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Memo Random

Bingo!

At the Wexner Center's Hair Ball, one must sometimes suffer to be beautiful

by Rich Warren

It's March, and spring is in the hair.

Or at least it was last Saturday night at the Wexner Center's fifth annual Hair Ball, when several hundred crazed dye-hards donned elaborate wigs and headdresses in what was appropriately dubbed "A Hair Oddity." Kind of a Halloween for those too harried to wait, this was the season's mane event, specializing in curly concoctions, daring 'dos, and bodacious bouffants.

I'd heard that all the big wigs of Columbus would be there, many of them having expended hours of effort assembling complicated structures to sit atop their neck-strained noggins. Knowing I couldn't compete, I'd originally planned to attend with nothing more than my own unruly cowlick waving in the wind. But those in the know nagged me so mercilessly that I was finally persuaded that to appear bareheaded would be akin to walking in naked.

So I dragged out a blonde wig I'd worn the Halloween I was Baby Jane. I decided to forego the frilly pink dress that accompanied it, reckoning that to sashay—heavily cocktail-tailed—amongst the guests in my own living room sporting such an outfit is one thing, but to appear stone cold sober in public is quite another.

Eventually, though, I offered this wig to my companion, who ended up resembling a blonde Howard Stern, kind of coquettish yet swarthy at the same time. I opted instead for Carmen Miranda's basket of fruit, which I've worn on more than one Halloween on several sensational tours of selected Ohio cities as the Brazilian bombshell. When it was first created, it was quite an engineering feat to strap this top-heavy basket on my head. But on Saturday, when I pulled it from its place of honor in the front hallway closet (right beside my cowboy hat), I noted it was in sorry shape, the basket showing signs of disintegration and the plastic fruit loose and wobbly.

Undeterred, I jury-rigged the thing with string and glue and set off for the Wexner Center with a song in my heart. We arrived ridiculously early—only a few forlorn individuals stood at the bottom of the stairs in the main entry. They looked at us scornfully, their noses in the air, as if to say, "Is that all the better you can do?" Had I downed a couple drinks, I might have informed them their own unimaginative

fright wigs resembled dead possums that had been rained on several times. Instead, I just stood there self-consciously, my scalp beginning to itch like crazy and my neck starting to ache in a way I figured would give a good chiropractor several weeks of work. I was reminded of the French proverb, "Il faut souffrir pour être belle" (One must suffer to be beautiful).

When the party finally started, it got hairy in a hurry. Guests made grand entrances, swooping down the staircase to the microphoned greetings of a Buddy Holly look-alike and then parading in front of a panel of judges and their loudly appreciative fellow partiers. There were Chia Heads, "Afronauts," Eraserheads, the entire Jetson family, a "Hairy Potter Express" (with a really nice caboose), a "Forgotten Soprano" whose curls were in his nose hair, and (by her own admission) a Pre-Menstrual Barbie who gave the lie to the expression "Pretty in Pink."

The ensembles were the real showstoppers, though—Edward Scissorhands and the topiary-topped babes with him, the entire cast of characters from *Chue*, and, best of all, two baggy-boobed and beehived Bingo players with a man balancing on his head a gigantic glass bowl filled with swirling Bingo balls. The crowd was lavish in its praise. It all made Baby Jane and Carmen pale in comparison.

Soon afterward, the "letting your hair down" portion of the evening commenced as a DJ filled the black box performance space with raucous and roll. It was surreal to see those soaring coiffures madly spinning and gyrating. An Easter Bunny whose rabbit ears were borrowed from a TV set passed out candy, *The Jetsons'* Rosie the Robot was bopping with a cocktail in her hand, and a man with a replica of the Mir spacecraft atop his head was spinning in circles, sending metallic-looking pieces of styrofoam in all directions. He should have been more careful—you break a Mir and you get seven years bad luck.

My own headdress was in the process of disassembling. Throughout the evening, a parade of people walked up to me returning the bananas and pomegranates I was dropping in my wake. At one point, one of the Bingo ladies approached me and earnestly entreated me to feel up her sagging breasts. "It's Jell-O, hon," she cooed, giving me an evil wink.

At midnight, Bitchy Barbie took the microphone as mistress of ceremonies and, in a strident shriek that reminded you of Courtney Love on a bad hair day, proceeded to distribute the various awards the judges had bestowed. There were many categories, enough that nearly all the very best 'dos got selected for something. It warmed my heart to see that in a country with a president more than half of us didn't want, justice can still sometimes prevail—the Bingo people deservedly took "Best of Show."

The dancing was to continue till the wee hours, but at that point I knew if I didn't get that basket of fruit off my head I would soon be heaving it at someone and cursing. So my friend and I reluctantly took our leave, passing in the parking garage the triumphant Bingo people, no doubt in a hurry to get home before their Jell-O-filled boobs burst. They smiled and waved to all their adoring fans who honked at them as they passed, obviously basking in their moment in

the sun. Nice people—I just hope it doesn't go to their heads. 

