

Gals in cast enliven show

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Review

The Pigeon sisters—those English girls who brighten an evening for Neil Simon's Odd Couple—very nearly steal the show in the dinner theater production at the Bum Steer.

Jean Garringer as Gwendolyn, who became a widow in time to save herself from divorce court, and Marlene DeFor as Cecily, a divorcee, giggle their way provocatively through a dinner at the apartment of roommates Oscar and Felix.

The Bum Steer is the newly renamed Drawing Board, which was the newly renamed Alvaro's in Royal Oak. The Drawing Board had to be scratched when it was discovered the name was already taken, although earlier investigation had indicated otherwise.

This Nancy Gurwin production of "The Odd Couple" opened Friday in Dinner Playhouse at the Bum Steer on the restaurant's lower level.

THE DINNER THEATER show, which has just moved from Cordoba's in Livonia, co-stars Carl Williams as Oscar Madison, the sloppy guy, and Kent Martin as Felix Unger, the neatnik.

It's always interesting to see how these characters are portrayed. Those of us who have become familiar with Jack Klugman as Oscar and Tony Randall as Felix in the TV series now in Channel 9 re-runs, will find vastly different personalities here.

Williams and Martin are a well-balanced pair, especially since Williams' Oscar seems more worrisome and fussybudgety than he needs to be as the boss, and Martin's interpretation of Felix is somber rather than outrageously picky.

This odd couple also strikes an interlocking note, with Martin, a black actor, and Williams, who is white, as the longtime buddies who decide to share an apartment when both become wifeless.

Felix's wife has thrown him out, and he lands on Oscar's doorstep. Oscar, who is divorced, takes in his pal but discovers the two are decidedly incompatible.

THE COMEDY IS always amusing

when the two battle over different habits in housekeeping and reach the stage where Felix, like a wife, demands to know why Oscar is late to dinner and becomes petulant.

Oscar's poker-playing buddies are Bill Hoffman as Speed, Max Wolf as Murray, Joe Lannen as Roy and Phil Milan as Vinnie. All do good jobs, and Lannen offers cynical support for Williams. Milan, chubby with eyeglasses and a funny voice, conveys the perfect schmuck.

But it's the Pigeon sisters who make the show come alive when they walk in to Oscar's apartment for a first get-together. Blonde Gwendolyn Pigeon, in clinging pink, undulates; Cecily, a brunette in red, off-the-shoulder, also sends sparks to the guys.

Both women, however, find themselves sobbing in sympathy with Felix's unhappy marital plight. Their tears put a damper on Oscar's plans for a romantic evening. Besides, Oscar causes Felix to burn the dinner to a crisp.

While Oscar has his poker pals, Felix finds he has the Pigeon sisters to turn to. They take him in when Oscar throws him out (Felix's compulsive neatness can be maddening).

Oscar describes Felix as "the only man in the world with clenched hair." DINNER PLAYHOUSE offers a sit-down dinner, in nice contrast to the usual, more hectic dinner theater buffet. You have a choice of New York Strip steak or stuffed founder with crabmeat; salad, vegetable and dessert are included. Cocktails are available.

The food rates satisfactory, and the setting holds promise with a good stage area. Diners were seated at those long tables on opening night, even though the crowd was light.

The decor could use a few more attractive touches. There's a separate front entrance that will be opened soon, leading directly to the theater. It adds something special to the theatrical atmosphere.

Edgar A. Guest III directed "The Odd Couple," performed Friday-Sunday at 8:30 p.m., preceded by dinner at 7.



Felix is charmed by the Pigeon sisters, Jean Garringer as Gwendolyn (left) and Marlene DeFor as Cecily, who in turn are charmed by him.



Oscar, played by Carl Williams (left) and Felix, Kent Martin, engage in a shouting match.

Herman's herd plays

Woody Herman and his Young Herd will perform at Clarenceville High School in Livonia on Sunday at 8 p.m. A warm-up session will begin at 7:30 p.m. with the Northville High School Jazz Ensemble under the direction of Bob Williams.

In November 1976 at Carnegie Hall, Herman celebrated his 40th year as a band leader. He will be 65 years old this month.

Clarenceville will greet him with balloons dropped from the ports, a birthday cake and a huge birthday card that will be signed by those attending the concert. The card will be in the auditorium lobby prior to the concert.

Reserved seat tickets, at \$6 and \$5, are available at Hammell Music, Livonia Mill Record and Tape, Marty's Records in Birmingham and Rocky's Record and Tape on Telegraph in Detroit. Mail orders will also be accepted.

For more information, call the Theatre Parents Organization at 478-8520.

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