

SUBURBAN DETROIT
THEATRES INC.

Critic's viewpoint

Players' production charged with energy

By BARBARA MICHALS

"Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." Tennessee Williams' modern classic, is a powerful drama, and the current production by the Birmingham Village Players crackles with electricity.

Under the able direction of Richard Charlton, an excellent cast brings both strength and credibility to this tale of decaying lives on a modern-day Southern plantation.

Among the first things one notices is the ease with which the players handle the Southern accents, never allowing them to sound forced or overly thick.

Dee Dee Johns-Charlton is outstanding as Maggie, a woman struggling with catlike ferocity to hold on to her crumbling marriage and her hus-

band's stake in his inheritance. Sexually frustrated by her husband's indifference, Maggie can be in turn sensual, scheming, supplicating.

"I'm alive! Maggie the Cat is alive!" Maggie screams at her brooding husband Brick, and Miss Johns-Charlton indeed makes Maggie come very much alive.

As Brick, Joseph Nicolini visibly seethes with suppressed anger and frustration. Hobbling about on a crutch because of a broken ankle, Brick's real crutch is alcohol. He drinks to try to obliterate his impotence against his domineering father, avaricious brother and sister-in-law, and bitterly disappointing marriage

and to ease his guilt over his best friend's death.

Howard Beer portrays Big Daddy, the wealthy plantation owner who remains a true redneck beneath a thin

vein of Southern gentleman. Beer is a rough and tough Big Daddy, coarse, loud, overbearing but thoroughly likable for resisting the hypocritical polite society requires of him.

Dee Duxley does an accomplished job as Big Mama. A bit simple-minded on the surface, Big Mama still has the steel to stand up to her domineering husband after some 40 years.

JoAnn Sellers is effective as the syrupy-sweet Mae, the scheming Sister Woman trying to wangle her way into Big Daddy's affections by breeding a

dynasty for him. Tom D'Agostino is Mae's husband Gooper, the elder son who never had a firm grip on his parents' affections.

Enhancing the performances, the Birmingham production employs some clever staging, utilizing the idea of invisible mirrors and doors. Having the veranda always visible serves as an effective reminder of the stifling heat and stifling emotions on center stage.

The Village Players' version of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" is thoroughly skillful and moving. The production concludes this weekend with performances Friday and Saturday evenings at the playhouse.

How to send news items

Ethel Simmons is entertainment editor for the Observer & Eccentric newspapers.

News releases, photographs or other information on theater, movies, night life, restaurants, travel TV and radio

can be mailed to Mrs. Simmons at 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 49012, or delivered to any office of the Observer & Eccentric.

The Birmingham office can be reached by phone at 644-1000.

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"TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING"
Smash Preview Sat. Night
"TOM WITH DICK & JANE" (R)

FAIRLANE
101 Rd. at Telegraph
LO 1-7200
1 "MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL"
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"SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION" (PG)
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Basil Rathbone
"THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES" (G)
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West Maple Rd.
Adjacent to the
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1 Gene Wilder Richard Pryor
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2 "ROCKY" (PG)

NORTHLAND 1 & 2
J.L. Hudson Bldg. - Downtown Center
559-3366
1 Gene Wilder Richard Pryor
"SILVER STREAK" (PG)
Matinees Wed. Sat. & Sun
Smash Preview Sat. Night - 9:00 p.m.

2 "NEVER A DULL MOMENT" plus, featurette: "THREE CABALLEROS"

OLD ORCHARD 1 & 2
Old Orchard Lake Rd. at 12 Mile
477-0010
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RADIO CITY
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1 "MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL" (PG)
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Continuous Matinees Sat & Sun
HOLLYWOOD SNEAK PREVIEW - Friday Night

1 "SILVER STREAK" (PG)
HOLLYWOOD SNEAK PREVIEW
Friday (Feb. 4) Night

2 "SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION" plus "HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES"
Starts Friday:
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"FRECKLY FRIDAY" (G)
Matinees Wed.-Fri. 1:00 p.m.

TOWNE 1 & 2
3000 Plymouth Rd. W. - Midfield
937-1717
1 William Holden
Faye Dunaway
Peter Finch
"NETWORK" (R)

2 "LUMIER"
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Geon Moreau

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CLINT EASTWOOD "THE ENFORCER"
NO PASSES ACCEPTED PG
1:00 7:15 9:45

King Kong
NO PASSES ACCEPTED PG
1:00 7:15 9:55

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