

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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(07B)

Rain, rain, go away

But even if it pours, concert venues are prepared

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

LIKE ICE CREAM on a scorching day and going barefoot in sun-warmed sand, listening to music played outdoors remains a strictly summertime pleasure in Michigan.

Good music reaches new heights when heard against the spectacular backdrop of a glowing orange sunset or under the dome of a deepening blue sky alight with stars - unless it rains.

How often does Michigan's fabled fickle weather actually force outdoor performances to be canceled, postponed or moved indoors? What are the official rain policies of places such as the Meadow Brook Music Festival, the Troy Hilton, the Ponchartrain Hotel, and Plymouth's Hillside Restaurant, which schedule regular outdoor concerts during the summer season?

Normally at Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester Hills, the show goes on despite rain or foul weather, and concertgoers with tickets on the lawn come prepared to wait out cloudbursts. During sprinkles and downpours, many colored umbrellas blossom on the hillside and some hearty souls erect lean lean-tos of canvas or plastic so they can huddle out of the rain and enjoy their pre-concert picnics despite the weather.

JIM SPITTLE, former festival production director, says, "We've had some doozy storms out there, winds blowing in sideways (on seats in the covered pavilion), but they'll go on with the performance. It's a risk you take performing outdoors, and a risk you take as an outdoor audience."

Only once in his memory was a show cancelled indirectly due to weather. In the summer of '86, one performance of "A Chorus Line" was called off due to power failure.

Spittle says, "It poured torrential rains just about the whole week before the cast was due, and the downstairs dressing room flooded. We got it vacuumed and dried the morning

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— Andy Williams
manager, Troy Hilton

they moved in with the costumes." But the week of stormy weather caused a power failure when it was time for the show to go on.

Official Meadow Brook Music Festival policy on weather requires that the audience be notified when the weather service posts a severe weather warning, a tornado watch or a tornado warning. The official script read over the loudspeakers during severe weather warnings states, "The festival performance for this evening is still scheduled and has not been canceled."

The show goes on in time-honored show business tradition even during a tornado watch when no tornadoes have been spotted. Only a tornado warning with actual twisters confirmed will postpone a show at the music festival.

RAIN MAY BE a soggy inconvenience to concertgoers but, according to Spittle, rain is more crucial to crews who operate electrical equipment. He says, "Follow spots are outside, not under cover, and they're shut down the minute any kind of rain hits them because the mix of metal, water, and electricity is dangerous." He adds, "We're also scared of brown outs during laser shows because lasers are water cooled and if the pumps go off, you can burn up the equipment."

Rain wasn't the culprit last Aug. 1, but weather still takes the blame for stopping the show. The scorching temperatures of last summer's



JIM RIDER/staff photographer

When it rains, take cover, under a protective poncho, or whatever keeps off the raindrops. This scene is on the lawn at

Baldwin Pavilion, where the Meadow Brook Music Festival is held.

record-breaking heat required huge amounts of power to run air conditioners. The unprecedented power demands caused severe brown outs that plagued the sound and light systems at Meadow Brook just before the late Roy Orbison was scheduled to go on stage. Rock and Roll greats Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins had already appeared when power failure caused the concert to be canceled part way through.

Meadow Brook publicist Sylvia Coughlin says, "Roy Orbison was rescheduled for Aug. 31, and people

could exchange their tickets for the new concert or get a partial refund."

The Troy Hilton sponsors outdoor entertainment two nights a week during the summertime. "Jazz to the Hill," a new series this summer, fills the air with the cool/hot sounds of jazz Wednesday nights. According to Andy Williams, general manager of the Hilton, "Twelve-hundred-plus people gather on the pool side and courtyard" Wednesdays to listen to jazz under an open sky. Shows begin at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. and the hotel serves complimentary hors

d'oeuvres from 5-6:30 p.m.

"It's such a very nice setting" he says, "But the weather certainly has not been very cooperative this year. The Syro Gyra concert was a total rainout and rain delayed the Ramsey Lewis performance until 7:30 p.m. Instead of two sets he played one long one."

WILLIAMS RECALLS, "The Lionel Hampton concert had to be moved indoors due to rain." Moving indoors is often not possible because the hotel ballrooms accommodate

only 400 and they're not usually available. "We can't often hold ballroom space as backup, so if a concert has to be canceled, we either offer rainchecks for future concerts or a refund," Williams says.

The jazz lineup at the Hilton for the remaining summer includes the Weisberg, Dixie Gillespie, Herb Mann, Norma Jean Bell, Alexander Zoljic and Kirk Whalum, Full Band, with luck, no rain.

"Hot Summer Nights," the reg-

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upcoming things to do

Deadline for the Upcoming calendar is one week ahead of publication. Items must be received by Thursday to be considered for publication the following Thursday. Send to: Ethel Simmons, Entertainment Editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

MEADOW BROOK
Sounds of the '40s and '50s will be heard when Julius LaRosa, Helen

O'Connell, the Modernaires and Tex Beneke and his Orchestra take over the Meadow Brook Music Festival stage at 2 and 8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 4, at Baldwin Pavilion on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. Tickets are \$16, \$13 and \$8 for the afternoon performance and \$20, \$17 and \$12.50 for the evening. Children's television show personalities Sharon, Lois and Bram will appear in two children's concerts at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 5. Only

lawn tickets, at \$6.50, are still available. The Canadian Brass quintet mixes comedy with classics for the Meadow Brook audience at 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 5. Pianist-singer Max Morath opens the show with a humorous look at the ragtime era of American music. Tickets are \$17, \$14 and \$11. For ticket information call the box office at 377-2010.

TROY PLAYERS
An open picnic for Troy Players

members and all individuals interested in community theater will be held at 4 p.m. Saturday, July 29, in Troy. For more information call 879-1285.

ON FILM
"Don't Eat the Pictures: Sesame Street at the Metropolitan Museum of Art," a one-hour musical on film that follows the adventures of Sesame Street characters, is being screened throughout the summer at

the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum in Bloomfield Hills. Film viewing is free with museum admission. The museum is open from 1-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays. Admission is \$2.50 for adults, \$1.50 for students and senior citizens, children 7 and under are free. For more information call 645-3312 or 645-3324.

SCHEDULE CHANGE
Phil Hurt will appear at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 2, at the Troy Hil-

ton's "Jazz to the Hill." Hurt replaces Najee, who was to replace the originally scheduled Angela Bofill. Tickets are available at any Ticketmaster outlet or by calling 583-9000.

'PHANTOM' COMING
Director Ken Hill's London stage musical, "The Phantom of the Opera," arrives Wednesday, Nov. 1, at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Hi-

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