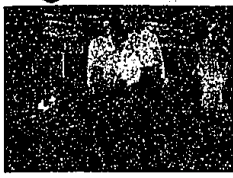


FRIDAY



Schoolcraft College piano students Joseph Heremans, Sanjay Mody and Brian Rodriguez will perform classical works at 7:30 p.m. in the Forum Recital Hall on the Livonia college's campus, 18600 Haggerty Road.

SATURDAY



The Detroit Symphony Orchestra presents a "Mozart Summer Serenade," featuring pianist Anton Nel 8 p.m. at the Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester Hills. Tickets \$42 to \$13, call (313) 833-3700, (248) 377-0100 or (313) 645-6666.

SUNDAY



Ani DiFranco and BR5-49, appear with Bob Dylan 6:30 p.m. at Pine Knob Music Theatre in Independence Township. Tickets \$40 and \$27.50 pavilion, \$15 lawn, (248) 377-0100.



Hot tik: More than 200 artists, including Kathy B. Phillips of West Bloomfield, will exhibit their works at the Novi Art Festival, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 9-10 in the parking lot of the Novi Town Center, 1-275 and I-96.

WHAT TO DO • WHERE TO GO

ENTERTAINMENT

KEELY WYGONIK, EDITOR • 313-953-2305

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Final edit: Producer David Baker, standing, and director Kenneth Guertin have turned out an action-packed movie thriller from their office in Farmington Hills.

LOCAL FILMMAKERS

'Make Believe' with thriller

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

The director opened the door to a black T-shirt that had seen better days. The door opened into a cluttered one-room office, subdivided by a black curtain. At the back was a sophisticated, state-of-the-art editing system.

This is the world headquarters of Make Believe Productions in Farmington Hills, a facility shared by director Kenneth Guertin and producer David Baker.

We are definitely not in LA-LA land.

This year's Oscars were touted as the triumph of the independents over the studios. But all the "independent" movies were actually bankrolled by the studios and other media conglomerates.

The real independents can be found in hide-aways like Make Believe Productions, where Baker, Guertin, and of Northville, are preparing for the premiere of their first feature film.

"The Incorporated" is an action-thriller (see review) shot in Michigan using local talent and some highly respected film veterans. For a change the action doesn't take place among palm trees and crashing surf. Livonia City Hall, a gas station in Novi, an office in Farmington Hills and a state police office in Northville are some of the "exotic" locations.

"We decided let's be entertaining and marketable," said Guertin.

"The Incorporated" cost just under a million dollars to make, cheap by Hollywood's mega-million standards. Mashed out credit cards got the film

"The Incorporated"

What: Premiere screenings.
Where: Millennium Theater Center, 15600 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield
When: 7:20 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 14, special invitation only premiere. 9:15 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 14, first public showing. 7:15 p.m. and 9:15 p.m. Friday, Aug. 15; 5:15 p.m., 7:15 p.m. and 9:15 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 16; and 5:15 p.m. and 7:15 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 17.
Call: 248-552-7000.

started and early rushes helped attract other investors. The action style landed Baker and Guertin a foreign distribution deal with Showcase Entertainment.

"We were fortunate to get distribution. It's an action thriller that translates well in the foreign market," said Baker.

If it takes off overseas, the hype could help get domestic theatrical distribution, cable casting or home video deals.

The premiere is the culmination of a professional partnership that began when Guertin, 30, and Baker, 29, were students at Florida State University in the late 1980s.

Following college, Guertin produced a cable TV show for children, "Make Believe," and used Baker as an actor. When Baker was working for Anheuser-Busch Creative, he used Guertin as a film editor. Then while working for a Fox affiliate, Baker hired Guertin to produce a promotional film. That film won several awards.

"He called me about being a producer," Baker said. "I thought about keeping my job, but then I decided to quit my job and dive head first into it. I don't regret it for a

minute."

"The Incorporated" has been in the works since January of 1994, while Baker and Guertin continued to turn out the industrial films and commercials that are the bread and butter of Michigan's film industry. But the filmmakers always saw feature film as their goal.

"We want to do stuff people want to watch, not what they have to watch," Baker said. "An industrial film, you're brought into a room and you have to watch it. A commercial, you have to watch."

Guertin began writing the script for "The Incorporated" with another writer, who eventually dropped out. "He got disillusioned and bailed out of the project," Guertin said. "I basically wrote the rest of the script."

It took me two years to write the script. I found out that this idea is one of the most submitted ideas now."

The "idea" concerns government agents working against innocent citizens, playing into the current anti-government paranoia. Guertin said on the day of the Oklahoma bombing, the film crew was scheduled to explode a mobile home, one of the film's central action sequences.

Baker and Guertin recruited local actors through four casting calls advertised in local newspapers. "A lot of them didn't have much film acting experience though a lot of them had done theater," Guertin said.

Steve Gibbons of Livonia responded to the ads.

"My mother, being the supportive mom that she is, saw it and cut it out for me. I went in and auditioned

Please see FILMMAKERS, E2

THEATER

Teens get in musical act

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Anyone who has, or knows teenagers, will tell you they hardly get excited about anything involving that four-letter word - work.

But Natalie Ross of Livonia, one of the teens cast in the Music Theatre of Michigan production of "Carousel," is an exception.

"It's work, it's well rewarded work," said Ross who plays Julie Jordan, one of the leading characters. "I couldn't think of anything I'd rather do this summer. Performing is work, but what we do is amazing, that's what makes it worthwhile."

Some time passes, and other cast members wander into the house. They hug each other hello, dig into purses and bags for scripts, and spontaneously burst into song, whether anyone's listening or not. Creative combustion explodes everywhere, until their leader, and mentor, Daniel Cooney, a 1986 Westland John Glenn High School grad, and professional actor yells - "quiet in the house."

Cooney founded the Music Theatre of Michigan with his long-time friend Michael J. Sawaya in 1995 to give talented high school students from Wayne and Oakland Counties an opportunity to sample a taste of the "real world" - to train and work side-by-side with professional stage actors and directors.

Forty students were selected from auditions held in March to attend an intensive 11-day summer acting workshop taught by one of New York's finest acting instructors, Jim Bonney, and Cooney.

When the workshop is over, students audition for a musical, which features Cooney, and other professional actors. Not all of them make the cut.

"We're a professional acting company, that uses non-equity actors," said Cooney who is directing "Carousel," and starring as Billy Bigelow.

Harold Jurkiewicz of Dearborn directs when Cooney's on stage, and

"Carousel"

When: 8 p.m. Friday & Saturday, Aug. 15-16; Aug. 22: 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 17.

Where: Louis E. Schmidt Auditorium, 20155 Middlebelt Road, (Between 7 and 8 Mile Roads), Livonia.

Tickets: \$16 general admission; \$14 children, senior citizens age 60 and older, and groups of 20 or more, call (313) 425-5782 or Ticketmaster, (248) 645-6666.



Rehearsing: Natalie Ross (sitting) and Jamie Earls practice a scene for "Carousel."

STREET SCENE



Coming to town: Live - from left, drummer Chad Gracey, singer Edward Kowalczyk, guitarist Chad Taylor, and bassist Patrick Dahlheimer - brings its "Secret Samadhi" tour to Pine Knob Music Theatre in Independence Township on Tuesday, Aug. 19.

Rock band Live comes to grips with fame

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Five or so years ago, live performances by Public Image Ltd., Big Audio Dynamite and Blind Melon, were packaged together as the "120 Minutes Tour" which came to then-ClubLand, now the State Theatre in Detroit. Blind Melon hadn't released its self-titled debut album.

And there was one other band that used the gigs to showcase its debut. In stark contrast to its punk and hippy tourmates, the small town band's four frat boy-looking members hit the stage. A monstrous voice erupted from the skinny, well-groomed intense lead singer.

Live was well on its way to success. "So many people that I've talked to ask us if we remember the '120 Minutes Tour.' How could I forget it? It was totally weird," Live's singer Ed Kowalczyk explained with a laugh.

"You want to talk about a fish out of water? We were a fish on top of Mount Everest. We were as out of water as you could possibly be. We were 21 year olds from York, Penn. We had never been much west of the Mississippi at all and we were going all over the world. It was ground-

breaking in a lot of different ways for us."

Besides offering Live the chance to play songs from its debut 1991's "Mental Jewelry" (Radioactive), the "120 Minutes Tour" allowed the band to hone its skills in front of large audiences.

Following "Mental Jewelry," Live achieved multi-platinum status with 1994's "Throwing Copper," which featured the hits "Lightning Crashes," "Selling the Drama," and "I Alone." The band appeared on covers of Rolling Stone and Spin magazines, as well as performing on "Saturday Night Live" and "MTV Unplugged."

"I'm still in the midst of coming to grips with our position" as a top-selling band, Kowalczyk explained. "I think that we're getting more and more comfortable with the idea of being a big band and playing in front of lots of people. It was the growth process that had to be sped up."

As a testament to that, Live, along with Luscious Jackson and upstart Brit rockers Manbrek, come to Pine Knob Music Theatre in Independence Township at

Who: Live, Luscious Jackson and Manbrek
What: Perform in concert
When: 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 19
Where: Pine Knob Music Theatre, 175 and Sashabaw Road, Independence Township.
How: Tickets are \$28 pavilion and \$18 lawn with 25 cents from each ticket donated to the Lifeline charity for AIDS. For more information, call (248) 377-0200.

Please see LIVE, E2