



Cranbrook's been performing light shows and impressing visitors for five years, ever since Mel Drumm built a projection system for the laser (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation) all from scratch. That included, Goudie said, using a black outdoor lamp pole with thousands of tiny mirrors bouncing around the four powerful beams of light.

Seeing the light Cranbrook style

By Dave Varga
staff writer

"Most (shows) are rock and roll, designed for high school and college-age students. It's an age that people don't always come out to a museum, so this brings them out." — Doug Goudie

It's fireworks for the MTV generation. Every weekend teenagers and yuppies, hand-holding couples and entire families pack into the Cranbrook Institute of Science planetarium to gaze up at the indoor dome for a laser light show. The 45-minute show features brilliant, ooh-inducing lines of color in ever-changing, 3-D shapes that flow and pulse to a rock-and-roll beat. Results can be breathtaking or overwhelming, depending on how long your eyes can hold out. Unlike fireworks, the dazzling display only pauses between songs. Video thrills, no waiting.

There is waiting to get in, though. Crowds line up on any given weekend for the three Friday and two Saturday night shows. On a recent visit to Cranbrook, the Saturday night shows were both sold out, with lines of visitors waiting among the

people don't always come out to a museum, so this brings them out," says Doug Goudie, coordinator of the laser show.

This night featured the "Genesis" show, with nine tunes from the British rock group varying from the days when Peter Gabriel fronted them to the more successful Phil Collins days. It continues through Dec. 10 and will be followed by "The British Invasion." Saturday and Sunday afternoon shows, meanwhile, feature "The History of Rock and Roll." (Call 645-3200 for details.)

FOR MOST visitors, the music didn't matter. Young Bridget Schultz of Bloomfield Hills said she liked the show, but she wasn't a Genesis fan. Adult Frank Saluk of Royal Oak, though, is a Phil Collins fan. "I enjoy this type of music," he said. But, his son, Cliff, and Cliff's friend, Dan Doctor, don't. "They didn't tell us the music until after we got here," Cliff said. Their preference? "Iron Maiden," Doctor said.

David Allio of Canton said he had seen a similar laser show in California, while his date, Shelley Rothenberg of Oak Park, hadn't. "But I enjoyed what I saw," she said. Allio said he did too. "The only thing is I wish he'd make it louder and keep it wider," he said.

The six loudspeakers in the 83-seat planetarium provided ample volume for most listeners. It doesn't reach the decibel level of a Polon concert, but Goudie said some folks treat it as a concert and sing along.

As for the width of the laser lights, Mark Green of Bloomfield Hills also noticed they were kept in the middle of the rounded ceiling. "It wasn't wide enough. It was really narrow," he said.

The laser lights — which dance and play among stars, planets and other heavenly bodies projected on the ceiling — are kept in the middle of the ceiling for good reason, Goudie said. "If someone was tall enough and jumped high enough and caught a laser in the eye, they could be in big trouble."

THE PIERCING clarity of the lights can be tiring. At times people closed their eyes. The slower songs and correspondingly slower lights were relieving. "My eyes got really tired and started twitching," Green said. "It's almost like looking at a strobe light."

Goudie or other light operators keep the lights throbbing to the music. "It's a live show really," Goudie said. A Boston firm called Image Engineering Inc. creates shapes and designs that seem to fit the songs and matches them on digital quality video. Shapes on that tape can then be manipulated during each show on a control board, which adds the special effects and different colors.

"We listen closely to what the audience seems to like, whether they clap or cheer. That's where the showmanship comes in. It's a very important live aspect that makes every show different," Goudie said.

In fact, the show operators that night, Ray Koltys and Jon Barth, both kept their eyes trained on the ceiling during the performance, breaking into smiles several times at their better creations.

Those creations can leave the viewer speechless, while at other times it forces some kind of vocal response. Very impressive.

ALTHOUGH THE light images can look still, the beam actually is continually retracing each an image it projects about 30 times per second, Goudie said.

The system is worth about \$500,000, Goudie said. But, since it was built from scratch, Cranbrook turns a profit on most shows, he said. Charge for the light shows is \$1.50 per person over regular museum admission of \$3 for adults, \$2 for students and senior citizens.

"Our most popular were the Wall (by Pink Floyd). We added extra shows consistently for five months," Goudie said. That show may return because it was so popular.



Resort holidays prove popular with families

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Behind The Porch is the large dining room, which serves a plentiful breakfast, lunch and dinner for \$4.95, \$5.50 and \$8.95 respectively. The meal price for children is their age multiplied by 35 cents for breakfast, 45 cents for lunch and 55 cents for dinner.

THE SCENE here at Thanksgiving is very much a traditional autumn scene. Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings in the dining room. Daytime crowds in warm sweaters gather around the huge slide, which costs \$4 an hour, but accommodates four people for that price. Hayrides are available through Thanksgiving weekend for \$2.

"You'll find people drinking hot chocolate or hot soup in the warming hut at the top of the slide. Hikers follow the trails, marked easy to moderate, that wander through the 1,300

acres of woods and shore in the park. James Lake is not frozen over by Thanksgiving. Last year it wasn't even frozen by Christmas, but it is a popular place for skating and other activities when it is cold enough.

WHY DON'T you take the 2 1/2-hour drive along I-94 and take the Marshall exit south on I-69 toward Angola? Follow the signs to Pokagon State Park and enjoy a day or a midweek vacation in and around the Potawatomi Inn.

If you like it, reserve for the first holiday weekend you can get, which may be two years away. Cancellations are always possible before then.

The Potawatomi Inn is one of six Indiana state park inns. You will also find state park lodging in Ohio and Kentucky. If you like warm, comfortable indoor facilities and cool, but not unbearably cold, outdoor activities, you might want to go as far south as Pine Mountain State Park,

north of the Tennessee line, Kentucky.

OF COURSE, all of Michigan's many inns are open to you, but they too may be booked up for this year.

You can check the Bayview Inn or the Terrace Inn, Petoskey, or the Montague Inn, Saginaw. Your best bet this year might be a resort like Grand Traverse Resort in Acme, near Traverse City. Call around.

You should also consider Ontario Inns, like Ben Miller Inn in Goderich or Elora Inn in Elora, Canada celebrates its Thanksgiving on the first Monday in October, so these inns might be a little less crowded on Thanksgiving weekends.

The Potawatomi Inn charges by the bed, not per person. Its rates are \$32.55 for a room with one double bed, \$37.80 with two double beds. There are special packages for groups. Contact the inn at R.R. 2, Box 180, Angola, Ind. 46703, or call (219) 833-1077.



State park lodging like at the Potawatomi Inn in Indiana can also be found in Ohio and Kentucky.

MICKY JONES