

Audience becomes the show as kids get to perform

Program gives fair visitors a chance to create 'Movie Magic'

By John Mitchell

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The plot was simple: An important movie script had been stolen by the Pink Panther, and a few young technician-actors from Canada rounded up a bunch of 6-, 7- and 8-year-olds to get it back.

A 13-year-old was recruited, too, but his job was to walk around with a snow-making machine. Not a taxing effort, but Paul Patterson of Moorpark still enjoyed it.

The action was all good fun, of course, and was on stage in the Youth Expo building at the Ventura County Fair on Sunday.

The technician-actors, hamming it up to the max, were from Mad Science, a Montreal-based organization that provides hands-on, educational science experiences

for children around the world. Mad Science has become a staple of the Ventura County Fair, putting on an interactive show called "Movie Magic."

During a fast-moving half-hour, youngsters learn how a movie is put together, see technological tricks and get to act. During all this, they watch themselves on a monitor while the audience sees the show on a huge screen.

Ashley Chavez, 8, of Santa Paula got to be a camera operator Sunday and helped actors with their costumes. A third-grader at Barbara Webster School, Ashley said she had seen the show last year and was really hoping to play the role of Superwoman. Maybe next year, she said.

If there had been an energy award, it would have gone to Josh Knoller, 7, of Encino. Josh, who attends Valley Beth Shalom School, was given the role of Rocky Balboa. With a silk robe over his shoulders and fat boxing gloves on his hands, he swung fiercely at the Pink Panther with lefts and rights, bobbing and weaving in



Photos by Joseph A. Garcia / Star staff



Sarah Argue of Mad Science, above, and 6-year-old Kate Fayloga of Thousand Oaks act in a scene from "Movie Magic" on Sunday at the fair. At left, Emily Platt, 5, of Camarillo plays her part in the production.

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Program is 'entertaining as well as educational'

'MOVIE MAGIC'

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what could have been an audition for "Rocky XXIII."

Haley Natzke, 7, accompanied by her 5-year-old sister, Holley, and parents, Mark and Susan, came to the fair from Santa Clarita.

Haley captured the plum role, that of the "Legally Blonde" woman. It was Haley who emoted the tragic line, "Oh no, I think the Pink Panther has stolen your script."

Also in the cast was tiny Kate Fayloga, 6, of Thousand Oaks. Kate seemed to spend most of the time staring at her dad, Jay, sitting in the audience. Later, wearing a red cap with antennae, she was swept up in the action.

"Movie Magic" plays five times on weekdays, six times on Saturdays and four times on Sundays at the fair, according to Phil Boudreau of Mad Science.

John Lockhart, a fair spokesman, said Mad Science is the type of program the fair

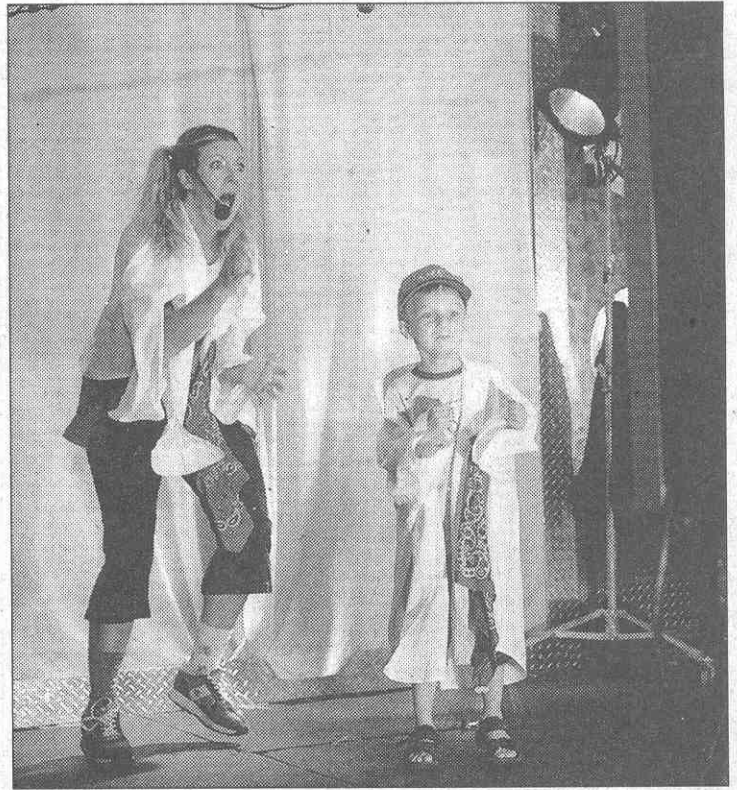
seeks to draw a younger crowd to Seaside Park.

"It's entertaining as well as educational and is perfect for multigenerational families," Lockhart said.

While some of the youngsters charged to the fair's amusement rides after "Movie Magic" on Sunday, many hung around the Youth Expo building to check out its many and varied exhibits.

Standouts that drew attention included a painting of Mission Santa Barbara by Jazmine David, 9, of Camarillo, and an untitled painting of a tropical paradise with waterways, trees and colorful flowers in the foreground and towering snow-covered peaks in the background by Hayley Appel, 11, of Agoura Hills.

A foldout, three-paneled, illustrated scientific project titled "Tsunami!!!" by Carl Niemi, 11, of Newbury Park answered in detail the question, "What relationship is there between the strength of an earthquake and the strength of a tsunami?"



Joseph A. Garcia / Star staff

Sarah Argue, left, with Mad Science, helps Charles Horn, 5, of Pasadena run through a scene during the "Movie Magic" presentation at the Ventura County Fair on Sunday.

The setup that drew the most attention from parents, however, was an identification booth staffed by members of Simi Valley's Masonic Lodge 806. They took thumb prints and photos of youngsters and offered them to parents.