

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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(T, R, S, D) OJSC



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Wriggling out of a straight jacket is no sweat for Matt Jacobson of West Bloomfield, 18-year-old magician who has been performing tricks and illusions since he was a youngster.

## All wrapped up in doing magic

By Chuck Moss  
special writer

The house itself is a Hollywood set, with enough white and mirrors to drive the photographer bananas. Inside, the young man stands bound in a straitjacket, an appropriate position for a 16-year-old. He smiles and begins to wriggle, soon flipping the jacket off, with a warm grin and a toss of his punk-streaked hair.

Meet Matt Jacobson, teenage magician, of West Bloomfield. An eight-year show business veteran, Jacobson can saw a girl in three

places and change a torch into a cane with the best of them.

He will perform at Birmingham's Community House at 1 p.m. Saturday.

Previously, he has appeared at the Masonic Auditorium, the Michigan State Fair and the Silverdome and has worked his own summer show in Niagara Falls. Jacobson has amassed a fat portfolio of shots with everyone from David Copperfield and Harry Blackstone to Sonny Elliot.

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Barry Williams relaxes backstage at the Birmingham Theatre, where he stars as Chuck Baxter, a young man trying to get ahead in a hurry, in the Neil Simon-Burt Bacharach musical "Promises, Promises." He is on stage during most of the show, singing such hits as "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" and the show's title tune.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

## '60s musical Actor has fun playing meaty role

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

It was a bone-chilling day in Birmingham, but Barry Williams, star of "Promises, Promises," didn't mind having to be away from his home in Malibu, Calif. "I know what it's like there," he said with practicality.

Williams was happy to be in Birmingham, where he has been on-stage starring in the Birmingham Theatre production of the Broadway musical hit "Promises, Promises" since Dec. 30.

He was looking forward to seeing his parents this weekend. "They'll be coming this weekend to see the show," he said. "It's my dad's 44th anniversary gift to Mom — a five-day trip to Detroit." He laughed good-naturedly.

Williams also was pleased because this was his first day off since the show opened, he said, and after the interview, he was going to play tennis at the Franklin Racquet Club with the actor who plays his boss in the show.

Many television viewers know Williams from the five years he starred on "The Brady Bunch," playing the oldest son, Greg. The show originally aired through 1974.

THE HANDSOME actor has appeared on television in the series "Run for Your Life" with Ben Gazzara and in "That Girl" and "Gomer

Pyle," which were directed by John Rich, who also directed "The Brady Bunch."

Williams has only good things to say about the latter show. "It's my favorite TV family," he explained. But he certainly wouldn't classify the part he played as one of his favorites. He prefers "meaty roles," and mentioned this on more than one occasion during the interview when he talked about his background as an actor.

Don't get the idea that Williams is just some Pollyanna. But he admits to being a guy who has a positive outlook on life. He prefers doing comedy on stage and straight dramatic roles in films. He doesn't want to get depressed by a character he portrays, so he keeps the serious stuff for his more brief performances, as in movies.

He finds comedy "more pleasant and lighter and entertaining than heavier drama." He says he's not a method actor but as for his demeanor on stage, he works at keeping his attitude pleasant. "I have a good time up there. You can see it," he said.

Describing the part he plays, of Chuck Baxter in "Promises, Promises," Williams said, "As an actor the role is very meaty. I'm never off the stage." The show is set in 1968, the same time the original production was first presented, and Baxter, a young man trying to get ahead in business, is "a pre-Yuppie-Yuppie,"

**'George Rondo, the director, said he wants to create a Valentine to the era.'**

— Barry Williams

he said.

SOME CRITICS have questioned why the show hasn't been updated to the '80s. Williams said it wouldn't work because things have changed so much since the '60s and the slogan of "Free Love," he noted. In "Promises, Promises" (based on the movie "The Apartment") "he gives the key to his apartment so married guys would enjoy flings."

"George Rondo, the director, said he wants to create a Valentine to the era," Williams said. "Promises, Promises" is at the Birmingham Theatre through Sunday, Jan. 31. Besides enjoying tennis, the athletic Williams said a bowling-league night for the whole cast has been put together.

During the show's run, the actor is residing at the Somerset Park apartment complex in Troy. His parents were staying at the Barclay in Birmingham. (They saw him in "Promises, Promises" Saturday night and came to see the musical again on Sunday afternoon.)

The versatile actor said that during his career he has done "a ton of

different things — episodic TV and several musicals a year, for the last dozen years." On television, he recently appeared as a rock star on "Highway to Heaven" and as a riding-stable Casanova on "Murder, She Wrote."

His favorite musical productions include roles in "They're Playing Our Song," "Pippin," "Grease" and "The Robber Bridegroom."

WILLIAMS BEGAN his acting career as a child. "I studied from the age of 11," he said. "I still study, to stay stretched and doing roles I might not be hired for." He works with Milton Katselas in Hollywood and is currently developing roughish roles.

Although not sure exactly how he will use this roughness, he cites Larry Hagman of "Dallas" fame: "I listened to him talk about the character for 'Dallas.' He worked for 12 years before the series came along to develop it."

An avid sportsman, Williams likes tennis, boating, waterskiing and surfing at Malibu, where he has lived for the last 11 years. "The air!" he exclaimed. Another attraction of Malibu is, "it has a small-town feel." Because he wants to give something back, for the success he has enjoyed, Williams participates in many celebrity tennis tournaments and fund-raisers. He has worked on behalf of the American Cancer Society, Heart Association and United Cerebral Palsy.

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