SECTION E

E

MAGAZINE

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Wednesday, August 9, 2000

Masterson moves to another stage in career

By Christopher Rawson
Post-Gazette Drama Critic

Marc Masterson, leader of Pittsburgh's City Theatre for 20 years, has been named the new artistic director of Actors Theatre of Louisville, one of the first rank of American regional theaters.

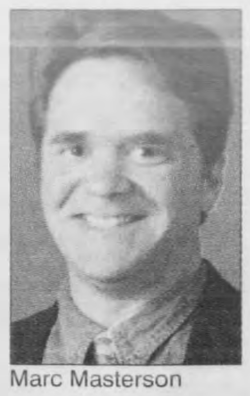
"I'm having all these different emotions at the same time," said the usually unflappable Masterson.

"I'll finally be able to say 'y'all' again without being self-conscious," he said from Louisville. The 45-year-old Texas native has lived in Pittsburgh since he arrived to study at Carnegie Mellon in the late 1970s.

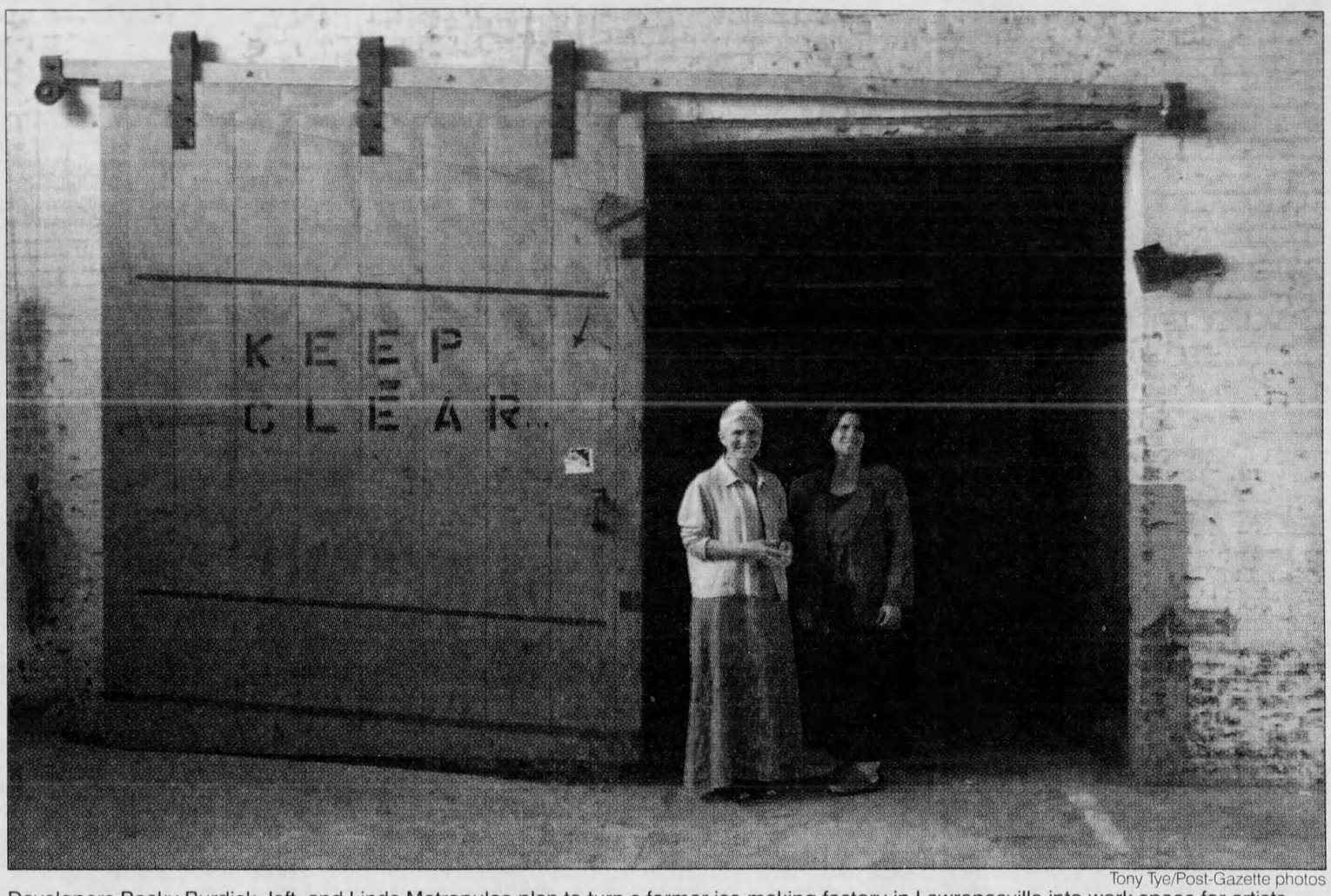
Masterson is moving from the No. 2 nonmusical theater in Pittsburgh, with two theaters (275 and 100 seats) and an annual budget just under $2 million, to an $8 million company with three theaters (637, 318 and 159 seats) with influence that extends far beyond the state of Kentucky. (For comparison, the Pittsburgh Public Theater has one stage and an annual budget of $6 million.)

The centerpiece of downtown Louisville, the Tony-winning Actors Theatre produces a regular subscription season and various touring

SEE **MASTERSON,** PAGE E-4



Marc Masterson



Tony Tye/Post-Gazette photos

Developers Becky Burdick, left, and Linda Metropulos plan to turn a former ice-making factory in Lawrenceville into work space for artists. The duo previously pulled together the Spinning Plate Artists Lofts in Friendship.

Drawing on a cool idea

Artists and Cities developers to convert ice-making factory into studio space

By Caroline Abels
Post-Gazette Cultural Arts Writer

Making art and making ice.

Local developers Becky Burdick and Linda Metropulos have no problem comparing the two occupations as they stand in a former ice-making factory in Lawrenceville and talk about their plan to turn the vacant 43rd Street factory into inexpensive work space for artists.

They believe the soon-to-be refurbished space will be as much a manufacturing entity and community icon as it was in its ice days.

Still, the two recall the skepticism they faced when they approached the city about turning the Ice House, which is zoned for manufacturing use, into work space for artists. It was not easy to convince officials that the creation of visual art and performing arts events is a manufacturing pursuit like any other.

"But they bought it," Metropulos said. "We convinced them that artists produce something and contribute something to a community."

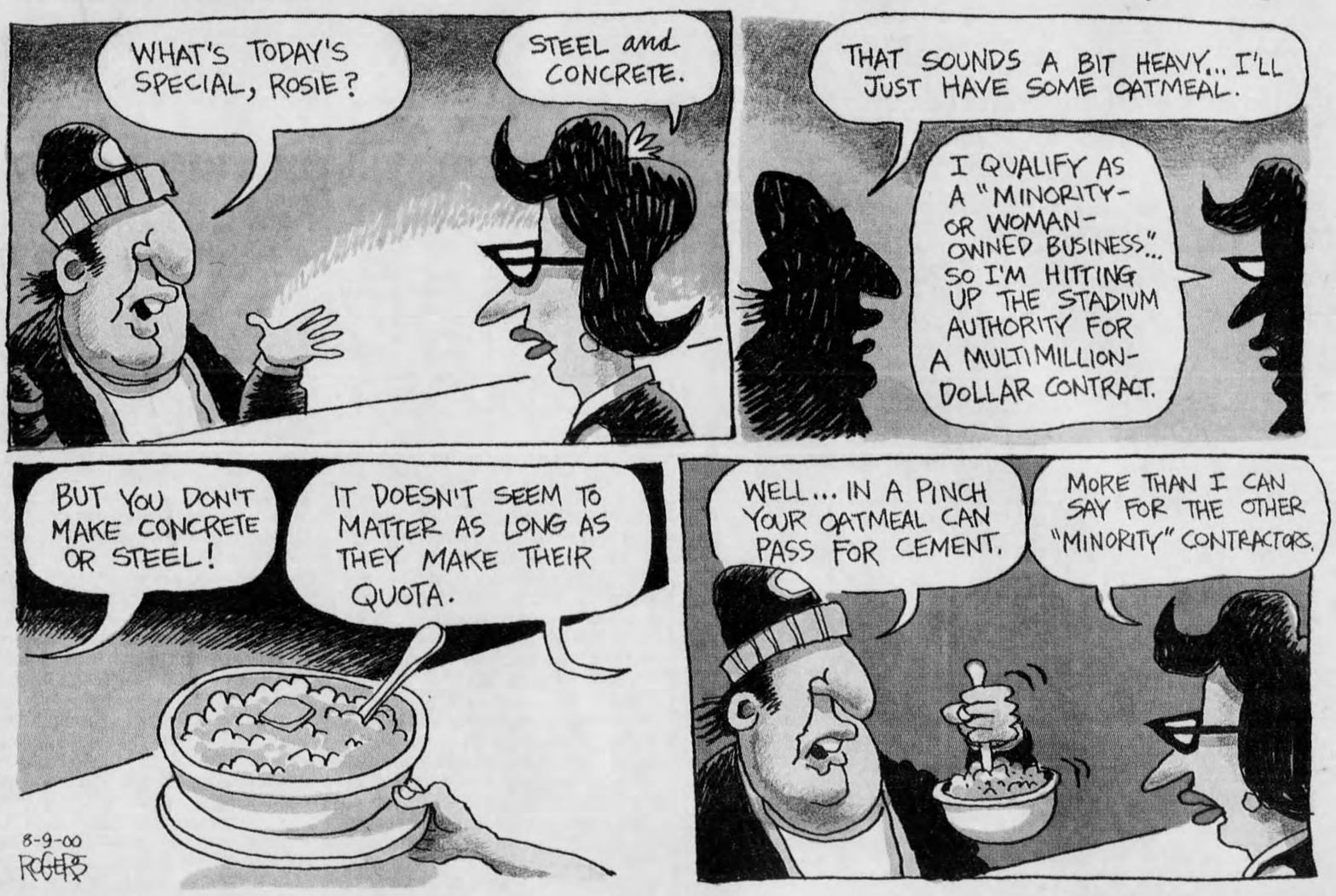
As a result, Artists and Cities, the not-for-profit development company run by Burdick and Metropulos, is now inviting artists and arts groups to apply for the 32 spaces they expect will be ready by February. Any artist of any income can apply, as can any arts organization that is seeking office space.

A stone on the front of the Ice House on 43rd Street bears the date of its construction.

Construction will begin next week on the 44,000-square-foot building, at 100 43rd St. between Foster and Willow streets. Studios will range from 427 to 2,475 square feet and will rent from $215 to $1,295 a month based on three- to five-year leases.

SEE **ICE HOUSE,** PAGE E-2

BREWED ON GRANT *By Rob Rogers*



Brewed on Grant appears Wednesdays in the Post-Gazette

Jonathan Winters

The humor of Jonathan Winters, the subject of an upcoming PBS special, belies an often-troubled life. **PEOPLE, PAGE E-5**

"Live Through This," MTV's first attempt at a dramatic series, focuses on the children of a fictional '70s band. It shows promise but needs to lighten up. **A&E, PAGE E-2**

"Dearly Departed," a new comedy at Apple Hill Playhouse, takes easy shots at one of the last unprotected minorities — rednecks. **THEATER, PAGE E-3**

Morning-radio veteran Jack Bogut is off to a good start at WJAS-AM. The interplay between him and Chris Shovlin and Carol Finelli is lively, the humor is funny, and listeners won't have to lunge for the dial if there are kids in the room. **RADIO PAGE E-8**

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GENE COLLIER

Between a rock and a soft heart

He started crying when he heard the songs on Tammy Hardin's "I Am Somebody" CD, because that's just where they took him, right past a little monument on the road that is the fast-focusing story of his life.

Tammy Hardin, actress, singer, songwriter, drug counselor, school psychologist, client, walked into his office at The Talent Group, the Strip District talent agency, with an idea that would electrify his vision, that would channel Richard Kohn's unique strain of inspiring, almost unnerving karma.

"Every step of the way," Kohn was saying over lunch at The Foundry the other day, "people have been drawn toward each other."

This all started with the rocks, didn't it? Yes, the rocks on the shores of Lake Erie.

True, there had been earlier indications that Kohn's existence could do with some kind of cosmic intervention. He'd been diagnosed HIV-positive, and he'd been walloped with chronic Guillain-Barre syndrome on top of that, Guillain-Barre being the rare condition sometimes called ascending paralysis, in which the immune system misreads peripheral nerve activity as the presence of a virus.

Kohn was paralyzed from the chest down when he started the recuperation that took him to a lakeside cottage for an extended stay. It was there he asked God to one day deliver him the strength to descend the 150 twisted iron steps to the rocky beach. That warm-up miracle granted, he saw, on the beach, a glorious shaft of sunlight aimed at a small, smooth stone that was shaped as an almost-perfect heart.

He picked it up, carried it up the steps and, anticipating a visit from his mother, wrote "You Are Loved" on it with a marker. He presented it to her.

"She was very moved, and from then on when I'd walk the beach, I'd collect them and give them to friends who were maybe having a bad day, or maybe just someone who'd been especially nice to me," he told me more than a year ago. "They're all over the beaches up there."

Love Rocks, he called them, but he imagined a grander, more compelling purpose for them. It had something to do, he felt, with children. He'd market Love Rocks and use the money for some vehicle that would empower children who felt different or left out, distressed or anxious about who they were.

He was relating all this to a friend, Sarah Sheer of Fox Chapel, when her eyes began to well up and she extracted from her purse ... a heart-shaped rock. She'd been to the lake.

Not long after that, Tammy walked in.

"I told him I wanted to do something in the schools, with music," she said yesterday. "He got goosebumps."

Now Tammy's CD is the first tangible artifact of Kohn's Empowered Productions, Inc., the organization he founded to help children realize their potential by planting seeds of encouragement, its goal being to have every child feel loved, special and powerful. Love Rocks are an historical footnote.

"We call them power kids," Kohn said. "Everyone's a power kid. Not superhuman. Simply human. If I can make one child feel like, you know, I'm OK, then I'll have done it."

The CD is vibrant and welcoming, 12 fairly simple songs delivered in Hardin's sweet, lilting voice, produced expertly by Dave Brown.

"He did a great job," said Hardin, whose musical roots trace to bluegrass and folk. "I didn't want it to be hokey. It had to sound sincere and believable, and I wanted it to be fun. There's an underlying message, a serious message. I think there are some parents who didn't get these messages, and now they can get them with their kids."

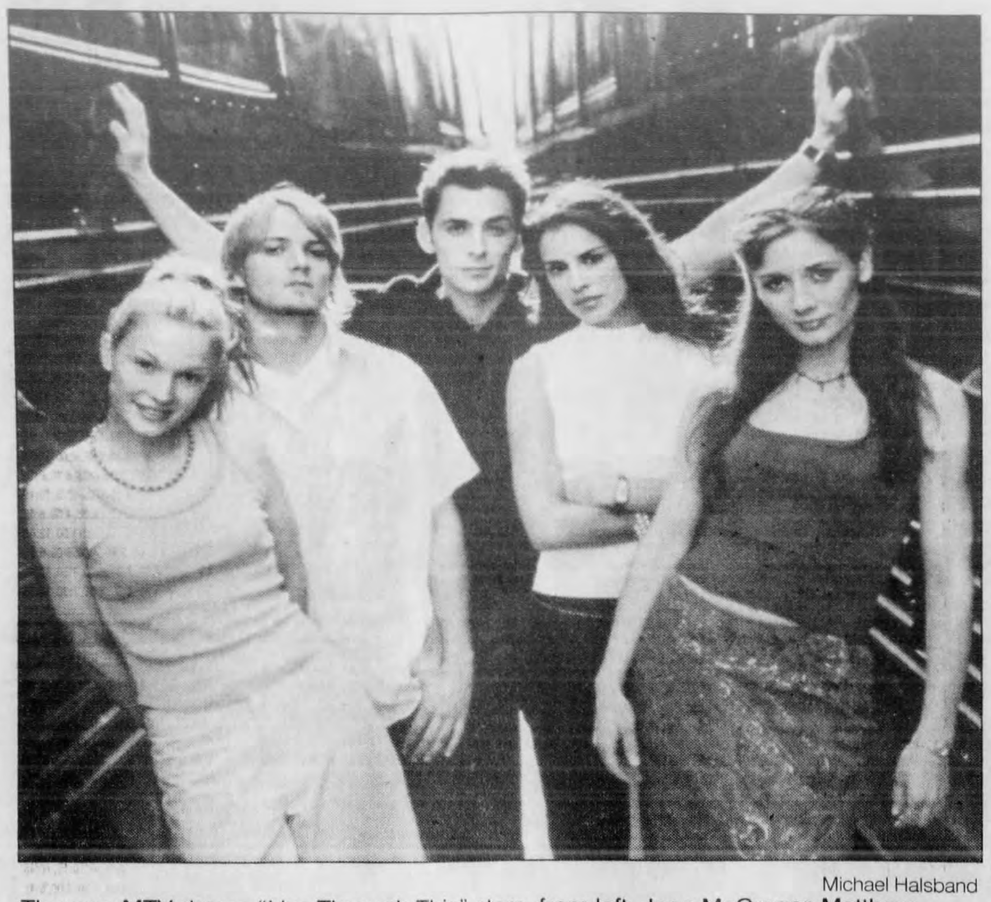
Now Richard boxes the CDs and mails one to Oprah, one to Rosie O'Donnell, one to Bette Midler, one to Christina Aguilera and on and on. He encloses a Power Kid T-shirt and asks if they'll wear one in public just once. He sees dolls, videos, a TV show called Tammy's Play Day Place. He sees Love Rock karma, come to life.

"I just want kids to know that what they do does matter," he said. "And that who they are does matter. I'll do it. If I come to a door, I'll get in through the window."

You can find out how to purchase "I Am Somebody" at 800-488-1888 or at www.empowered.cc.

Gene Collier's e-mail address is gcollier@post-gazette.com.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Michael Halsband
The new MTV drama "Live Through This" stars, from left, Jane McGregor, Matthew Carey, Tom Lock, Jessica Welch and Sarah Manninen.

MTV surprises with atypical teen drama

By Rob Owen
Post-Gazette TV Editor

TV REVIEW

"Live Through This"

When: Tonight at 10 on MTV.
Starring: Tom Lock, Sarah Manninen, Jessica Welch.

Next Tuesday, MTV premieres the funny-dumb comedy series "2gether," based on the funny-dumb movie of the same name that aired in February. This affectionate satire of boy bands is sure to draw hordes of teeny-boppers to the tube, but tonight's premiere of MTV's first drama series, "Live Through This," is a tougher sell.

Funny-dumb is an MTV staple, but a thoughtful, deliberate drama? That sounds more VH1 than MTV.

The notion of MTV attempting a drama series conjures more than a few horrible possibilities — Teens in school throwing a beer blast! Wet T-shirt contests! Let's get tattoos! — but "Live Through This" is a decent drama and far superior to The WB's sudsy "Young Americans." But in the first "Live" episode, at least, it's not as much fun.

Set behind the scenes on the reunion tour of the fictional '70s-era Jackson Decker Band, "Live Through This" focuses primarily on the children of the band members, including Chase Rooney (Tom Lock), who at 23 is managing the tour that includes his complaining musician father.

Three years ago, Chase broke up with Lu Baker (Sarah Manninen, who looks a lot like Jennifer Love Hewitt), daughter of the band's stage fright-prone lead singer. Lu and her mother switched roles years ago, with Lu acting as the responsible parent while her mother was the wild child, recovering from years of drug and alcohol abuse.

Chase's sister and the naive daughter of another band member round out the cast, but Chase and Lu epitomize the qualities that allow "Live Through This" to rise above much of the teen dreck on TV.

Once you get past reality issues — would an untested 23-year-old, even if he is the son of a band member, really be given the keys to a reunion tour? — "Live Through This" explores themes common in everyday life, but less prevalent on teen-themed television shows.

The way Chase strives for his father's approval, which blunts any benefits he may derive from being the son of a rock star, and Lu's parenting of her mother give the characters more complexity than I'd expect from an MTV series. Even Chase's bratty sister, Olivia (Jessica Welch), has a logical raison d'etre.

The young actors do a fine job, although so far none stand out. Several cast members inadvertently reveal their nationality and the show's shooting locale through their Canadian accents (the word "sorry" sounds like "sore-y" and "solitary" becomes "sole-i-tary").

The biggest stumbling block in tonight's pilot is a supposed plot twist at the end of the episode that is easy to predict early in the hour.

At this point I should admit I'm predisposed to like "Live Through This." The show's executive producer is Bernard Lechowick, who, with wife Lynn Marie Latham, created my all-time TV favorite, "Homefront." Lechowick was brought in after the first "Live Through This" pilot was scrapped. He wrote the episode viewers will see tonight.

It's a decent hour of set-up, always the burden of a first episode, but future episodes of "Live Through This" need to play down the obvious (there's not much suspense in will-they-or-won't-they-tour? when that's what the series is about) and better balance heavy drama with lighter moments.

This won't just help a decent show get better; it's also necessary for survival. MTV viewers typically prefer the loosey-goosey attitude of shows like "2gether." "Live Through This" must lighten up a bit if it hopes to live through more than its first 13 episodes.

Bad-boy radio jocks show how to get a radio show to take off in a flash

By Frank Ahrens
The Washington Post

Naked breasts.

Now that we have your attention ...

Cliched? Of course. But that's the moneymaking formula of guy-talk radio, today's hottest FM talk format. You'll hear jokes and sports talk and conservative politics and gun talk and potty humor. And plenty of ...

That's right. Naked breasts.

Last Wednesday, as NBC's "Today" show broadcast live from the Republican National Convention, a national TV audience got a full-frontal of ... you get the drift ... thanks to a New York guy-talk radio show.

As "Today" cameras in New York panned the usual gawkers gathered outside the Rockefeller Center studio, a young woman opened her shirt and flashed her bare breasts. Plastered to her stomach was a bumper sticker that read "WOW."

Which is what they were saying in the studios of New York's WNEW, home of afternoon bad boys Opie and Anthony.

More than a year ago, Opie and Anthony (Gregg Hughes and Anthony Cumia) started a listener promotion: Whip 'Em Out Wednesday, or WOW for short. The station printed bumper stickers, such as the one affixed to the aforementioned young lady's stomach, which men were encouraged to put on their cars. On Wednesdays around the New York metro area, women who drive by said cars are encouraged to flash the occupants. Some actually do.

The promotion got bigger. Augmented, you might say, by lucre. Opie and Anthony offered $1,000 for public WOWs caught on film or tape, provided the WOWer bore Opie and Anthony paraphernalia. The "Today" whipper, known only as Suzy, copped a cool grand for her exhibitionism. It was the biggest WOW score thus far for WNEW: The edited tape was shown on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," and David Letterman joked about it.

Could WOW be another sign of the Apocalypse?

"That's what they asked us on 'Extra' the other day," says Opie. "I think guys have wanted to see women's breasts for a long time now. It's just a pair of boobs."

Says Anthony: "One thing we've heard from guys is that we have helped their road rage. They say, 'On Wednesdays I look forward to my drive home, because I might get flashed.' "

Perhaps this helps WNEW fulfill its FCC requirement to broadcast public-service programming.

Anthony quickly adds: "I say this on the radio every chance we get: We tell the guys not to harass the ladies, and we tell the ladies they don't have to do it. We've been doing it for a while, and we've gotten no major complaints."

The WNEW jocks are hardly trailblazers among radio hosts trying to get women to disrobe. You can't watch Howard Stern's TV show on E! without seeing digitally obscured breasts. One routine is the free-breast-job bit: Women who want implants come to Stern's studio and bare their breasts. Stern chooses a woman and pays for her surgery. Six months later, the woman returns and displays the results. Stern then evaluates what he paid for. (He does similar bits on his high-rated radio show.)

On Washington's WJFK, Don Geronimo and Mike O'Meara's popular "Don and Mike" afternoon show runs various routines that involve women in the studio removing part or all of their clothing. Their lead-in host on the station, G. Gordon Liddy, just finished auditions for next year's "Stacked and Packed" calendar, a tradition that features heavily armed, heavily endowed — though clothed — women. (OK, we admit it: "Stacked and Packed" is a funny idea.) The Sports Junkies, who follow Don and Mike, have had porno actresses as studio guests. And the formula works: WJFK is one of Washington's top-billing stations.

Craving even further excess? You can find it on many radio station Web sites. Many have plenty of inoffensive links, but you can also find a handful of pathways to hard-core sex sites.

Which is a big difference between radio now and pre-Internet: Thanks to Web pages, radio is no longer just theater of the mind. Now, you can see everything and then some.

So are such stunts good or bad?

It depends on which argument you make: the feminist argument (that women are being exploited), the post-feminist argument (that, by baring their breasts, women are actually seizing power) or the post-post-feminist argument (Hey, I got a thousand bucks! Woo-hoo!).

Let's consider what this means for radio: It signals laziness in a format that looks as though it's running out of ideas. Whipped out too often, it feels like desperation. Does it get ratings? Sure. As certainly as "ER" would get better ratings if all the actors were replaced by naked supermodels.

Of course, such trifles as narrative, character development and meaning would be lost.

In radio, the hallmarks of good comedy are wit, cleverness and well-written shtick. But they are hard, and they take thought and imagination. On the other hand, what's an easy, guaranteed way of getting guys to tune in and laugh? By now you should know the answer.

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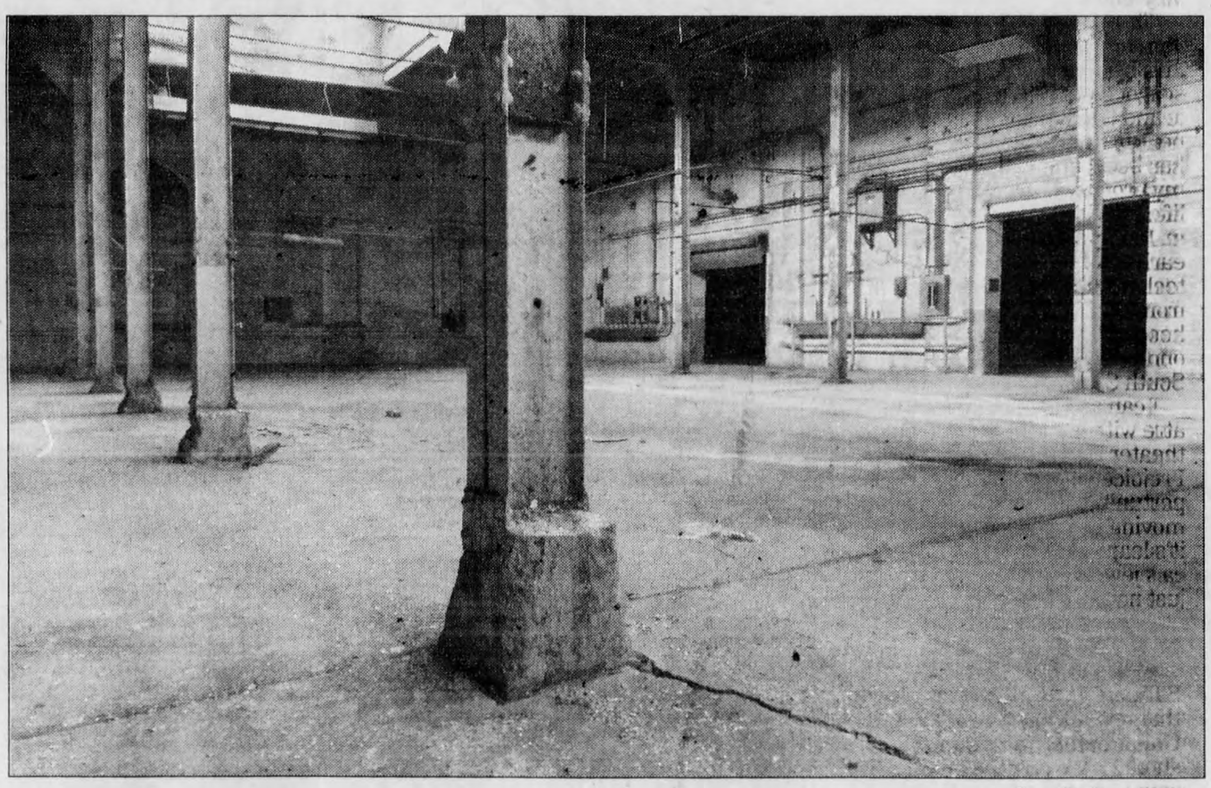

Tony Tye/Post-Gazette
By February, the Ice House, a former ice-making factory on 43rd Street in Lawrenceville, will be transformed into studio space for artists.

Ice House will provide studio space for artists

ICE HOUSE FROM PAGE E-1

Some units will have running water and their own furnaces so tenants can control their own heat. There also will be a loading dock for artists who use large objects in their work. Street parking will be available until a lot is created next to the building.

Burdick and Metropulos say artists have a hard time finding work space that is well equipped for their art form, is accessible 24 hours and doesn't become unavailable at the whim of a landlord.

"Often artists make do in their homes," Metropulos said. "We see people working in basements, kitchens — one woman had to take down her kitchen when she wanted to work and had to set it up again when she was finished."

Ceramist and sculptor James Shipman of Park Place plans to work in the Ice House because his studio in the Millvale Industrial Park is slated to be demolished for the expansion of Route 28. He looks forward to not spending years turning an industrial space into an artist's studio — something he did in Millvale and something more artists are doing.

"Younger artists have realized that the days when you could get cheap warehouse space have passed," Shipman said. "The city's progressing and has been buying up buildings like crazy."

Arts organizations are also in constant need of inexpensive office space. Chatham Baroque, an early-music ensemble, has already expressed interest in locating to the Ice House. The group plans to cut its ties with Chatham College by the end of next spring.

Shipman anticipates — as do Burdick and Metropulos — that the Ice House will become one of the nerve centers of Lawrenceville, which is becoming an attractive neighborhood for young people, artists and antiques dealers, many of whom have shops along Butler Street. Carnegie Mellon University's National Robotic Engineering Consortium is near the Ice House, at 10 40th St.

The Ice House Artists Studios is the follow-up project to the Spinning Plate Artists Lofts, which Burdick and Metropulos pulled together during the late 1990s. The Spinning Plate is a former car dealership in Friendship that was turned into inexpensive apartments for low-income artists.

The duo say the success of that project and its visibility helped them cull the funding for the Ice House. The Plate apartments have been filled since the building opened in the winter of 1999, and the gallery on its first floor is used for numerous shows by residents.

The realization that more Pittsburgh neighborhoods are being revitalized through the arts also helped the Ice House, they said.

The $2.3 million project was funded by foundations, low-interest loans from the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Lawrenceville Corporation, a bank mortgage and historic tax credits, which can be obtained for buildings with historic value and sold to a bank in exchange for equity.

The 1907 building, which has a 1920s addition, was an ice factory until the 1940s. It was later used for concrete mixing and then became a water bed factory. It has been vacant for 15 years and is eligible for designation as a historic site.

Burdick and Metropulos say that over the next five years they plan to take on another big real estate project, but would like Artists and Cities to become a stronger resource for artists who want to develop their own property. They also would like to gather more comprehensive information on Pittsburgh's artists.

Has it been easier for the duo to work on the Ice House than on the Spinning Plate?

"Well, we're not putting in 36 kitchens," Burdick said. "And the climate regarding people's perceptions about artists has changed in the last five years."

To receive information about the Ice House Artist Studios, or for a rental application, call Artists and Cities, Inc. at 412-687-5350.