

THE I. Q. ZOO

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The I. Q. Zoo format has two main parts, an automated exhibit and a staged show. The automated exhibit takes place in a semi-darkened room (or rooms), the walls of which are lined with glass fronted inset enclosures or "shadow-boxes." The animals perform within these enclosures. The performance may be completely automated with the act being initiated by a timer, and the narration supplied by magnetic tape, or manually, with each act being triggered and narrated by a guide. The audience moves from shadow box to shadow box, either following the guide or the auditory instructions of the tape and visual clues supplied by lights in each act as it is activated.

The stage show also takes place in a semi-darkened room. The stand-up audience views the show presented by a guide on a raised stage. The two shows are presented sequentially during light and normal visitor loads. When peak traffic causes crowding, both shows are presented simultaneously. Visitors enter at any time during the show sequence and leave when they have seen the entire show, or they can stay longer if they wish.

Let's follow a group as they tour the I. Q. Zoo. By happenstance, they enter just as the automated show is about to begin - - -

On this occasion the automated show happens to be in the fully automatic mode. All of the shadow box windows are darkened and the animals are concealed. Window Number 1 lights up and a bright voice invites everyone's attention to the colorfully lit technicolor setting. Describing briefly the humane training methods, the taped narration sets the stage for our Home Run Chicken and our Score-Keeping Duck. After the hen hits her homerun and runs the bases, the score is duly recorded by the duck. After the colorful hen departs into the "dug-out," the scene goes dark. Window Number 2 lights up immediately, and the same gay voice entices the viewing audience to follow the action -- in this case to witness a chicken dancing a lively jog, followed by a duck in Window Number 3 beating out a loud tattoo on a snare drum. Progressing to Window Number 4 at the enthusiastic recorded voice's request, we are treated to a green-headed mallard duck playing an unmistakable "Happy Birthday" on the glowing keys of a piano illuminated by shimmering candlelight, a truly startling sight and a sound that has children applauding. Moving on, we see a bunny kissing his girlfriend, a chicken playing basketball, a rabbit hunting rabbit hunters, and several other acts.

At the conclusion of the automated show (anywhere from 9 to 12 or more acts depending on desired time interval and complexity) the recorded voice directs the audience into the next room for the stage show. The human guide takes over here and ushers the guests into the stage show room. If the traffic flow requires it, another automated show is begun while the stage show or "Punch and Judy" show is in progress. The Punch and Judy show features a chicken, rabbit, duck, a raccoon, and a human guide

or MC. Much of the show is audience participation -- card games, quizzes, and mathematical questions draw out the audience and create an intimate atmosphere. The audience is encouraged to defeat the animals but, of course, the animals can't lose the heavily but secretly rigged games (nobody seems to mind!). A highlight of the show is the basketball playing raccoon. The raccoon answers arithmetic problems or counts by making baskets. The crowd tries to figure out how its done, but of course the "obvious" signal to the raccoon is always missed, and the visitors leave mystified but thoroughly entertained.

Those who have missed any part of the automated show re-enter the automated show room. The rest exit to the gift shop as they leave the I. Q. Zoo.

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