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# A gimmick backs singer Bob Anderson

By ETHEL SIMMONS

A guy as handsome as Bob Anderson, with a voice to match, shouldn't need a gimmick to get ahead in show business. But Anderson, who used to live in Rochester, is back in town four years after he decided to add impressions to his singing act. He's opening today at db's Club in the Hyatt Regency Dearborn.

"The last time I played Detroit, I was appearing at clubs where people came because it's something to do," Anderson explained. "At db's people are coming to see who's doing the show."

"It's nice to be working after all these years at the best club in Detroit."

ANDERSON'S PARENTS, who now live in Mt. Clemens, and his five brothers and two sisters, will be among the home-towners in the audience for his night club act.

Show dates at db's will be Thursday-Saturday and Tuesday-Saturday, Aug. 7-11. Performances will be at 8:30 p.m. except for Friday and Saturday when there will be two shows each night, at 9 and 11:30.

Four years ago, in an interview, Anderson talked about how he hoped to gain acclaim by doing vocal impressions of such stars as Tony Bennett, Sammy Davis Jr., Andy Williams and Steve Lawrence.

Anderson admitted then it was clearly a gimmick to get himself heard. He had already done club dates around metropolitan Detroit and in other cities, including Las Vegas.

Catching up on those four years, Anderson recalled wanting to move out west. He did a four-week stint at the Aladdin Hotel in Vegas, then moved to Las Vegas.

He had an engagement at Century City in Beverly Hills, at a new club: the Plaza Four. The first entertainer to play there, he opened for two weeks and the booking extended to nine months.

CENTURY CITY was "the center of everything," and producers, writers and performers from the industry caught his act.

Anderson then went to the Dunes Hotel in Vegas, where a club was switching from big-band dance music to a show policy. "They liked my type of act," he said. "Another two-week stint turned into two years."

Speaking of Vegas, Anderson said "that's a town of benefits. With his star billing at the Dunes, he was asked to

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appear on two or three benefits a week. Recently he did the St. Jude Telethon at the Desert Inn, with Wayne Newton, Tony Bennett and Milton Berle.

"I guess I've been doing impressions all my life," he reflected. "That's how I learned to sing, by listening to Sinatra, Damone, Bennett, all these years."

Once he put the impressions into the act, it seems he got everybody's attention. After his first appearance on the Johnny Carson show, "the response was phenomenal," Anderson said.

"The next day I got calls from Sammy Davis, Jr., Andy Williams, Steve Lawrence and Jack Jones, and I didn't even do Lawrence and Jones on that show."

EVER SINCE THAT first "Tonight" show appearance, Anderson has received special attention from Carson, as well as the audience. The singer, now 32, received a standing ovation after his first "Tonight" show bit.

Carson also came down to a rehearsal, Anderson recalled, and said, "Where in the world have you been until now?" amazed at the scope of Anderson's previously undiscovered talent.

Anderson has appeared on the "Tonight" show with guest host Rich Little, whom he calls "the world's greatest impressionist."

Little and Anderson currently may be seen on Home Box Office on a show about "The Great Pretenders," in which "I do the singing and Rich does the talking impressions," Anderson said.

Sammy Davis Jr. has praised Anderson's impression of Davis singing "What Kind of Fool am I." Anderson's impression begins with looking up with his eye kind of half-closed, and Williams mouthed the words to his own hit "Days of Wine and Roses" while Anderson sang from behind a curtain.

Then Williams walked away, and Anderson was revealed. "I finished as Andy Williams," Anderson said.

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Bob Anderson has been heading for the big time, especially since he added vocal impressions to his singing act. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

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db's, "most of the people now will be coming to see an impressionist. But as long as I do what they came to hear, I can do whatever else I want."

The curly haired, brown-eyed singer has looks to make a girl's heart flutter ("Cosmopolitan" magazine singled him out several years ago as a guy to watch).

Anderson's own kind of music is "ballads and the old standard swing songs." In his act about half the show is top-40 contemporary, one-quarter impressions and one-quarter standards.

Besides the "Tonight" show, he's done "The Mike Douglas Show," "Dinah" and "Merv Griffin." His name, face, voice and voices are becoming in-

creasingly familiar to TV- and club audiences.

Although success is taking longer to realize than Anderson first hoped it would, he is convinced being "more mature" is helping his showmanship.

The impression is that this impressionist/singer is following a steady course toward stardom.

## Screaming Bee Gees fans pack Pontiac mini dome

By JOANNE DIMATTEO

The Bee Gees' performance at the Pontiac Silverdome's mini-dome on Saturday night brought screams from excited fans. The scene was reminiscent of Beatles concerts more than a decade ago.

Thirty-six thousand fans packed the mini-dome to hear the beat of old and new Bee Gees songs.

The Pontiac concert was part of a 38-city Bee Gees concert tour of the United States and Canada.

The Bee Gee brothers, Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb, performed along with an 18-piece orchestra and three female singers (of Sweet Inspirations). Lasers, fireworks and blinking overhead lights provided an altogether fancy stage setup.

When the Bee Gee brothers took the stage, the audience of young and old went into fits of screams and cheers; the group played its hit single "Tragedy," from the album of the same name.

### Review

THE BEE GEES current No. 1 selling LP is "Spirits Having Flown."

The group performed 20 tunes including hit singles such as "Stayin' Alive," "Night Fever," and "How Deep Is Your Love" from the soundtrack "Saturday Night Fever."

The Bee Gees also included a medley of older tunes in their act, with songs like "Holiday," "Lonely Days" and "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart?"

Barry and Robin Gibb sang the lead vocals in the medley while Maurice played a backup role for laughs. He paced back and forth behind his brothers, acting as though he were bored until his part in the chorus came up.

The medley brought laughs and screams simultaneously from the audience.

Barry, the eldest Gibb brother, sang a falsetto solo of "Words," which brought screaming girls to their feet.

The Bee Gees were born in England and also lived in Australia. Their success in the United States started in 1967 with the hit "New York Mining Disaster 1941," followed by "Holiday" and "To Love Somebody."

WHEN THE SOUNDTRACK for the movie "Saturday Night Fever" hit the charts, their success began skyrocketing. The Bee Gees are, without a doubt, a big part of the disco influence and are supported greatly by their fans.

The audience screams at every song and the screams seem to get even louder when they play songs from their "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack.

The Bee Gees music has been versatile over the years. Their music has ranged from ballads to rhythm and blues to the current popular disco sound. The Bee Gees' only rival in success during the disco era.

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The Bee Gees are (from left) Robin, Barry and Maurice, who appeared at the Mini-Dome, plus a surprise visit from brother Andy.

## Audience throws popcorn at melodrama's villain

By HELEN ZUCKER

### Review

Nostalgia for old radio shows, Dink Stover heroes, mustache-donning villains, shrieking heroines and dastardly doings that all come right in the end seems to be on the rise.

The Farmington Players, an ambitious group, takes wacky melodrama a step further in its latest production, "Caught in the Villain's Web," or "More Sinned Against Than Sinning."

The play runs through Saturday, Aug. 4, with an 8:30 p.m. curtain, at the Farmington Players Barn, 32332 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills.

Sharon Kolbasa's direction of this '30s play (written by an author with the unlikely name, Herbert E. Swayne) turns the work into a spoof on the whole "penny dreadful" genre. Wealth,

poverty, lost memories, train wrecks, jailbird butlers, ailing Victorian ladies, sweet young things — this play uses every 19th century plot twist available. It's the ultimate soap opera.

We are told at the beginning of Act I that we are going to get "A Riotous Melodrama," and that's what we get. Invited to boo, hiss, cheer, sob and throw popcorn, the audience felt with such zeal that I grew alarmed for the safety of the actors.

By the middle of Act II, the set — the Drawing Room of the Larkfield Mansion (these things always take place in

mansions) — was covered with popcorn. I find it extraordinary that no one in the cast slipped or even stumbled.

DOUG BUCKLEY, stepping briefly out of his role as the arch-villain, ad-libbed in a sinister voice: "I know your address," to one young popcorn thrower. His remark brought the house down.

It's a "Riotous" evening, despite slightly uneven casting. The production catches the marvelous kookiness of a form that depends on leaps from Elizabethan English to racy '30s dialogue.

The heroine moans, "O, woe is me, O, lack a day!" while Mother Larkfield says to her son, "You're merely physically attracted to Felicity."

Son replies snappily: "What's so mere about that?" The dialogue is

matched by the totally crazy plot. Ralph Rosati and Tom Dougall manage to insert some subtlety into the wonderfully archaic phrases the play is filled with, creating puns on puns.

Jodie Tibbitts shines as the aimed-against heroine, Felicity Fair. Felicity turns up at the Larkfield Mansion in a Red-Riding-Hood cape, to nurse a totally healthy matron who is "dying" of heart disease. Having lost her memory, in a train wreck, Felicity nonetheless breathes sweetness, coyness, virginal yearnings for a home with a picket fence and for the Nice Young Man of the house.

MS. TIBBITTS is beautifully arch, very doll-like and manages to breathe life into a role that transforms her from a nurse to "Doris Dopplinger,"

wife to the villain (gasp), then to "Florence Larkfield" (Felicity's true identity), and at last — you guessed it — to Mrs. Felicity Larkfield. Working girl wins the day here.

Erik Carlson is a stalwart Malvern Larkfield, "the manly hero who raises stinkweeds." Carlson steps onstage in farmer's overalls, signaling to us that he is The Nice Young Man; he is going to rescue poor Felicity, catch the villain, get rid of the stuffy/Hargreaves and subdue his machinating mother.

Carlson is so tall and Ms. Tibbitts is so small that the mere sight of this pair elicits delighted laughter.

There's a silent-movie quality about their scenes. If the Keystone Cops had fallen through the garden door with Carlson, it would have seemed quite in keeping with the mood.

Virginia Mitchell looks the perfect mistress of Larkfield Mansion. She sits grandly on her couch, looking like the efficient mistress of a finishing school. As Mrs. Regina Larkfield, Malvern's cold-hearted mother, Ms. Mitchell talked too rapidly during the first act, seemed to catch her breath as the evening progressed and fell into the proper pace during the final act.

THE WHISTLER-STYLE bathrobe Ms. Mitchell strode about having "Heart attacks" in was perfect. Ralph Rosati as Brockton, the ex-jailbird butler, sent up the river for a crime he didn't commit, understood this mad play. Rosati alone caught the exact tone melodrama demands. Rosati's ability to leap from dread serious-

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