

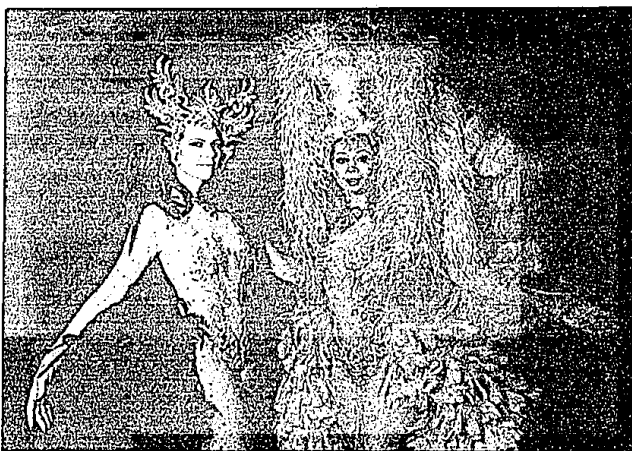
## Creative Living

Marie McGee editor/591-2300



Thursday, June 23, 1988 O&amp;E

(F)1E



Area dancers Melissa Viedrah (left) of Southfield and Darlene Montgomery of Bloomfield in two of Cape's creations that will appear in the Follies Bergere number.

## Artistry in design

By Rob McCabe  
special writer

**W**HEN people normally think of high fashion, places like Paris and New York City come to mind.

But there is a designer in the metropolitan Detroit area with the creative touch of an Yves St. Laurent or a Coco Chanel — and it's a light, feathery touch at that. His name is James Cape, and for a number of years he has been designing one-of-a-kind evening creations for a selected clientele. Pictures of his creations have appeared in the fashion sections of both Detroit dailies as well as the Toronto Sun and the prestigious WW — Women's Wear Daily, the fashion trade publication.

Some of his clients over the years have included actresses Gloria Swanson and Margaret Hamilton, entertainer Sally Rand and Detroit's own Aretha Franklin.

"WHAT I DO FOR Aretha are the flamboyant things — the showy stuff," Cape said. "Things like her feather coats. I don't do her entire wardrobe, but I did design her wardrobe for her 'Showtime special'."

Because he uses feathers a lot in his creations, designing for Rand was a natural, he said.

"Sally Rand was doing her famous fan dances way into her 70s," Cape said. "After the show, she would come out on stage and talk to the audience. I designed

those gowns for her."

One of his current clients is Marge Monaghan, wife of pizza king and Detroit Tigers owner Tom Monaghan. The infamous Drummond Island costume party had Marge Monaghan in a Cape-designed "red devil" creation of swishy georgette material. "It was very dramatic," Cape said. He also designed her dress for the couple's recent 25th wedding anniversary.

Cape was born and raised in Dearborn and still lives there in a comfortable house he shares with his sister. After training at New York's American Academy of Dramatic Art, Cape tried his hand at acting but decided that a career in fashion design was what he wanted most. He has lived in Los Angeles, New York and has traveled extensively around the world.

**ASIDE FROM A** successful career in fashion design specializing in evening wear, Cape, for the past four years, has also been heavily involved with his partner, Ron Dehl, in producing top-quality theatrical productions through their nonprofit company, Alexander Productions.

Their latest endeavor is about to take place. It will star singer Eartha Kitt in a musical extravaganza. "A Night in Paris" will open tomorrow night and continue through Sunday in the Music Hall in Detroit. Backing up Kitt will be a 24-member chorus composed of area dancers chosen

through auditions.

"A Night in Paris" has been in the planning stages since last year and Cape's enthusiasm is quite apparent. As executive producer for this show, he is responsible for everything the audience will see worn by the chorus plus Kitt. And judging on past performances, it promises to be a dazzling sight.

"For her opening number," Cape said, "Eartha will be wearing a full-length beaded dress made out of 24-K bugle beads."

For the show's can-can number, the skirts will be made from 800 yards of hand-ruffled fabric.

One of the show's highlights will be a production number in the style of the Paris' Follies Bergere. The costumes for this number are elaborate to say the least.

"ALL THE FEATHERS in the costumes for this number are ordered by the pound and hand-wired onto the headpieces and costumes. More than 400 giant Chinese black peacock feathers and hundreds of Chinese coquill feathers have been used on each costume — and there are 16 costumes designed for that number," Cape said.

Working with a talented woman like Eartha Kitt is a joy, Cape said.

"She's a complete professional. She's flying back into Detroit from London just to do this show. She's currently in rehearsal for the London production of Stephen Sondheim's musical, 'Follies,' and our show will be the last time that she'll appear in the U.S. for a year," Cape said.

Another costume Cape has designed for Kitt consists of iridescent beads sewn onto black velvet. She will probably wear it during "The Heat" number, against a black backdrop in full spotlight.

"Can't you just see it?" Cape asks excitedly.

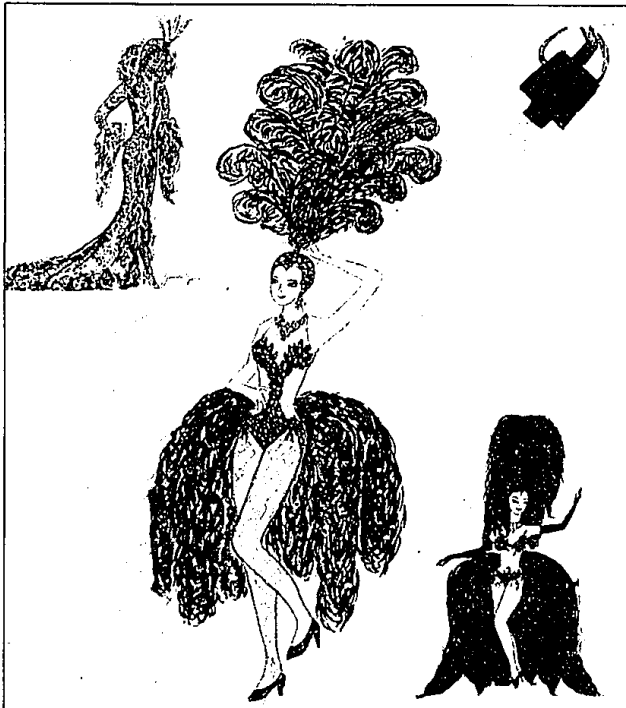
Although Cape declined to say exactly how much was spent on the production, he said that each chorus costume in the Follies Bergere number is worth \$2-4,000 each. Kitt will be wearing about \$30,000 worth of clothing.

"Eartha will also be wearing over a million dollars worth of jewelry from Sidney Krandall and Sons Jewelers in Troy," he said.

Tickets for the opening night carry a special "benefit" provision to help the production company. The opening night \$50 price includes an afterglow with Kitt and the entire company at the popular 1940 Chop House restaurant on East Jefferson.

"If you go to a fine restaurant to have dinner, you could expect to pay at least \$50, so it doesn't seem bad to me if you get to meet Eartha and eat too," said Cape.

In addition to three evening performances, there will be 2 p.m. matinees on Saturday and Sunday. For ticket information, call the Music Hall box office at 963-7880. For group and afterglow information, call Alexander Productions at 561-1472.



Sketches show a costume Kitt will wear (upper left) and costumes two dance numbers that will be featured in a salute to the Follies Bergere. Kitt's costume will be cost-style of re-



Jeanne Pryciak of Redford shows off a feather headpiece and jeweled collar she will wear in one of the dance numbers.



Maria Simos of Garden City is a member of the chorus.

Staff photos by  
John Stormzand

## Friends star in supporting roles

By Marie McGee  
staff writer

There are a number of people all over the metropolitan Detroit area who are — in one way or another — pulling for the success of the show this weekend at the Music Hall starring Eartha Kitt. You could call them a supporting cast of sorts.

There are folks like restaurateurs Don and Pat Vargo. Former Livonians, they have offered their 1940 Chop House for an afterglow benefiting the non-profit Alexander Productions headed by a volunteer board of directors, which includes production director Ronald Dehl and designer James Cape.

"They're putting on the whole thing," said Cape of the afterglow, which will allow first-nighters an opportunity to meet

Kitt.

All the flowers involved on and off stage have been donated by Detroit florist Edgar Brazellon, and all the formalwear is from Randazzo's of Livonia.

**BUT PROBABLY** the most unusual twist came from those people who responded to the call to adopt a dancer.

Because of their generosity, the chorus boasts 24 dancers instead of the 14 the production company could afford to pay and costume.

"And you hardly see 24 dancers anymore," Cape noted, "because it's gotten so expensive. The adopt-a-dancer idea is one major ballet companies use to help make ends meet."

Some of those folks include Birmingham resident Lorraine Schultz, who along with her husband, played a key role in the

benefit fashion show last February at Fairlane Manor in which several of Cape's creations were showcased. Others are Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Schneidewind and Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Mularoni.

"We are dedicated to providing a showcase for local metro-Detroit talent in a professional atmosphere," Dehl said. Past productions have included "Encore at the Old Majestic" (an original revue) and "My Fair Lady" in which Cape's costuming talents were highly visible. They have also produced several shows in a dinner theater setting, including "Cole" and "Butterflies are Free."

Anyone who has seen a Cape creation knows he likes to work with feathers. This weekend he's hoping to add yet another plume to his cap of dazzling achievements.



James Cape chats with chorus members during rehearsal.