

# Those Ink Spots still stir up the memories



The Ink Spots, at a recent recording session, are Paul Parks (left), Nathan Williams, Gene Miller and Floyd McDaniel.

"Just Like Old Times," The Ink Spots, produced by Martin Scott Kosins for Open Sky Records

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

ONCE MARTIN SCOT Kosins of this metropolitan area gets a clear bead on where he wants to go and how he wants to get there, he moves toward his goal unwaveringly.

A year or so ago, after his newly formed recording company, Open Sky Records, completed its first release, "Songs of the Seeker," with John Caridine, Kosins said a group of nostalgia releases would be next and he enumerated the artists to be featured — The Ink Spots, Duke Watson, and Gene Miller.

When The Ink Spots came to Somerset Mall to perform last December, Kosins already had been in contact with them, sending them tapes of the arrangements he had done in preparation for the recording session in Farmington Hills the following day.

They previously had arranged by phone such details as the time to record and the right key. Kosins does the arranging, conducting, producing and mixing of the final product. The multi-talented Detroitian is, in the truest sense, a one-man band.

## review

SINCE THE Ink Spots were on tour there was no time for rehearsal so, as Kosins said, "The appearance at Somerset served as rehearsal for the album."

And although he included several songs such as "The Old-Fashioned Way" and "Autumn Leaves" not in their repertoire, and they hadn't done "It Had to Be You" for about 10 years, the recording session went off with hardly a hitch.

These aren't the original Ink Spots, as anyone who heard the first ones back in the mid and late '40s can well believe. Since the name was never copyrighted, there's nothing to prevent its use. The four on this recording are Gene Miller, lead singer and elder statesman, Floyd McDaniel, second tenor and guitarist, Nathan Williams, talker/singer who speaks that familiar "Honey Chile" in nice round tones, and Paul Parks, bass voice and bass player.

Parks blasts loose in a Louis-Armstrong-style vocal on "Honeychuckle Rose."

Only Miller, at 63, has a tie to the original Ink Spots. When that group

broke up, Deke Watson, who started the quartet regrouped and chose Miller for his lead singer. So Miller has a firsthand knowledge of the sound as well as the arrangements.

And it was the sound — the pleasing falsetto tenor, the laid-back approach to the music, the personal touch they gave to the lyrics and soft-pedal harmony — which gave the original Ink Spots their wide appeal.

PURISTS MAY claim this recording isn't quite the same — and that's true, but it's close enough to please.

Surprisingly, "Autumn Leaves" comes off as one of the best works on the record. Kosins' arrangement is solid, and the men handle this one with great finesse. Kosins said he included it because it was one of his mother's favorites, and she died when the record was still a dream. When Williams broke into quiet tears during the recording of that song, Kosins learned he had a similar memory in conjunction with the song. So they all gave it plenty of TLC.

The other standout number is "Til Get By." Included on the record, for the benefit of nostalgia lovers, are "Inte Each Life Some Rain Must Fall," "For Sentimental Reasons," "Once in a

(Continued on next page)

# Cast works magic with 'Saving Grace'

The Jimmy Laupres Production of "Saving Grace," comedy by Jack Sharkey, is presented Fridays-Saturdays at Somerset Dinner Theatre in the lower level of Somerset Mall. Troy Cocktails are at 7 p.m., dinner from 7:30 and show at 8:45. Tickets are \$18.95 per person including tax and gratuities. Cocktails are not included. For reservations, call Alfred's at 643-8985.

By Helen Zuckoff  
special writer

The Somerset Dinner Theatre really knows how to orchestrate an evening's entertainment.

By now, Detroit's original dinner theater, produced by Jimmy Laupres Productions, has got dinner theater down

## review

to an art. A wide choice of cocktails, served by pleasant, professional waitresses, is followed by an excellent dinner.

I especially recommend the chicken florentine, the fetticuchini and the abundant fresh fruits and salads, attractively served buffet style by Alfred's chef's.

After dinner there's light, amusing theater guaranteed to send the customer home relaxed and happy.

JACK SHARKEY'S comedy "Saving Grace" has got a few script flaws. But

under Robert Jordan's energetic direction, the lively cast does more with Sharkey's script than this critic would have thought possible. Stage manager Bill McFerran's neat set includes authentic plastic mapin holders and what New Yorkers call "folding tables," not harvest tables. The dinky Jackson Heights apartment, contrasted with frames of the New York skyline thrown on the left wall, does much to create the crazy ambience in which most residents of Queens live.

(Jackson Heights, where all the action takes place, is actually a rather nice section of those endless blocks that stretch for miles just across the East River from Manhattan.)

Paula Davis as Grace Larkin, the pretty secretary who wakes to vivid life when reliving movie scenes, is believably dippy, often funny and looks wonderful in a mad Hawaiian outfit (with a leather belt) only her boss could have dreamed up.

Everyone in the play is bent on "saving" Grace. Her boss wants to take her to Hawaii (in the outfit!) "to take notes," the telephone lineman wants to save her for himself, her older sister wants to save her virtue.

Grace even hides the TV set she's addicted to, to save the lineman's opinion of her intelligence.

DAVIS SPENDS a great deal of time dashing into the bedroom with coats and hats when she isn't drying wet clothing in the oven, and the physical actions are funny and well handled.

Bill Moore as 43-year-old Walter Chepple of MOP (Mutual of Pittsburgh Insurance), the boss who's been chasing Grace for four years, does a good job. I kept expecting him to have a wife in some other part of Queens, but Chepple turns out to be a nice guy who finds the right woman at the finale. It isn't Grace.

Moore looks exhausted, and well he

might — rushing about in below-zero weather, never remembering to turn his headlights off, going up and down those interminable Queens steps.

Mark Halprin does a terrific job as Alex Docker, the competent, sexy telephone lineman, who actually turns up to fix Grace's phone late at night and is mistaken for a burglar by Grace. Needless to say, this movie-mad girl falls for the man she can "return."

Halprin has a neat sense of timing, and his face exudes intelligence even while his glands go wild at the sight of Grace.

EMILY SCHREIBER as Harriet Larkin, Grace's benighted older sister, is very funny, as she sheds the virtue she's sick of. Schreiber manages to make the transition from Chillicothe, Ohio, to New York in the course of a single night. The glands may belong to Grace, but the brains in the Larkin family belong to lonely Harriet.

Robert Jordan makes two brief appearances as Gregor Vanitzky, a traveling evangelist who has come to marry Harriet and her mother's silver. Jordan stalks about in trailing white Dracula robes, spouting Russian proverbs like, "When the milk moves into Minsk, a wise man keeps his sieve out of the soup."

Slater's ideas of proverbs are pretty funny and so are many of the lines. When Harriet asks Walter Chepple, "How can you insist on intruding where you're not welcome?" Chepple snags back, "I'm in the insurance business."

Anyway, it's fun. Lots of mistaken identities. The play even ends with the telephone lineman being mistaken by his true love, Grace, for a football lineman.

Lots of people find their mates in the course of a single cold night, but the plot moves along at such a fast, crazy pace, and the cast is so endearing, it all adds up to fun.

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