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‘Rocky Horror’ event camps out for one night at the Fisher Theatre

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5–6 minutes

Four days after “Funny Girl” and five days before “Company,” Detroit’s Fisher Theatre hosted an event that was decidedly not Broadway but was absolutely theater — of the most extravagant kind.



‘Rocky Horror Picture Show’ star Barry Bostwick visits with

members of the Michigan Rocky Horror Preservation Society's shadow cast before a 48th anniversary presentation of the film Thursday night, Oct. 12, at Detroit's Fisher Theatre (Photo courtesy of the Michigan Rocky Horror Preservation Society)

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show's" 48th Anniversary Spectacular Tour came to town on Thursday night, Oct. 12, and provided a time warp that turned the Fisher into a circa late 70s movie theater, when the campy cult classic was raging and drawing legions of dressed-up fans toting bags of rice, stacks of toast, newspapers, lighters and more props to be used at appropriate moments in the film.

It also came with Barry Bostwick, who starred as Brad Majors in the film and spoke to the crowd before the screening, and the Michigan Rocky Horror Preservation Society, a Wayne-based troupe that provided a lively "shadow cast" to act out scenes while the movie was being shown. It was wild but not necessarily untamed, per one of the movie's songs, a spectacle that was part comic con, part community theater cabaret, part burlesque and a pre-Halloween party where dress-up and interaction were encouraged — and rewarded.

"It's like a big family," Bostwick, still tanned and trim at 78, said before the show. "We're on a third generation (of fans). I don't know about you, but when I was growing up we would never think of falling in love with something our parents enjoyed, let alone our grandparents.

"So it's astonishing to me, because it's a while different form of entertainment that was created by the fans. And as long as they're willing to throw stuff at us and yell dirty things in a theater, we'll be

there for them.”

“The Rocky Horror Picture Show,” an adaptation of Richard O’Brien’s stage show, was released during August of 1975. The send-up of B-grade sci-fi films starred Tim Curry as Dr. Frank-N-Furter, O’Brien as the “handyman” Riff Raff, Susan Sarandon as Brad’s fiancée Janet Weiss and Meat Loaf as doomed delivery man Eddie; it was initially a box office bust but became a midnight film sensation that turned it into a long-running cult phenomenon that maintains to this day.

The throwing part of the ritual was regulated somewhat on Thursday, though the sold-out crowd booed when national Rocky Horror Fan Club founder Larry Viezel explained that “this theater has some rules.” Rather than let fans bring their own gear in, the MiRHPS sold \$10 bags that included key items, and the organization guided their use from the stage. By the time the show was over confetti, playing cards and pieces of toast were strewn around the Fisher floor while toilet paper hung off the balconies and across the seats.

“(Thursday) was the most incredible experience,” said MiRHPS CEO and Director Emeritus Becky Milanio Koupparis. The troupe performs “Rocky Horror” twice monthly (second and fourth Saturdays) at the State Wayne Theater but the Fisher was the largest venue and crowd it had ever appeared before. “We hope our audience enjoyed our show as much as we enjoyed performing for them.”

That much was clear throughout the night as the Fisher crowd engaged in the traditional give-and-take with the characters on screen — dancing to “The Time Warp,” and, per tradition, yelling at

“a***hole” at Bostwick’s Brad and “slut” at Sarandon’s Janet. “I think I have embraced it, and I think it has become part of my personality,” the actor said during his on-stage remarks. “I think it’s so much part of me I can now run for governor of Florida.”

Bostwick did, however, touch on the more serious undertone that’s responsible for “Rocky Horror’s” deep connection with its audience.

“Y’know, Susan and I sing ‘there’s a light over at the Frankenstein place’ at the beginning of this film. I think that light has become something very important,” explained Bostwick, who also delighted the crowd by singing part of “Once in Awhile,” a song that was cut from the film. “I think it has illuminated the way for a lot of people to act up, act out...I think it has allowed an awful lot of people to maybe examine and explore their authentic selves, and I think we’ve encouraged people to really be tolerant and embrace the differences in amongst all of us.”

He considered “one last serious thing about this,” then paused. “No, it’s just sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll” — a sentiment Thursday’s audience greeted with equal enthusiasm.

For more information about the MiRHPS “Rocky Horror” presentations, including special Veteran’s Day and holiday shows, visit michiganrhps.org.