

Entertainment

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Michael Klier

Producer's companies expanding

By Cathie Bralidenbach
special writer

MICHAEL KLIER has his fingers in a lot of theatrical pies. Theatre Arts Productions, the company he started 10 years ago, has evolved into a demanding, multi-faceted entertainment business with more than 100 people on its payroll.

Klier learned the craft of theater as a performer, but he seldom goes on stage nowadays. "I do most of the directing for productions myself except when we've got more work than I can handle," he says.

He started working in University of Detroit summer stock during high school and continued performing while earning a bachelor of arts in theater from the University of Detroit and a master of arts from Michigan State University. With his theater company's escalating number of ongoing projects, Klier notes that more and more often he needs other professionals to help direct productions.

Theatre Arts Productions, called TAP for short, performs cabaret-style musical revues on a regular

basis at the Novi Hilton, Holiday Inns in Windsor and Livonia, and the Holly Hotel, as well as at the Premier Center in Sterling Heights. It also custom designs shows for businesses and private parties and presents national educational programs in the schools in five southeast Michigan counties.

"THIS YEAR we'll do 300 performances of shows on child abuse and handicapped people in the public schools," Klier says. "It's an important side of what we do and we hope to expand it further."

Four TAP acting companies perform in schools during the day through an arrangement with Oakland, St. Clair, Wayne, Macomb and Outer Wayne County school districts. "The Bubbylonian Encounter," a national show about the sense of touch and its abuse, was written for K-12th grade audiences by Gene Mackey of Kansas City. Whenever "The Bubbylonian Encounter" goes on before a young audience, a facilitator from a social service agency such as the Haven introduces the show and fields questions afterwards in the classroom.

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Words on film

'Moontrap' is writer's first movie

By Anne V. Meyers
special writer

A SCREENWRITER'S GOAL is to one day watch his characters come to life on the big screen.

Birmingham writer Tex Ragsdale is experiencing that excitement with the coming release of "Moontrap." The screenplay is his feature film debut, shot mainly in warehouse space in Troy and drawing from Detroit-area talent.

"It's exciting to sit there and hear them speaking your words," says Ragsdale, 44, of a recent preview of some unfinished parts of the film. "It's probably the most thrilling thing I've ever done."

The film is a project concocted by Ragsdale and local producer Robert Dyke of West Bloomfield. The two were childhood friends who lost contact with each other in their high school years.

"WE WENT TO kindergarten together," Ragsdale said. "After 25 years we met again. Bob was making commercials, and I was in advertising."

"We got together and decided to put something together. We kind of worked backwards. We were trying to think of what we could do that would cost little money and use Bob's experience in special effects."

Both men had grown up as fans of 1950s science-fiction movies. Ragsdale's writer's imagination, Dyke's special-effects expertise and a common interest in science-fiction films made the theme of "Moontrap" a natural.

"It is something interesting," says Ragsdale of his new screenplay. "It

'It is contemporary, not set in the far future or anything. It has to do with the space shuttle and astronauts.'

—Tex Ragsdale

is contemporary, not set in the far future or anything. It has to do with the space shuttle and astronauts."

For this reason, the screenwriter asks that audiences keep an open mind about his film.

"I ask people not to think of it as a science-fiction movie," he said. "I ask people to come see the movie and give it a chance on its own merits. It's a good adult-interest movie."

RAGSDALE SAYS the film will have as wide an appeal as possible. He expects a PG or PG-13 rating.

The screenwriter is optimistic about the film's popularity. "I expect 'Moontrap' to be moderately successful," he said. "Especially among science-fiction fans, which is why we chose the star, Walter Koenig. He is someone that will draw people to the movies with his built-in following."

Koenig is a veteran of the "Star Trek" television series and films. This is his first feature film outside of his identity as Chekov, the Russian, on "Star Trek." "Moontrap" will be promoted at Treklike (avid followers of "Star Trek") conventions, further drawing in Koenig's dedicated fans.

"All the people involved are good. Please turn to Page 10



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Tex Ragsdale of Birmingham wrote the screenplay for a new science-fiction film, "Moontrap." He thinks the story should have wide appeal, to more than just sci-fi fans.

Area talents create 'Moontrap'

By Anne V. Meyers
special writer

"Moontrap" is a combined effort of some of metropolitan Detroit's greatest creative talents. Here, four of them give their impressions of the project.

Producer/Director Bob Dyke, a West Bloomfield resident, has been in commercial production for more than 12 years. His other feature film credits include effects for "Evil Dead II" and the Steven Spielberg production "Harry and the Hendersons."

Among Dyke's responsibilities with "Moontrap" was selecting much of the crew and cast. For this reason, many of those involved in "Moontrap" are acquaintances from the local production of "Evil Dead II."

"I'm very familiar with the talent here in Detroit and confident with those talents," said Dyke. "I wanted to give myself the best insurance I could by using people I knew were good."

"I'M PREJUDICED, but I think 'Moontrap' is great," he said. "We created a good piece of science-fiction entertainment. It's going to be a stretch.

We used a limited amount of money, and it looks like it would cost as much as would be expected for this type of film."

Former Birmingham resident Bruce Campbell, now of Van Nuys, Calif., costars in the film. Campbell, 30, a veteran of the "Evil Dead" films and several other horror movies, is a producer/actor. "Moontrap" is his first non-horror film and the first where his role is actor only.

"I've known Bob for many years," Campbell said. "I was also comfortable with all the crew members, from the cameramen to grips and gaffers. I knew 90 percent of the people on it. It was an absolute pleasure working on 'Moontrap.'"

Campbell spent seven weeks in town on the filming of the movie, and as an added bonus he was able to enjoy a home atmosphere while staying with his father in Birmingham.

Joseph Loduca, a 32-year-old resident of Birmingham, is no newcomer to creating musical scores for feature films.

"This will be my sixth feature," he said. "We want to avoid all the traditional space-movie clichés."

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