

Talent abounds at look-alike contest

By Amy Rosa
staff writer

THEY CAME upon Southfield like a mice on muenster. Dozens of celebs smiled and posed for the cameras. There were even a couple of appearances by Mike Dukakis and Dan Quayle. Where there's media coverage, after all, there will be stars.

Or were they really stars? Double take was the name of the game Oct. 20 at a contest hosted by look-alike king Ron Smith of Hollywood. Housewives, businessmen, secretaries and others from around the metro area converged at Southfield's Embassy Suites Hotel dressed as their favorite stars (figure and face matching closely, of course), in hopes of winning modeling contracts with Smith.

Southfield was a stop in a national presidential and star look-alike tour, sponsored by Smith's Celebrity Look-alikes based in Los Angeles.

HANDLING THE promotional aspect from this end were Marilyn Fessler and Barbara Waters of Southfield-based Connections, a group that hires local look-alikes for area events.

"We want to tell Detroit that there is a way to use your likeness to a celebrity or star," Fessler said. "Detroit is the fourth largest market for industrial films and the sixth largest for news media. This is a great place to enhance this (likeness)."

And who's a better judge of star look-alikes than star look-alikes who have been them for years. On hand to do the rating were a Tom Selleck, Phyllis Diller, Alan Aida, Lionel Ritchie, Raquel Welch and Suzanne Somers — all area residents who work with Connections in some fashion.

Doni Danton of Westland has been playing Phyllis Diller for six years, getting started as the opening act for Ringo Starr, Chubby Checker and the Glen Miller Band (the original one), she said. "People have been

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— Marilyn Fessler
promotional assistant

telling me for years that I look like her," she added pulling from a cigarette holder from underneath a halo of blond spiky hair.

"There's a lot of money to be made doing this, especially around Christmas time," she said, mentioning that she travels all across the country for shows and events, and even bumped into the real Diller once. "She told me I walked just like her."

DIANA CRAIG of Farmington Hills, beside walking just like the real Raquel Welch, is a dead ringer for the sex symbol. Declining to mention her age, she said, "I'm somewhere between 30 and death," but admitted she stole that line from Danton's Diller.

It was 15 years ago that Craig first heard she looked like Welch, and decided to take on the actress' short hair and make-up style for profit 10 years later. She hoped the exposure would lead to more modeling jobs in print and TV commercials, but confessed that semi-stardom can't match her favorite job of "being a mom."

West Bloomfield's Jeri Brandt drew a few stares with her blond billowing tresses, wide smile and sassy expression that one thinks only Suzanne Somers can muster. But Brandt has been imitating Somers for quite some time, even before she thought she really was a match for her.

"It wasn't until I saw her in person that I thought I really looked like her," she explained, revealing how

much she enjoys the impersonation. "I just love it when people stare at me or ask for an autograph."

"I'm really an insurance agent, but that doesn't go with my image, does it?"

THE BIG celebrity look-alike winner was Diane Ross, a Dolly Parton from Mount Clemens. Ross beat out such impersonators as Tina Turner, Rod Stewart, Janet Jackson, Woody Allen and Eddie Murphy, for a one-year promotional contract with Smith's group and Connections.

And it was a tough choice for the better presidential campaign look-alike, for both contestants would have been mistaken as Senator Quayle and Governor Dukakis in any crowd.

But a similar contract was won by 42-year-old Southfield print company manager, Dick Ricci. Unlike the others, this was Ricci's first official appearance as his look-alike, "The Duke."

A friend has entered him in a National Enquirer Dukakis look-alike contest, but he has yet to find out if his bushy eyebrows and prominent proboscis won him the \$500 prize.

Quayle look-alike Bob Kiger of Mount Clemens came up to congratulate Ricci on his win, announcing, "You better believe that he'll vote for Dukakis — he wants to stay in business."

Then with a laughing smile and a handshake, the Quayle impersonator said, "But really, he's going to be out of work in three weeks."



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Believe it or not, it isn't Raquel and Suzanne, but professional look-alikes who were on hand to judge a national Hollywood look-alike contest in Southfield. Diana Craig of Farmington Hills (left) has been appearing as Raquel

Welch for five years, along with West Bloomfield's Jeri Brandt, who portrays the dizzy blonde Suzanne Somers. Both sex-symbol imitators appear locally at parties and social events.

Art show to highlight temple anniversary

In celebration of its 25th anniversary Birmingham Temple will feature the works of a talented trio of Farmington area artists in its annual art show Friday through Sunday Nov. 11-13.

The three join 125 artists presenting their selected works in a banner weekend that will be climaxed on Sunday by the awarding of a prize of an art work from the show.

In early childhood, Sandra Levin

knew she was an artist and has continued painting ever since, in spite of her parents' disapproval of her ambition for an art career.

Much of her imagery derives from her love of nature, especially in the Georgian Bay area and the Rocky Mountains. She rejoices in translating these memories into the color and form of her paintings.

Levin's success can be measured by the many prestigious juried exhibitions that have included her work, and the numerous prizes awarded her. She was chosen by Jan van der Marck, modern art curator of the Detroit Institute of Arts to show in the Detroit Artist's Market Exhibit last fall.

In addition, she is represented in a number of local corporate and private collections such as Botsford Medical Building, Med-Tronic Corporation, the permanent collection of Oakland Community College at Orchard Ridge, headquarters of the

Honey Baked Ham Corp., the Anderson Collection and Dr. Sarah Keldan collection.

ELIZABETH LURIE'S subtle sculptural porcelains convey an elegance to functional pieces. She continually grows as an artist, currently developing a new interest in surface texture and color for innovative concepts in wall sculpture.

Her pottery is exhibited in the permanent collections of Pewabic Pottery and Bigelow Tea Co. She has entered local and national competitions from New Hampshire to California, winning a number of prizes.

She earned her masters degree at University of Michigan.

Donna Vogelheim, from her graduate studies in biology and teaching biology, switched to a whole new career as a watercolor artist. This happened in order to visualize and share her intense reaction to the color, form and rhythm found under the

microscope and in her numerous field trips.

Her love of rich color is developed in the dramatic designs of her work, often achieving a luminescence through repeated glazed layers. Contrasts exist everywhere: light against dark, warm against cool, flat pigment against sparkling transparencies.

She has been a favorite at local institutional exhibitions, from Lansing Art Gallery to Detroit Institute of Arts Founders Society, with many prestigious shows in between.

Her art training was at Oakland Community College, Birmingham-Bloomfield Art Association and TV production workshops. She has been invited to enter major corporate ex-

hibitions, as well as to present her own one-person shows.

BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE, during its banner celebration of its 25th anniversary, will show selected works of the artists in painting, sculpture, jewelry, ceramics, glass, weaving, metal art, and basketry.

Visitors to the show in Birmingham Temple at 26611 W. 12 Mile Road, between Inxter and Middlebelt Roads in Farmington Hills, may meet the artists and sample wine and cheese to a background of live music from 8-11 p.m. Friday, for \$5 admission.

Hours on Saturday and Sunday are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free before noon, and \$2 thereafter.

Fashion show aids home for kids

The Sarah Fisher Auxiliary hosts its Annual Fall Fashion Show and Luncheon Wednesday, Nov. 19, in Fairlane Manor, Dearborn. This year the show features the designs of Kathryn Scott of Birmingham.

Highlighting the afternoon will be the raffish of movie star Tom Selleck's autographed Tiger cap and Tiger/Dominio Pizza mogul Tom Monaghan's autographed copy of Tiger Pizza.

Other raffle prizes, as in previous years, are exceptional. They range from airfare to Florida to elegant dinners for two at local restaurants.

Proceeds from this event benefit the children of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills.

Reservations are required. For further information, contact Julie Eskoff at 855-8345 or Barb Bennett at 549-8340.

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