Once Upon a Mattress' brightens dinner theater

Surely one of the better bargains in dinner theater is the current production of "Once Upon a Mattress" at the Burn Steer in Royal Oak.

It's a fresh, song-filled musical delight, preceded by a hearty steak or stuffed flounder dinner.

stuffed flounder dinner.

Nancy Gurwin, producer of the Dinner Playhouse, stars as Princess Winnifred, otherwise known as Fred. Ms.
Gurwin is a blonde bombheful who looks like she arrived out of the present to spoof the characters in this fairly tale of the past.

As a matter of fact, she does arrive As a matter of fact, she does arrive dates for the prince's hand in marrige dates for the prince's hand in marrige have been very proper princesses.

Fred is a princess, too, but she makes her entrance by swimming the moat and showing up dripping wet. Her short-cropped hair and long rasp-

Review

berry gown do dry out, as Winnifred prepares to take the test devised by the queen.

THE ENTIRE CAST is lively and especially good performances are turned in by Fred Buchalter, who is the low-key but reved-up Prince Dauntless, and Joyce Schultheiss as the brazen Queen Aggravain (just like her name).

slight of build. He looks meek and mild, and Winnifred is a bold contrast

whom he instantly adores. Queen Aggravain is one of those overbearing mothers who thinks no Elliman, Sayer

By PATRICIA BEACH SMITH

One should choose one's Wednesday nights at MeadowBrook Music Festival carefully.

July 26's concert was a good example that should have been carefully researched before subjecting one-

July 20's concert was a good cample that should have been carefully researched before subjecting one-self to it. On a scale of 100.1'd give the first half a 62, to be second a 88 (and year) and the first half a 62, to be second a 88 (and year) and the second a 98 (and year) and year of explanation, the is your beyond foggy, writing here, so nothing Ywonze Elliman or Les Sayer could have done tht right would have been pleasing. Ms. Elliman started the program with some hefty renditions of her own songs "Stranger's Arms" and "Up to the Man in You" from her "Night had her famous from "Jesus Christ Superstar," "I don't know How to Love Him."

LOOKING LIKE something between waif, wastrel and witch, Ms. Elliman resembled the departed white queenof soul. Janis Joplin; she is less sincere than Ms. Joplin. She did, however, give a varied and listenable program. From the eighth row, "listenable" included enough decibels to wreck your average pace-maker.

The arrangements for her songs were very well done and effective. Her backup band was particularly notable, especially lead guitar. Throughout her act which truly warmed up the audience, the lighting was less than inaginative, but it turned out to be more dever than that which illuminated Lee Sayer's anties.

Leo Sayer is just like the young, beach, loud and slily British music hall

Last, loud and silly British music hall performers one can see in old British movies—the kind with no plot. One would imagine Sayer would be good at mime, but in the case of Wednesday night, he wasall noise.

night, he wasall noise.

It is difficult to see what the attraction of this fellow is, but he has apparaently taken the hearts of lots of people, if the audience undanuted by the worst storm of the summer at the su

MUSICALLY, Sayer is simple to figure. Hissongs all have the same
bubble-gun appeal. He is quite like
Elton John at his least effective, all
show and nothing much behind it.
There was little qualityto his songs sounded
alike. What did shine were the songs
he'd written that other people sang
first. like the Roger Daltry hit 'Givin'
It All Away."

If anyone out there remembers
Donovan, that's about what Leo Sayer
looks and sounds like, only sans folk
idon influences. When helplays the
larmonica, it's a different story. He
should have stayed behind the scenes
writing for other people and playing
the mouth organ.
When he plays his own mouth, it's

Review

non-stop. He's like an ultra nervous Barry Manilow—ever see him stand still onstage? Not on your life. Sayer clearly some thing—keepmoring and Clearly your reviewer was in the minority in disiking Sayer. The audience seemed somehow enth-railed—or something else. Teenagers (I think) rushed the stage when he beckoned them to dance. They gave him flowers. They squeezed his hand amorously. And they even screamed! It was just like 1959 all over again, but nobody waswearing a crinoline under their skirts.

Among the ditties Sayer presented, under the most academic and uninteresting stage lighting, were: His hit "You Make Me Feel Like Dancing," Dancin' the Night Away," "One Man Band, "In'My Life," "Endless Flight" and "I'm in Love."

IN ADDITION there were songs like Buddy Holly's "Rainin" in My Heart" (the 50s will rise again from the ashes) and more.

and more.
Only time will tell where Sayer go.
Only time will tell where Sayer gos from here. He may be a meteor des-timed to burn out quickly or he may be just autty enough to hold the appeal a little longer. If he gives up singing his own work and gives it away to others, he'll be more beloved, if less well-loown.

How to send news items

News releases, photographs or other information can be mailed to Ethiel Stramons, entertainment editor, at 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012, or delivered to the Birmingham, Southield or Rochester office of the Observer & Eccentric.

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DINE OUT TONIGHT

one is good enough for her son, espe-cially Winnifred. She devises a sensi-tively test, where 20 mattresses are piled up for a night's sleep; if Win-nifred is a true princess she will pass

tom maturess.

All the voices in the cast are pleasant on the ears. Lady Larken (Betsy

Baker), who will become the prin-cess's lady-in-waiting, and Sir Harry (Eric Jones) are well-paired on the ballad "In a Little Wille." The show romps along with many

and ears, Lady Larker (Betsy



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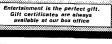








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