



## Performing, on stage

# Come to the cabaret

Cabaret, Kabarett, music hall, nightclub. All are etymological variations of a word whose meaning has surfaced recently in Eugene at The Brass Rail, Sheli's and Perry's. At each of these places, some of the hottest restaurant-theatre is catching on.

Cabaret history is a difficult one to trace.

Story by Patrick Bleck  
Photos by Dave Kao

Dewey Decimal advises: cabaret — See Music (music halls, variety shows, etc.). Some 11,800 entries hatched on celluloid discourage investigation. Only Britannica offers helpful elucidation.

"The cabaret," Britannica reveals, "originated in France in the 1880s as a small club in which the audience was grouped



On The Edge is one of the hottest cabaret groups in Eugene.

around an entertainment platform." Remember the Moulin Rouge? More: "By the late 1920s, the German cabaret 'Kabarett' gradually had come to feature mildly risqué musical entertainment for the middle class gentlemen, as well as biting political and social satire."

Cabaret was music halls to England, then a transatlantic leap where it was usually called a nightclub, "one of the few places where an entertainer can establish a rapport with an audience in an intimate atmosphere that encourages improvisation and freedom of material."

Money chaperons followed World War II, and the intimacy broke. "A few of the performers were successful with sharp political and social satire, but commercial considerations were paramount, and nightclubs relied chiefly on established theatrical personalities who could attract a wide audience."

Hello Harrah's.

Unfunny events multiplied: blacklisting, struggling bisected nations like Korea and Vietnam, Bob Hope Christmas specials, Kent State, Tet and finally, "peace with honor." All things staged became suspect; spontaneity bore its own apothosis. Cancel rehearsal; performance to begin immediately.

A rag-tag history to be sure, but therein lies at least a partial backdrop to modern comic theater, its most salient example being Saturday Night Live. What one finds in Eugene is a particularly lively strain of this humour, performed in a cabaret setting and prosaically labelled "wacky, off-the-wall, silly," and worse, "fun."

Two groups, For Play and the more pro-



Cabaret is alive and thriving in Eugene at such establishments as The Brass Rail, Sheli's and Perry's.

fessional On the Edge, currently perform in a cabaret setting which means, simply, in a restaurant before a seated audience which may be happily sipping libations. Each group has its forte, and each is well worth the price of a few dollars.

For Play is a group of seven members led by University graduate assistant, Katha Fefter. Its show is almost entirely improvisational — a series of situations set up by the group after it's thrown verbal cues by the audience. Example: Primitive Man Discovers. Two grunting performers take stage and react to the discovery of items solicited from the audience's imagination. Primitive Man discovers preservatives, sliced bread, zippers and so on. Primitive Man also discovers primitive imagination. The tendency toward collegiate ribaldry somewhat undermines the group's creativity. Still, it is a courageous, entertaining show.

The majority of For Play's skits are successful. Tension runs high; electric anticipation crackles through the crowd, snapping

forth involuntary cues from less sober spectators, stimulating a kind of primeval appreciation for language.

The other cabaret show in town, On The Edge, is perhaps truer to its Germanic variant. Political and social satire dominate. An episode of I Love Lucy is staged in El Salvador. Most of the vignettes are scripted, and a good number of them satirize strictly local lore and custom. All of them are original, professional and very, very funny.

Cabaret is doing well in Eugene. The current run of On The Edge is sold out at the Brass Rail. A two-act play is in the offing for an On The Edge Christmas show.

The Brass Rail has also hosted comedy plays performed by the Cascade Balza Company and plans to continue its local showcasing. For Play will be around at least through December, performing both at Sheli's and Perry's. Look for their next performance tonight, Oct. 28, at Sheli's on 13th Avenue. The show begins at 10 p.m., tickets are \$2 and seats are gone by 9:15 p.m.

# 13th ANNUAL

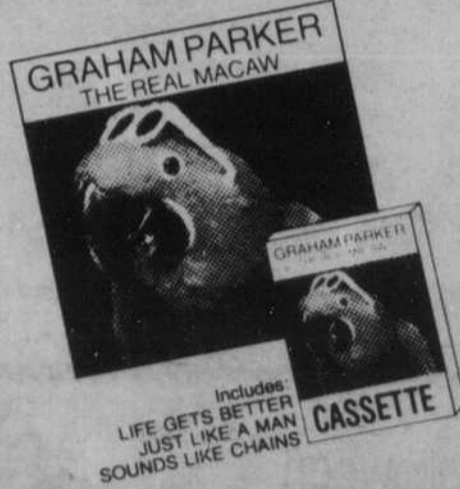
## "EVERYTHING'S ON SALE SALE"

ALL 7.99 ALBUMS AND TAPES ONLY 5.99

OCTOBER 14th to OCTOBER 30th



\$5.99



# ARISTA

New. On Arista Albums and Arista Qualitape Cassettes.



# Everybody's

5th and Willamette,  
Eugene, 687-0761

RECORDS TAPES AND VIDEO

CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOW VIDEO RENTAL PRICES

