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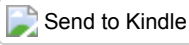
# It's a Sideshow! It's Scientific! It's STEAM Carnival!

By [Harry McCracken](#) May 29, 2013

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Not every session at the [D11 conference](#) involves one or more tech or media executives in conversation with Kara Swisher and/or Walt Mossberg. The first segment this afternoon was a sneak peak at [STEAM Carnival](#), a Kickstarter project which aims to bring a new-age traveling interactive event to major cities, beginning with Los Angeles and San Francisco in early 2014. And as you can see from the photo above, its creators brought part of the carnival with them.

Reminding me both of San Francisco's [Exploratorium](#) and the [Big Apple Circus](#), STEAM Carnival involves old-timey carnival elements and technology of both the digital and analog sort. It aims to entertain families, but also to get kids excited about science and technology. (I'm not sure if the "STEAM" is a reference to steampunk culture or Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math education, or maybe both — but it works in either context.)

The carnival is the brainchild of Eric Gradman and Brent Bushnell of [Two Bit Circus](#), who appeared on stage with Swisher and Mossberg to show a couple of sample attractions from among forty they've designed so far.



(Bushnell is following in the footsteps of his inventive father, [Nolan Bushnell](#), the man behind both Atari and Chuck E. Cheese.) As seen above, one of the attractions looked like a classic carnival weight-testing gizmo — but when Swisher smacked it with a hammer, it used a [Jacob's Ladder effect](#) to shoot a high-voltage traveling arc of electricity upwards.




As I write, STEAM Carnival's Kickstarter has four days to go, and about \$13,000 left before it hits its \$100,000 funding goal. Its odds of making it are pretty good — and if the carnival comes to San Francisco next year, I'll be one of the first in line to see it.

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