SRO's 'Greater Tuna' hilarious must see show

SRO Productions presents "Greater Tuna" 8 p.m. Fridays Aug. 1 and 8 and Saturdays Aug. 2, and 9, and 2 p.m. Sundays Aug. 3 and 10 at Southfield's The Aug. 3 and 10 at Southfield's The Burgh on northeast corner of Civic Center Drive and Berg Road. Tickets are \$8 adults, \$7 seniors/children. Call (248) 827-0700. BY BOB WEIGEL SPECIAL WRITER

Alan Madeleine and Frank Markus are in top form in SRO's hilariously-splendid production of "Greater Tuna." The play had a brief off-Broadway run in 1982-83 and has been popular with regional and summer the-ater audiences, as it provides a performing tour de force for actors.

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Madeleine and Markus rarely miss a beat or an opportunity to score. Each plays 10 characters from the west Texas town of Tuna, total population of 20. Each seems more bizarre than the previous one. Yet, they never go overboard when playing women, by becoming too campy. And as they switch back and forth between roles, they retain the small character details that make their performances so satisfying.

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Tuna, a dusty, wide spot in the road, has a radio station Unlikely for sure, but playwright, Jaston Williams, uses the station as a comic device to take an affectionate, yet critical view of small-town America. Williams builds his story around the broadcasters and the screwball people and events they talk about.

Williams cleverly gives the station the call letters of OKKK, since some viewpoints are openly projudice. Luckly, the transmitter only puts out 275 watts. We find that the town has an unsettling degree of hypocrisy, deviousness and far-out right wing ideology, and just plain igno-

ideology, and just plain igno-rance. At one point a character



In the act: Alan Madeleine of Beverly Hills, (left) and Frank Markus in "Greater

asks a reporter what magazine he works for. He responds, "Intelligence" magazine. The

character suys, "oh, I don't believe we have that in Tuna."

When we first meet Messrs Madeleine and Markus, they are reporting folksy, small town news: the farm report, winning papers in school, etc. Markus, who by the way is technical director for "Car and Driver" magazine, slips off and changes into Didi Snavely doing a ludicrous gun commercial. "if our guns can't kill it, it's immortal."

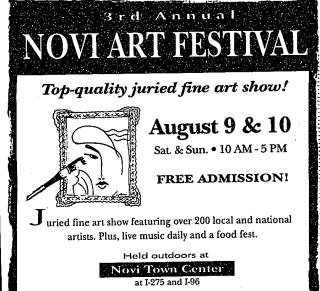
Madeleine is excellent as, Bertha, who leads the Smut Snatchers in romoving books from the library. She has three pathetic kids- all played by Markus in a distinct manner. The most interesting perhaps is an overweight Charlene, desperate to be a cheerleader. The wig and padded pants were alone worth the price of admission.

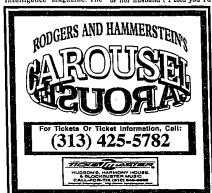
Madeleine is also excellent as Leonard, a talk show host- as Pearl Burras, a senior citizen bent over and walking with a cane, but capable of killing a dog or her husband ('I told you I'd

sing over your grave. I feel a song coming on.")- and again as the bible pounding, Reverond Spikes. Dressed in a snazzy off-white suit, the preacher man delivers an oulogy consisting entirely of every tired worn-out cliche known to mankind. It is a very funny five minutes.

Some of Markus' best moments include, Petay Fisk, as a humane society weird of this hat says, 'Save The Snails')- Phinias Blye, a perpetual city council candidate- and Vera Carp, a blonde busy-body, Markus, origi-nally from Memphis, has a natu-ral Southern accent with savory phrosing that makes his charac-

ters most believable.
Kudos to dressers (Tom Smith
and Janet (Snis) who made the
many costume changes. The incidental country music was tasteful and complimented the show.
Director Judi Rosati's staging
provides a fresh, lively pacing
that's a joy to behold. "Greator
Tuna" is a must see show.









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