



The Rivertime Players have all been actively engaged in transforming an old airplane hangar at Scott's Field Airport in Parsons into a beautiful area to produce plays and otherwise engage with the community. With the help of the City of Parsons, a grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission allowed them to buy new stage curtains, and the Tennessee Department of Economic Development helped them to build a brand new lobby with concessions and restrooms. The Rivertime Players look forward to showing off their new home to the public, and they chose their premier play, *Escanaba in da Moonlight* to open the series. There will be shows March 9, 10, 17 and 17 at 7:00 p.m., with a Sunday, March 11 matinee performance that begins at 2:00 p.m.

# *Escanaba in da Moonlight*

## Rivertime Players produce corker to showcase new digs

TTBy Pam McGaha

Decatur County's favorite group of thespians, The Rivertime Players, are gearing up to proudly unveil their new, permanent theater in The Hangar Performing Arts Center on Friday night, March 9. Their first production will be *Escanaba in da Moonlight*, a play written by Oscar-winning actor Jeff Daniels.

*Escanaba in da Moonlight* portrays a group of men heading to their family's hunting camp for the first day of deer season. Any fan of The Rivertime Players will not be surprised when all types of hilarity soon ensue.

Cast members include Mark Tubbs as Rueben Soady and Leonard Ward as Rueben's brother, Remnar, neither the sharpest tool in the shed; Shane Bridges as their father, Albert; Mark Tillman as "astute" Ranger Tom, who is the first to notice that something very interesting is going on; and the wild role of Reuben's wife, Wolf Moon Dance, a member of the Native American Ojibwa Tribe (with plenty of ancient "remedies" at her disposal, is played by Teresa Taylor. The troupe will also introduce a new face to the community, E. J. Spain, who plays Jimmer, a local man who has been abducted by aliens, and who still suffers from the repercussions.

In the play, a quiet, remote deer camp, deep in the woods, suddenly erupts with lights, disembodied voices, and rampant chaos.

After eleven years of Toby Tent Shows under the Big Top, The Rivertime Players look forward to "knocking people's socks off," in this hilarious production, and they are pulling out all the stops to make the show look good. "We've worked really hard with countless hours spent working on the set. Mark Tubbs has bought a lot of new lighting fixtures, and we are putting them all to use. This show requires lots of light and sound effects, and Mark has become a really good light



Albert Soady (Shane Bridges) and his sons Rueben (Mark Tubbs) and Remnar (Leonard Ward) are looking forward to a good season of deer hunting in the rollicking *Escanaba in da Moonlight*, the premier play by The Rivertime Players on their new, permanent stage in The Hangar Performing Arts Center located at the old airport in Parsons.

and sound designer. I hope people are going to be impressed by the overall 'look' of the show."

For the first time ever for the Rivertime Players, this play is rated PG-13. Due to the nature of the play, the language between the hunters may be considered "salty" by some, and Director Shane Bridges recommends that you leave your children under 13 at home. In fact, he warns that those easily offended may want to save their money for the upcoming and more family-friendly Toby Show in the fall, which will continue each year.

*Escanaba in da Moonlight* was written by actor Daniels (Gettysburg, Dumb and Dumber, Speed, The Five People you Meet in Heaven, to mention a few of his credits). In 1991, he returned to his home of Chelsea, Michigan and founded The Purple Rose Theatre in a used car and bus garage that he purchased from his grandfather. *Escanaba in da*



The Hangar Performing Arts Center includes a concession stand in the lobby that reflects the talents of the actors on stage, and allows for a variety of selections.

*Moonlight* is one of a series of plays about the Soady family that he wrote as a vehicle for cast members to showcase their talents. With the misadventures that constantly beset these "Yoopers," (a different breed of Hillbillies), there is no dearth of material.

*Escanaba in da Moonlight* was eventually made into a movie in 2001, and the play now has hit the stage in many American communities. Ten years ago, the Jackson, TN Arts Council produced *Escanaba in da Moonlight* and the response was so overwhelming that they added encore performances a few years later. "Tubbs saw the most recent production in Jackson, and really fell in the love with the show," explained Bridges "This is the show we wanted to do here for our first production, and when I read it, I was convinced. It's truly funny. But it's not like the Toby shows, which are really joke heavy. This show is funny because it's real people who find them-

selves in an unreal situation," he added.

Don't worry about the annual presentation of the Toby Shows each fall. Central to The Rivertime Players' mission is preserving and continuing the Toby Tent Show experience. In fact, the troupe was formed when Dr. Dawn Larsen donated to the Parsons Arts Council the last remaining repertory tent show in November, 2006. The Rivertime Players are now caretakers of a historic cultural asset that can trace its roots to its founding 120 years ago.

Performances of *Escanaba in da Moonlight* will be on Friday and Saturday, March 9 and 10, with a matinee show on Sunday, March 11, beginning at 2:00. There will also be shows on the following weekend on Friday and Saturday. All evening shows begin at 7:00 p.m. The Hangar Performing Arts Center is located at the old Scott Field Airport, located at 253 W. 9th Street in Parsons. Admission is \$10 for adults; \$7 for seniors; and \$5 for students.

"If you haven't yet come by to see The Hangar, I think it's worth giving a look. We have put so much work into it, and with the help of the City of Parsons, a grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission allowed us to buy some curtains, and the Tennessee Department of Economic Development (with a solid assist from Chamber Director Charles Taylor) allowed us to build a brand new lobby with concessions and restrooms...we think we have something special in The Hangar Performing Arts Center. We hope to have something happening in The hangar all the time going forward, and it will soon be available for public rentals as well. We already have a few events booked."

Only one real question still remains: Will the unlucky Rueben bag his buck, or will evil spirits overcome them all? Come to one or more of the shows find out!