

Liv delivers live

A REVIEW

By RICHARD ROTH

HUDSON—*Saturday Night Liv*, a new monthly live variety show, got off to a rousing start at the Pleshakov Music Center last weekend.

A series of comedy sketches sometimes got edgy enough to cause a little squirming and some nervous laughter, and other times unleashed nothing less than total hilarity.

In the first, called "These Things Take Time," a middle aged couple, played by Sal Maneri and Dianne Hobden, enters the stage bickering about anything and everything until the man calls a halt and says, "Tell me something—when are we gonna get beyond the flirting stage?"

Within minutes they're talking long-term-relationship. Then the woman's daughter appears, Taconic Hills student Peggy Kalamaras painted into a pair of hiphuggers and a bellytop. Her mother is a little crestfallen—she hasn't seen fit to mention a teenager, clearly. But Maneri is all too happy to give her a reachy hug, and they're soon ready to march off into the sunset together, a happy if slightly kinky non-traditional family.

The Entertainment Center cast Dan Region as a powerful and somewhat tiresome receiver/amplifier, Prudence Theriault as the sexy new CD player in a low-cut dress, Dianne Hobden as a slightly dowdy cassette deck hurt at being replaced by a younger woman but too proud to admit it, and Frank Lauria as the pathetically out-of-date turntable, a real sad sack. The jokes were obvious—turntable to CD deck: "wanna take a spin?"—and went over very well.

The comedy sketches were separated by musical numbers, some of which appeared to have needed just a little more rehearsal time. But then, singer/songwriters Sandy McKnight and Liv Cummins had also written and directed, respectively, most of the sketches.

Vinny Velez of Copake was the exception. Once he got cooking, he sang and played two of his own compositions with skill and passion, part balladeer and part one-man flamenco-punk garage band.

Dave Cox, a street performer from Albany who travels all over the country, livened things up about halfway through with his "bizarre human feats"—balancing a push broom on the bridge of his nose while going from a standing to a sitting to a reclining position; juggling a hatchet, a torch and a rubber chicken while balancing on a 2-foot board sliding back and forth on a length of culvert.

Wally Hughes presented his

impressions of Ed Sullivan, Peter Lorre and Mae West. Hughes is not averse to taking chances with his material: he evoked a kind of grisly fascination, daring the audience to admit that he was making them afraid, all tittering aside.

Pat Naggiar delivered a comic monologue, casting herself as the owner of a Warren Street antiques shop called The English Duchess ("Oh, I'm not a real duchess of course"). She ruefully but bravely discussed one of the chronic problems of the antiques trade, an unfaithful boyfriend.

Prudence Theriault made a second entrance as Zahara, Turkish belly dancer. Her resume says she has received and given professional training in the gyrational art form, and she certainly looked convincing.

Following a whirlwind appearance to music that sounded as though it might have been speeded up for the occasion, once an uncooperative player mechanism was finally persuaded to work, she returned to the stage to make "an important announcement." Men, she hypothesized, are actually more graceful than women, and to prove it she needed three male volunteers.

Cox the juggler was eager to sign up, and two other audience members were recruited to join him. After a short lesson in the shoulder shimmy, the pelvic shimmy and one or two other technical elements, Zahara instructed them to stand in a row, one hand on the shoulder of the guy in front, and undulate. "I'm getting in back," said the guy in front, drawing a big laugh.

Musical accompaniment for the show was provided by Jil Christensen on piano with some nice jazzy improvisation from time to time; Karl Allweier on standup bass and electric guitar; and Vinny Velez on drums. Lighting was by Ernie Bellanger. Josh Kant, Judy Eron, Mike Goudreau and Christine Abitabile assisted with the writing, and Ms. Abitabile also had a lead role in one of the sketches.

Anthony Bolton made a cameo appearance at the end of the show, rushing the stage and shouting "Father Bob" as he jumped in Dan Region's lap and smooched him. *Saturday Night Liv* fills a niche nobody would have noticed was there, and the opening night audience—close to a full house—appeared to be having a very good time.