Offbeat Martin Mull captivates his followers

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Not being a devoted fan of Martin Mull or 'a regular viewer of the "America 2-Night" television show, I came to the Birmingham Theatre for its early show Saturday night with an eager curiousity.

In the audienne I was surrounded by Mull's cult followers who are addicted to his show. Bis records his burnor.

Mull's cult followers who are addicted to his show, his records, his humor. The curtain rose and there was Mull playing a baby grand piano in a traditional living room setting backdropped by a painted exterior of formal gardens. A roar of pleasure rose from the comedy concert-goers and they greeted their hero with a standing

greeted their hero was greeted their hero wation.

Mull, in a white suit and with his tongish, sun-streaked blond hair, s Mult, in a write suit and with his longish, sun-streaked blond hair, looked angelic/devlish as he sang his opening number, a song "for alcohol abuse." His voice was somewhat boarse but happy.

boarse but happy.

Although be has been billed as a satirist ("America 2-Night" is a longue-in-cheek talk show with phony guests), Mull let loose a few real barbs at the Birmingham Theatre.

HE DID COMMENT, "The dressing rooms are beautiful. I didn't expect to find low-income housing, but these are

really nice."
And Mull insisted that "I maybe bon't understand the charisma of Biriningham," and gave the audience a cornedy test, telling them first a joke

Review

shout Raigh Waldo Emerson visiting Henry Thoreau in prison and then suggesting a more coarse joke, which he didn't proceed to tell. The audience obviously passed the test and "Birmingham" was allowed to listen to Mull's preference of intellectual humor. He professed amusement that couples had come to the theater of dates. "I love to see people dating," Muldeclared. "They're not going to believe it back in L.A. That's darting!"

believe back in L.A. That's backing back in L.A. That's arring!"
He dedicated his final song, "Do the Nothing." "To the inner city of Detroit." In this dance tune he sings, pusses for long periods of time and just relaxes or tends to other business. MULL'S NAME: seems appropriate to his style, for he seems to be mulling hings over, in a whimsteal way, as he chats with the audience. But I swear it didn't seem six owth (the toy ticket). Mull made a few jokes about the ticket prices, saying. "Did it cost each of you 380 to get in? Oh, only \$152" He indicated he wouldn't give his full show for these prices. Nobody seemed to think they got taken by Mull. Instead they loved it.

Composer Mull's songs included "What's Say You and I Get Normal for a Change" ("Clet's quit rock-roll-ing"); "I Got the Polish Blues" ("I made the bed and then got up"); ham to "whips and chains;" more when "a sea chantey sung by Columber crew, the U.S. 5 first, folks song; the crew, the U.S. 5 first, folks song; the sung should be crew, the U.S. 5 first, folks song; the crew of the control of

wrose wire has a neadache.

The funniest song Mull sang he explained as too ribald to sing in front of a family audience. He promised to sing the nonoffensive parts and hum

MULL SANG most of his songs seated on the sofa, strumming his gui-tar, smoking a cigarette and sipping from a glass. He talked about his two ABC

albums. At one point he pulled his new "record" out of a grocery bag and showed it to the audience. It was not in a jacket, and he helpfully explained

you should not put the needle on the paper circle because it wouldn't play. Mull also plugged Marty's record store, next door to the theater. He indicated if prompted he would come back for an encore. At the end of the show, the autience gray him.

come back for an encore. At the end of the show, the audience gave him a standing ovation. He came back and sang another song, and the show closed with another standing ovation. Mull was in town to perform two Saturday night concerts at the Birmingham Theatre. Both were sold out, and he has been subsequently booked for two more shows this Saturday.

Mull also told the audience that

DICK PURTAN, the WXYZ-Radio personality who has a few fans of his own, introduced the concert.

Mull's stint was preceded by the Brookside Jazz Ensemble, a brasile jazz band that originated at Brookside School Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. The band, although terrific at PJazz and other outdoor concerts, overwhelmed the Birmingham Theatre stage.

Estelle Parsons opens fall season

Estelle Parsons will recreate the role that won her a Tony Award nomination for Best Actress on the stage of the Birmingham Theatre this fall.

"Miss Margarida's Way" is just one of the hit Broadway productions that will be featured in the theater's first season.

will be reduced in the season.

The Broadway season will open July 10, with a musical entitled "By Strouse." It features the music of three-time Tony Award Winner Charles Strouse, who has written the

score of the current smash hit "Annie," as well as "Applause," "Bye Bye Birdie" and many other success-ful shows.

bye of true and many other success-led shows.

Strouse is also known for "Those Were the Days," the theme song from "All in the Family."

OTHER PRODUCTIONS included in the first season's series include: "Les clirks, Les Girls, 's staring from Martin and Cyd Charrise, Sept. 12-23; "Miss Margarida's Way" starring Estelle Parsons, Oct. 9-21; The John House-

man Alting Company, Oct. 23-39: "The Passion of Dracular" starring Jean Fierre Aumont, Nov. 6-18, and "P.S. Your Cat. Is Dead" starring Roddy McDowell in late January.

Theater owners Gary Deeb and Edward Fuller, commenting on sales have on the new series subscription, said. "Preseason subscription sales have far exceeded out expectations. Our season series department is overwhelmed with mail orders.

"Undoubtedly the first season of the

Birmingham Theatre is a total suc-

cess."

The Birmingham Theatre opened as a legitimate theater May 18 this year, following extensive renovation. The The Birmingham Theatre opened as a legitimate theater May 18 this year, following extensive renovation. The theater will book the full spectrum of the performing arts, including Broadway plays, a jazz and dance series, children's theater and cabaret acts. Birmingham Theatre Season Subscriptions can be bought by mail or by calling the Season Subscription Department at 614-3558.

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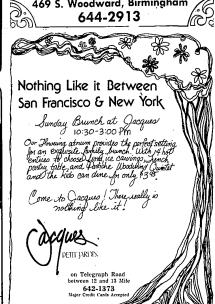
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