

WED DOSSIER MUSIC

BY SARAH FELYX



Glenn Miller, Helen Ward and the Benny Goodman Orchestra capture the classic big band style (1933).

SIZE MATTERS *Say "I do" to brassy Big Band sound for your wedding soirée*

DJs are great—but if you want your wedding to feel more like a gala than a sixth-grade dance, consider hiring a big band orchestra. The music, which was popular in the '30s and '40s, evokes an era of ritzy ballrooms, long white gloves, oversized pearls, and slim, satin dresses. With saxophones, trumpets and trombones, the musicians can play everything from slow melodies to quick-on-your-foot tunes.

You may not be able to name any big band hits off the top of your head, but you'll instantly recognize them. Don't believe us? Log onto iTunes and listen to these four classic tracks: "Sing, Sing, Sing," by Benny Goodman; "In the Mood," by Glenn Miller; "Begin the Beguine," by Artie Shaw; and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," by Tommy Dorsey.

So where can you go in Houston for this type of music? The premiere place in town is the Richard Brown Orchestra. It was named after its founder, who manages the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and is a professor of percussion at Rice University. Depending on your budget, there's an eight-piece, 17-piece, or a 27-piece band to choose from, each accompanied by four singers. The price tunes in around \$6,000 and can reach as high as \$12,000.

"I started doing Big Band because there was nothing else like it in Houston," says Brown, who has been in business for 12 years. "My musicians and singers can also do a lot more than Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman. If you want to start out the evening with big band music and

then finish with mo-town, rock n' roll, or songs from Elvis or Sinatra, we can do that too. We can pretty much play anything you ask for." A word of warning: the band books up fast (they also play at many of Houston's fancy fundraisers), so plan ahead.

Richard Brown Music, which is Brown's umbrella company, also offers string quartets for ceremonies (around \$800 for one and a half hours).

PHOTO BY ESTHER ESKELINEN/GETTY IMAGES