Strong performances captivate audience in 'Stalag 17'

Farmington Players present "Stelag 17," 8 p.m. Friday-Sat-urday, through May 19 at Barnes & Noble, West Bloomfield. Tick-ets \$12, call (248) 553-2955, BY BOB WEISEL. SPECIAL WAITER

The Farmington Players production of Stalag 17 drammtical by brings to life the story of men who lived a less well-known World War II experience than those popularized in Tom Brokaw's highly acclaimed The Greatest Generation. In case you missed the hit 1953 movie version, Stalag 17 is the story of mirmen in a German POW camp.

Playwrights Donald Bevan

and Edmund Trzcinski were two of those prisoners. They portray the struggle for survival in a brutal environment – and the never-ending dreams of escape – against the dark comedy that men engage in to get through another day. Though the small talk is sometimes a bit forced and not spontaneous, the cast humorously gripe about the rotten food, lack of showers, mail, women, atceteras. What carries the play, however, it can be supposed of learning who among these men is a saitch – an American whe would sell out to the Nazis!

Two prisoners have been shet attempting to escape, and some

one in the barracks must have tipped off the Germans. The most likely suspect appears to be Sefon (Kirk Haas) who openingly trades cigarettes for small favors from the guards.

Hans, in voice and manner isme, creates a sympathetic loner from the working class section of Boston. Not educated, but street-smart, he will play whatever games it takes to make it (Isn't that the way the world works?)

Who's the traitor?

But whatever else he may be, Sefton is no traitor. And one has the impression that he has expe-rienced the terror of war, some-

thing that is lacking in some other characters. Ross Grossman, thankfully has that demeanor, and he effectively plays Dunbar (from a wealthy and connected Boston family). A class struggle develops with Softon, but when the Germans put Dunbar on trial for sabotage. Sefton and others plan his escape (of course, Softon has his own ulterior motives). Jeff Miller, very tall, very blond, very American-looking, and very good as Price the airman in charge of barracks security couldn't possibly be the agent, could hef What about John Boufford, as Stosh, who provides most of the comedy?

Then, there is John Yono, as the wise-cracking Marko, who delivers prison news. Could it even be the barracks leader, Hoffy, played in a no-nosense style by Fred Karn? By the end of act one it is clear who the culprit is. The only question is how will the others react, including the Germans. Bob Liegle (S.S. Guard), Darko Martinowsky (S.S. Officer) and Alan Madeleine (guard Shultz) create a terrific ensemble for the others to play off. Madeleine gives Shultz a very human quality, and little of the silliness associated with the Shultz character in the dopey sitcom Hogon's Hero's. In stark contrast to the underbelly of war

in inspector, all dressed in fine clothes and played superbly by Brett Milnek. He underscores the pretense and charade of international politics.

Director Hank Bennett does a fine job in marshaling a large cast of 17 men the even plays a small role himself) and getting strong performance from key roles. Others in the play include Joe Wachowski, Matt Yanke, Joe Marzka, Aaron Brown, Jim Jernigan and Bruce Madsen.

Bob Weibel lives in Westland and writes about theater for the Observer & Eccentric Newspa-

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Festive events offer a feast of sounds, sights and smells



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bands, often while expanding your tastes in art and food. Feast of sounds

when the visual performing and culinary arts become intertivined just for the fun of it. Festival season is upon us. That means you'll sawn have an opportunity to fill your calendar with events that offer live music from some of the area's best performers and

The DEMF has demonstrated its international appeal, and local interest should swell due to the fact that the Detroit-based originators of the music genre will be showcased.

Local warm weather attraction seem to blossom their second year. The Arts, Beats & Eats Festival in Pontice and the Woodward Dream Cruise are a couple of examples. By the third year, there's usually a groundswell of people trying to curb popular events because of the inevitable inconvenience hordes of visitors can cause to an area.

Smaller venues

Those with an aversion to crowds can always turn to smaller venues. On May 13, Ann Arbor's Kerrytown Concert House presents the Troubadours, a Detroit-based classical guitar duo of Michael Blaszkiewicz and David Cocagne. If you are looking for a more raucous experience, the promising local rock group Lucid Jones has a May 11 date at Ferndale's Magic Bag, and another on May 18 at the Emerald Theatre in Mount Clemens.

Then again, if you're looking

for convenience and intimacy without a cover charge, let me steer you to Detroit Public TVs BACKSTAGE PASS, which features in-studio performances by the Troubadours and Lucid Jones in an edition that praineres 7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 13.

The weekly arts series is also looking for you to participate in an online Bands for an upcoming special edition.

Log on to www.backstag epass.org and review the video vault of past performers. Then vote for your favorites: As hest of the program, I've had the opportunity to see more than 100 music performances that have been presented during the first five seasons of BACK-STACE PASS. We hope you let us know which ones you liked best, so that we can keep them coming.

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