

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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## Make-believe

### When band plays, music and vocals are an illusion



JOHN STORMZAND

Don Myers of Troy, who plays trumpet with Illusion, takes a turn leading the band, during a recent engagement at the Troy-Clawson Elks.

By Victor Swanson  
special writer

**S**TAND BY! EVERYONE on stage, check your lies. Ready microphones! Three, two, one, on the air! And when that on-air light glows, the hall is instantly filled with the romantic sound of Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade."

That's how it might all begin on a wonderful night when Illusion, a group of about 15 entertainers, comes to give a performance. The group combines real recordings by such big bands as the Glenn Miller Orchestra and the Benny Goodman Orchestra and a pantomime show, all into one.

"We're not musicians," said Mike Best of Plymouth, founder and director of Illusion. "We never try to pretend we are. We are entertainers."

Illusion is made up of people from all over the area and with all different types of occupations who get together every so often to mimic performances by well-known big bands, pretending they're the playing the music or singing the songs. A couple of the members, though, really can play instruments.

A person might call Illusion a "glorified disc jockey," who plays



Mike Best of Plymouth, the band's founder and director, sings with Illusion vocalist Andrea Wojack. Best also plays piano with the band.

the sounds of the big band era and presents a visual show for the audience. "Only Illusion offers live on-stage entertainers and authentic sound of no less than 15 of the old-time greats — Miller, Goodman, Dorsey, James, Lombardo, Barnett, Kyser, Shaw. And we have about 55-60 songs," Best said.

"I HAVE THREE to four saxophones, three horns, two trombones

... stand-up bass, guitar, piano, drums, vocalist and director," Best said. Members of the band are in uniform — blue blazer, gray slacks, white shirt and red tie.

There are real instruments, most of which, he said, don't work. "If someone makes a squeak with one, we'll kind of joke and stop and all stand around and say, 'Did you make a noise?'"

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## Update 88 eyes TV, VCR impact on viewing movies

By Dan Greenberg  
special writer

"The importance this day has in the media community has increased tremendously — and that's very gratifying."

— Tina Stover, executive administrator, Detroit Producers Association.

More than 250 film and video enthusiasts crowded the halls and rooms of the William D. Ford Vocational/Technical Center in Westland on Saturday, for "Update 88," sponsored by Detroit Area Film Teachers and the Detroit Producers Association.

Headlining the speakers was Elliott Wilhelm, director of the Detroit Institute of Arts Film Theater, currently in its 28th season. Wilhelm is also film critic for WJR's "Midday Magazine" and Channel 50's "Ten O'Clock News."

Wilhelm spoke about the tremendous impact television, in particular VCRs, has on how we watch movies. The ability to watch any film at

home, at one's own leisure, and the psychological differences between home viewing and watching the "silver screen" in a theater were also addressed by Wilhelm.

DAFT is a non-profit organization founded in 1969 with membership ranging from students and teachers of film and video to enthusiasts and professionals working in the area's many media activities. Co-sponsorship of the annual Update festivities with the Detroit Producers Association was a natural. Charlie Meyers of DAFT, and John Prusak of both DAFT and the DPA co-chaired this year's Update.

HIGHLIGHTING the film and video screenings was Detroiters' Sue Marx and Pam Conn's Oscar-nominated "Young at Heart," now playing at the Maple Theater in Bloomfield Township. Also shown throughout the day were selections from previous Michigan Student Film/Video Festivals.

Annually, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences makes available a compilation reel of films

entered in the Student Oscar competition. The 1987 winners were screened at Update 88, as were a compilation of programming by the Catholic Television Network of Detroit and 20 local films presented under the program title, "Made in Detroit."

Featured in that program were films by Bill Searlet, David Lee, David Stern, Pat Zarnuba, Ken Lago, Erik Iversen, Jeff Bloomer, Doug Chiang, Bill Dear, Larry Coplin, Mike Rowles, Tim Mantyla, Jeff LaDuke, John F. Beaver and Mitchell J. Peyser, plus work by several companies: Filmworks, Front Porch Productions and Sound Moves Productions.

Another headline feature of Update 88 was the panel, "Access Success Stories," hosted by the Oakland County Community Cable Commission's Dick Rockwell. "We're happy to see so many people with cable background," he said.

"The growth in the number of people with public access experience is phenomenal. And it is interesting

that they are becoming more successful targeting programs for specific audiences rather than the more commonly expected public access pattern of programming for and to communities."

ROCKWELL'S PANEL included Michael Short, producer of "Coffeehouse Cafe" who explained how to get big-name talent to appear on public access shows and how that exposure benefits those stars.

Denise Swope and Sharon MacDonald, producers of "Community Update," a public access program that recently went into national syndication, discussed the distribution problems for public access programming.

All cable systems provide channels available to everyone in the community as part of their franchise agreement, hence "public access." In recent years such programming has grown substantially with the help of people like Dick Rockwell and the Oakland County Community Cable Commission.

Another public access success sto-

ry is "Speak Out" hosted by Brent Triest. Beginning on a public access channel it has moved to open broadcasting and now airs live at 7:30 p.m. every Tuesday on Channel 56.

"Speak Out" Producer Suzanne Schumacker described the incredible amount of work it takes to air the show. She's currently in the midst of hundreds of calls putting together a program on public attitudes toward casino gambling in Detroit. "In this kind of business," she said, "you have to be able to handle a lot of rejection."

"IT WAS PARTICULARLY rewarding," she maintained, "to see all the work that people were willing to do without expectation of monetary reward." Although now looking at syndication, initially "Speak Out" was a volunteer effort with an Oakland County Community Cable Commission grant for production expenses.

Another well-received presentation was Jim Piechocki speaking on "Everything You Always Wanted To

Know About Grants..." Piechocki is employed by the Sandy Corp., and prior to that was in Los Angeles writing for Saturday morning cartoon shows "He Man," "Fat Albert" and "Ghostsbusters."

"You need to give strong indication as to how your project is different, what is its unique quality and what your artistic vision is," Piechocki told those looking for grant support.

Tina Stover of the DPA said that this presentation was particularly helpful because "so many talented people are overwhelmed by the business of getting grants."

Piechocki also said that applicants should list all their credits because "specialty credits will make the film or video a richer experience and committees handing out money recognize this." He also suggested that grant plans of work should demonstrate "how well-organized you are since 70-80 percent of grant projects don't get finished."

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