

# TV show relies on behind-the-scenes planning

## BACKSTAGE PASS



ANN DELISI

Fresh faces. Fresh approaches. Two essentials for any comedian wishing to reap the benefits that a thriving arts and entertainment scene can provide.

As the host of Detroit Public TV's BACKSTAGE PASS, I can tell you that freshness is an ingredient the producers insist upon in every show. Even with much-anticipated and highly-publicized exhibits like "Van Gogh: Face to Face," which opens March 12 at the Detroit Institute of Arts, there are important stories that can go untold.

■ In an edition that airs at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 27, the producers could have chosen to do a segment on the magnificence of the art (they, it's Vincent), or the significance of the exhibit (the first anywhere with such a collection of van Gogh portraits).

Instead, the focus will be on how the DIA was able to pull off such a coup. Viewers will get a behind-the-scenes look that provides insight into the process of attracting such a major event. It's a story of ingenuity that offers much promise for bringing in future exhibits of this magnitude.

■ Sometimes, freshness involves a new sound for a musician who has been around for a while. As the frontman for the Jand'Gov't Male, Warren Haynes has drawn on his stint as a member of the Allman Brothers in developing a distinctive blues/rock thrust to his music.

"Fans over the years have come to expect music from Warren that bridges the narrow gap between the Grateful Dead and Phish. Here, it will be a very rare acoustic performance with just his voice and a guitar," says BACKSTAGE PASS music producer Ron Pangborn of Haynes' appearance on the Feb. 27 show.

■ Having toured with Was/Not/Was during the band's influential period in the 1980s, and subsequently performing

solo as an opener in such diverse concerts as Marvin Hamlisch and the Squirrel Nut Zippers, no one will ever suggest that Kathy Kosins is reluctant to try something new.

The Birmingham-based jazz vocalist made a transition from rhythm & blues to straight ahead jazz in the early 1990s. Her 1996 release, "All in a Dream's Work," was a bold, widely-acclaimed collection of nine originals and just one cover.

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—BACKSTAGE PASS producer

Kosins' open mind and broad musical experiences helped her

develop exceptional skills as a songwriter and producer. It also takes drive and confidence to turn a debut album into a fresh, personal statement. It shows in her performances, including a Feb. 27 appearance of BACKSTAGE PASS.

■ For fresh faces, there may be no greater showcase than the third annual Sphinx Competition, a free concert by young African American and Latino string players. Held Sunday,

March 5 at 4 p.m. at Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium, the performers will vie for more than \$10,000 in scholarships to such acclaimed music schools as the Aspen Music Festival, Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and Interlochen Center for the Arts.

The Sphinx Competition is an excellent example of how the arts can create opportunities, with, if you'll pardon the pun, no strings attached.

## 'Kids' comedy returns

The Head Crusher, Chicken Lady, Cabbagehead. For Kids in the Hall fans, these feisty characters are as real as the five comedians who've performed them since 1988.

And after a four-year hiatus, the Canadian comedy troupe is back for two shows at the State Theater this Sunday and Monday, Feb. 27 and 28. Both nights are sold out, and Monday's show is the last of their two-month, 20-city tour.

When the Kids (Mark McKinney, Bruce McCulloch, Scott Thompson, Kevin McDonald and "Newsradio" Dave Foley) played the Attic Theater in the early 1990s, they were at the height of hilarity. Their television show was on CBS and CBC, so the Detroit audience could get a weekly double-dose of their outrageous antics. And their live show proved nothing short of quirky comedy at its best.

The reunion tour, "Same Guys, New Dresses," draws out some new material including "Jesus 2000" an infomercial to sell a new-and-improved Savior. "What was wrong with the old Jesus? Nothing. But Jesus 2000 forgives a lot faster."

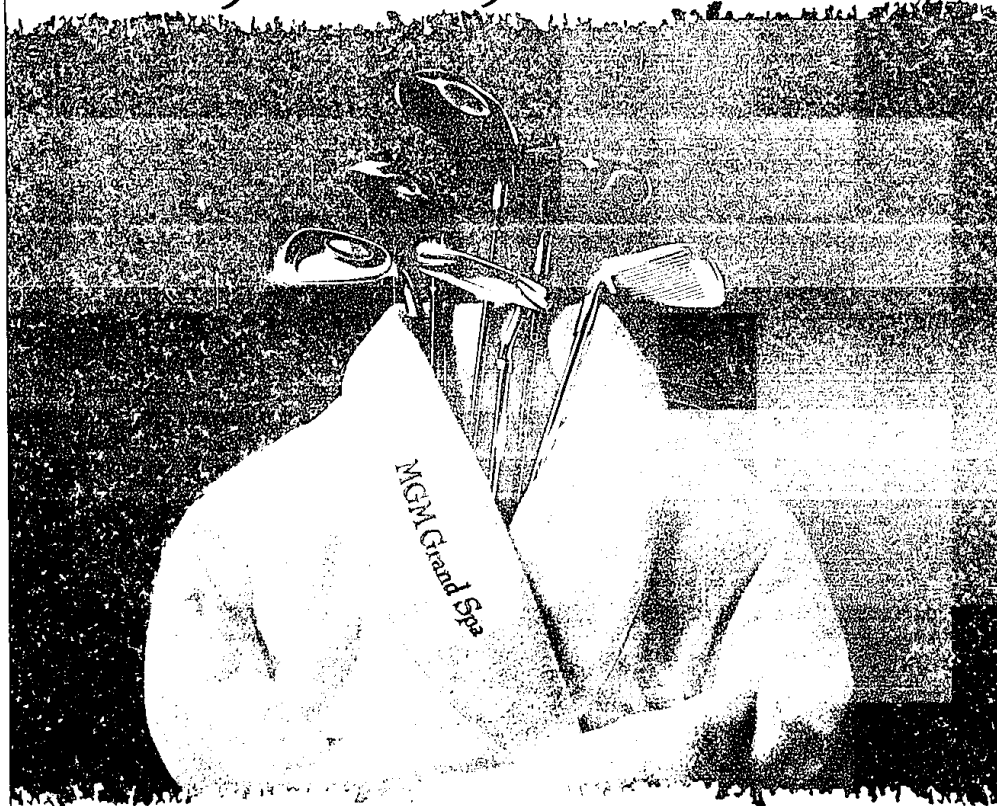
But Kids devotees will likely find the best bits to be classics: Sir Simon Milligan and Hecubus in the Pit of Ultimate Darkness; Gavin, the annoying kid, and the ultimate lounge lizard, Buddy Cole.

"The future is nothing but the mistakes of our past squeezed into a new dress," coed Thompson's martini-sipping Cole on opening night in Vancouver. The comeback Kids have their party dresses ready.

And from the opening strains of their "Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet" theme song to the final curtain call, the Kids show is bound to please its hearty cult following — even if, at times, it is a drag.

—Alicia Rhein, staff writer

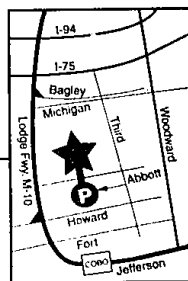
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