

Bob Seger just like Superman

By DAVE DODD

The scene was backstage at Detroit's Cobo Hall. The members of the Silver Bullet Band had already arrived and were in their dressing rooms.

The door opened when a long-haired mustached figure wearing jeans and a blue down jacket walked through the door. In less than half an hour, that person was going to stun the crowd that filled the sold-out arena.

A while later, a long-haired mustached figure wearing dark purple velvet pants and a matching vest along with a shiny white shirt emerged from dressing room 120. It was almost like Clark Kent blazing into the nearest phone booth and changing into the mighty Superman. The only difference was the "S" stood for Seger—Bob Seger.

The Silver Bullet Band—Drew Abbott (guitar), Robyn Robbins (keyboards), Chris Campbell (bass), Alto Reed (trumpet) and Charlie Martin (drums)—made their appearance on stage and the crowd roared. Backstage, Seger came out of seclusion ("You get tense if you're with a whole lot of people before you go on") and made his way to the stage.

ALL OF COBO Hall rose to their feet and greeted the King of Detroit rock 'n' roll with outrageous cheers. This was the second concert of four for Seger: Each one a sell-out. (The concert dates were Jan. 13, 14, 16 and 17.)

Charlie Martin began by pounding the drums and Seger delivered his first blow by blasting "Nuthin' City Limits" into everybody's hearts. The

audience got up and danced to this powerful tune. Rockin' Robert kept things going with the ballad "Travelin' Man" followed by his smashing single "Beautiful Loser."

He then presented four tunes from his "gold" album "Night Moves." The 12,000 raving spectators clapped along to "Ship of Fools" and sat back and watched Seger perform "Mainstreet" to the fullest.

With the help of guitarist Drew Abbott, "The Fire Down Below" and "Merry Lou" sounded like the original cuts on the album "Night Moves" . . . they were perfect.

The atmosphere of Cobo Hall changed drastically when Seger said, "We'd like to do another one from 'Live Bullet.' This features our saxophone player Alto Reed."

The crowd knew Seger was about to perform the song that would make you melt. When I listen to "Turn the Page" it reminds me of the long hard struggle Seger had to make it to stardom.

Here I am on the road again. There I am, up on the stage. There I go, playin' star again. There I go, turn the page.

. . . and then tells you what it's like to be playing in front of a crowd when you've finally made it.

Out there in the spotlight you're a million miles away. Every ounce of energy, you try to give away. As the sweat pours out your body like the music that you play.

Seger then tells you about war in "Lookin' Back" and blasted out "Rock 'n' Roll Never Forgets" along with an excellent version of "Bo-Diddley."

dley" that had the crowd on their feet for eight minutes.

The Silver Bullet Band rocked out side three of "Live Bullet." Once again the fabulous talent of drummer Charlie Allen Martin led the rhythmic striking beat of "Ramblin' Gambelin' Man."

Seger then said, "No matter what city we're in, this is known as Charlie's song."

That's when the drummer went wild in "Heavy Music" and backed Seger on vocals. The 24-year-old Detroit shows more talent with two sticks than anyone.

SEGER FINISHED off the three-song ordeal with "Katmandu." The excited crowd got up and danced as the hometown boy sang to the fullest his 75 single.

The stage was then emptied as Cobo lit up with matches and lighters demanding more of Seger.

The stage lit up. "You guys still here?" screamed Seger. The crowd responded with intensifying cheers and the first chord on the guitar was strung, causing the devoted Seger fans to go delirious.

Seger was performing his recent success "Night Moves." The song that took him six months to write, made Cobo go wild. "Usually I throw a song away if I can't finish it in two or three weeks," explained Seger, "but 'Night Moves' I really believed in. It just took a long time to finish."

The exuberant fans wouldn't let him go. He came out for a second, third and fourth encore, finishing with the fast-paced thriller "Get Out of Denver."

After the two-hour, nonstop, rock 'n' roll extravaganza was over, Seger

and his musical ammunition rested backstage.

I TALKED to Bob in a Pistons' locker room. We mostly discussed his long-awaited trip to stardom. "Right now we're headlining I'd say 35 to 40 percent of the market. I think that will change now because we have the hit single."

Seger added, "Now that we've somewhat established ourselves, we don't have to do album after album on the run." Seger's career has come to astonishing success lately, as he puts it, "It all started three years ago. Three things happened. No. 1, The Silver Bullet Band committed to tour nationally."

At that time, the band never had the opportunity on the big stage. Their first major tour was an 84-date gig with BTO. "We learned how to play stages like Cobo Hall every night. No. 2, we got a good booking agency, ATI out of New York. No. 3, we re-signed with Capitol."

Another important factor is that Seger stopped playing lead guitar and became totally a front man. "I took the burden of playing guitar and piano off my back. I was able to concentrate only on the singing. For the last three years, it's been slowly edging up, and for me it's like a whole new career started three years ago with the Silver Bullet Band."

Since his "Beautiful Loser" album, Seger has slowly been climbing to reach the peak of stardom and finally made it with the combined effort of "Live Bullet" and "Night Moves." The best way to describe Seger comes from Ed Scott of Rock Tours Limited. "Seger's as hot as he's ever been."

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Theater cats add to 'Planet' humor

Gole Vidal's "A Visit to a Small Planet" will open Friday at Will-O-Way Repertory Theatre, 775 W. Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills.

The play has many amusing effects, including two scenes played with one of the theater's many cats.

The scenes call for Kreton, a visitor from outer space, to gossip with the cat about mice, dogs and the fables of human beings. The cat is played by Will-O-Way's Mrs. Periwinkle.

Kreton is played by veteran character actor Duke Dweley of Bloomfield Hills.

Dweley, with 35 years experience on the stage, says this is a first for him.

No stranger to Will-O-Way, he has appeared there in "Guys and Dolls," as the Stage Manager in "Our Town" and as Grandpa in "You Can't Take It With You," as well as in two Shakespearean productions, "Richard II" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

He is also on the active list at the Village Players of Birmingham, carrying on a tradition started by his parents, who were among the founding members of this group more than 50 years ago. His wife, Dee, is also active in both groups.

AMONG HIS more memorable roles at the Village Players were Henry Higgins in "My Fair Lady," Matthew

Brady in "Inherit the Wind" and Walter Burns in "Front Page."

Dweley, a happy amateur who acts because he loves it, is a self-employed manufacturer in real life, with a factory in Birmingham.

The part of Kreton in "A Visit to a Small Planet" was originally created by Cyril Ritchard on Broadway.

"It is completely different from anything else I've done before," said Dweley. An avid student of planet Earth and its fascinating human creatures, Kreton journeys in his spaceship to observe the Civil War firsthand. A mechanical failure causes his arrival 100 years too late, starting a highly amusing chain of events.

"Most of us at Will-O-Way have inadvertently and unwillingly shared the stage with the many cats who seem to multiply there," Dweley said with a laugh.

"They stroll onto the stage with feline indifference to the audience. The trick is to ignore them and get on with the show."

"This production, however, calls for me to play two scenes with the march of their cats in my arms. It's not easy, but it does add to the charm of the play."

For more information on "A Visit to a Small Planet," call Will-O-Way Theatre.

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