

Sarah Brightman is pure *Eden* out in hollywood

by Brian D. Holcomb
Special to Q-Notes

Sarah Brightman, diva of Broadway, London and PBS, graced the Belk Theater stage at the North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center on July 7. It was a show not to be missed and a crowd worth seeing also: lots of fashion-impaired women and lots of not-quite-out-of-the-closet men with their wives. And a huge percentage of Charlotte's gay population. Sarah is a goddess and we were there to worship.

We should have known we were in for something unique. The sound board table was draped in faux leopard... a nice touch, but a bit odd. The audience was peppered with people looking over shoulders to see copies of the enormous souvenir program. Photos from the liner notes of *Dive* and *Eden* (her new CD... it is fabulous and you *must* have it) made up the bulk of the program, letting us know that we were in for her earth-goddess/neo-disco look.

Susan Sontag, legendary social critic, has defined camp as "failed seriousness." There is no better description of this evening that I can offer. Sarah and her company took themselves very seriously, should not have, and were all the more fabulous for it. Before I go on, let me just say that Sarah's voice (which is what made her famous, after all) was incredible. She also has gotten back in shape after the eating binge that followed her divorce from Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber. She should, however, fire her manager and designers.

The show opened with six half-naked dancer boys draped in capes and hoods entering the theater from the sides. They carried flaming lamps and chanted as they worked their way toward the stage. Then... Sarah's voice. "In Paradisum," the opening track of *Eden*, has a lovely, mysterious, quasi-operatic/liturgical sound. The red velvet curtain parted and there was Sarah lying on a divan, singing into her

headset Madonna-style, dancing boys worshipping her. An overdone, yet perfect moment. Capes were dropped (causing many an eyebrow to be raised in the audience), Sarah was lifted and carried around by the dancers (now only in skin-tight lycra pants), and the show had started.

Few shows could maintain the energy of such a dramatic opening. In fact, this show did not, although it obviously thought it did. Musically, the show was not to be equaled. Visually, it was full of drama, and equally full of things meant to be dramatic, that in fact were not. Even in the face of such "failed seriousness," I cannot deny that I thought the entire spectacle flawless from beginning to end. It resembled nothing so much as an enormous drag show: it took itself quite seriously, while it looked a bit ridiculous; it was full of all sorts of pathos and it tried to do all of this on a budget.

The evening was full of songs from *Eden* (mercifully without her bizarre cover of "Dust in the Wind"), and was a great combination of Broadway, opera and dance beats. There were only a few moments where Sarah spoke to the audience; she had so many costume changes, they could probably not afford the time. Lots

See BRIGHTMAN on page 23

by William Horn
Special to Q-Notes

A powerful re-action

The pilot for the new television comedy *Action* is already generating a stir in Hollywood — a full two months before its premiere. *TV Guide* has already printed an article on the series' controversial and racy content and the buzz it's generating in some of Hollywood's most exclusive power circles. The show stars Jay Mohr as Peter Dragon, a foul-mouthed, vicious and ruthless movie producer. GLAAD has already seen the hilarious, obscenity-filled pilot, in which Mohr meets his new girlfriend/muse (a hooker with a heart of gold played by Illeana Douglas). *Action* also includes studio head Bobby G., who's out of the closet within private circles, but has a very public (arranged) marriage to Dragon's ex-wife. We see a lot of — almost all of, in fact — a freshly showered Bobby when he and Dragon butt heads at a beach house Christmas party. While the characterizations are by no means likable, some of Hollywood's biggest names told *TV Guide* they are the inspirations for these characters. We're not sure how much of the pilot, which is being circulated throughout Hollywood, will need to

be edited for primetime TV. *Action* is set to air at 9:30pm on Thursday nights this fall on FOX.

Hughes played bi Leo?

Gossip columnists worked double time when news broke that Leonardo DiCaprio had renewed his interest in portraying tycoon Howard Hughes. The mystery now is whether or not Charles Higham's book *Howard Hughes: Secret Life* will be the source for the script. Higham contends that Hughes was bisexual, carrying on affairs with Hollywood elite including Marilyn Monroe and Cary Grant. DiCaprio would be directed by friend Michael Mann, who directed *Heat* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. The *Titanic* star has played gay once before — in 1995 he portrayed French poet Arthur Rimbaud in the 19th Century period piece *Total Eclipse*, in which he had an affair with poet Paul Verlaine.

Carr parked for good

Stage and film producer Alan Carr died recently at the age of 62. Carr won a Tony for his stage version of *La Cage aux Folles* and brought *Grease*, *Grease 2* and *Can't Stop the Music* to the big screen. Famous for his elaborate parties, famous friends and embroidered caftans, Carr will live in infamy for producing the 1989 Acad-

See HOLLYWOOD on page 23

Rent cast to do MAP cabaret

by Brian D. Holcomb
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The national touring company of the Broadway hit *Rent* is coming to Charlotte. The show will open on Tuesday, July 27 and run for two weeks at the NC Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, closing Sunday, August 8. While in town, cast members have agreed to perform a cabaret show to benefit Metrolina AIDS Project (MAP). The event will be held on Monday, August 2 at the Great Aunt Stella Center, 926 Elizabeth Avenue.

MAP has sponsored several Broadway cabarets in the past and they are always a unique experience. It gives Charlotteans an opportunity to see some talented performers singing music of their own choice. Cabarets in the past (performed by the touring companies of *Les Miz*, *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Miss Saigon* and others) have been a great place to see just how good the actors in the shows are. Frequently, the numbers they choose to perform are nothing like those they sing in the show they are touring with, allowing cabaret audiences to see their range as actors and vocalists.

The *Rent* cabaret, titled *Voices that Care*, will begin at 7:00pm in the sanctuary at the Great Aunt Stella Center. The intimacy of the space and the excellent acoustics should make for a great setting. Before the performance, there will be a reception with the cast, as well as a chance to bid on *Rent* memorabilia (signed posters, T-shirts, etc.). Tickets for the show only are \$25.00, \$35.00 for the show and reception. Tickets may be purchased in advance at the MAP office or at Paper Skyscraper in Dilworth, or by calling (704) 372-7787. Tickets will be available at the door beginning at 5:00pm on the day of the show.

For anyone who has an interest in musical theatre (and if you're reading *Q-Notes*, you probably do), or who has an interest in *Rent*, this is an event not to be missed. Not only will you get to see the actors up close, listen to them sing the songs they love and even have a chance to meet them, you will also be showing your support for MAP. Buy a ticket. It's not like it'll cost you the rent. ▾

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