

Rock n' mime road show will be documented

By CORINNE ABATT

Blake Simmons discovered he can't drop the Friends Roadshow, subject of his recent photography exhibit at the Ed Gray Gallery.

Simmons, who has been making a living as a leathercraftsman, started taking pictures in 1970 when he was in Troy High School working on the yearbook and the student newspaper.

The Friends Roadshow, and Jango Edwards of Livonia who originated the idea of the clown and mime spoofs, have so captivated Simmons that he plans to follow the show throughout Europe and North Africa this summer.

SIMMONS' PHOTOGRAPHS at the gallery were shown along with circus puppets made by Marie Ferrini. The two had previously shown their leather work under the name, Cat Dancers Leather, at many area art shows and festivals.

He and Miss Ferrini will be designing and making costumes while they tour with the Friends Roadshow. However, Simmons also plans to document his adventures with camera and diary to have a complete photo journal account.

During June some 60 groups of mimes, clowns, actors and entertainers will be performing simultaneously in the Netherlands under the all-encompassing name, "Festival of Fools."

Simmons will stay with Edwards' show in Amsterdam and continue with

them when they play on the Mediterranean coast in Tunisia and North Africa at an art colony.

NEXT SUMMER, the Friends Roadshow will return to Ann Arbor for a two-month engagement. When the show played for four days in Rome last summer, the cast was overjoyed to learn that the Italian director, Federico Fellini, attended all the performances and later told Edwards he was the greatest clown in the world.

Edwards is scheduled to teach mime at the University of Stockholm for a month before the Amsterdam run.

Simmons, who shares Fellini's enthusiasm for Edwards' work said, "He's a genius and his work fascinates me. I'm totally behind the group. It's so refreshing to see them."

Simmons' photographs in the Ed Gray gallery show, (a few are still there) are the work of a photographer who understands and deals in fantasy. He is tuned in mentally to the antics—some ribald, some pure humor—of the clowns and mimes.

Simmons said he went to Europe last year with the specific goal of visiting the Salvador Dali museum in Spain.

I have always been captivated by surrealism," he said.

His photographs of the Friends Roadshow International evidence that interest. He likes to use a fisheye lens which distorts, particularly at the edges of the photograph. He likes to work with infrared film and sometimes finishes his work in sepia.



Blake Simmons of Troy will travel with the Friends Roadshow in Europe this summer and document his experiences with a photo-journal. (Photo by Cynthia Abatt)



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Fancy This proudly presents their fourth annual ART FAIR. Originally started to give unknown but very talented local artisans an opportunity to present their wares. This year, owner Bunny Davis boasts eighteen different artists from the various media: pen and ink, jewelry, soft sculpture, photography, ceramics, weaving and more. Also slated to be at the happening is Mike O Mara with the Pretzelman Street Band and the people from Sun Ray health foods of Warren. All of this can be found on the sloping grounds of Fancy This. Scheduled to take place May 13 and May 14 from 10:30 to 4:30. It is Mothers Day weekend; bring the entire family out and spend the afternoon.



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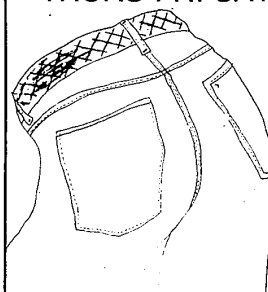
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