



San Francisco Chronicle

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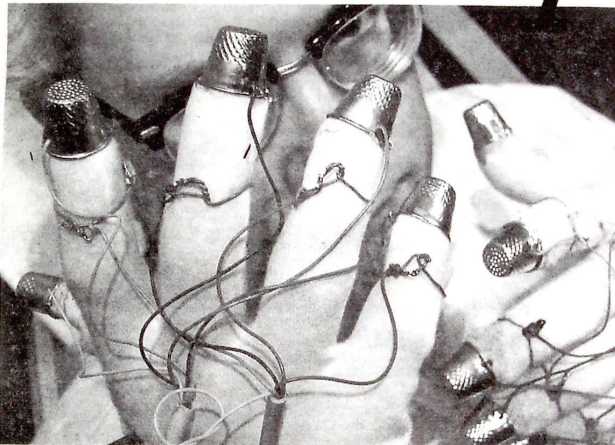
THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2006

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Family

HANDS - ON FUN

:: Maker Faire :: This fair offers more than 100 craft, science and technology projects to create.



A Thimbletron, an instrument consisting of 10 sewing thimbles and exposed wire, will be played by the Electronic Control Committee at the Maker Faire.

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Photo courtesy: Maker Faire

If only elementary school science fairs were this exciting. Promising rockets and robots, and boasting pavilions such as Weird Science and Ultimate Garage, the Maker Faire aims to take amateur experimentation out of the back room, dust it off and make it fun again.

A fantasy book for all those with the impulse to do something themselves, Make Magazine and its funky, illustrated ideas have recently given invention a veneer of hipness. With an eye to ratcheting up the appeal of hobby projects, the magazine's fair this weekend will host more than 100 exhibitions and hands-on activities designed to engage people in crafts, science and technology through participation.

Educational though they may be, many demonstrations will vie for attention based on sheer spectacle value. Take your pick of a robot hockey shootout, a bicycle rodeo or a runway show of technology-enhanced fashion by designers Emily Albinski and Diana Eng (a recent competitor on Bravo's "Project Runway?")

Other presentations will focus on pressing concerns, like the potential security benefits of using a laser pointer and a cheap digital camera to fabricate a Sibling Intrusion Detector.

When inspiration bubbles over, workshops like Zach's Cool Stuff will help imaginative small hands pour plastic molds of their fingers and create shapes out of plastic sheets. The Exploratorium's Learning Studio will teach attendees to build simple wind-up toys from glue and basic parts, and an open movie studio will allow visitors to film stop-motion animation.

For those who dream big, more complicated tutorials will present projects on building your own water rocket, musical instruments or wind-powered generator; felting; or even converting a hybrid car into a plug-in model. And that's not to mention the robots: lawn-mowing robots, vacuuming robots, steam-powered robots, you name it. No inventors' revival would be complete without them.

— Eric Smillie, 96Hours@sfgate.com

10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Sat., until 5 p.m. Sun. San Mateo Event Center, 2495 S. Delaware St., San Mateo. \$12, \$5 teens, younger than 12 free; family pass, \$25. Additional fee for some workshops. www.makezine.com/faire.