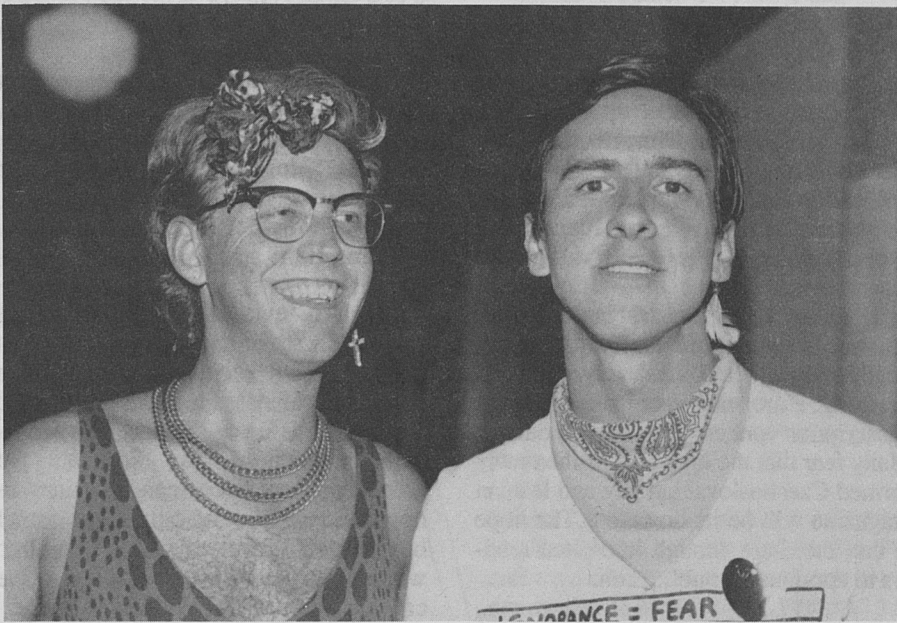


Romanovsky & Phillips A Hit!



by Michael Warner

When a friend asked if I wanted to go the the Romanovsky & Phillips concert on Tuesday, June 18 at Burlington's Contois Auditorium, I really wasn't sure. It was embarrassing to admit that I had never heard of them, but it sounded like a good chance to be "out" on the town and begin celebrating pride week. Besides, as it was a benefit for OUTRIGHT VT, I was assured that my money would be well spent. Well, I certainly wasn't disappointed! Their billing as the "Gay Smothers Brothers" doesn't begin to do them justice.

The show began with an announcement by Pat Fontaine of Bad Girls Productions (who co-sponsored the show along with the Burlington Women's Council and OUTRIGHT VT) that this show was the first annual "outwardly queer" event to be held in Burlington, FOREVER! When R&P took the stage it was immediately obvious that not only was it a first for Vermont, but we were in for some fun! The instant rapport which they established with the crowd was amazing. Their opening number spoofed the entire performance genre. It was light, humorous, and fun.

According to Paul Phillips, this was their first concert in Vermont. He went on to describe Vermont as "so damn cute" just like "postcards and the Bob Newhart show." From the large crowd's reaction it was clear that they were more than welcome. Musically the show was interesting. Their material is both funny and

touching without being trite or self-deprecating. Ron Romanovsky, who does most of the writing, employs lyrics which are witty and biting—not cynical; emotional—not banal. He uses humor to create songs which both debunk and celebrate gay myths. They sing of relationships, closets, people living with AIDS, of the joys, sorrows and absurdities of living in this world as a homosexual person. They sing in clear strong voices of topics which normally aren't heard on top-40 radio or MTV. It's very refreshing and empowering.


A show like this really depends on the banter—the chatter which goes on when the performers aren't singing. R&P have more than earned their reputation as a gay equivalent to the Smothers Brothers due to the repertoire of stories, jokes, and conversations with which they entertain their audience between songs. I found this part of the show as enjoyable as the music. While one can always listen to songs on a tape, the ingredient which made this live show special was R&P's ability to keep the audience laughing and interested between numbers. The show flowed for over two hours without a

slow moment. Paul's timing of lines and Ron's playing the role of, excuse the pun, straight man, were flawless. After the first set the duo took a break and came back complete with a costume change which they described as a sort of "Tarzan Goes to the Big City" and "k.d. lang Meets ACT UP." Paul's hot pink leopard-spotted minidress and Ron's cowboy boots and boxer shorts were only a small part of the act. Although somewhat outrageous, they didn't need to rely on their costumes to carry the show; rather the "out" fits just added an additional layer of fun and games. It was hard to take Paul seriously in his pink mini as he complained about sticking to the piano bench, before playing what was a very poignant song, one of the few he penned himself.

In closing the show, Paul joked that if we had had half as much fun as they, then they had had twice as much fun as we did!! It's great to think that these guys really enjoy what they're doing. They also understood their audience and why we all live here, "out in the mountains", citing the serenity, peace, and nature of Vermont as reasons they hoped that they'd be back in Burlington soon. Judging from the reaction of the audience, we want them to come back VERY soon as well!

Romanovsky & Phillips sent us skipping and humming into the night to the tune of Bob Dylan's "The times, they are a-changin'," slightly altering the lyrics: "Come out of your closets and stand up with pride—for the times, they are a-changin'!" I'm happy to admit that I spent the evening laughing and enjoying this duo. I even broke down and spent money on one of their latest CD's which I had the honor of having autographed after the show. I know that it won't take much convincing to get me to their next concert. ▼

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