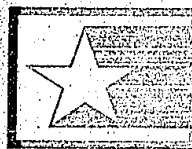


Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, July 10, 1984 O&E

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Breakdancing: 'It gets your mind off everything else'

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

EVEN A SUDDEN rainstorm couldn't stop them. The break dance group the Renegade Breakers went right on breakin' in the rain.

We break in all kinds of weather," one of the guys said.

The demonstration, part of a photo and story session for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, was scheduled in Birmingham's Shain Park but had been moved to outside Baldwin Library's new addition, when the rains came.

Undeterred by the downpour, the guys put on their jackets, pulled the hoods over their heads when they went into a headspin, or a jacket sleeve over their hand when they did handspins on the break dance board they brought with them.

A crowd — including young female admirers — quickly gathered. "Are you Neal Mandi?" one girl asked. "Yeah," he said.

MEETING GIRLS is one of the dividends of break dancing, according to most of the break dancers interviewed for this story. Besides the Renegade Breakers, area groups include the Universal Breakers of Rochester and the Southfield Floormasters, who do not live in Southfield but picked their name because they live near the Southfield Freeway and Lasher Road.

Neal Mandi, 14, of Bloomfield Hills is spokesman for the Renegade Breakers. He's a familiar face to some not only because of his break dancing but because he is an actor. He has been an actor since age 11, when he got his first agent and his first commercial (for Bubble-Yum) at the same time.

The Renegade Breakers, the Universal

Breakers and the Southfield Floormasters were among participants in the recent Motor City Break Dance Competition, held May 28.

The Southfield Floormasters took first place and the six members of the group, which now includes five guys, split the \$2,000 prize six ways.

Surprisingly, considering their considerable talents, the three groups have been together only a short time.

Mandi, who attends Brother Rice High School in Beverly Hills, said the Renegade Breakers has been together about 2½ months.

He began break dancing some four months ago, after watching a group called the New York Breakers on Channel 7's "Kelly and Company."

"I TAPED IT and watched it day and night. I made it a part of my life," Mandi said. "Eventually I could do everything they could. I started going to dance clubs to see how good I really was."

"I found out I was the only one (in the Pontiac area) who could do the Windmill. I started teaching at Karoly School of Dance in Bloomfield Hills and started looking for a group."

Many of the break dancing groups seem to go through changes. Two of the guys who danced with the Renegade Breakers in the Motor City Break Dance Competition are no longer with the group.

Of the original five members of the Universal Breakers, who were in the same dance competition, one has not danced with the group lately. A member of the Southfield Floormasters has gone on to California, where he will be dancing at intermission at the Olympics, he told the rest of the group.

Please turn to next page



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer



The Renegade Breakers break dancers and their "street" names are (left to right): John "Action" Abboud of Birmingham, Jeff "Juice" Najjar of Southfield, Matt "Capt. Boogey" Pruitt of Southfield (also pictured above), Neil "Mr. Fresh" Mandi of Bloomfield Hills and John "Argyle" Barron of Birmingham.

Comedy Jam at Fisher Friday

Mike Binder is bringing his brash, innovative Detroit Comedy Jam back to the metro area for two shows at 8 and 10:30 p.m. Friday at Detroit's Fisher Theater.

"We're making a movie — full-blown — and we're really doing a thing here," Binder said. He described the movie as "a documentary concert film, like 'The Last Waltz,' only about comedians."

Appearing with Binder will be Paul Rodriguez of the short-lived TV series "a.k.a. Pablo." Howie

Mandel of "St. Elsewhere" and Dave Coulier of Warner Amex's "Out of Control." The multi-media, two-hour concert also features the Comedy Jam Band.

"I want to make this a huge thing in Detroit every year," Binder said of the comedy jam, which he created and hosts.

Tickets at \$14 are available at the Fisher Theatre box office, phone 872-1090, and all Ticket World outlets.

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