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Musical makes waves with trendiest story

By Mary Doerr
Special writer

"What the show is saying is — isn't the world funny and let's laugh at ourselves."

— Del Howison
Attic Theatre

Del Howison of Birmingham looked up with a serious expression on his face. "This show is not," he said.

He was talking about the musical comedy, "An Evening at the Paradise, A Nu Wave Love Story," now showing midnights on weekends through May at the Attic Theatre in Detroit's Greektown.

Howison, public relations director of the Attic Theatre, plays the part of Lou Sleef, a rising new-wave rock singer, in the production.

George Goulson of Bloomfield Hills, well known in the Birmingham area because of his connection with Palladium, Silverbell Ski Resort and Something Different, is producing the rock musical, his first theatrical undertaking.

"THIS IS one theatrical venture that you don't have to go to New York, California, or Las Vegas to see," Howison said. "It is a local show, produced locally, written locally, using local talent."

The 90-minute nontraditional new wave musical is the conception of Jonathan Round, another resident of Birmingham, who was formerly associated with the Raven Gallery. He wrote the play and composed its 11 tunes. The story revolves around a bar

called the Paradise, run by Mo Thelove, who decides to teach three feuding friends a lesson. Conflicts are resolved in surprising ways, utilizing satirical characters, gaudy costumes and outrageous antics. The sole purpose of the show is entertainment.

"It is the kind of show you go to when your wife is dying, your house has just burned down, and you lost your job," Howison said. "It makes you forget everything."

Both Goulson and Howison believe the appeal of the show lies in its satirical humor and characters that fall short of offending anyone.

"IT SATIRIZES the moral majority as well as the liberals," continued Howison who is himself a graduate of the conservative John Brown University. He once intended to be a minister.

"Even Reagan would enjoy it," Goulson commented.

Howison was quick to add, "What the show is saying is — isn't the world funny and let's laugh at ourselves?"

"An Evening at the Paradise" first appeared at the Attic Theatre last October for 30 performances. It was then taken down and reworked. The characterizations were changed, tunes were added and the script was tightened.

It opened at the end of April again at the Attic Theatre in the midnight slot, where it will be playing until the end of May on Friday and Saturday evenings. "I think we have the stage production up to the quality of the sound track," Goulson said referring to the sound track presently in the making by Fiddlers Music Co. of Grosse Pointe.

NOT ONLY is the sound track nearly complete, but Goulson has already negotiated the sale of the world-wide video rights for cable, pay TV and commercial television with American Jade Network Productions.

After it is taken down at the Attic Theatre, "Paradise" moves immediately to the Punch and Judy Theatre in Grosse Pointe Farms where the filming will be done in July.

That video film will first be aired in October in Europe and probably in the United States a month later.

Both Howison and Goulson admit that the show is a trend-setter because the new wave trend has already been set.

But they think that the time is perfect for this musical to become a hit in the midst of the new fad.

"We intend to ride this trend up with this show," said Goulson, who also is making plans for a road company. "It is a slick enough show for Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and certainly for off-Broadway."

THIS NEWEST trend in rock music called new wave is a combination of punk, rock, pop and reggae music. Howison describes it as a style that is reverting back to the feel of the early 1960s laced with the electric advancements in technology.

"You might say that it is whatever you want to do at the time with a nice beat," Howison said with a laugh.

Goulson's and Howison's positive attitude might be summed up with the words of Howison's T-shirt, which read "Turn on the Sun." So certain are they of the future success of their production they have already been considering a sequel called "Return to Paradise."

All this creativity has been generated in Birmingham, a town Goulson refers to as the new "Motown."

"And who knows — if this thing goes, I might even go back to being a minister," Howison said.



MARY DOERR

Patti Raven and Del Howison appear in "An Evening at the Paradise, A Nu Wave Love Story," at the Attic Theatre.

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