the rhythmic beat for the Classic Swing Big Band since its inception. His strong musical presence will be greatly missed until he is able to return to the bandstand. Rockie would enjoy hearing from his many friends. You can drop him a card at UMass or at his home in Shrewsbury.

Tickets for tomorrow night's dinner-dance are \$40 per couple, which includes the evening of dancing and a steak dinner.

The Spencer Country Inn's Hogshhead Tavern is one of the hottest nightclubs in the area, packing in big weekend crowds for top-40s bands. CA Connection will be featured there tonight, followed by Tiara tomorrow night. The Hogshhead, on the inn's lower level, will present Down East Nov. 19 and Fame Nov. 20 and 21. •

EXPRESSLY BIG BAND

The Wayne Naus Big Band Express has excited jazz audiences throughout New England with its stylish performances and imaginative arrangements. The group, mainly Buddy Rich Orchestra alumni, plays a swinging brand of big-band era and contemporary jazz that keeps the audiences lively and involved all night. Reservations are suggested for Monday's concert in the Nile Lounge of El Morocco. •