

## How two teens totally save the world

*By Stacy Trevenon--Half Moon Bay Review*

What if Earth is threatened by aliens with a whim to blow it up?

What if the only power to stop it lies in two teen blondes who live just for shopping, hair and makeup?

To find out, come see this year's Young Actors Workshop play, conceived and staged by 42 YAW students from kindergarten through 10th grade. Running this weekend, "Earth Versus the Spinkle-Fidgit, or Candi and Mandi Totally Save the World," will let you know.

The story hinges on pop singers Candi (Erinn McHale, 13,) and Mandi (Becky Schultz, 14). Offstage, the two, both eighth-graders at Cunha Intermediate School, get good grades. Onstage, they live for their pink clothes, makeup, hairstyles and shopping.

"They're kind of like dumb blondes," said McHale.

"Perky, snobby, not very smart," added Schultz.

At the beginning, they're preparing for a performance at hot nightclub Cookie's Club. But, in outer space, aboard the E.V.I.L. Spinkle-Fidgit spaceship, Capt. Heenu Hudat and his crew plan to blow up a planet - Earth.

Flash back to the nightclub, where customers see an unusual show with an animal trainer and performing wolves and dogs (all YAW students) - and headliners Candi and Mandi. Their show ends with what the audience thinks are special stage effects, but it's really the Spinkle-Fidgit landing.

The evil Capt. Hudat proceeds to take human captives to force them to watch the destruction of their planet. The film crew covering Candi and Mandi must cut to cover the Captain's plot. The wolves and dogs are turned into an army.

But in the brig, Candi and Mandi stumble upon a way to escape. They must find something else to care about besides their makeup ... like foiling the plot ... maybe.

"They care about the earth because they'd miss shopping on it," said McHale, tongue-in-cheek.

Can they do it? Totally!

It was almost as hard for these two brainy girls to play airheads.

"We got out of the ordinary and played something new," said McHale.

"You can't mess up on something dumb," agreed Schultz.

Auri Naggar, YAW director, put it this way: these days, it's fun to play "the ditzzy-blondie, fashion-conscious, Valley Girl-type."

It's also fun to play a nasty character, and YAW student Max Hampton, 13, revels in it. As the Captain, he has created a "deranged neat freak who is twisted," with a cackling leer. "Picture (a character) locked in a cave for several years, coming out," he grinned.

Able, if evilly, abetting the Captain is his Lieutenant, (Catherine Sheils, 14,) who is into bodybuilding and taking prisoners.

She, too, stretches to play something very different.

"I used to want to be tough," Sheils confessed. "Now, I want to be strong. More like a nice person, but still strong."

The stereotypes were the starting point in this latest YAW venture performed in what Naggar calls "guided improvisation." That means the actors improvise each scene, following a storyline, not a script.

As YAW students pondered this year's play, one student

suggested outer space. McHale and Schultz separately came up with a Valley Girl-type character, which Naggar suggested they develop jointly.

"They were such strong characters, we built the play in two directions," he said.

Starting in December, the play took shape, YAW style. Each class made up its own segment, from the film crew to Cookie's Club staff to the wolves and dogs. They also wrote the play's several songs. Naggar offered minimal guidance and gave free rein to imagination.

"The kids played with the characters," he said, "and I said, 'Let's build on that.'"

"Candi and Mandi" will run at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, May 14 and Saturday, May 15, and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 16, in the Half Moon Bay High School auditorium. That's a switch from the usual YAW venue of Cunha School, but it's good, Naggar said, because they have more space and more lighting and sound equipment.

Tickets, at \$5 per person, are available at Bay Book Company and at the door. Call 726-1304.