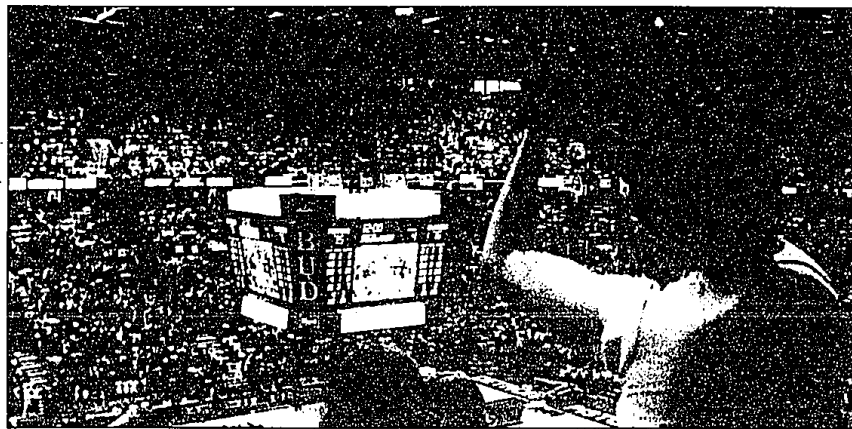




Pat Gross, a 34-year-old Westland resident, triumphantly turned to the Palace crowd after Piston Vinnie Johnson hit the winning basket.



photos by JIM RYDER/retail photographer

The Palace of Auburn Hills is a roaring sea of fans at the beginning of the fourth quarter with the Pistons trailing, 75-76.

Bedlam rocks Piston Palace

By Ralph R. Ehlman
staff writer

A deliriously ecstatic young woman grabbed my arm as I walked toward my motorcycle and chanted in a loud voice, "I can't bleeping believe it! I can't bleeping believe it!"

One might expect that she'd reached the go-go threshold by touching one of the New Kids On The Block, but au contraire, she was thrilled beyond belief because a hoop squad from Auburn Hills beat a similar collection of tall guys from Portland, Ore. for what passes as the world championship of basketball.

The Detroit Pistons' unbeaten record when televised on "Palace-Vision" remains unblemished as they beat the Portland Trail Blazers 92-90 Thursday night.

"What's Palace-Vision?" you ask. It's a Sony JumboTron TV set built into the scoreboard at the Palace of Auburn Hills. More than 15,000 rabid Pistons fans turned out to watch the roundball boys on the scoreboard Sunday before last. Then the place sold out, at \$3 a pop, for games Tuesday and Thursday.

BUT WHAT'S so great about watching the game on a scoreboard when you could be sitting in your own home where the seats are more comfortable and the beer significantly less expensive?

"You're with all the action," said Laurel McNabb of Birmingham. Friend Lissa Etzelman was more descriptive, hot to mention president. "Right here is where the party is," she said. "We are awesome. The Pistons are going to kick Portland's butt."

This particular dynamic duo also attended the Palace-Vision extravaganza Tuesday. "We had the greatest time," Lissa enthused. "We were rockin' so bad."

Steve Lasake of Rochester attended his first Palacevision performance Thursday. Having given his tickets to friend Kelly Sawyer of Warren, he retrieved them when Kelly felt remorse and returned the commodities.

During the first half, two young women from Troy Athens High School were standing in the corridor that rings the Palace. "You can get

more into the game here," Suzy Guitar said, who also maintained that Suzy Guitar is her real name.

"What can I say? The place is awesome!" effused Suzy's friend Amy McCarthy.

ALTHOUGH MODERN times have devalued the English language to the extent that incredible means what good did 20 years ago, the word awesome still comes very close to describing Thursday's pandemonium.

The place was so darn noisy that you couldn't have heard Dick Vitale talking if he was three feet away, not that you'd want Dick Vitale three feet away from you.

Bart Simpson signs seemed to be all the rage, with four or five examples floating around. Other signs said, "We love Palacevision," "Bill is our hero," and "This one's for Joe."

Paper airplanes created from R.I.P. Portland signs rained on the Palace floor, some particularly well-crafted models coming all the way from the upper deck. A guy dressed in a Robocop suit trotted around the floor. A Palace attendant distributed

car plugs to members of the media as WLLZ's Michael Fox exhorted the crowd to new levels of fervor.

While one might figure they'd seen the extent of what inveterate, run-amok fandom can do to ordinary people during the first three quarters of the game, records for insano- loquacious behavior were broken when Vinnie hit the hoop that put the Pistons in the champagne zone.

To say the primarily teen-age crowd "went nuts" is exaggeration, of course, but in the days of runaway, language inflation it's an understatement.

TOTAL STRANGERS were high-fiving each other. Everyone was on his or her feet, screaming like drunken banshees, which some of them were. Even the normally staid "may I see your ticket please?" ushers celebrated in uninhibited fashion. One removed his clip-on tie and whirled it over his head.

Yet nearly everyone seemed particularly friendly and good natured, and the rampaging that plagued Detroit far away.

A GREAT NAME JOINS A GREAT CITY!

Top Quality
Excellent Service

CAR FONE

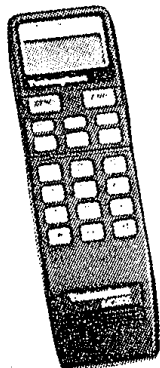
communications, inc.

AN AMERITECH COMPANY

LIMITED TIME OFFER

\$100 IMMEDIATE REBATE OUT THE DOOR PRICES

Better Values
Large Selection

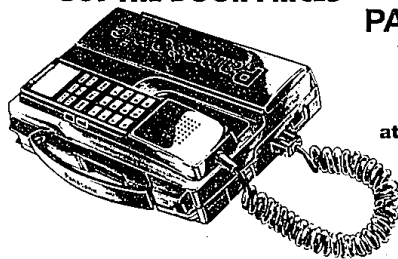


TECHNOPHONE
MOBILE PHONE

at \$69*

OUT THE DOOR
AFTER REBATE

This price does not include installation



PANASONIC

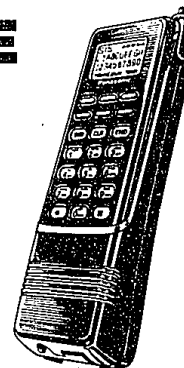
TRANSPORTABLE

OR

PORTABLE

at \$399*

OUT THE DOOR
AFTER REBATE



*REQUIRES NEW AMERITECH ACTIVATION W/TIMEPACK. ADD \$300 WITHOUT ACTIVATION.

CAR FONE

communications, inc.

AN AMERITECH COMPANY

The difference is Excellence!

AMERITECH ★★★★★ 5-STAR DEALER

LATHRUP VILLAGE • 26911 SOUTHFIELD • 557-8855

HOURS: MONDAY THRU FRIDAY — 9AM-5:30PM