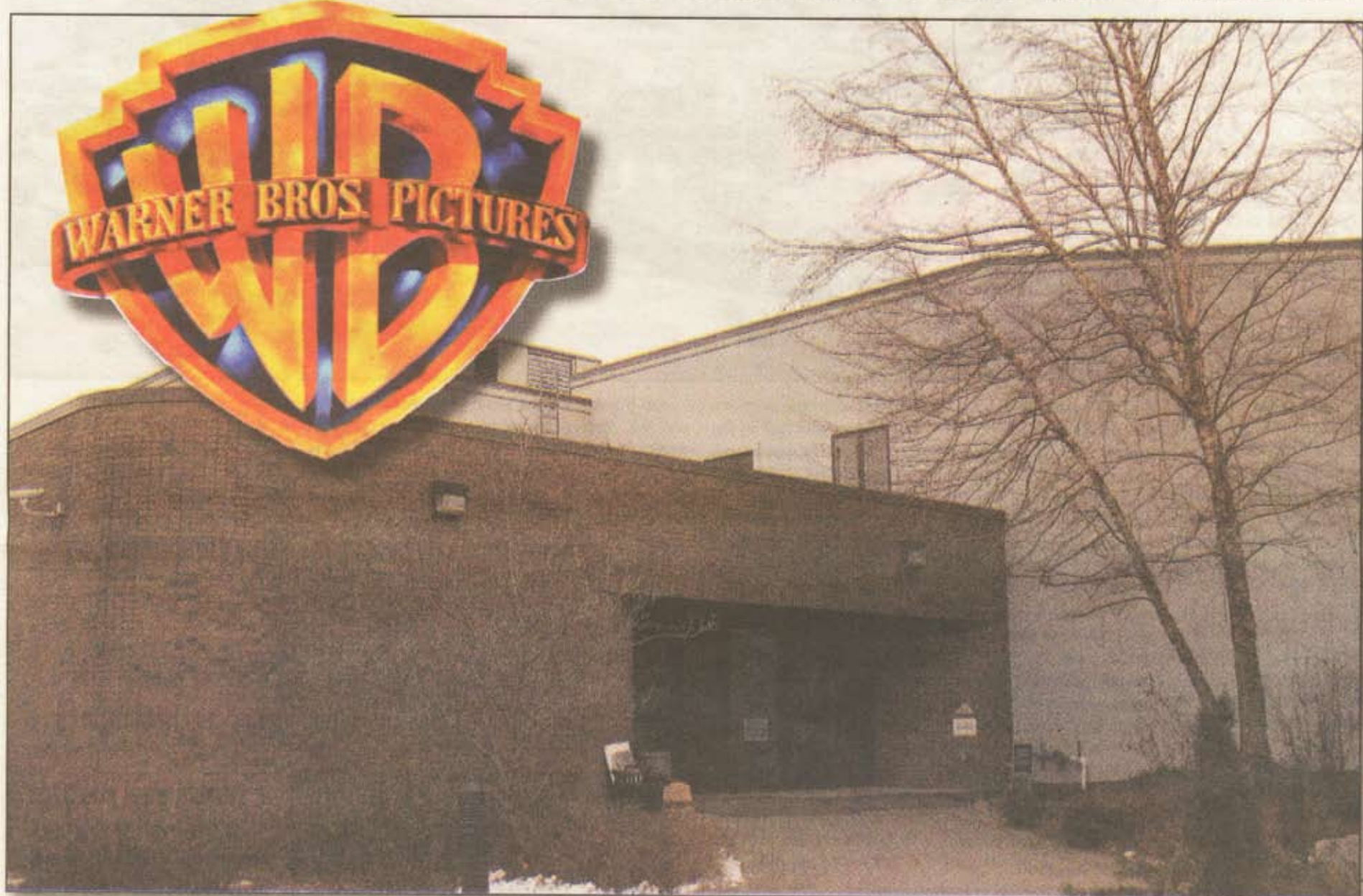


THE OBSERVER ENTERTAINMENT & DINING

Back to the '50s at Lyndhurst movie matinee



The Meadowlands Environment Center in Lyndhurst.

By Lauren DiGiacomo
Observer Correspondent

A large auditorium, a projection screen, and plenty of kids and adults of all ages were part of this past weekend's "Old Fashioned Saturday Afternoon at the Movies," an event

collaborated by the Meadowlands Museum in Rutherford and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission. Presented at the Meadowlands Environment Center in Lyndhurst, old cartoons and newsreels from the 1950s were featured, as well as a Walt Dis-

ney special and a Laurel & Hardy short.

The event was part of a new partnership between the Meadowlands Museum and the Meadowlands Commission to showcase different aspects of history in the area, noted Jackie Bunker-Lohrenz, director

of the museum. "Normally [events at the center] focus on science and theology," said Bunker-Lohrenz, who helped organize the event. She also noted that the facilities at the center are perfect for large, interactive programs. "These are history-related programs that

are fun," she said.

The afternoon at the movies was one of several experimental programs coming to the Meadowlands Environment Center for the winter session. Other events presented by the Meadowlands Museum include a session that

teaches senior citizens how to trace their genealogy using online resources, as well as another program for seniors that highlights information about the famous Morris Canal.

The afternoon opened

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with an introduction from Bunker-Lohrenz that helped to set the scene and enable the audience to picture times when there was limited diversion on weekends. "There were no TVs, no computers, and no Wiis,"

she said. "If you wanted to do something fun, you would go to the movies."

Speaker Marc Provost was on hand for the presentation, which was designed to show the audience what an afternoon at the movies was like 50 years ago. "Parents loved it because they got rid of kids for the entire afternoon," Provost said.

His expertise comes from his involvement with the international group the Serial Squadron, which is dedicated to preserving and speaking on behalf of classic movie serials. The first reel showcased was a Bugs Bunny cartoon from the 1950s. Next came four newsreels from the same time period, each segment



30-45 seconds long. The newsreels covered all manner of topics, including a Long Island woman who was learning to drive stock cars, coverage of "Triplet Convention" day at Palisades Amusement Park and a segment on French bathing suit fashions.

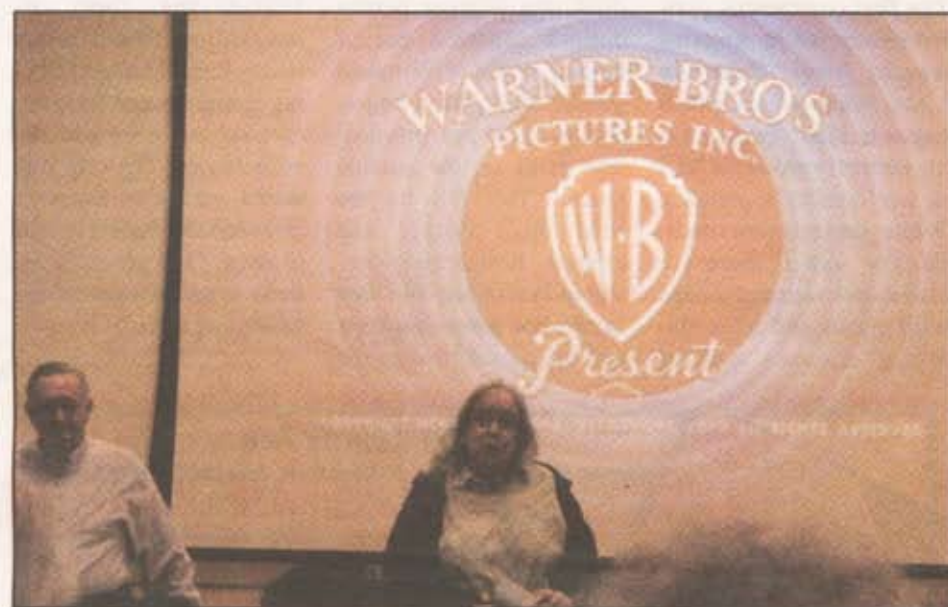
The informative, comedic newsreels were

followed by some of Walt Disney's true-life adventure stories, also created in the 1950s. Each was a half-hour documentary on different aspects of wildlife based on research done in the wild. "They would often be shown along with an animated Disney film like 'Cinderella' or 'Snow White,'" Provost said. The

documentary "Bear Country" depicted the lives of young bear cubs in the Rocky Mountains and highlighted hibernation and the lives of other creatures living in the area.

The attendance in the large auditorium-style the-

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Meadowlands Museum director Jackie Bunker-Lohrenz and speaker Marc Provost at movie matinee event.

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ater was close to 100. "It was interesting to get a glimpse of the past to see how people my age would have spent an afternoon 60 years ago," said 27-year old

Bayonne resident Thomas Weeks. "It's very interesting to see how much simpler times were. I overheard an older gentleman say, 'It was like a trip down memory lane'."

After the Disney segment, background informa-

tion was given on Laurel & Hardy, the famous comedic actors who originally worked in separate films, according to Provost, but eventually were put together in movies, forming an impressive comedic duo. "They first starred in the

silent films, then the talkies, and then shorts," Provost said. "The Music Box," a short that won the Academy Award in 1932, was shown. The presentation was concluded with a chapter from the Flash Gordon serials, which premiered in

1936, and which according to Provost, was the most popular serial for its time.

An informative and fun mode of entertainment for all ages, the afternoon at the movies was a great way to relax in an environment that fosters historical learning

and knowledge and gives the attendees something to remember. For more information on future events at the Meadowlands Environment Center, call 201-460-8300, or visit the center's website at njmeadowlands.gov/ec.