

# Glossary

## An Exploration Of Terms And Ideas

The discussion of Grounds Entertainment uses terms which may not be familiar to those reading this material; hence the need for this glossary. There are many shades of gray in trying to define the subject of entertainers and various forms of entertainment. The definitions of the terms in this glossary explore these shades of meaning and ways they may be expanded and/or applied to Grounds Acts and Attractions. This information is intended to serve as a communication aid when dealing with this book's subject matter. It is our intention to help you to form your **own working definitions** for the general concept of Grounds Entertainment.

## Classifying Types of Acts

### Strolling Acts -

This type of entertainment is also referred to as Walk-About Acts. This is a form of entertainment that is "on stage" as soon as it enters the public's view. By the time a Strolling Act is seen by the public, the performance has already begun; little or no set-up in public is needed before the show starts. Strolling Acts are especially valuable to venues with limited performance facilities because they can perform by merely moving about the grounds. Examples of this type of act are Stilt-Walkers, Walking Puppet Stages™, Clowns, Mimes, Strolling Musicians.

In brief: *They provide the show as they go.*

### Found-Space Acts -

These are acts who have the least demanding technical requirements for performing a specific show. Their performance area can be any space they "find" that provides the necessities for their act such as an area that won't interfere with the desirable crowd flow, that perhaps provides shade for the audience and/or performer, as well as a minimum of distractions. Such an area can be "found" under a tree, on the lawn, or in the food court. Once the performers have arrived at the proper area they set up their equipment, gather a crowd, and perform. Examples of this type of performing artist are a juggler who sets up equipment to begin performing, or a magician who finds a shady spot to put his magic table to begin a show, or the solo musician who plays a tune for a family having lunch at a picnic table. Found-Space Acts are very handy for filling in dead areas of your event with entertainment, for attracting crowds to slow merchandising areas, or pulling people into an under-appreciated exhibition area.

Some Strolling Acts can also function as “Found-Space” acts. For example; a clown who entertains while strolling might also do a ten minute pocket magic show when they find a place for a crowd to gather comfortably.

In brief: *They perform in any suitable place they can find.*

### **Self-Contained Acts -**

These are related to Found-Space Acts but generally provide a more elaborate array of equipment. Minimally, a Self-Contained Act provides a setting or backdrop, props of some sort, and a sound system. Sometimes they will provide seating, lighting, and/or shade cover. There is a wide range of variety in Self-Contained Acts, but the one factor they should all share is that they make minimal demands on your facility. Self-Contained Acts can expand your event’s resources.

In brief: *They provide the place for the show, and the show.*

### **Free Stage Acts -**

In terms of this *Management Guide*, “free stage” does not refer to whether the show is free of charge to the fair goer, or a separate, paid ticket. For the purpose of our discussion it means a facility that is “free” or open, for use by performers. The “Free Stage” can range from a platform with a small sound system surrounded by hay bales, to an arena with a monster size sound and lighting installation. This type of act needs the support elements that a controlled performing location affords such as seating and focus for the audience, a platform stage above ground level or otherwise separated from the audience, technical support such as electrical power, sound and lights, and possibly dressing rooms and equipment storage areas. Examples of Free Stage Acts include everything from major headliners to small local performing groups. What all these acts have in common is, that to one extent or another, your event is responsible for providing equipment for what it takes to get the show on. Familiar examples of Free Stage Acts are community dance schools, and country western bands. More unusual presentations might include a hypnotist, public service presentation, ventriloquist, stand-up comic, or animal act. Free Stage Acts, especially major headliners, can really bring the people into your event, but they also can really tie up your event’s resources.

In brief: *You provide the place, they provide the show.*

### **Body Suit Characters -**

A theme park term which refers to those “larger than life” characters who stroll the event grounds, usually with an assistant/walker. Generally, these characters are so large that the operator inside is completely hidden from view, which often impairs their vision. Examples of popular trade-marked Body Suit Characters are, Mickey Mouse, the Easter Bunny, Barney, Smokey Bear, or other costumed animals and corporate mascots.

In brief: *These characters are great for handshakes and hugs.*

### **Attractions -**

These are physical elements which create areas of interest by the display of any novelty, mechanical, or educational exhibit; i.e. a petting zoo, log-house, frozen shark, antique tractors, three-legged cow, etc. By definition their purpose is to attract people all by themselves, whether free or charging a fee for admission. Generally they can be classified among the “Self-Contained” Grounds Acts.

In brief: *You provide the locations, they draw people to them.*

### **Craft Demonstrator -**

This is an attraction that involves a performing crafts person. It is informative, educational, and allows for interaction between the fair going public and the demonstrator. Examples are: blacksmith, weaver, cook, skate boarder, quilter, carver; even first-aid personnel.

In brief: *You provide the locations, they demonstrate their skills.*

### **Variety Acts -**

A general term that describes performers who use (or demonstrate) a variety of performing skills including but not limited to: music, singing, dancing, magic, juggling, circus and/or vaudeville skills.

### **Musical Acts -**

A general term which refers to acts who sing and/or play musical instruments.

### **Community Acts -**

Generally refers to entertainment on an amateur level. Grouped in this category are dance schools, band competitions, gymnastic demonstrations, senior’s kitchen bands, cheerleading competitions, beauty pageants, talent shows, and other activities of interest to the immediate community.

**NOTE:** To a greater or lesser extent all entertainment forms are incorporated in the four categories of : Strolling, Found-Space, Self-Contained or Free Stage. By knowing your event and to what uses your particular facility lends itself, even the bleakest areas can be dressed up through the proper combination of Strolling, Found-Space, Self-Contained and Free Stage shows.

## **Specialized Terms and Ideas**

### **Atmosphere Entertainment -**

A term most often used in the theme park industry which refers to the use of entertainment elements to augment the design elements of different locations within the park. Examples of Atmosphere Entertainment in theme parks are; employees costumed as cowboys, trappers and miners in the Old West Area, and pre-recorded Dixieland music in the Roaring 20's area. In the fair and festival industry this term is interchangeable with the terms "Grounds Acts" and "Free Acts". Included under this more generic heading of "Atmosphere Entertainment" are Strolling Entertainers, Bandstand Acts, Body Suit Characters, and Crafts Demonstrations because **they all add to the entertainment atmosphere of the event.**

### **Destination Point Show -**

This term refers to a performance at a location where the viewer specifically goes in order to see the show. The Destination Point Show makes use of defined seating areas, (could be hay bales, grass, or actual seats) and there is a definite separation between performer and viewer (risers, bandstand, a rope, or other barricade). Examples of Destination Point shows are, a rodeo in the grandstand, a group on a bandstand, an auction in an arena, or a lecture in a tent.

### **Platform Stage -**

This is a performance facility in its simplest form. These platforms range from a simple four foot by eight foot riser unit to sixty foot by forty foot mechanical elevated platforms. These performance areas may, or may not, have a sound system, lighting, or a back stage, but usually have access to electrical power. Often the audience for a platform show stands, or sits on the grass. Platforms are valuable because of their ease of set-up and flexibility. They can be adapted for use by musical acts, variety acts or other community activities, and easily decorated to support any theme.

### **Bandstands -**

These facilities are the most common on fairgrounds. They are often permanent facilities, used year after year, and familiar to the fair goer. Bandstands usually provide a shade covering for the performer, a back wall, good quality sound system and general area lighting. The audience area at a bandstand usually has seating available; chairs, benches, bleachers or merely bales of hay.

### **Stages -**

These performance areas are more sophisticated than bandstands. Usually a stage has a backdrop and/or main curtain, is more enclosed than a bandstand, and often located indoors. More sophisticated sound and lighting control capabilities make stages the preferred areas for performances demanding closer attention to detail and a better focus for a larger number of audience members, such as plays, dance recitals and headline artists.

### **360, 180, 90 degree viewing -**

This is a concept of show presentation which addresses the fact that various acts need to be physically viewed in different ways. The best way to explain this concept is with examples:

- Acts and attractions that are best viewed from all sides, that is to say 360 degrees, include fireworks, a stilt-walker, a circus act in the center ring, two jugglers passing clubs in the middle of a crowd.
- An 180 degree viewing relation works well with acts that are on a stage, such as bands, marionette shows and plays.
- A 90 degree viewing angle works for acts of a more intimate nature such as close-up magicians, caricature artists, and storytellers.

### **“Set” or “Show Set” -**

This is the amount of time an artist or act spends actually performing. For example, a Strolling Act may be scheduled to do four “sets” between noon and six o’clock.

### **Interactive Entertainment -**

This is the performance style that allows the ultimate possibility for direct involvement between the performer and the audience. Audience members may become part of the performance and are an essential part of the show. Examples are a child hugging a clown, a volunteer helping a magician, or a spectator asking questions of a crafts demonstrator.

### **Reactive Entertainment -**

This is a performance style in which the audience basically reacts to the performers; their job is to watch the presentation. Examples would be the crowd reacting to the competition at a truck pull, or the show being done by a headliner in the grandstand.

## **Common Business Terms**

### **Artist/Performer -**

The actual person or persons who appear before the public in the performance of the show. Whether it's KoKo the Clown or Kenny Rodgers, talent is the final point in the structure of show production.

### **Agent -**

Agents act as the direct booking representatives for their group of artists/performers. They may function as the exclusive representative of the artist, or just be one of many non-exclusive, or even unlicensed, agents carrying the artist's resume to the market place. No additional fees or commissions are charged to the fair because the check usually comes to the artist, who in turn pays the commission (10% - 15%) directly to the agent. Remember, agents work on commission and prices for any particular show may vary depending on the arrangement between the artist and that particular agency.

### **Personal Manager -**

The personal manager functions as a liaison or buffer between the artist and the buyer. The personal manager often enlists the aid of agents, talent brokers and promoters to further the employment of the artist, but these buyers deal with the personal manager, not the performer. The following is an example from my personal experience. I used to road manage Wolfman Jack, well-known radio and television personality who has since gone on to rock 'n roll heaven. Wolfman's personal manager used four agents. One agent had exclusive representation in television deals, one for films, one for radio shows and commercials, another for fairs and theme park events; but each finally had to deal with his personal manager. The

services rendered by a personal manager may be significant in scope, encompassing everything from selection of the artist's wardrobe, to arranging all their affairs in public and personal life. The manager is paid based on the income generated by the artist (20% - 50% and beyond).

### **Talent Broker -**

This is a person or company who arranges for talent to be contracted and often serves as an on-site talent coordinator as well. The broker is paid a fee or commission by the event organizers to locate and hire talent within the budget and artistic decisions made for the event. The broker's job is to contact the artist, their appropriate agents or personal managers, in order to fill the show roster. A broker is not an agent and should receive no money from the artist; although in practice this is a subject open to debate!

### **Producer -**

This is a person or company who handles all the show production details for your event. They book the talent, provide or coordinate promotional material, contract for sound and lighting companies, coordinate show production, and provide other support and expertise to ensure a smooth running event. Producers are often paid a "package" price for their services and work directly with the fair as their representative through on-site management. Producers generally do not take a commission from any of the acts they book or agents they use.

### **Promoter -**

Promoters are not hired by the performer (as a personal manager or agent is), or by the fair (as a broker or producer is). The promoter is usually an independent entity who buys, produces and sells admission to a show. Often the promoter hires the facility outright on a daily flat fee rental basis. Sometimes they will offer to enter into an income vs expense, or percentage split arrangement with the fair, giving the fair a greater chance of profit, but also of the potential shortfall.