

By **ETHEL SIMMONS**
Birmingham resident Mark Lashlee is singing the praises of Detroit.
In fact, Lashlee is only one of a group of talented, enthusiastic creative people who have banded together to write, produce and star in a new show appropriately titled "Detroit!"

They hope that the exclamation point at the end of the title will do as much for "Detroit!" as it did for "Oklahoma!"

Lashlee, a Detroit booster from 'way back, although he is a young man, originated the idea for the show, which he describes as a play with music.

Formerly a guitarist with Mel Ball and Colours and then leader of the group Friendship, Lashlee had written several songs about Detroit and recorded some of them on his own label, Life.

"I WANTED to develop a play about a band in a bar in Detroit," he said.

The scene is set in 1972 in a riverfront bar in downtown Detroit. Lashlee said they actually found a bar later that looked almost like the bar dreamed up for the play.

In "Detroit!" Lashlee plays a band leader, naturally. Other characters are Alfio Most, an ex-boxer who is an ex-middleweight championship contender, portrayed by Albert Zolton of Farmington Hills; Agnes Fairchild (Saint Agnes), who once ran a mission but lost faith in herself, played by Mary Callaghan Lynch of Birmingham; and Chick Stone, who had a successful Packard dealership (and you know what happened to Packard), played by William Unger of Detroit.

There are new songs by Lashlee, too. Listening to playbacks of some of the tapes, he commented on some of his musical numbers.

The songs in the show offer blues, spiritual, country rock, a little disco, and a ballad or two. A raw blues type of flavor pervades the score.

Hearing himself singing "Detroit Detroit!" Lashlee said, "I think this is my favorite in the show, only because it's raunchy and I kind of let my hair down a little."

The song has an infectious, earthy sound, as he wails, deep-voiced against a bluesy background. "Detroit! Detroit! Aw, pretty baby Keep trying . . . You've been so excit-

On "So This Is Life," he draws, "... I'm in love with you . . ." "And when you're feeling blue, I'll come to you."

The song "So This Is Life" was conceived on Quarton Lake in Birmingham. "It was early summer," he recalled. "The birds were singing."

recalled. "The blossoms were falling, swans floating by. I was thinking, 'So this is life.' The song came to me. I ran home (I had my bike) and wrote it."

Lashlee looked at the script to decide which of his songs was appropriate to each part.

The theme song for "Detroit!" is "Roll Back the Stone," written by Dattilo and his wife Catherine Grimshaw, who sings it as a precurtain number. The couple live in Grasse Pointe,

Dattilo and Grimshaw also wrote "I Try Too Hard"—he on lyrics, she the music—sung by Agnes in the show.


"A celebration of the spirit of life" is how the show is being touted by its performers. Tickets are on sale at the Little Professor Book Center in Birmingham, the Mercv College Bookstore Piper's Alley in downtown Detroit and Grosse Pointe Farms, and Cafe Harmonie in downtown Detroit.

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