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at your leisure

Tom Lee recreates '50s sound with Big Daddy

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

RECORDING an album done in nostalgic '50s style was a lot of fun for singer/songwriter Tom Lee, a former Bloomfield Hills resident.

Lee usually records his own songs and says, then, "You leave your blood on the page." But with other members of the California-based band, Big Daddy, he found it a real pleasure to sing and play on the album "Big Daddy! What Really Happened to the Band of '59."

A '50s rock band, Big Daddy was asked by Rhino records to do an album of the oldies. Lee and the guys took the suggestion one step further — and have recorded contemporary song hits in the groovy style of 30 years ago.

To top it off, "We took all the ballads and made them rockers," Lee said. "We took all the rockers and made them ballads."

SONGS on the album that has been getting airplay locally include "I Write the Songs," "Bette Davis Eyes," "Super Freak," "Star Wars," "Whip It" and "Ebony and Ivory."

On the flip side, the selections are "You Don't Bring Me Flowers," "Hit Me with Your Best Shot," "The Rose," "Just What I Needed," "Hotel California" and "Eye of the Tiger."

Lee, who sings bass, does vocals and back-up guitar on the album. He's featured on the vocals for "Ebony and Ivory" and "Eye of the Tiger."

Before joining Big Daddy, Lee was in a band called Citirens, whose gigs included opening for the Doobie Brothers in 1981 in Charlevoix. Since going out to California, Lee has been singing as a solo and duo and recording with Big Daddy, the band he joined some six months ago.

One of Lee's songs that has just been published is called "I'm Just an Automobile." Of the publishers, he said, "Their job is to get it (the song) to a star. The pie is split one half to the publisher, one half writers' royalties."

DESCRIBING "I'm Just an Automobile," the songwriter said, "It's about a guy who gets transformed into a car. It's kind of a new wave song."

Lee received important recognition as a composer when his song "One of the Americans" was runner-up, in 1981, in the Top 40 category at the American Song Festival, an international competition.

Lee was married in May to Wanda Van den Ende, who also is from Bloomfield Hills. His wife is a photographer and a seamstress, who used to work for a Rochester dress designer. They live in Van Nuys, Calif.

THE GUY with the most beautiful body in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area is Marcos Zartari, 28, an attorney from Birmingham. Zartari, who competed for his title in a Bloomfield Body Beautiful contest at the Kingsley Inn, weighed in at 205 pounds on his six-foot-one-inch frame.

Runner-up in the contest was Michael Bouchard, 27, a policeman from the Birmingham-Bloomfield area. He's six foot one and weighs 170 pounds.

A team challenge also was offered in the contest. The Hamilton Place Athletic Club beat out the Franklin Racquet Club/Nautilus for the trophy.

Judges for the contest were members of the all-women Kingsley Club, a group organized by the Kingsley Inn for professional and business women.

TROY PLAYERS has announced its three-play season for 1983-84.

The Neil Simon comedy "Plaza Suite" will open the season in the fall, the musical "Pajama Game" follows in mid-winter and the drama "Inherit the Wind" closes the season in the spring.

The group's board of directors is accepting applications to direct the shows.

Tickets for the new season of plays are \$11.50. Troy Players also is offering an early-bird special for annual memberships, which are \$16 until Aug. 20, or \$20 thereafter. Anyone who wants to join up may call 879-1285 for information about a membership party at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 20.

The community theater group is looking not only for actors but for stagehands and individuals who want to learn how to direct and produce plays.

For more information write Troy Players, P.O. Box 284, Troy 48069.

FORMER BIRMINGHAM resident Paul Stookey will be back in town during August, when the ever-popular trio Peter, Paul and Mary plays Aug. 19 at Pine Knob.

Other performers coming to the music theater in Clarkston during August include Willie Nelson, who plays Aug. 1-4; Roberta Flack and Peabo Bryson, Aug. 5; James Taylor, Aug. 6-7; Loverboy and special guest Quiet Riot, Aug. 8-9; Gordon Lightfoot, Aug. 10; Talking Heads, Aug. 11; James Brown Soul Revue, Aug. 13; and the Animals, Aug. 14.

Also scheduled Merle Haggard, Aug. 16; Jefferson Starship and special guest Patrick Simmons, Aug. 17; Kenny Loggins, Aug. 18 (a new date); Peter, Paul and Mary, Aug. 19 (new date); Miles Davis, Aug. 20; Men at Work, Aug. 21-22; Elvis Costello, Aug. 23; George Benson, Aug. 25; the Oak Ridge Boys, Aug. 27, and the Hollies, Aug. 30.

For tickets contact the Pine Knob box office or any CTC outlet. For more details call the Hot Line at 647-7790.

THE CRANBROOK Summer Jazz Ensemble will play two free concerts this week.

The first will be at noon Wednesday at the Prudential Town Center Gardens in Southfield. The second will be at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, across from the reflecting pond.

The concert is being presented in conjunction with Jesse Sinclair's "Adventures in Dance" summer jazz dance program.

JIMMY LAUNCE, WJR radio personality who also heads up the Jimmy Launce Productions dinner theater operation, will be starring in the fall show opening Sept. 18 at Somerset Dinner Theatre.

Launce will play an advertising man who gets caught up in two murders in the comedy-mystery "Catch Me If You Can." Performances are Fridays-Saturdays, with cocktails at 7 p.m., dinner at 7:30 and curtain at 8:45 p.m. Tickets are \$18.95 per person inclusive. The buffet is by Alfred's restaurant at Somerset Mall in Troy.

For reservations call Alfred's at 643-8865.



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— Tom Lee  
of '50s-style band Big Daddy

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