

# Oakland players present 'Loot' in converted bank

By Donald Calamia  
special writer

A drama group that converted an old bank in downtown Royal Oak into a theater seating 55 has had its ups and downs, but the general manager of the Fourth Street Playhouse said prospects are now on the upswing.

"We opened last September to some lousy reviews, but now we've built up a whole string of critical acclaim. Our audience has been likewise building," said Darrell Zink, who is also the company's artistic director.

The group presents contemporary comedies and dramas written in the last 20 years, most of them new to Detroit audiences, he said. "Loot," a mystery-farce lampooning wealth, law and order and the Catholic Church, will open tomorrow at the theater, 501 W. Fourth Street.

"About one-third of our audience comes from Rochester. The rest come from the Royal Oak, Birmingham, Troy and Sterling Heights areas," Zink said.

THE GROWING AUDIENCE is

straining the capacity of the tiny theater, Zink said. But the close proximity of actor to audience is one of the theater's strong points. It conveys the spontaneity of live theater in a way that drama's electronic competition cannot match, Zink said.

"When a person is only 12 feet away from the stage, as they are in our playhouse, how can they not become involved in the action?" he asked. "That's excitement you can never get from the movies or television."

Zink calls the company semiprofessional, as distinguished from amateur

community theater and professional groups.

"We're here to produce plays for the art itself and for the enjoyment. Our people do get paid, though not enough to live on," he said.

THE GROUP HAS a core of 25 member artists — a mixture of resident company members and "gypsies," Zink said.

"Loot" will be performed on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:30 p.m. and on Sundays at 7:30 p.m. through Aug. 15.



Ron Turk gives Ken Baggett a stern warning in "Loot," the mystery farce which opens Friday at the Fourth Street Playhouse in Royal Oak.

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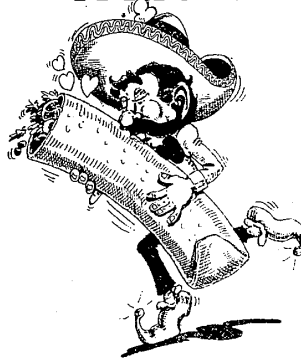
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