

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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(O)50

## Music makers

### It's an adventure performing on river cruise ship

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

**S**TAR OF DETROIT, in its third season on the Detroit River, provides a pleasurable outing, with cocktails, food and music for listening and dancing adding to the basic fun.

Entertainers who perform aboard the Star all enjoy the extra dimension provided by the ship's shape, floating venue.

Shella Landis and Top Drawer have played aboard the Star ever since it began operating in August 1984. They do three shows a night for dinner cruises 7-10 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday and 9 p.m. to midnight Friday, and also play on the Saturday moonlight cruise from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.

"It's different than performing in lounges, mainly because you rock back and forth," Rochester Hills resident Landis said about the Star. "It's a lot nicer than doing a lounge. It's a sense of adventure. There's a small dance floor. People are there mainly to chat. We're providing the ambience."

SHE SAID the dance floor usually isn't crowded. But one night this season, the group did a party for Bulek and people were packed like sardines on the dance floor. "We did our Motown set and they went crazy."

Landis' group plays all types of music and also does requests. "Some want their 'Stardust' and some nothing but Madonna," she said.

Are Saturday moonlight cruises romantic? "It really varies. Sometimes there are kids that want to do nothing but dance, sometimes couples that hold hands and look out the window," she said.

Along with bandleader Landis, who does vocals, the group includes Jon Kautz of Rochester, drums; Phil Kelly of Rochester, piano; former Troy resident Ken Kellett of Detroit, bass; and Ken (Saturdays)

Scott Petersen of Detroit, saxophone.

The Star offers cruises open to the general public and also takes reservations for special parties, which may reserve part or all of the ship. Landis said her group plays some proms early in the season, does corporate charters and special cruises.

LANDIS HASN'T gotten motion sickness from being on board the ship, but she and her band members have noticed something else. "I feel like I'm tipping and lurching even when I'm not on the boat," she said. "We've got our sea legs and we can't get rid of them."

Tom Hewitt and Feelings play 7-10 p.m. for Monday and Tuesday night dinner cruises and 5:30-7:30 p.m. Fridays for the TGIF (if you need a translation - "Thank God, it's Friday") cocktail cruises.

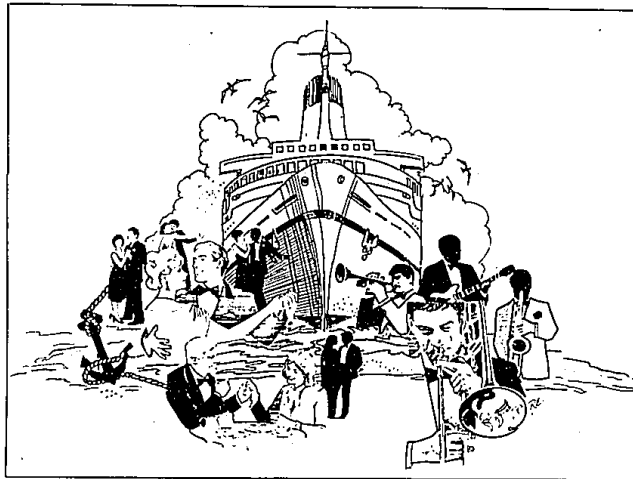
Hewitt's group also is playing aboard the Star for the third year in a row.

"I think the reason we've been on it so many years is that we have such a variety we do," said Hewitt, a Rochester Hills resident. Show tunes, Top 40, old rock 'n' roll, big band, funk and Motown are some of the types of music offered. They also play waltzes and fox trots, he said.

The band can't limit itself to playing just one kind of music, when there are people with varying tastes aboard. Passengers may range from a young twosome to a couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

HEWITT is a third-generation musician, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. He plays saxophone, clarinet and flute and does vocals. The four lead vocalists include his wife, Elaine; Frank Dunn of Sterling Heights, who also plays piano; Tim Garrick of Royal Oak, guitar; and Ken Murphy of Rochester, drums.

"I think the most fun I derive is when someone asks for a request,"



said Hewitt, describing what he likes best about playing aboard the Star.

"It's a wonderful cruise," he continued. "I highly recommend it."

Cruising on the river, in varying weather conditions, may lead to minor problems. "There have been times you get a little seasick, but nothing very serious," he said.

Another thing he likes about the Star. "It's nice to see from the top of the windows (the two lower decks are enclosed), one side the United States and one Canada."

Hewitt said there's a difference in the crowd at the TGIF cocktail

cruises. He described it as "an upbeat crowd, a fun crowd. Without dinner, there's a lot of dancing. At \$15 a person, \$30 is reasonable for a date. And you get hors d'oeuvres. Two hours goes like two seconds."

DOUG JACOBS and the Red Garter Band play at Saturday brunch from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. aboard the Star of Detroit.

"To me it's like a mini-cruise ship, but you don't have to go away two or three weeks at a time," said the longtime Detroit-area Dixieland bandleader, who lives on Cass

Lake.

"We start upstairs and play a set. We go downstairs and entertain people tableside for our second set, and then we take a short break and invite everybody from the downstairs and the second deck to join us for a sing-along on the third deck to end the day," he said.

"As they depart, we play, 'Oh, When the Star Comes Rolling In.'"

The happy, New Orleans Dixieland music draws a lot of attention.

"The people really totally enjoy us," banjo-player Jacobs said.

"They even dance to us on the second deck."

JACOBS finds it smooth sailing aboard the Star. "It's like being on an airplane. It's as smooth as it could possibly be."

The view of Detroit and the fun and enjoyment people seem to get being on this boat, it's a fabulous situation for downtown Detroit. I think of it like being on the Delta Queen out of New Orleans."

ALL THE entertainment for the Star of Detroit is booked by Nancy Kader-Jacobs, Doug's wife, who is owner-operator of the Entertainment Connection in Southfield.

Other performers who play on the ship include the Claude Lambert Trio, which plays for a Dixieland Sunday brunch from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. ("For brunches, we've decided to stick with the Dixieland," said Kader-Jacobs), and the Mary Williams Trio, which plays jazz for a Sunday cocktail cruise 3-5 p.m. ("Fun jazz," said Kader-Jacobs).

"For dinner cruises seven nights a week, it's important we got groups that could exercise a good versatility," she said. "We want to accommodate everybody's taste."

Musicians at dinner cruises "play jazz and standards, Motown and oldies and current Top 40 music, so anybody can be pleased. Sometimes there's an old crowd, sometimes a young crowd."

At TGIF cruises, the music is strictly Top 40.

The Star of Detroit, docked at Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit, sails through Sunday, Oct. 19. Brunch, lunch and dinner cruises are served buffet-style. The Star will feature jazz during the upcoming Montreux Jazz Festival Weekend (the Montreux Detroit Jazz Festival runs Wednesday, Aug. 27, to Monday, Sept. 1). For information and reservations, call 465-STAR.

## upcoming things to do

### ● GOLDEN ERA

The big band sound with Joe Vitale and his six-member group playing favorites from the "Golden Era" of American music will be featured from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 21, at Prudential's Sun Bowl in Southfield. Concertgoers may bring their lunch, blankets and lawn chairs, to the free series.

### ● JAZZ SOUNDS

George Benson offers his jazz sounds in a free concert series from noon to 1:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 22, at the atrium of the First Center Office Plaza in Southfield.

### ● BIG BAND

Ed Nuccelli's big band arrives for a concert at 7 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 24,

at the Prudential Town Center Sun Bowl. Elliott Trumbull of the City of Southfield's Parks and Recreation Board will emcee the free concert.

### ● PLAZA FEST

The City of Southfield will close out its 1986 Plaza Fest concert series with the Latin jazz of Francisco Mora and the comedy of the Ron Co-

den Show from 5-8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 22, at the Civic Center Plaza. Concertgoers may bring lawn chairs.

### ● SOMERSET MALL

The Ron Jackson Trio featuring the trumpet star will be held from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 24, at Somerset Mall in Troy. The free concert will be held in the Center Court.

MEADOW BROOK Grammy-award-winning saxo-

phonist David Sanborn plays pop, jazz and rhythm and blues at 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 21, at Meadow Brook Music Festival on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. Multi-Grammy-award-winning jazz vocalists Manhattan Transfer

will perform at 8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 22. Final children's concert of the season, "Aesop and Other Fables," starring puppeteer Marshall Izen, will be presented at 11 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 23.

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