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+ *What's On*

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What's On

SPELLBOUND

Crazy kids. Zany antics. The wild and the whacky come together in the *Aladdin Xtravaganza*

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WHACKY'S THE word. From crazy kids to zany antics, from wilder improvisation to bright spark kids, *The Aladdin Xtravaganza* is corny, captivating, classy and sprinkled with colourful adjectives. "It's a very loud experience," quips director Raell Padamsee, who manages a word or two in between the hula-baloos.

The director after some larynx-wrenching yelps arrives at some modicum of sanity. And things finally start rolling.

"Let's take it from the top," says the boss and the first scene kicks off. The Emperor of China in all his fatness, searches for his beautiful and very bold daughter So Shy, who has eloped to marry the character of her dreams. That is followed by the genie's crazy antics, as fit after crazy fit, he casts his spell.

But who are the magicians who

Highness has script in hand as he booms out his lines. "Neville Godiwalla, the initial choice, dropped out and he (Kunal) has joined us the day before yesterday. A last minute snag, but we are coping," says Raell.

The fun doesn't stop with the play. A host of activities have been planned to get children from across the city involved.

Explains Raell, "Like as part of our Aladdin parade, we pile on to two cars with balloons, part of the cast, costumes et al and travel to different schools in the area. Kids from Cathedral, Green Lawns and others in South Bombay that are open will get masks.

"They have to colour them and bring them along for the play and the best drawing will win a prize. This way the excitement and involvement among non-participants is greater."

Another creative fun event is the



Children at play... a still from *Aladdin Xtravaganza*

crecendo, with improvisation holding all the punches. Boxy the bulldog barked his way to the rehearsal. Sniffing and snorting, he made his presence felt and kept getting in the way, in a nice way. But sadly, Boxy has no connection whatsoever to the play — he is

Raell's personal possession.

So, on go the preparations, the Emperor's robe needs an inch hemmed in and the children have to assemble their costumes, the play needs some finishing touches and everybody is busybodying around in a frenzy.

Perhaps a prelude to an energetic, engrossing and an enthralling experience.

The Aladdin Xtravaganza is on at the Sophia Theatre on November 20 at 4.30 pm, and November 21 at 10 am.



Director... Raell Padamsee

made this magic possible? "It's a creative team venture," admits Bubbles Gursahani who along with Rehaan Engineer has written the script.

Veena Dhandhia has choreographed and created the costumes, the technical director is Jay Chinoy, set designer is Mita Bhagat and the sets are executed by Rehmatani and Sameer of Shobiz.

The kids' parents too are active participants helping out with costumes, ideas, and a lot of encouragement.

But at the pulsating core lies the cast. There are 50 children and four adults who get into 120 costumes do their thing on six sets. Cyrus Broacha is the all-powerful genie, Kavita Sahni is Aladdin's mother 'Twanky', Kunal Vijaykar plays the Emperor of China, Vrajesh is Uncle Abanazar, Advait is the MTV monkey... the list goes on.

We pick up action at the rubber duck, bubble bath scene five days before the show, when the Emperor waddles splash splash in his bathtub. "Where are the bubbles?" he sulks, "off with the head of the manufacturers."

Kunal Vijaykar who plays his

'Rewrite a fairy tale' contest. Things like what if the seven dwarfs were seven giants, or the slipper never really fit Snow White and the wolf actually ate Red Riding Hood. Your favourite tale can be given a new twist, anyway you like.

As the shows go on, the contests get more exciting, like the making of a 3-D Aladdin or a Chinese cap, etc. These extravagant proportions had simple beginnings.

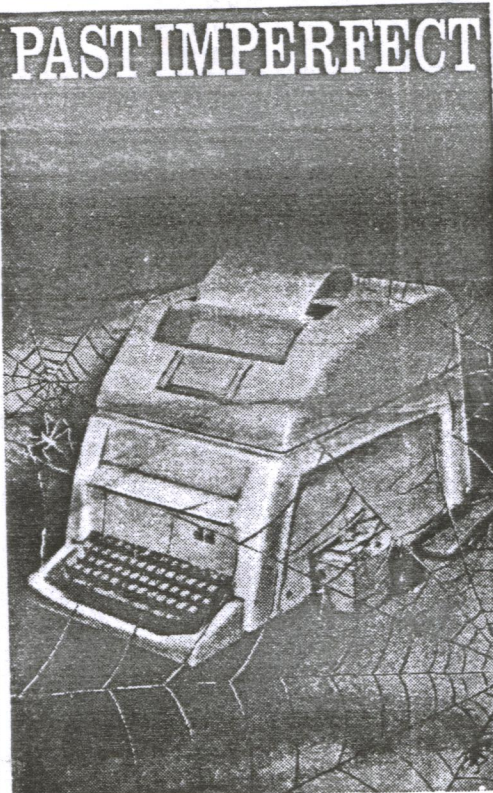
IT WAS a nondescript workshop like any other that started in July 1993 and suddenly during one brainstorming session, it was decided to actually put their creative forces together and act out a play. "It was a case of why not, as we set the deadline at mid-November and ain't I happy we've stuck to it!" says the relieved Raell.

So some three months and many practice sessions later *The Aladdin Xtravaganza* has taken off.

The excitement and commotion at a rehearsal spoke for the spontaneity of the effort.

The high points of the evening being the WWF, Michael Jackson and Madonna scenes.

Just when the wrestling reached a



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