

Suburban Life

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A bride in white, lace, tulle, and glitters, often the finale at fashion shows has come to be a tradition. Not every show has a bride, but those that do draw more than a few sighs from the audience. At the Radisson Plaza fashion show for the forthcoming Adat Shalom show, Zina Gault, resident of Birmingham modeled the bridal gown.

Staff photos by Jerry Zolynsky



"When I arrived in America, I could speak six languages, English wasn't one of them."
— Leah Marks

Pizzaz

Producer's shows put the frosting on fashion's cake

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

LEAH MARKS wore the clothes of the world's top designers when working as a top model in Israel, London, Rome and Paris.

After coming to this area, when she viewed the shows paraded down the Detroit runways she felt there was a little something to be desired. In a few short years, Marks has given new meaning to the term "fashion show" for residents of Southeastern Michigan.

Billed as Leah Marks Productions or Leah Marks Fashion Extravanzas, her models keep time with fast-paced choreography to fast-paced background music in a fast-paced show.

Marks has used dry ice machines and snow machines, children and their pets, mimes and clowns, backgrounds of slides or kaleidoscopes of changing color, special lighting effects, to best show off the fashions at hand.

She'll be using lasers on the runway for the first time when Albert Nipon comes to show his collection in an extravaganza she's producing for Juvenile Diabetes Association in Fairlane June 24.

The West Bloomfield resident has joked that she has sometimes had to use whatever background was handy.

Last year Marks teamed up with Michigan Opera to raise money for AIDS research. The company was playing at the Fisher at the time so Marks wrapped her entire production around the "Pirates of Penzance" set that just happened to be there.

On another occasion, a benefit for Children's Hospital sponsored by a fitness club was staged on a tennis court.

A MARKS PRODUCTION is always staged for a charity, and generally includes the fashions from a half-dozen boutiques or specialty shops.

"I try to match up the merchants and their fashions with the audience that the charity will bring in," she said.

"This might be the high ticket items or the modest-priced, or the specialists in children's clothes or petite sizes, large sizes — whatever."

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it takes to get the right combination.

"I am the producer and director and work with a crew of between 30-40, the best models, choreographer, musicians, technicians, stage managers there are. I oversee everything but selling the tickets. That's the agency's job."

"I have gotten door prizes or raffle prizes for the organization, and have even gotten a celebrity or two to enhance their fund-raiser."

"I don't promise anybody that they are going to make money, but they always do."

"The merchants all come back and even call me asking to be in my next show. Most of the merchants are from the northwest suburbs — Farmington, Southfield, Birmingham, West Bloomfield and more, a lot of them along the Northwestern Highway strip."

"As for the organizations, I must be doing something right, because I get a lot of repeat business."

"I'm going to be back at Adat Shalom for a show May 9 (sponsored by the congregation's sisterhood). The United Negro College Fund has asked for a second show that's scheduled for May 13 and I'm doing another show for Michigan Lung Association in September."

MARKS IS A native of Israel who began her modeling career at age 15, a career that was interrupted for a mandatory 18-month stint in the Israeli Army.

Some of her show business savvy may come from the influence of her mother, a noted singer and cantor in Israel.

Of her career in the Israel Defense Forces, Marks said: "It was no picnic, but I'll say this. I think every 18-year-old would benefit by serving in the reserves. They would learn what work and responsibility and protecting their country is all about — and just learn to appreciate life more," she said.

Modeling jobs were easy to come by for the tall, dark slim woman with the dramatic and exotic good looks.

"It was a fascinating life of excitement, adventure, fashion, travel," she said.

"When I arrived in America, I could speak six languages. English was not one of them, but Yiddish was. Yiddish always served me best wherever I went and it was my Yiddish that got me accepted by the garment industry."

All of her past experiences as a model and in the garment industry, even being a tough soldier when she had to, goes into the shows she produces here.

"I was the one who knocked the narration out of fashion shows here. I am very happy to say that any fashion show without narration, which only slows things down, has been copied from me."

"So much has been copied from me that I have to continually keep creating something new. All of my shows — all of them — are different from one another," she said.

Shows put producer in gear

By Shirlee Rose Iden
staff writer

It may take Leah Marks two months or more to produce one of her fashion extravaganzas, but no matter how great the effort, it's all over in 45 minutes.

Marks, who commands a group of models like the ex-army sergeant she is, knows how to put together all the parts that make up a dazzling show.

What's more, she is expert at dealing with the dozens of local merchants who like being part of the

splendor when a Leah Marks Production is onstage.

With a show in the offing, Marks goes into high gear, making contacts, (writing contracts), hiring models, technicians, lighting people, a choreographer and so on. Rehearsals are a vital part of the effort, tying together

er the creative ideas precisely worked out, and charging the models with the electricity that Marks Production models are noted for.

COMING UP on Wednesday, May 9 is a show for the Sisterhood of Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills. The calendar is marked for a rehearsal at the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Southfield.

General Manager Bill Kirkhoff is contacted to make a large rehearsal hall and other space available.

The rehearsal brings together all those who combine their talents to make the show work, from child models to producer Leah.

In another enterprise, Cocktails and a strolling dinner will start up the gala for the June 24 Juvenile Diabetes Foundation event at the Fairlane Town Center.

This one's a special with elegant Albert Nipon, designer attending, showing his own fall collection.

"For this show, we are going to use lasers for the first time," Marks said.

Live mannequins showing the niceties of the nineties above the fountain at Fairlane Town Center are scheduled for March 23, 30, and 30 and April 6, 20, and 27.

The productions highlight the latest in fashions from every corner of Oakland country and even further.

Harry Kossin's of Southfield regularly shows up scale men's fashion in Marks's shows.

Valentina's of Applegate is a repeat participant as are Bogidim and Sally's Designs of West Bloomfield.

SHOWCASING HIS fine jewelry creations in Marks' productions, John Darakjian Jewellers of Southfield brings on the dazzle and glitz.



David Dunning, fashion coordinator for Leah Marks Productions, directs the models as Marks watches and adds her directions.