



Mike and Barbara Smith on stage at The Raven, Southfield

Nervousness remains with folksinging duo

By DEBORAH PERLBORG
Mike and Barbara Smith settle into the hard, worn chairs in The Raven's dressing room and begin to relax. Their first set hadn't gone very well, and while the second set had been better, the audience was only slightly more responsive. Soon, in maybe 20 minutes, they'd be back on the stage for a third (unscheduled) set — perhaps on the theory that they should keep trying till you get it right.

THE SMITHS have been performing together for more than seven years. Their low-key approach should have been replaced with developing confidence long ago but hasn't.

Something has developed, though, and developed well. That's Mike's writing ability. He and Barbara work together on their arrangements, but Mike is the songwriter of the team.

Most of the music they do is Mike's. His songs are melancholy stories, and the best — like "The Dutchman" which Chuck Mitchell also does — are poetic and moving. Over thirty himself, Mike writes a lot about young men growing old

in faraway places. Even his funny songs have a twinge of wistfulness to them.

AT LEAST THREE nostalgic tunes in the second set took place in the mythical town of Spoon River. Mike explained that they had been written for an unrealized performance of "Spoon River Anthology," once slated for Phil Esser's "Dinner Theatre of Detroit."

The Smiths' performances are marked by strong theatrical overtones, and many of Mike's monologue-type songs are done with a cabaret-style delivery.

But, both he and Barbara disclaim this aspect of their work.

"We don't want to be more theatrical," Mike insists. "In fact, we'd like to play it down in the future."

FIVE YEARS AGO, in an unsuccessful first album, they did a lot of what they term "pretty" tunes. Neither seems anxious to repeat the experience.

They have a second album, just released, which Mike says is "a lot more rhythmic" and much stronger. He and Barbara grow more intense and excited, as they

discuss the album and their future. Mike talks of using more back-up musicians in their act and Barbara, strumming her guitar, enthusiastically agrees.

She had been playing quietly all along, but now she and Mike begin singing snatches of their next set. "We don't practice as much as we should," she apologizes.

Flower exhibit begins Monday

Flowers and music will harmonize at the Women's National Farm and Garden Association Flower Show Monday through Saturday, Sept. 21 at The Pontiac Mall Shopping Center, Waterford Township.

Nine months of planning, committee work, gardening and flower arranging will produce the judged flower show, which is the largest WNF&GA show in the United States.

More than 200 flower and horticulture arrangements will portray the flower show's musical theme: "There's A Song In The Air." Taking a stroll through the show, one will encounter flower arrangements interpreting the nostalgic strains of "Oklahoma," "Little Brown Jug," "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," "Blowin' In The Wind" and many others. Arrangements by junior flower arrangers (sponsored by a WNF&GA member) will reflect the tunes of Walt Disney like "When I Wish Upon A Star."

Twenty-six branches of the WNF&GA, Michigan Division, will present the annual flower show at The Pontiac Mall, with a two-fold purpose of gaining financial support for the Drayton Plains Nature Center and bringing beauty and grace to the community.

General show chairman, Mrs. Arthur Stiller of Holly, announces the following participating branches: Berkley, Berkshire, Bloomfield West, Bloomfield Hills, Clarkston, Colony Green, County Downs, Franklin, Glen Willows, Heritage, Hickory Grove, Holiday Farms, Holly, Kirkwood, Lake Angelus, Lorraine Manor, Maplebrook, Osage, Pine Lake, Pontiac, Rochester, Shelby Gardeners, Sylvan Lake, Vernor, Waterford and Wing Lake.

Participating branches are responsible for committee work, providing entries for the show and the actual execution of the show at The Pontiac Mall. Committee work

includes organizing the show's schedule, staging, entries, special exhibits, daily demonstrations, judges, juniors, horticulture and several others.

PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE Mrs. James Scott, Mrs. Earl Weston and Mrs. L. E. Carter of Birmingham; Mrs. Richard Simmons of West Bloomfield; Mrs. Bernard Spiro, Mrs. Doris Stefansky, Mrs. Fred Trickey and Mrs. Charles Fazio of Bloomfield Hills; Mrs. Emmet Moynihan and Mrs. Herman Klix of Rochester, and Mrs. Frank Cartee of Farmington.

Special exhibits set among the judged flower arrangements will be presented by the Four Seasons Bonsai Club of Oakland County, Men's Garden Club of Oakland County, Oakland Audubon Society, and Michigan Orchid Society.

Daily educational demonstrations covering numerous flower arranging and craft topics will be presented Monday thru Saturday at 2 p.m. Everything from orchids to constructing wreaths for the holidays will be presented.

The flower show, in its ninth year, is an educational service project. The Drayton Plains Nature Center will be the recipient of \$1,500, which The Pontiac Mall will present to the WNF&GA branches for staging the week-long show.



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