

Palace from page E1

visits to The Palace - Billy Joel, Reba McEntire, Elton John and Jimmy Buffet - as well as family shows such as Discover Stars on Ice, World Championship Wrestling and the Longhorn World Championship Rodeo.

Others have made their Detroit-area debut. The Spice Girls treated a sold-out crowd of mostly girls under the age of 10 to its Broadway-style show last

month. Pearl Jam will re-enter Ticketmaster venues in the area by playing The Palace on Sunday, Aug. 23.

The birthday activities began in late July with 10 20-foot-tall candles mounted on the top of the building facing Lapeer Road. Keeping with that theme, The Palace of Auburn Hills is hosting a variety of activities during the next 12 months. Joel, McEntire

and John will return to play The Palace (see accompanying chart). A Palace guest - namely the 25th million - will get "some major surprise."

"We haven't announced the package yet. We're at 23-1/2 million right now. We're going to put a counter up on the main entrance with it marking each passing guest so everyone can see how close we're getting to 25

million. Somebody - hopefully a relative - will get a very nice package," Wilson said with a laugh.

**Bringing back memories**

The Palace's 10th anniversary coincides with the 10th anniversary of the Detroit Pistons' first championship, so it is holding a season-long celebration.

"Every few games, one member of the championship team will come to a game. It will all culminate on April 3 when Orlando and coach Chuck Daly come in and we'll have everybody back for one big night to revisit the Bad Boys," he explained.

Pete Skorich, the vice president of broadcasting and multimedia, counts the Detroit Pistons' titles as his fond memories.

During those seasons, the Rochester Hills resident served as the video coordinator for the Detroit Pistons and visited the White House with the champions. That led to other, bigger opportunities including a stint as the video coordinator for the 1992 original men's basketball Dream Team.

"I was able to do some things that under normal circumstances I wouldn't have been able to do. When something like that happens to you, you go, 'God, I'm still relatively young. I wonder if these will be the two biggest events of my life?'"

But they weren't.

He lists among his other high-

lights as the Vipers championship in 1997 and the concerts held throughout the years. Skorich, who started with the Detroit Pistons in 1976 as a ball boy when the team played in the Cobo Arena, was instrumental in putting together the anniversary special.

"Putting the special together created a new memory. In 1998 when Bob Seger did those concerts here, we shot video of it. I directed video of an concert on the tour in Detroit the six Palace shows and two different Pine Knob shows. As I went into the studio in recent weeks to put the finishing touches on the live performance videos (which premiered during the special), through it all it occurred to me that I had never met Bob Seger."

Soon thereafter he got the opportunity when Seger ordered minor changes in the video that premiered during the television special.

"We went into the editing studio and spent the evening together until 6 a.m. putting the finishing touches on the video. Not only did I meet him, but I spent a lot of time with him."

For Wilson, seeing Barbara Streisand in concert in 1994 was a thrill.

"Still to this day, it's the best shows that we've ever hosted because it was just so perfect. No one had any hope that they would ever see her perform live. That made it very, very special."

There was this level of excitement, too, about the fact that they (patrons) were paying \$50 and nobody called to complain," Wilson explained.

**Upcoming improvements**

The Palace of Auburn Hills, according to Wilson, will continue to keep up its reputation. World-renowned restaurant designer Ron Rea, who also worked on the nearby Industry nightclub in Pontiac, will head up the multi-million dollar effort to revamp The Palace's restaurants and banquet facilities at the east and west sides of the building will be gussied up. Further in the future, the organization is planning to modernize the arena's public address/audio system and PalaceVision video screens, to enlarge areas of the concourse and expand the north end of the building.

Looking back at The Palace's 10 years, Wilson is amazed at its growth.

"At the beginning, we were a pretty tight little group of more than 100 that opened the building. Now we're up to 350 full-time employees. We went from being an arena and a basketball team to (adding) an amphitheater, the other amphitheater, the Shock, the Vipers hockey team. Now 300-plus nights a year, give or take a few days, we're doing something somewhere. That's the most amazing thing."

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late and Fudge Shoppes. Stroll along the tree-shaded paths and watch demonstrations of ancient crafts such as glass blowing. Hundreds of items reminiscent of the 16th century will be offered for sale including jewelry, pottery, weavings, herbs and clothes.

King Robert challenges all youngsters to test their skills and become official knights of the realm. Cheer for your favorite knight during the full-contact armored jousts three times a day.

"We create a playscape where the scene unfolds within you, you're part of the cast," said Lu

Harding, director of entertainment. "There are over 300 performers on any given weekend. We perform anywhere there's a patch of green."

To help prepare young actors and actresses for the challenges of performing at the Renaissance Festival, Harding expanded the Academy of the Michigan Renaissance Festival to include classes in the history of theater, movement, period costume design, and Renaissance performance.

Local experts including Phil Fox of Wayne State University and Roberta Lucas of the Eisenhower Dance Ensemble, worked with the students.

"We want to give the students more ammunition," said Harding. "They step out on the festival grounds with a little bag of tricks, they're very young actors who don't have a lot of tricks. We feel it's important to help them gain experience."

The 40 Academy graduates range in age from 16 to 23, and will be joined on the festival grounds by seasoned performers including Greg Oatley who portrays Sir Collin Macleod and world-renowned Renaissance bard, Owain Phyfe. Guest artists will also be performing on select weekends.

**Avenge Cancer!**

Join the Oakland Regional Board of Trustees of the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, Robbie Timmons of WXYZ, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and WXDG The Edge for a benefit showing of **The Avengers** starring Ralph Fiennes, Uma Thurman and Sean Connery

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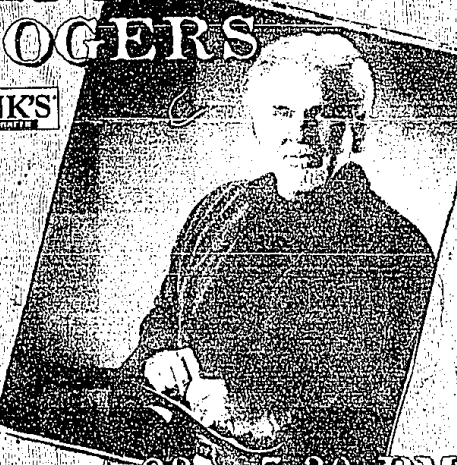
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