

Entertainment

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Thursday, January 22, 1998

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Jeff Haas trio with Marvin Kahn presents an evening of jazz classics and original music 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Borders Books & Music in Birmingham, 34300 Woodward, (248) 203-0005.

SATURDAY



Hilary Hernandez and Danielle Paccione are featured in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," a Pontiac Theatre IV presentation, 7:30 p.m. at Pontiac Northern High School, (248) 681-6215.

SUNDAY



Lisa Bucchi, Melissa Lardo and Jerod Fish in The Rising Stars production of "The Crucible," noon at Andover High School in Bloomfield Hills, (248) 433-0885.



Hot Tip: See Big Bird and his pals in Sesame Street Live's "1-2-3... Imagine!" through Sunday, Feb. 1 at the Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Call (248) 433-1515 to charge tickets, or (313) 983-6611 for more information.



PHOTO BY LORNA GIBBY

Dutch's Treat

Elmore Leonard as memorable as his characters

BY FRANK PROVENZANO • STAFF WRITER

Prolific: Elmore "Dutch" Leonard is the author of 34 novels, many of which have been made into films. His latest, "Cuba Libre," an historical novel, arrives in bookstores this week.

It's a cold, rainy afternoon, and the familiar bearded man with a scholar's inquisitive expression sits behind an IBM electric typewriter. He could be off writing anywhere in the world, from the sunny south of France to the sultry South Pacific. But he's content suffering amid the drizzle, brisk winds and sub-freezing chill of another ornery Michigan January. Why? "All my stuff is here," said Elmore "Dutch" Leonard of Bloomfield Village, whose deadpan response resembles his laconic prose. Ironically, it seems like Dutch is everywhere. Detroit. Miami. LA. And now, with his latest book, "Cuba Libre," he's marching up and around San Juan Hill at the turn of the 20th century, on the eve of the Spanish American War. For years, Leonard and writers of the crime genre

like Ed McBain have had legions of readers. As a teenager, filmmaker Quentin Tarantino got caught stealing a copy of Leonard's "The Switch." An incident that Leonard clearly covets as a high form of flattery. (Tarantino has purchased the film rights to four of Leonard's novels.) While crime fiction has been around since the days of Dostoevsky and Dickens, Leonard's genius for distilling dialogue and drawing vivid portraits of



Please see TREAT, E2



PHOTO: LAUREN/METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER INC.

Contemporary comedy: John Travolta stars as Chili Palmer, a Miami loan shark who goes to Los Angeles to collect on a gambling debt and winds up in the movie business in "Get Shorty."

Halley's Comet inspires actor

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

In 1986, Halley's Comet made another sweep near Earth, as it does every 76 years. Actor John Amos had gone out to take a look when he happened upon an elderly gentleman and his multi-generation family staring into the sky. That image was an inspiration.

"I began to imagine what it was like to live when he did and that he saw the comet as a child. I had a beginning and an end and decided I'd go and see if I could write a middle," Amos said.

The result is "Halley's Comet," a one-man performance in which Amos plays an elderly man looking back over his life and this century in a conversation with the comet. The play comes to the Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts in Detroit Jan. 28 to Feb. 1.

"It has been a rewarding experience, the way it has been received here and abroad. There seems to be a common chord, people like to hear about older days and about the values of those days," Amos said, in telephone interview from upstate New York, where he had arrived after being delayed several hours in Virginia by the heavy snowfall last week.

Amos, best known for his Emmy-nominated performance as the adult Kunta Kinte in "Roots" and as the strong father in the situation comedy "Good Times," has put his own concerns about declining values in his performance as the nameless 87-year-old man.

"He has a dialogue with the comet," Amos said, slipping into the old man's voice. "Comet, we used to have something called an extended family and you had a right to chastise a child ... you put a hand on a child today and you're in trouble with the police and the FBI. He's confused about what happened to those old values and why they're not applied today."

Amos said he has combined humor and drama. The play begins as the old man is on his front porch, running late for his appointment with the comet he last saw when he was an 11-year-old boy. He's been married three times and buried two wives. He's also buried three sons in war and a daughter in the civil rights struggles of the '60s.

Amos started with a one-act play in 1989 and then expanded to the present two-act, two-hour presentation. He has performed the play throughout the United States and around the world. He is currently on a tour through the beginning of April.

Please see COMET, E2



John Amos: Actor and playwright

COLLEGE THEATER

Students present dramas that passed the test of time

Modern drama: Kelly Komlen of Livonia poses for the last portrait of "The Jewish Wife," one of three Bertolt Brecht one act plays showing in Wayne State University's Studio Theatre.



BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

In intimate studio theaters, students at Oakland and Wayne State Universities are presenting plays by 20th century storytellers whose works share a sense of place and humanity. Opening tonight is Oakland University's telling of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," and at Wayne State, three one-act plays by Bertolt Brecht - "The Jewish Wife," "The Informer," and "The Elephant Calf." Wilder's "Our Town" is Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, in the early 1900s. Brecht wrote about Nazi Germany during the 1930s while Adolph Hitler was developing his "Final Solution." "We're trying to help our students become better storytellers," said Karen Sheridan, associate professor



Drama: George Gibbs (Matthew Hammond) is smitten with Emily Webb (Keri Dennis) in the Pulitzer Prize winning play "Our Town," to be presented at Oakland University's Studio Theatre.

of theater, who is directing "Our Town" at Oakland University. "I think more and more this age of computers, e-mail, and phones stands in the way of that person-to-person communication. We need to find a balance, or we could lose our souls. It's important to stay in touch with words and how they sound and not just how they look on screen."

Oakland University Wilder said "Our Town" (which opened at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, N.J. on Jan. 22, 1938) was an attempt to find value beyond all price for the smallest events of our daily life. "I think it's a beautiful story," said Sheridan. The play is part of the university's Festival of Arts saluting the 20th century, which continues

Please see STUDENTS, E2

On Stage

Oakland University Department of Music,

Theater and Dance

"Our Town" by Thornton Wilder

Thursday, Jan. 22, through Sunday, Feb. 1
Studio Theatre, Varner Hall, Oakland University, Rochester

Performances:
• 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 22-24

• 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25

• 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Jan. 30-31

• 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 1

• Student matinees 10 a.m. Tuesday-Wednesday, Jan. 27-28

Tickets: \$10 general admission, \$5 senior citizens, \$5 students, call (248) 370-3013. Tickets also available one hour before performance time at the Studio Theatre Box Office.

Wayne State University Studio Theatre

"The Jewish Wife" - "The Informer" - "The Elephant Calf"

Three one-act plays by Bertolt Brecht

Thursday, Jan. 22, through Sunday, Feb. 1, downstairs at the

Hiberty Theatre (corner of Cass and Harcock), Detroit

Performances:
• 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 22-24 and Jan. 29-31

• 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25 and Feb. 1.

Tickets: \$7 general admission, \$5 senior citizens and WSU staff, Alumni Association members, and students. Call (313) 577-2972.