

Talent

'Sweet Henry' Blows Sour Notes

NEW YORK — In its transition from the film "The World of Henry Orient," the Broadway musical, "Henry, Sweet Henry," has gone sour. Its chances for survival on Broadway are slim and ABC Records, which has a hefty financial stake in the show, will have tough going to get the original cast album off the ground.

The show is centered on youth but its handling is aged. The libretto by Nunnally Johnson, adapted from the novel by his daughter Nora Johnson, and the score by Bob Merrill are from yesteryear's trunk. They are in direct opposition to the adolescent peg of the production and the one concession to what is really happening with today's youth is a hippie-styled production number that opens the second act, but that, too, is a middle-class cliché view of the so-called "love generation."

The laughs are cheap and not really on target even though they're often made at the expense of current pop culture myths as Princess Lee Radziwill, Sophia Loren and Sandra Dee. Both Nunnally Johnson and Bob Merrill seem unaware of how sophisticated and hip

teen-agers have become and by applying the style and the sound of the 1940's, they have created a generation gap of their own.

The simple plot line of an adolescent's crush on a middle-aged composer, with the difficulty of parental communica-

tion thrown in, gets nowhere and ends with the 11 o'clock curtain in mind rather than the complete resolution of the problem.

Bob Merrill's songs don't help either. Except for the title song, he offers little lilt and less imagination. The ballads and the material numbers are routine but get some spark from Eddie Sauter's lively arrangements and some respectable renditions by Robin Wilson, the young singer who's been recently signed to A&M Records, her adolescent ally Neva Small, and Alice Playten, who belts out a show-stopper in "Nobody Steps on Kaffritz." Don Ameche, who plays the title role, has only two songs to do, and one of them is a duet with co-star Carol Bruce, who has a thankless part as a self-centered mother of one of the girls. Merrill short-changed his stars in this one.

George Roy Hill's direction does nothing more than keep the kids from getting out of hand but he does give choreographer Michael Bennett a chance to bring some joy in a couple of dance sequences. Bennett seems to know where it's at today and it's a shame he didn't have more of a say.

MIKE GROSS

HERE IS WHAT DAILIES SAID

NEW YORK—"Henry, Sweet Henry," a new musical with book by Nunnally Johnson and score by Bob Merrill, opened at the Palace Theatre, N. Y., Oct. 23. Following are excerpts of the reviews appearing in the daily newspapers:

TIMES: "Whatever it is that happened to the American musical is not likely to be put right by 'Henry, Sweet Henry.' The main trouble is with the music and lyrics by Bob Merrill."

NEWS: "This is a thoroughly pleasant and most affectionate musical and it should settle in for a run."

POST: "It is a most disappointing musical comedy . . . starts off the musical comedy season gloomily."



It's not an understatement that Del Shannon's latest album is titled "The Best of Del Shannon" (Dot DLP 3824; DLP 25824). It includes his favorite hits, like "Stranger in Town," "Hey, Little Girl," "So Long Baby," and "Do You Want to Dance." Del's own brand of musical treatment gives them a special winning flavor. His brand of musical background is also special—a Gibson Guitar—the choice of professionals.

(Advertisement)

Playboy Looks to Push Own Talent Via Disks

NEW YORK — The Playboy Club, which recently announced that it will book top name talent into its clubs across the nation, is now seeking to promote its own acts via record exposure.

In its New York club, the organization, under the auspices of music director Sam Donahue, is attempting to launch a pop-jazz group, the Earl May Quartet, on records. Donahue, who on occasion is the fifth member of the group (on saxophone), is actively looking to obtain a record affiliation for the group.

The Earl May Quartet, one of the house groups, is featured in the club's Living Room. "We set this group in the room," Donahue said, "to give them maximum exposure to our club guests." There is no cover charge for this room and according to Donahue, the turnover is good.

Members of the group are Earl May on bass, pianist Larry Willis, Al Gafa on guitar and drummer Al Foster.

The Living Room is essentially designed for a background music-jazz combo, but Donahue has transformed it into a

showcase for this group. "While the room has a good turnover each night," Donahue said, "we've found many of our patrons returning evening after evening to hear the same group. Then, too, there's a general hush in the room's cocktail lounge setting when the group comes on. We've had wonderful response from the audience—most of whom originally stopped by the room on their way to one of the club's other entertainment rooms."

Signings

Carol Lawrence to RCA Victor. She has already recorded four sides under the direction of Ernie Altschuler, RCA Victor vice-president in a&r. . . . Epic Records has signed the Dubliners, Irish folk group. Their album, "A Drop of the Hard Stuff," is scheduled for release at the end of November. . . . Kapp Records has added Raun MacKinnon and a new group called the Eighth Day to its roster. . . . British singing group the Move signed with A&M Records, which is releasing the group's "Flower in the Rain" this week. . . . Comedy team of Mitzi McCall and Charlie Brill to Congressional Records. . . . Greg Morris, co-star of CBS-TV's "Mission Impossible," signed three-year contract with ABC Records. . . . Truman Thomas, 18-year-old organist, to Veep Records, a division of United Artists. His first album is being recorded under the supervision of UA's a&r director Henry Jerome. . . . Jack Scott to Jubilee Records. His disks will be produced by Jimmy Wisner. . . . A new group, the Five Stairsteps and Cubie, to the Buddah label. Their first single is "Something's Missing." . . . Jay Gordon, r&b vocalist, to Verve with Esmond Edwards producing. . . . Lucie Donna to Billy Ver Planck's Mounted Records.

Garner to Make Tour of Germany

NEW YORK — Erroll Garner will make a special series of concerts and TV appearances in Germany from Wednesday (1) through Wednesday (8). Garner reached Hamburg Sunday (29), where he was feted by Deutsche Grammophon, the company distributing his MGM recordings in Germany.

Garner will headline government-owned television and radio programs emanating from Berlin. He will also play concerts in Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart.



RCA VICTOR'S JEFFERSON AIRPLANE, with Bill Graham, the group's manager, field questions at press conference at Hunter College preceding their concert.

'Airplane' Gives College A Lesson in Electronics

NEW YORK—The Jefferson Airplane initiated an audience at Hunter College, Friday (20), to the electronic assault of the San Francisco sound. The Airplane performed against a colorful psychedelic barrage of shapeless blobs and throbbing amoebae, pulsating madly to the beat of the band. The music of the Airplane battered the auditorium like a fleet of jackhammers turned loose on stage, proving that napping during a rock 'n' roll show can be challenging—and risky.

The strategy of the Airplane is to first attack the ears with unique vengeance before numbing the remaining senses. Electrified twanging, often prolonged for the purpose of savoring the dying tones, is fol-

lowed by feed back intentionally induced by moving the guitars too close to the amplifiers—all this to the accompaniment of a steady drum beat. Words are added, the volume is turned up to bury the words, and the audience is bombed with the end result—a noisy salute to chaos.

The Airplane—six strong—got its decibels worth out of cuts from its RCA Victor LP "Surrealistic Pillow," including "3/5 of a Mile" and "Plastic Fantastic Lover." The group's hit singles "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit" were sung by Grace Slick, the Airplane's main asset, who hypnotic staccato chants give the Airplane its popular appeal across the country.

ED OCHS

Small Hipp, Hippie Hooray To 'Hair,' Off B'way Musical

NEW YORK — "Hair" is a hippie rock musical of varying quality. It opened last week (26) at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Public Theater off Broadway. The musical, which early misses in its drive for shock value, has some good material and at least one exceptional performer, Jill O'Hara, a smallish Cass Elliott. RCA Victor plans to issue an original cast album.

Miss O'Hara's "Dead End" is the high point of the first act, belted and meaningful. The show, after a predictable protesting beginning, came alive with "I Got Life," sung by Walker Daniels, who is the central character and Marijane Maricle, who plays his mother.

Daniels plays a hippie who receives his induction notice and, to the dismay of his friends, decides to report. While much of the music is rock and folk

rock, "Frank Mills" one plaintive, yet comic number, is effectively sung by Shelley Plimpton, an ideal follow up number to "Dead End."

One of the top musical bits in the second act is the pairing of "White Boys" and "Black Boys," each sung by three distaff members of the large company. Miss O'Hara also has another good number in "Good Morning Starshine" and joined Daniels in "Exanaplanetooch," which is a cute selection about an ideal planet in another galaxy.

Several trios, including "Easy to Be Heard" also are interesting. Throughout the evening, performers contribute from the aisles and a ladder, for generally good theater. The main question is whether enough people want to see a disturbing hippie musical.

Also doing well in leading roles were Gerome Ragni, Steve Dean, Arnold Wilkerson and Sally Eaton. Ragni and James Rado wrote the lyrics, while Galt MacDermot wrote the music.

FRED KIRBY



WAYNE NEWTON, left, firms his switch from Capitol to MGM with Mort L. Nasatir, MGM president.

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