

PASADENA -- Wanna be in pictures?

Lights - camera - action

Pasadena firm's exhibit puts you in the pictures

By Kevin Smith, Staff Writer

If you stop in at the Chicago Museum of Science & Industry you can star in, produce and take home your own professional-looking movie -courtesy of Chick Russell Communications.

The Pasadena-based company designed and helped install the one-of-a-kind interactive exhibit, dubbed "Action! An Adventure in Moviemaking."

"We've actually created a soundstage in the museum with sets that we had Paramount Studios build," said company President Chick Russell, 52, of Pasadena, who wrote and produced the script. "Visitors can run the equipment and be in a movie that they make.



"Participants create their own three-minute film trailer called "Escape From Zircon," a mistaken-identity thriller, with the help of museum personnel who serve as the directors and know how to operate the movie-making equipment.

The 5,000-square-foot soundstage features several sets, including a Paris cafe, a tropical beach and Zircon's underwater lair, which looks like a sunken oil rig filled with pipes and valves

The temporary exhibit opened at the Chicago Museum of Science & Industry on May 28 and will remain through Jan. 9 when it will begin moving to other locations throughout the country, said John Beckman, manager of temporary exhibits at the museum.

"It's been great," he said. "We were looking to develop a new temporary exhibit because we weren't really happy with what has been out there. We tested our audiences to see what they might be interested in -- and going to the movies scored very high.

"Beckman said the interactive exhibit garnered a 6.1 rating on the museum's stringent 7-point scale.

"Ninety-five percent of the people we interviewed said they'd recommend it to a friend," he said. "It's very unique among movie attractions, whether you're talking about theme parks or movie studios."

Once participants complete their part, trained museum personnel use a computerized editing system to add prerecorded music and sound effects as well as scenes from real Hollywood movies to create a seamless, professional-looking product.

"They can go to a store in the museum and buy a DVD of their film and they can also access it online so they can send it to their friends," Russell said.

Richard Giss, a retail analyst with DeLoit, a New York-based accounting firm, said interactive exhibits have a value that extends well beyond the traditional museum experience." There are only so many things you can look at," Giss said. "Most people like to engage by having some type of exhibit where there is interaction — you are forced to connect."

For more information on Chick Russell Communications, visit www.chickrussell.com .

Kevin Smith can be reached at (626) 962-8811, Ext. 2701
or by e-mail at kevin.smith@sgvn.com