

Haunted Houses Will Scare Up Some Thrills

By Rick Ruggles

World-Herald Staff Writer

Simple effects, not special effects, make a haunted house effective, according to some of those who design spooky places for Halloween.

You just can't beat dark hallways, shrill sounds and monsters in hiding when it comes to creating a haunted house, said Brad Finkle, who has been creating haunted houses for 12 years. He has helped set up the Omaha Community Playhouse Stone Castle of Terror for five years.

Elaborate special effects usually fail, he said, because people hurrying through a haunted house cannot appreciate them.

A couple of years ago, for example, Finkle said he devised an attraction using lights and mirrors that created the illusion of one person being transformed into another. It wasn't a big hit, he said.

"Most of them didn't work out," he said of his efforts at extensive special effects. "Not as well as a monster jumping out of a corner."

Randy Kosmicki, chairman of the Grand Island (Neb.) Jaycees Haunted House, agreed that simplicity is the key to creating a scary place.

Plenty of creatures lurk in the dark corners in the Jaycees' haunted house, he said. One year, a patron fainted at the mere sight of a creature cranking up a chain saw, Kosmicki recalled.

Mark Butler, who helps put together the Hastings (Neb.) Jaycees Haunted House, described some fairly elaborate attractions at the Hastings horror show: A pendulum appears to be slicing a person in half and there is an apparent electric-chair execution.

The latter trick, he said, is accomplished with a pulley that serves as a vibrator on the spectators' bench. Nevertheless, Butler said the Hastings Haunted House elicits a lot more screams from simple effects.

"Yeah," he said, "the basic stuff is what scares them. The schemes we're using aren't that elaborate, really. We'll have extra people around, hidden in any corner we can fit them."

In Kearney, Neb., college sophomore Mitch Johnson said a willing audience is easy to frighten. He is helping create the Kearney Stairway to Terror, which will be found in the basement of radio station HITS-106.

Omahan Finkle, who for years set up a haunted house of sorts in his parents' front yard, said he shoots for originality, too.

At the Stone Castle of Terror, there is a truck with a monster in the driver's seat. Suddenly, the truck's lights blaze and the horn blares.

"It doesn't take that much to make that effect," Finkle said. "It's very simple."

Here are some of the haunted houses and other scary Halloween attractions around the Midlands:

Nebraska Special Olympics-Lite 96 Mystery Manor, 716 N. 18th St.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Open through Oct. 31. Operated by and for Special Olympics.

Admission: \$4, discount coupons at Taco John's.

Includes a maze, library, ambulance and slide to exit the house.

Haunted Hotel California, 15th and California Streets.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 7 p.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Open through Oct. 31.

Admission: \$3.50. Not advised for children younger than 5.

Social Settlement Association of Omaha Haunted House, 4860 Q St.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Open Oct. 27 only.

Admission: Donation requested of \$1 for adults, 50 cents for children.

Features a guillotine, maze, graveyard and chain saw killer.

Scream in the Dark Haunted House, Southroads Mall, 1001 Fort Crook Road North, Bellevue.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 7 p.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Presented by and for Youth for Christ Youth Guidance. Open through Oct. 31.

Admission: \$3.50 adults, \$2.50 children.

Also offers the Children's Fun House open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and Oct. 28 and 29, and 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Halloween. Features magicians, clowns, face-painting and other attractions. Admission is \$2.50; adults with paying children get in free.

Omaha Community Playhouse-KOIL Vintage Stone Castle of Terror, 20th and Center Streets.

Hours: 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 7:30 p.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Open through Oct. 31. Proceeds go to the Community Playhouse volunteer program.

Admission: \$4. Features a maze, a room with nine doors and a killer truck.

Academy of Terror Haunted Barracks, 11000 N. 72nd St.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 7 p.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Open through Oct. 31.

Admission: Donation of \$3 requested.

Boys Club of Omaha-Henry Ogram Club Haunted Forest Walk, 4101 N. 17th St., Carter Lake.

Hours: Open 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. only on Oct. 25. Proceeds from \$1 admission will benefit the Laker Keystone Club.



Rich Janda/World-Herald

A werewolf portrayed by John Badura haunts the Stone Castle of Terror Haunted House Part V... The haunted house at 20th and Center Streets is sponsored by the Omaha Community Playhouse and KOIL.

Features Mr. Chain Saw, Cave of Doom, Haunted Bathhouse.

Carter Lake Spook Station, 2907 N. Ninth St., Carter Lake.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday; 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Halloween, except 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Oct. 27 and 28. To benefit Carter Lake Volunteer Fire Department.

Admission: \$1.50 donation requested. **Lincoln Jaycees Nightmare on O Street**, 11th and O Streets.

Hours: 7:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. through Oct. 31.

Admission: \$4. Not recommend for those younger than 13.

Columbus Jaycees-KWVG FM Haunted House, at the ice-skating house in Pawnee Park, Columbus, Neb.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and Oct. 27-31.

Admission: \$3 adults, \$2 high school students and younger.

Features Freddie Krueger, a maze and a mad scientist.

Grand Island Jaycees Haunted House, Grand Island Mall, Grand Island, Neb.

Hours: 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Oct. 25 and 26; 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. Oct. 27; 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. Oct. 28; 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Oct. 29; 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Oct. 30; and 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. Halloween night.

Admission: \$2.50. Proceeds will benefit the United Way and St. Jude Children's Hospital.

Features a maze, graveyard, Jason from "Friday the 13th" horror films, Freddie Krueger and others.

KQ 106 Stairway to Terror, 23rd and Central Streets, Kearney, Neb.

Hours: 7:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Oct. 27, 28, 30 and 31. Proceeds will be given to the United Way.

Admission: \$3 for adults, \$2 for children ages 12 and younger.

Features Freddie Krueger, graveyard, other attractions.

Hastings Jaycees Haunted House, 317 W. Fifth St.

Hours: 8 to midnight tonight through Sunday and Oct. 26-31.

Admission: \$2. Features a maze, pendulum room, crazy car, electric chair, chain saw.

Chadron Business and Professional Women's Haunted House, second floor of City Hall, Chadron, Neb.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Open only Oct. 27.

Admission: 50 cents. The house is for children ages 10 and younger only.

Features ghosts and other items.

Council Bluffs Jaycees-Pottawattamie County Historical Society Haunted Jail, 226 Pearl St., Council Bluffs.

Hours: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. today, Wednesday and Thursday; 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Oct. 27, 28 and 31. Haunted Jail closed Monday and Tuesday.

Admission: \$2.50 for visitors ages 14 and older, \$1.50 for those ages 4 to 13, free for those ages 3 and younger.

Features Jack the Ripper, gallows, surgery room.