

Wildomar Resident Clicks With Web

BEST SITE: He wins an award for his pet project, a digital tribute to a Disney World haunt.

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By RICK DAVIS
Special to The Press-Enterprise

WILDOMAR - In Jim Strawn's workday world of psychotherapy, the creative side of his brain was suffering from lack of an outlet.

Helping clients analyze issues was getting in the way of artistic needs he nurtured as a young adult in the early 1990s as the lead vocalist and songwriter for an alternative-rock band that played the Los Angeles-Orange County club circuit and released one album.

The 40-year-old Wildomar resident found his fix about 18 months ago when he decided to pursue an idea that had been stuck in his cranium since being blown away by a 2002 visit to the Tower of Terror attraction at Disney World in Orlando, Fla.

Self-taught on the computer and fascinated by the challenge of Web site design, Strawn set out to create a fan site for the attraction.

The project became a labor of love that paid off last month when it was selected as the 2006 Web Site of the Year by the American Association of Webmasters. "I'm not a natural at Web design, but I feel I can take an idea or concept and pull it together in an artistic fashion that stands out in terms of originality," Strawn said.

Geared to fans of the Tower of Terror attraction that incorporates the theme of Rod Serling's "Twilight Zone," the site was deemed "a clear winner" among about 16,000 applicants, according to Donna Snyder, chief executive officer of the Avondale, Ariz.-based webmasters association.



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Jim Strawn, of Wildomar, displays his 2006 Web Site of the Year award for creating a fan Web site for Disney's Tower of Terror.

"It has custom Flash elements, great graphics, interactive features and message boards," Snyder said, noting that judging by a national panel of Web-design firm owners is based on creativity, content, design and technical features.

A lifelong Disney fan who as a teenager worked one summer at Disneyland, Strawn said he did research to determine theme and subject matter, then hired a Tennessee-based webmaster and graphics designer for the technical parts.

"I didn't do this to make money," said Strawn, who now works for the state Department of Mental Health in Riverside. "It's for the fans who love Disney and this attraction, and also as a thank you to Disney for providing wonderful memories over the years."

WINNING WEB SITE

Wildomar resident Jim Strawn designed an award-winning Web site for Disney's "Tower of Terror" attraction.

The site: ServiceElevator.com