



Ethel Simmons

# Raven Gallery closing; Mike Binder back in town

"The Raven Gallery is closing its door permanently," announced Joseph Kesner. "My partner (Michael Schwartz) and myself have tried our hardest to make a go of it," he said.

The Southfield coffee house has been a home for folk singers and other entertainment for some 20 years. Started by Herb Cohen, the Raven was operated after his death by his widow, Kitty, before Kesner and Schwartz took over.

"When the two men invested in the Raven about a year ago, 'Mike and I thought we had saved the club, but we didn't know what was going to happen to the economy,' Kesner said.

"We're going to go out with a bang," he declared. The Ron Coden Show opened Wednesday and continues through Sunday. Then, Josh White Jr., a longtime favorite at the Raven, returns for the final shows, July 2-5.

KESNER AND Schwartz operate an advertising agency, the Southfield-based Recom Communications. "The agency is still successful," Kesner said. "We had the agency for two years, and thought the club would be the perfect merger."

This year the cover charge was

raised from \$4 to \$5. "Entertainment costs came out of that," Kesner said. "It went to the entertainers, not us."

The coffee house was one of the few metropolitan Detroit places to feature local and nationally known entertainment, without serving liquor.

Through the years, the Raven has featured and built such stars as Buffalo Phil Esser (who unsuccessfully tried to buy the club prior to its announced closing), Lori Jacobs and Tom Paxton.

"We even tried national acts," Kesner said. Comedian and actor Pat Paulsen played an engagement at the Raven. "Paulsen was very expensive. We did get a lot of press."

Lamenting the Raven's demise, Kesner said, "It's a shame. It's a national landmark that's going down."

COMIC MIKE BINDER, who recently played the Comedy Castle in West Bloomfield, is an extra attraction there again through Thursday.

"He returned Tuesday-Thursday this week, turning up his act," said Mark Ridley, impresario of the Comedy Castle at Friday's in the Pine Lake Mall.

Paul Kelly from Chicago is headlining the Comedy Castle Show through

Saturday night. Binder has returned because he has been booked Friday and Saturday night as the opening attraction at Pine Knob Music Theatre, where John Davidson stars.

Davidson and Binder are replacing the canceled Liza Minnelli-Marvin Hamlish show at Pine Knob, in Clarkston. Binder is a former Seaholm High School student who has made it big on the comedy circuit in Los Angeles.

RIDLEY SAID Binder's recent shows at The Comedy Castle were audience pleasers with Binder called back to do an encore at each show. At two of the shows, he was brought back twice for encores.

An upcoming TV movie "The GIs" features Binder as one of the five co-stars. "It's a combination 'M\*A\*S\*H'/'Hogan's Heroes' type of thing," Ridley said. Binder is "absolutely hilarious" in the film, which Ridley saw at a screening at Channel 2.

"The GIs" will be seen as a TV movie this fall. "If the response is good, it will be a series," Ridley said. Comic Binder has been booked for another engagement at the Comedy Castle again this winter.

# Theater's first season 'met our commitment'

By ETHEL SIMMONS

## theater

Looking back at the Birmingham Theatre's first season of operation as a Nederlander Theatre, Harry Nederlander is satisfied that "we met our commitment 100 percent."

When the Nederlanders took over the theater last year, the first season had to be put together, he said, "on the shortest possible notice."

"We made a commitment to provide four shows. All were selected from the list we originally advised subscribers we were going to select them from."

The brochure that went out to previous season's ticketholders, before the Birmingham Theatre Club's premiere season, promised "The Gin Game," "The Mousetrap," "Elephant Man" in negotiation, and a fourth attraction to be announced.

Nederlander explained, "Elephant Man" was an option. "He indicated the problem in getting the show was due to timing of bookings."

INSTEAD OF "Elephant Man," Birmingham season ticket holders also saw "Daisy Mayme" starring Jean Stapleton and "Whose Life Is It Anyway?" starring Michael Moriarty.

"The Gin Game" starring Larry

Gates and Phyllis Thaxter received the Detroit Free Press award for top show last year. "That particular award was very meaningful," Nederlander said.

"The Gin Game" is an outstanding show. It's still a big success, touring the country with Phyllis and Larry."

The Birmingham Theatre's shows were all running "pretty close" in box office popularity, prior to the opening of Michael Moriarty in "Whose Life Is It Anyway?" Nederlander said. "The Mousetrap" was the most successful attraction up until Moriarty's show, which closed the season.

Nederlander said "Whose Life" did well at the box office, playing to more people than any of the other shows presented at the theater last season.

"It was really a great artistic success," he said. "It's a beautiful show."

OF JEAN STAPLETON'S show, which critics panned, Nederlander said, "I think the cast was tremendous and the vehicle was poor."

Asked to comment on "The

Mousetrap," which received mixed reviews, he said, "The only trouble was the lighting. It looked like it was done with light bulbs. It made the set look bad."

The Birmingham Theatre had all new lighting for ceiling and walls, and even a new transformer, installed by the third show.

"We thought they (the lights) would be in by the second show ('Mousetrap'). We didn't need them for Jean Stapleton and for 'The All Night Strut,'" he said.

A musical revue, "The All Night Strut" was presented as a non-series attraction.

"Strut" got tremendous notices. The word of mouth was great. Still, it did only fairly well," Nederlander said.

THE BIRMINGHAM Theatre's second season is off to a start with Peggy Lee starring in "Side by Side by Son-heim," and other shows promised including "Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Light?" "The Elephant Man" (tentative) and "Table Settings."

As for subscriptions to the second season, Nederlander said, "We're still in the process of receiving them." He expects to have final figures available within a few weeks.

# Free films shown at Cinema

Two Cinema Canada programs of films produced and/or distributed by the National Film Board of Canada will again be part of this year's Detroit/Windsor International Freedom Festival.

Presented in Ford Auditorium in cooperation with the Consulate of Canada, the films have been selected be-

cause of their diversity and their appeal to family audiences.

"Cinema Canada I," a two hour-program of short films, will be presented at 2 and 7 p.m. June 27. Highlighting the program is "Cities: Glenn Gould's Toronto," a gold medal winner of the International Film and TV Festival.

Viewers are taken on a tour of To-

ronto, under the guidance of the renowned pianist. Two documentaries, one a year with a Lapp family and their reindeer herd and the other showing the birth of a whale, are scheduled.

"Log Driver's Waltz" and "John Law and the Mississippi Bubble," two animated films, and a film on stained glass making with Robert Jeky complete the program.

Keyboard artist Chick Corea will perform a benefit concert at 8 p.m. July 2 at the Royal Oak Music Theatre.

A benefit for the Michigan substance abuse program Narconon, the concert is sponsored by the Friends of Narconon in conjunction with the Detroit Jazz Center.

Narconon is an international network of drug, alcohol and criminal rehabilitation centers. In Michigan, Narconon provides substance abuse treat-

ment to the inmates of three Michigan correctional facilities.

Chick Corea's jazz tradition stretches back to his childhood. Born in 1941 in Chelsea, Mass., he began the study of classical piano at age 4.

HIS FATHER Armando is a jazz trumpeter and bassist who wrote and arranged all material for his own band during the 1930s and '40s.

It was his father who provided Corea

with his earliest musical impressions. Through his father's collection of 78s, Corea became acquainted with the music of Horace Silver, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Lester Young and Bill Evans.

Tickets for the Narconon benefit concert are available at the Royal Oak Music Theatre, J.L. Hudson's and the Detroit Jazz Center. For more information, call the Jazz Hot Line, 962-4124.

# Chick Corea in benefit

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