

Thursday, February 25, 1992

Versatile He puts on show

By Nick Charles
special writer

JEFF BOUCHARD of Bloomfield Township has brought his diverse talents and interests to one of the most well-known agencies in the country, Gail & Rice Talent Agency of Livonia.

In a recent interview at his home, Bouchard explained, "Gail & Rice is a creative agency that basically has two divisions, a creative department that does writing and photographic work for different areas of industry, and the entertainment division where I work. Our main emphasis is on industrial shows."

Bouchard works as agent and show production specialist.

"Gail & Rice represents the client, rather than the talent," Bouchard said. "We're a nationwide company, even though we're known for booking bands at weddings and country clubs. We booked all the entertainment for the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, d's Club (now closed) at the Hyatt in Dearborn, and even hotels in Nevada."

GAIL & RICE has been in business for more than 50 years. The men at the top of the entire organization are Al Rice and Max Gail Sr., who is now on the board of directors.

Bouchard has always had a split personality as far as his interests are concerned. On one side, he wanted to be involved in the exciting world of music, and on the other he wanted the security of a business life.

With Gail & Rice, Bouchard has a home where the two aspects of his personality combine to make a well-rounded and satisfied individual.

"That's the thing I like about Gail & Rice," he said. "I'm still involved in the entertainment business without giving up a normal lifestyle."

Bouchard, who grew up in Birmingham, graduated from Groves High School in 1970.

"AFTER HIGH school, I went to MSU and graduated with a degree in communication arts/pre-law," he said. "I also attended one semester of law school, but I decided I wanted to do something else."

One of the things Bouchard wanted to do was travel, and he got the opportunity to do so with the worldwide incentive organization, E.P. McDonald. "I worked for the travel operations part of the company," Bouchard said. "I would oversee conventions of incentive winners. I would take care of all the arrangements with hotels, limousine companies, entertainment agencies and, basically, just make sure that everybody had a good time."

"I've been all over the world because of that company. I even went to the Orient several times."

The Dr. Jekyll part of his personality harbors the ever-present love for music.

"I STARTED playing guitar when I was in third grade," Bouchard said. "I took lessons for about two weeks, but they weren't teaching me what I wanted to learn. I wanted to sound like the Beatles. I've been in bands since junior high school, like the Heard of Birmingham, and I played in clubs in East Lansing during college."

The turning point in his music career was in 1975 when I met singer-songwriter Kenny Loggins at a hotel in Las Vegas, when he was still with Jimmy Messina. We got to be good friends, and through our friendship came our collaboration on such songs as "Now and Then" from Kenny's "Keep the Fire" album.

"I learned a lot from him," Bouchard said. "He's very well respected in the music business. Just in the last couple of years he's written songs with Steve Perry of Journey, Michael McDonald of the Doobie Brothers and Lionel Richie of the Commodores."

He also wrote "I Believe in Love" for



DICK KELLEY/Staff photographer

Entertainment-business personality Jeff Bouchard releases in his Bloomfield Township home.

the soundtrack of the movie "A Star Is Born" with Barbra Streisand. I was on the road with him for a while, singing background vocals and playing percussion. The last show I did with him was at Pine Knob during the summer of 1980."

Bouchard said he and Loggins have written other songs together that haven't been released.

"I LIVED the music to the fullest," he continued. "During the recording of 'Keep the Fire' one week, we went to parties every night. We went to a party at Rod Stewart's house, and the night after that we celebrated the Fourth of July at Stevie Nicks's house."

Bouchard, 29, has been married to his wife, Kathy, for a year and a half. He has found all the perfect ingredients. He has had the chance to live out his single life doing what many young people would love to do — travel and sing with one of the top performers in the country.

"I don't miss it though," Bouchard said. "I'd rather have a normal lifestyle with my wife. I had the chance to live and work in both California and New York, but I wanted a conservative midwestern lifestyle."

Bouchard pointed to a "Home Sweet Home" newspaper on the wall and said, "That says it all."

'Oh, Coward!' brightens stage

The musical revue "Oh, Coward!" presented by Crossroads Productions, Ltd., and the City of Southfield continues at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday at the Southfield Parks and Recreation Building. Admission is \$5, with special rates for groups, students and senior citizens.

By John Terrance
special writer

Crossroads Productions, Ltd., recaptures a bygone era of the theater in the musical revue "Oh, Coward!" at the Southfield Civic Center. As the legendary Noel Coward himself might have said, it was a marvelous party.

Though his career as actor, playwright and composer spanned more than half a century, Noel Coward is best known for bringing to the stage sophisticated high society of the 1920s and '30s. This show is a potpourri of period songs, snippets of plays and anecdotes celebrating the genius of this remarkable writer.

It was assembled for the New York stage by Roderick Cook. Song lyrics run the gamut from sentimental to irreverent and are frequently downright risqué. Coward may not have invented the double entendre but he might have raised it to an art form.

The Southfield production is highly entertaining. Though the company is housed in a drab multi-purpose room in the Parks and Recreation Building, a lot of creative thinking has gone into eliminating the effects of tan cinder block.

THE LOW, open stage is backed by an art deco fantasy in silver and black, topped by cartoon Cowards as the masks of comedy and tragedy, which almost seem to take a paternal interest in the proceedings.

In an endearing touch, a butler serves tea and cookies at the intermission. How fashionable can one get?

But this show's true strength lies in the unusually strong combination of talent. Director Laurie Logan, herself an

review

accomplished stage and screen actress, has assembled an excellent trio of performers with broad professional experience.

Susan Borofsky, Richard Buzinski and Gary Dirda sing and dance their way through Coward's tortuous music and Ms. Logan's snappy choreography, with style and barely a pause for breath. The voices are strong, clear and wide-ranged. They take naturally to the individual colorations of each song.

Much credit is due to musical director Aaron Hunt, who also provides piano accompaniment. Of special note are Ms. Borofsky's rendition of a haunting street ballad "London Pride" and Dirda's zany parody of a South American dance number "Wina."

RICHARD BUZINSKI seems at home in the role of the urbane, worldly-wise commentator on the life and times of Noel Coward, but even he turned loose at last in a wicked tale of the widowed "Mrs. Wentworth-Brewster."

The weaknesses in the show seem to have arrived with the scripts. Don't expect the same smooth continuity found in musical comedy — that is not part of musical revue format. But "Oh, Coward!" seems worse than most at leaving the audience behind, as it skips from song to sketch to dance.

Blackout sketches clump together like afterthoughts. Songs seem to arrive on an up time, then down time schedule. And after some of the really beautiful music that precedes it, the finale seems almost anti-climactic.

It is fortunate that the cast is as winning as it is, for Coward's sharp lampooning makes his affected, haughty characters almost as amusing onstage as they would be in real life. They take getting used to.

Peter
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