



Photo courtesy of Universal Orlando

DIGITAL SCARES

DESIGNING HAUNTED MAZES FOR HALLOWEEN HORROR NIGHTS by Brian Szaks

Five years ago, Universal Studios began to design their Halloween Horror Nights houses in a way that revolutionized maze creation. Aided with a program called "Sketch Up", they were able to compose a complete walkthrough of the house on a computer before the first nail was ever driven.

The software, which was acquired by Google in March of last year, is also used by Universal Creative to do theme park and permanent attraction design. It allowed T.J. Mannarino and his team to uniquely input every last detail into the design of the house and work out all errors. Mannarino, the Director of Art and Design at the

Universal Orlando Resort, is no stranger to innovations when it comes to design. InPark featured him earlier this year in an article that explored his unique infrared helmet design.

The haunted houses are first digitally designed in Sketch Up to create the critical space, then the scenic elevations are hand drawn. Mannarino was able to consider all design requirements- from audio to lighting placement to safety and ADA concerns for all eight houses at the resort.

After months of hard work, living in the digital age pays off for the resort. Peak nights and capacity limitations have allowed Universal Orlando to host Halloween Horror Nights for more dates this year than ever before, proving yet another success for their annual event.

Universal Orlando Resort is located a few miles North of the Orange County Convention Center. Check the IAAPA website for convention prices, park hours and further information. ■■■