

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100

Thursday, January 28, 1988 O&E

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STEPHEN CANTRELL/Staff photographer

Debi Green and Joe Lannon co-star in the St. continues through Saturday, Feb. 20, at the Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook production of playhouse in Bloomfield Hills. For ticket information the musical romance "They're Playing On Radio," call 644-0527. Song." The show opens Friday, Feb. 5, and

upcoming things to do

Deadline for the Upcoming calendar is one week ahead of publication. Items must be received by Thursday, to be considered for publication the following Thursday. Send to: Ethel Simmons, Entertainment Editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 35251 Schoolcraft, Livonia #8150.

MAGIC SHOW

Matt Jacobson, 16-year-old magician, will perform at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30, at the Community House in Birmingham. The show originally scheduled for Jan. 18 was canceled when Jacobson got the flu. It was the first performance he missed in eight years. For information on tickets at \$3 call 644-5932.

IMPROV NIGHT

The Actors Alliance Conservatory presents Monday night improv classes with Jonathan Round. The class begins 7:10-30, Monday, Feb. 1, and continues for six weeks through Monday, March 7, in

Southfield. Each session will meet from 7:10-30 p.m. at a cost of \$150. Advanced, as well as new improvisational students may join this accelerated course. Early registration is advised. Call Actors Alliance at 642-1326 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays.

RADIO MARATHON

"Have a Heart," kick-off party for the 1988 DSO

QRS Radio Marathon, will be held 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Southfield. The event includes hors d'oeuvres, silent auction, prize drawing and cash bar. There will be entertainment, and a complimentary sweet table will follow. The party is sponsored by the Detroit Symphony League and the Women's Association for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, with all proceeds to benefit the DSO. Tickets at \$25 per person may be bought by calling 851-1524.

PRIZE DRAMA

"Crimes of the Heart," winner of

the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics Circle award in 1981, begins a three-weekend run Friday, Feb. 5, at Oakland University at Varner Studio Theater in Rochester Hills. Performances will be at 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturday, Feb. 5-6, 12-13 and 19-20, and at 2 p.m. Sundays, Feb. 7, 14 and 21. The play examines the plight of three young Mississippi sisters betrayed by their passions. Tickets are \$8 general admission, \$5 for senior citizens and children and \$4 for OU students. For ticket information call the Center for the Arts box office at 370-3013.

JAZZ NIGHTS

Max & Erma's Jazz nights are from 9-11:30 p.m. Sundays, Feb. 7-28, in Farmington Hills. Attractions are the Blues Cruiser featuring Steve Gornall and Bugs Bedow, Sunday Feb. 7; the Hot Club, Sunday, Feb. 14, and Fast Tracks, Sunday, Feb. 21 and 28. Cover charge of \$2 is refundable with any Max & Erma's food purchase. The lounge menu is available for late night snacks.

Sci-fi star plays a heroic role

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

FOR THE LAST 21 years, Walter Koenig has been overcoming assorted evil aliens in outer space as Chekhov in the "Star Trek" TV series and in all four "Star Trek" films. Now the actor/writer is "in space" once again, to shoot a new science fiction film called "Moontrap" for Magic Lantern Productions, in Troy.

Koenig says of his science fiction niche in film, "I've been pigeonholed, but this is great fun. I like to expand my horizons and do different kinds of characters. 'Moontrap' is a very different role from what I've been playing."

For starters, he portrays an all-American NASA astronaut in "Moontrap" instead of the Russian, Chekhov, of the "Star Trek" series. And this time around he gets to be the hero, Jason Grant, rather than just a crew member on the Starship Enterprise.

"THIS GUY JASON is in control. He leads an expedition to the moon in the late 1980s, discovers a hostile robot culture and takes the responsibility for protecting earth," Koenig said.

Co-star Bruce Campbell, a fellow astronaut and his sidekick in the film, said, "Jason's the hero, you can always tell who's the hero. He's the one who gets the girl."

"Yeah, I get the 14,000-year-old girl," Koenig shot back. In "Moontrap" his romantic interest is Mera, an earthling from a prehistoric earth colony played by newcomer Leigh Lombardi. She's freeze-dried in a lunar crypt so she can warn future earthlings about the robots threatening to take over earth.

Her crypt looks like a cross between a glorified manhole cover and an ancient altar as it waits discovery on the lunar set. Most of the film is being shot in a converted warehouse on Rochester Road in Troy. Between takes, Koenig and the rest of the cast and crew wear surgical masks to filter out the dust that hangs in the air, a lingering special effect created by cement dust and a smoke machine used to recreate the arid lunar landscape. Behind the camera, they look like M*A*S*H.

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astronauts stationed on the moon.

KOENIG PLAYS the hero not as a superhero but as a realistic modern man with inner anxieties and conflicts (not to mention the external difficulties he has with the race of malicious lunar robots). Back on earth he's separated from his wife and having trouble with his son. Out in space he faces private anxieties. Koenig says of the character, "Jason is in his early 40s and wonders with the encroaching years if he's still as capable as he once was."

A genuine attempt to be realistic lies behind the presentation of characters in the film and in the sets constructed by a team of carpenters working nonstop in another section of the warehouse.

Robert Dyke, the film's producer/director and the power behind Magic Lantern Productions, said, "Realism is what makes this film unique. My aim is to take a core sci-fi premise — spacemen go to moon, find beautiful woman, fight monsters — and translate it into a realistic tale."

Dyke says, "We try to keep the science as accurate as possible by trying to duplicate on our sets NASA photos of the moon's surface. We take the imagery of the moon that we've all seen for the past 20 years and introduce it into a fantastic storyline."

A WRITER as well as an actor, Koenig has a keen ear for good storylines. Besides working in film and in theater, he writes screenplays, TV scripts and novels. He has written episodes for TV shows "The Incredible Hulk," "Family" and "Land of the Lost" and for the animated "Star Trek" series. His second novel, "Buck Alice and the Actor Robot," is due out in March.

In real life, 51-year-old Koenig

lives with his family in Los Angeles and divides his time between acting in films, working as a stage actor and writing. Dry spells between jobs are the bane and the reality of an acting career.

Asked whether he prefers working in film to working on stage, he said, "I like working. That's the prerequisite."

Then he admits, "I find theater most gratifying, but it pays the least. So between film jobs I try to do theater. I do a lot of theater in L.A. — comedy and drama."

He lists roles in "Steamboat" and "The Deputy" as highlights, along with playing Pompeius with Lynn Redgrave and Timothy Dalton in "Anthony and Cleopatra."

Shooting on the 3.6-million-dollar film is scheduled to wrap up in February. The film will hopefully be shown at the Cannes Film Festival in May and be released nationally in August.

TWO PROJECTS wait in the wings for the conclusion of Koenig's other-worldly adventures in "Moontrap." He has written a screenplay, "When You Are Ready, C.B." which he hopes to see produced. He wants to play Tom Sawyer in a play called "The Boys in Autumn." He has no aim to pretend he's the tousle-haired kid Mark Twain invented but rather wants to play a grown-up Tom with a smattering of gray in his hair.

He says of the innovative production, "It's likely it's going to happen. The play will debut in L.A., then go on tour."

Meanwhile, Koenig wears an authentic replica of a NASA spacesuit and mans the controls of a Saturn rocket bound for a dangerous expedition to the moon. This thoughtful man of many talents for once gets to be the hero.

external difficulties he has with the race of malicious lunar robots).

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