

Let's hoedown to good, old country fun



It was a hand-clapping, foot-stomping time during "Country Fun" night at Oscar's on Saturday.

It was a night for urban cowboys. On Saturday they all came out in their cowboy hats and jeans to dance and enjoy at Oscar's in Southfield. The evening was dubbed "Country Fun" that promised to be a night of cowboy fever. Dances featured included the Cotton Joe, The Kicker, Hoedowns, Schottische and Happy Feet.

Country-western band Larry Lee Adkins and the Hanging Tree provided the music.

Prizes were awarded for the best country and western attire and for the best dancers.

A "Country Fun" organization has recently been started in the Detroit metropolitan area to promote country western entertainment events. For more information, call Carol Klein at 626-4860 or write 2866 Acorn Road, Bloomfield Hills 48013.



Arthur Murray dancers instructed the crowd on the latest Western dance moves.

Photos by Labe Waddell



(From left) Lorri Ortwean, Nancy Cusick, George Hopson and Ron Bardness enjoy the fun.



Edgar "Robbie" Robbins of Detroit is the limousine driver most requested by rock groups visiting the Detroit area.

A successful production

Can Dracula be fun and games?

By SHROYER KEARNS

"Dracula" for fun? Having promised to be "deliciously frightening" and to tickle the funny bone in the process, it was natural to wonder how all this would be accomplished.

Southfield Repertory Theatre (SRT) met the challenge most successfully in its performance in April at the Southfield Civic Center Parks and Recreation auditorium. The closing production of the sixth season of the Southfield-based company may have been its best.

Ralph Valatka's adaptation of the chiller classic bore scant relation to Bram Stoker's original but it did not suffer in the translation.

Texas playboy Quincy Morris arrives at a long-closed castle in the Transylvanian mountains and announces that he has arranged to solve the riddle of

the Dracula legend with the assistance of scientists Dr. Seward, played by director Valatka, and Van Helsing, played by Ronald S. Merkin.

Merkin was particularly effective in this role with his satchel of vampire protection — the usual crosses, wolfbane and garlic necklaces — and did not overplay by so much as a single twitch of an eyebrow.

HAL DOYLE AS the American movie director and Barbara Bean as his movie star wife have proved their versatility in earlier SRT productions this year. Ms. Bean was fetching in glamo-

rous costumes, making it easy to understand the vampire's immediate determination to capture her. Her broad "American" accent gave an unexpected depth to her character and contributed to the believability of the concluding plot twist.

Doyle, with his boyish good looks and Bogart accents, was somewhat less well-defined, but the cigar he chomped and sometimes smoked added a toughness that his Hollywood character needed.

William Green in the title role played "Dracula" to (dare one say it?) the teeth with leers, smirks, and Transylvanian accent. He effected a certain lurching movement which reminded the audience that he spent his days in a narrow bed.

THE CASTLE WITH its secret passages, tacky 1920s furniture, and view

of Count Dracula's mysterious estate across the abyss set the stage for dark deeds. There was lots of business that kept the kiddies glued to their seats in fascination — a bat that soared over the audience, a chase scene, dimming and flickering lights, and Dracula theme music — until a mid-stage disappearance by Dracula sent at least one bright youngster running up to inspect the stage. Very clever, these Transylvanians.

The surprise ending, which few in the audience seem to have suspected, brought a humorous conclusion to the demonic threat to the American visitors — but let no one think that Dracula has been laid to rest permanently. Valatka closes his drama with an eerie light burning in Dracula's castle on the distant mountain. Good fun for all concerned, but hang on to that wolfbane and garlic.

review

'Robbie' is a hit with rock groups

By NICK CHARLES

At 66-years-old, Edgar "Robbie" Robbins is one of the oldest rock and rollers in Detroit.

Robbie doesn't sing or play an instrument, but he knows more rock stars than most people in Michigan.

Journey, Slyx, Foreigner, The Who and just about every rock group that plays around the Detroit area are lucky to be driven by Robbie.

Robbie works for the Michigan Limousine Service and he is constantly requested by most rock groups.

"I've been driving these cars for 10

years now" says Robbie.

Before he started driving limousines, Robbie sold insurance with his father and his son on the east side of Detroit.

"My favorite band is J. Geils," says Robbie, "especially Peter Wolf. When Peter gets into my car do you know what he listens to on the radio? Black church services with ministers raving on. He gets ideas and songs from that."

ROBBIE SAYS that being around young people in the music business keeps his life interesting. "I get into the senior citizens groups

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By BARBARA MICHALS

"Stop the World, I Want to Get Off" is the kind of show that has to be performed faultlessly or it falls flat on its face. The current production at the Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre nimbly meets the challenge with some top-notch performances.

The British musical-comedy by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley continues its run on Friday and Saturday evenings at the Will-O-Way Playhouse in Bloomfield Hills. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m.

In what is essentially a two-character play, Ralph Viau and Maureen Feder are both outstanding. In addition to their fine singing voices and acting skills, each radiates a special warmth and charm. Their performances are energetic, heartfelt, and highly polished.

Using mainly songs and mime, "Stop the World" takes a satiric look at modern times. Among its targets are big business, politics, and the British, Russian, German, and American national characters.

Viau portrays Littlechap, a working-class Everyman. A born opportunist, Littlechap declares musically "I Wanna Be Rich" and then fortuitously marries the boss's daughter. He works his way up the corporate ladder, overcoming such obstacles as a posting to Sludgepool, the quintessential British industrial town.

SOMETIMES LITTLECHAP cries "stop the world" when he feels he can no longer cope, but his natural ebullience always returns. Faced with the low productivity in Sludgepool, for example, he simply resolves "Gonna

Build a Mountain." Littlechap later turns to politics, where his natural gift for "Mumbo Jumbo" again quickly boosts his career. Though ultimately knighted for services to his country, in his old age Littlechap finds his life hollow and admits he has never really loved anyone but himself. Realizing it is not too late, Viau sings his best number, the poignant "What Kind of Fool Am I?"

Ms. Feder plays Evie, Littlechap's sometimes-loving, sometimes-nagging wife. She also portrays three other women Littlechap has dallied with over the years: Anya, a Russian guide; Iba, his German maid; and Ginnie, an American nightclub singer. In each of these characterizations, Ms. Feder sparkles when she sings, "Typically English," "Glorious Russian," "Typisch Deutsche," and "All-American."

UNDER THE DIRECTION of Celia Merrill Turner and choreographer Michelle Levine, the 10-member women's chorus moves with well-rehearsed precision, and the whole production is smoothly paced. Likewise, the four musicians under musical director David Wilson provide strong support.

Lorraine Poirier and Michele Stock are appealing as Littlechap's children, and young Josh Dawson does a fine job miming Littlechap's grandson and newborn son. As the announcer, Elaine Kelmert's varied voices are most effective.

The set and costumes are very simple but wholly adequate. Only the lighting cues lack the polish that marks the rest of Will-O-Way's production of "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off." It's a very small flaw in a very fine evening's entertainment.

'Stop the World' rises to the challenge