

Puppets are a hit at playgrounds, rec centers

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

A bolt of lightning almost brought the curtain down last year.

But Oakland County's Puppet Mobile is back on the road, braving the elements to entertain kids all summer long.

Working out of playgrounds and community centers, the puppet show on wheels is part of a mobile recreation fleet run by Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission. Other trailers offer sports, roller skating and a show stage.

Despite one close call last summer — a lightning bolt striking the ground

nearly — the puppeteers didn't hesitate to sign up again for the outdoor performances.

"It's always a different audience, never the same group twice," said puppeteer Brad Lowe, whose Lowe-Hamilton Puppet Theatre is featured on the Puppet Mobile.

"Even older folks appreciate it. The show reaches just about everyone."

Shaggy Rudyard and his stagehand nephew Styrmie are stars of the shows put on by Lowe and Boot Hamilton, both Avon Township residents. Also behind the scenes are Gloria and Rick Henry of Pontiac.

The troupe, who call themselves "children's entertainment specialists,"

'You almost have to split your brain in half to make one puppet react to the other.'

— Brad Lowe
puppeteer

designed the puppets which are modeled after the famous "Muppet" characters. They also write their own scripts, many of which are take-offs on fairy tales.

"The main thing we try to do is entertain," said Hamilton, who teamed up with Lowe three years ago. They also

perform regularly at the Spaghetti Company restaurant in Livonia.

"There's not always a message, although sometimes we can slip in a morality lesson."

So that they will be more believable, the puppets are never "out of action."

"We have to create the illusion that this little character (the puppet) is thinking," explained Lowe, who made his first puppet at age 5. He was one of the original puppeteers on ABC-TV's children's program, "Hot Fudge."

Hamilton played blues in Chicago with such legends as Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed and John Lee Hooker. Also a founding member of Mitch Ryder's Detroit rock music group, he composes and records music for the puppet shows.

The other troupe members, Gloria and Rick Henry, sell real estate. Freelancing as puppeteers is a creative sideline for the couple.

"We like getting our hands in puppet work," joked Mrs. Henry, who likes the chance to "perform for little adults."

"The kids talk into the microphone and tell us stories."

SPECIAL WORKSHOPS follow each performance put on by the puppet mobile, so that youngsters will see how the puppets are created.

To encourage youngsters to stage their own puppet shows, kids are given paper bags and taught how to make puppets. The puppeteers request only one thing in return: "Don't litter."

"This is learning in entertainment-type form," explained Lowe. "This

sparks an idea and then they can take it home."

Dedicated to quality entertainment for kids, the puppeteers want children to "get something" out of their programs. And they see puppets as an excellent medium to achieve that goal.

"Children who won't respond to

adults will to a puppet. It's a fantastic type thing," explained Mrs. Henry.

For Lowe, puppeteering is serious business. "It's just like being an actor; but instead of you acting, your puppet does the acting," he explained.

"You almost have to split your brain in half to make one puppet react to the other."



ANN STRAKY

Shaggy Rudyard gets a hug from an enthusiastic fan as puppeteer Brad Lowe watches.



ANN STRAKY

Shaggy greets a youngster at a performance of the touring Oakland County puppet mobile.

SOMERSET DINER THEATRE
CINEMA 4 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM ALL SHOWINGS
WEEKENDS 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
STARTS FRI. JULY 24
DONALD SUTHERLAND
LAST WEEK: ALAN ALDA
WEEKLY CAROL BURNETT
"EYE OF THE NEEDLE" (R)
DAILY 1:30-2:30-3:30-7:45-9:50
DAILY 1:30-3:15-5:15-7:30-9:35

STARTS "THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK" (PG)
JULY 31st
DAILY 1:45-4:30-7:15-10:00
FOR YOUR BOGER MOORE
EYES ONLY

PONTIAC MALL
CINEMA 4 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM
WED. SAT. & SUN. 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM
GENERAL CINEMA THEATRES

MACHES
PARKLANE TOWERS
and
TAP Ltd.
Michigan's Largest Dinner Theatre
The Fourposter
A Precious Summer Time Comedy
FRIDAY 11:50
SATURDAY 11:50
INFORMATION & RESERVATIONS 288-0450
A THEATRE OF THE ARTS PRODUCTION

Your TV set is a
MOVIE THEATRE
AND YOU HAVE THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE
NOW RENTING

9 TO 5
AIRPLANE
POLYMER
BILLY JACK
THE INCREDIBLE
CADDYSHACK

1103 Orchard
Oxford Lake
875-4400
6000 Highland Rd.
Livonia
3 Miles -
Your Choice
A Video Package
For 3 Days
\$15.95 (Tax Extra)

FAMILY
VIDEO

SOMERSET
DINER THEATRE
Altruda Jimmy Launce
PRODUCTIONS, Inc.
presents
SLEUTH
A Thriller
Tony Award Winner
Performances:
Friday & Saturday
Group Rates &
Performances
Available
Reservations
643-8865
Lower Level Somerset Mall

NEW KING LIM
RESTAURANT
celebrates
3RD ANNIVERSARY
introducing:
ALL YOU CAN EAT
Special Luncheon Buffet
Mon.-Fri. 11-4 **\$3.95**
And Sunday Brunch 12-4 pm **\$5.45**
Happy Hour 4-7 p.m.
CANTONESE • SZECHUEN • MANDARIN CUISINE
3350 Auburn Road 1/2 mile W. of Adams
Auburn Heights **852-8280**

Appearing 8:30 to 1:30 a.m.
Wednesdays through Saturday
Now through July 31st

The Ron Coden Show

Nondy-Tondy...
PAUL KRASS & FRIENDS
Two all Ladies draw 's price
11.95

2775 Telegraph Road
Livonia
248-1488

SUNDAYS AT SCHULER'S...
BRING YOUR BUNCH TO BRUNCH!

This Sunday take the whole family to a delicious Win Schuler's brunch. It includes all your favorites that make Sunday a very special family day. We're waiting for you...so call us now for reservations. Children under 10—\$2.95, adult's check includes children under 6.

SCHULER'S
ROCHESTER 2801 Rochester Rd. 852-8330
WEST BLOOMFIELD 6086 West Maple 851-8880
Brunch: 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Brunch: 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

SHOWCASE CINEMAS
STERLING HEIGHTS:
35100 VAN DYKE RD. AT 15 MILE RD. STERLING HEIGHTS
BARBAIN MATINEE DAILY
1:50- FIRST SHOW ONLY
979-3160
2400 SOUTH TELEGRAPH RD. PONTIAC BARBAIN MATINEE DAILY \$1.50- FIRST SHOW ONLY 332-0241
\$3.00-ADULTS-MONDAY THRU THURS. EVENING PERFORMANCES

SUPERMAN R
PONTIAC STERLING HTS.
ENDLESS LOVE R
PONTIAC STERLING HTS.
FOR YOUR EYES ONLY PG
STERLING HTS. PONTIAC
STRIPES R
STERLING HTS.
S.O.B. R
STERLING HTS.
CANNONBALL RUN PG
PONTIAC STERLING HTS.
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK PG
STERLING HTS. PONTIAC
ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK R
STERLING HTS.
HISTORY OF THE WORLD PART I R
STERLING HTS.
THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER G
STERLING HTS.

APPEARING NOW:
FINGERS
Monday - Saturday 9 PM - 1:30 AM
Sundays - Cliff Gracey
thru August 1
MOUNTAIN JACKS
BEST SEATED SEATING 2360 Rochester Ct., Troy 689-7920

Pearl's Garden
Serving the finest in Chinese & American Cuisine
• Luncheons • Dinners • Carry Out Orders
Chinatown Style Welcomed
Open 7 days a week
Mon.-Thurs. 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; Fri. 11 a.m.-11 p.m.
Sat. 12-11 p.m.; Sun. 12-10 p.m.
469 S. Woodward, Birmingham
644-2913

MON LIX LAU
Serving Regional Style Cuisine from all of China
Mandarin • Szechwan
Cantonese • Hunan
Chinese Dining & Drinking
Maple at Stephenson, Troy 689-2332