

Rydell plans stop in Capital City

By Nick Thomas
Special to the Advertiser

Former '60s pop star Bobby Rydell will be two days shy of his 67th birthday when he takes to the stage Friday at the Troy University Davis Theatre for the Performing Arts. Though he views his teen-idol status in the rear-view mirror of life these days, the popularity of the South Philadelphia native has never waned.

"I've been constantly busy since 1959," Rydell said, from his home in Penn Valley, a Philadelphia suburb where he still lives.

In the '50s and '60s, Rydell was riding high on the airwaves with hits such as "Volare," "Good Time Baby," "Wildwood Days," and "The Cha Cha Cha."

From the late '60s until the early '80s, he continued to play at venues across the U.S., Europe and Australia. Then, he teamed up with two other former teen sensations, Frankie Avalon and Fabian, and formed "The Golden Boys."

"I grew up in the same Philadelphia neighborhood with those two guys," Rydell said. "We began performing and touring together in 1985, and it was a lot of fun. We thought it would only last for a year or so, but we're still doing it to packed houses nearly 25 years later!"

Avalon and Fabian couldn't make it to the Montgomery concert, so Rydell will be sharing the spotlight with another veteran from the '50s, "Diamond" Dave

WANT TO GO?

- **What:** Bobby Rydell and Dave Somerville in concert
- **When:** 7 p.m. Friday
- **Where:** Davis Theatre for the Performing Arts, 251 Montgomery St.
- **Cost:** Tickets are \$20-\$45
- **Information:** Call 241-9567

Somerville, an original member of The Diamonds, best known for their 1957 hit "Little Darlin'."

Now 75, Somerville said audiences will be getting a two-for-one deal at Friday's concert.

"We won't be performing together," said Somerville from his home in Los Angeles. "I'll do my show, and Bobby will do his."

Back in 1957, Somerville was part of a legendary 12-week rock & roll bus tour across the U.S. and Canada. Among his traveling companions were Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Paul Anka and the Everly Brothers.

In addition to performing hits from the original Diamonds, Somerville said he will talk about the historic bus tour during his show, and sing the greatest hits his bus buddies made famous.

When Rydell takes the mic, expect to hear all his classic hits, too.

"I also do a medley from Bye Bye Birdie," he said, referring to the 1963 musical film in which he played boyfriend to newcomer, Ann-Margret. "And there's a trib-



Contributed photos

Above, Bobby Rydell sings on stage. Left, Rydell has been performing since the 1950s.

ute to Bobby Darin, who was a very dear friend, as well as lots of comedy in the show."

Although today's music circuit may seem saturated with veteran singers, Rydell and Somerville consistently receive critical acclaim for the energy, warmth, enthusiasm and humor of their performances. In fact, critics are especially applauding Rydell for sounding better than ever.

"I've always been a huge admirer of Bobby," said Somerville. "He's got one of the best voices I've ever heard."

"It's much warmer and more mellow," Rydell said of his voice today. "So vocally, I can do just about anything I want. But really, I'm just having a ball performing and I think audiences can sense that. I'm not up on stage looking at my watch wondering how long before I can go home!"

When pressed, Rydell couldn't recall the last time he performed here — not surprising, perhaps, with thousands of concerts to his credit.

"It's been a while since I've been in Alabama," he said, "so I'm looking forward to it."

As a role model, Rydell never let his fans down. In fact, 17-year-old Rydell handled the fame and legions of adoring fans with remarkable maturity after "Wild One" raced up the pop charts in 1959.

"It helped to have good management, the support of your family, and just not letting it all go to your head and thinking you were a superstar," he explained. "When the kids today get fame so fast, their whole world turns around and some just can't handle it."

So how does an "old rocker" compete in today's fierce and younger music market?

"I don't even try to," Rydell ad-

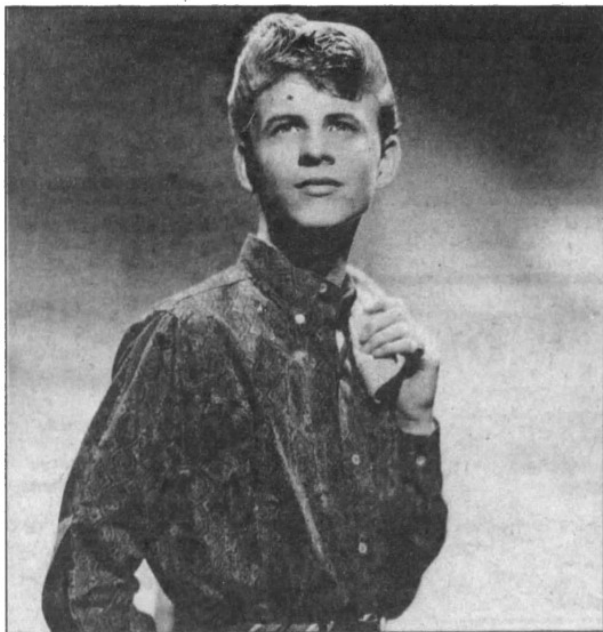
mits. "The music I sing is timeless, it will never die. I still get 15-year-olds coming to my shows, and of course a lot of people in their '60s and '70s who remember the music and were fans from that era."

For Rydell, one of the best aspects of being a veteran singer is that fans no longer make a grab

for a lock of hair, or try to tear off his jacket. "Now, they approach me in a polite and sociable way!"

"I've been entertaining for 50 years now," Rydell said, "and still love it. If it ever became a job for me, that would be the time to give it up."

Nick Thomas is a freelance



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