



Brenda Rees / PencilNews

A group of kids work on their radio show.

Series recreates radio shows

By Brenda Rees, PencilNews correspondent

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. – Saturday mornings in Los Angeles, kids like 9-year old Natalie Reyes and her 11-year old brother Nicolas are magically transformed into cowboys, English sleuths, Turkish crusaders, hard-boiled detectives, subterranean creatures and evil blob aliens.

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BUT THESE KIDS aren't assuming new identities via the Internet or acting on stage. They are discovering theatrical ambitions in a very simple way – using spoken words and sound effects to create a new version of an old [PENCILBLUES](#) genre: dramatic radio plays.

Sponsored by the Museum of Television and Radio in Beverly Hills, “Re-creating Radio” is an ongoing series of Saturday morning workshops that introduces and reinvents the art of radio productions for new generations of kids who didn't grow up listening to the adventures of “The Lone Ranger” or the antics of “Little Orphan Annie.”

“It's really cool,” says Nicolas who has attended all seven different radio show workshops and particularly liked being a good guy in the Superman show. “I like doing both the voice acting and the sound effects. It's something different every time I go. It's not the same

thing over and over.”

“I like the acting parts,” confesses Natalie. “It’s a great thing to do and I tell my friends to go and try it. It’s really fun.”

“Re-creating Radio” started more than four years ago and came from similar workshops held at New York’s Museums of Television and Radio.

“The workshops are structured pretty much how radio programs were originally done,” says Tony Palermo, director of the sessions who also wrote the seven scripts and composed the music.

While today’s kids might never have sat down to listen to a radio play, they do come to the workshops already familiar with the idea of radio shows, which has surprised many involved in the program. Palermo credits animated programs and books on tape with keeping kids in touch with voice acting.

“In radio, you can be whatever you want to be,” says Carla Fantozzi, deputy director for the museum. “It doesn’t matter what you look like but you have to use your voice to communicate character and emotion.”

Palermo says his scripts only differ in one way from original radio shows – more characters and action. Ranging from science fiction and horror to soap opera and super hero, the scripts all contain slang dialogue which reflect the period.

For example, the script for “Rick Lowell, Private Eye” contains a glossary of phrases such as “high rollers” (frequent gambler who uses large sums of money), “built like an icebox” (a large man), “blackjack” (a short leather covered club used by criminals) and “keyhole peeper” (a private detective).

After auditions and casting the plays, Palermo shows the participants a video clip of how performers years ago put on a radio program. A startling array of voices comes out of only four performers’ mouths and the sound effects men smoothly maneuver around Rube Goldberg-type noise machines, later crinkling paper and banging on huge sheets of metal.

Some of the sound effects machinery – such as doorbells, buzzers and old telephone dials – have been donated by NBC radio in New York and from Cliff Thorsness, a sound effects creator for CBS radio in Los Angeles.

Once in the studio, voice performers are instructed how to speak into microphones while the sound effects team practice footsteps, fight scenes and train engine noises. After the cue rehearsal, Palermo gives last minute instructions and then it’s show time.

Music up. Scripts in position and Palermo points to the announcer and the play is underway. All in all, the show takes about 20 minutes. When the recording is done, the entire cast hears a playback. A week later, each participant receives a cassette copy of the show in the mail.

“The workshops have been a fun way to spend a Saturday morning,” says Graham Heacock from Los Angeles, “and for the price of only \$5 a session, it’s a huge bargain.”

“Re-creating Radio” workshops are held Saturday mornings 10a.m.-12p.m. at the Museum of Television and Radio, 465 North Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills. Workshops are for children ages 9-14. Cost of the workshop is \$5 per person or \$125 for groups up to 20. Reservations are required.

The radio studio is also available for private parties. For more information and reservations, call (310) 786-1014.



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