



In his Southfield apartment, songwriter/singer Erik Erikson discusses his recent and successful switch from corporate businessman to music.

man. "I never sang before a year and a half ago," he says. Since then, he has gained national attention for some of his work.

Singer seeks own style after imitating others

By Jackie Klein
staff writer

HIS BLOND AND blue-eyed, obviously doesn't have red, green and purple hair or wear a red bandanna. His voice is a dead ringer for Neil Diamond's, but it's not a gimmick.

He's Erik Erikson of Southfield, a 31-year-old singer who's determined to go places on his own steam.

Erikson got his first real break singing the lyrics to "If This is Culture, Give Me a Club." That's the theme song for the Boy George Fan Club started by Dick Purtan, morning man at WCZY-FM.

The club is for people who like Culture Club's music but can't stand to look at lead singer Boy George.

"I did the voice over to 'Forever in Blue Jeans' by Neil Diamond and with the way I breathe and sing it sounded like an imitation of Diamond," Erikson said. "But imitating someone else is short-lived, so I have to find my own voice."

"It's really a fluke. I never sang before a year and a half ago. I took voice lessons, but the teacher told me to just keep singing and practicing six hours a day because, he said, I have talent."

Erikson admits he doesn't make any money singing jingles. But he has faith that the money will come once he gets original material and an agent or backer who believes in him.

ERIKSON SINGS jingles such as "Strolls on the Rocks," and parodies about former Lion's coach Monte Clark written by Dan Vossian, Mike Heineitz and Steve Bhaerman.

He's done voice-overs of Willy Nelson and Julio Iglesias singing a parody called "To All the Girls I've Seduced." Erikson's tapes are played on most local radio stations and promoted by disc jockies.

He puts his heart and his raspy Neil Diamond voice into singing commercials, and he once did a jingle for a country station in Houston, Texas. But the bread and butter comes from his job as a sales representative.

"I took acting in college, but my father, Erik Erikson, 'the swashbuckler of Grosse Pointe,' said acting doesn't pay the bills. So I went into business with my dad, but after two years I decided the corporate life isn't for me."

"I've made a little money singing for private parties and at restaurants. And I was the opening act for David Brenner at the Premier Center. The audience loved me."

"Sure I'd like to sell 25 million records wearing one glove. But I'm a product like Kellogg's cornflakes. Tony the Tiger has been selling frosted flakes for years, but I've got to promote myself and it's tough doing it alone."

Erikson has landed appearances on "PM Magazine" and "Kelly and Company." Radio stations in Houston picked up some of Erikson's tapes and changed the words to fit situations in that city.

"I LOVE TO sing standards from the era of the big bands," Erikson said. "There is no age in music. All you need is good arrangements, the right emotion and an audience."

"I enjoy singing for big crowds. It's the greatest feeling in the world when people stand up and applaud. It's funny because they say I sound just like Neil Diamond and he doesn't sing the correct way. But he's got great style."

Erikson's latest "big" was a March 30 black tie affair to benefit the Family Life Education Council at the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores.

Entertainment was by "Detroit's own Neil Diamond" — Erik Erikson.

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