

international pulse

ipm speaks with Gary Goddard of The Gary Goddard Group for an update on **global trends** and hints of things to come.

What are the real hotbeds of activity on the international market?

I think everyone realizes that things have slowed down in Dubai and that this single factor has changed the landscape more than any other single element. However, Dubai representatives, and in particular the people at Dubialand, continue to tell the press that the delay is temporary and that things will begin again soon. So while many major design firms have had to move to other places and projects of necessity, I believe hope springs eternal with regard to Dubai and that within this year we will see positive motion once again. In addition the economy continues to have an effect on many aspects of our industry. That being said, at the moment - which is to say as of this writing --- there seems to be a continuing momentum in both China and Korea, and there seems to be a lot potential movement in India as well. And there are pockets of activity in various places throughout Europe.

What developments are thriving?

From our perspective it appears that those retail-malls that offer a mix of entertainment and retail are faring better in this economy as people try to economize and search out less expensive entertainment options. Beyond that its hard to make broad statements as society is in flux now --- reactions are different country to country, region to region. Some theme parks are faring well, while others are seeing a drop in both attendance and spending. It seems virtually every park has come up with a

new "reduced pricing" scheme of one kind or another. Water parks seem to be faring best over all as a product - but to some degree water parks have always been seen as a bargain in terms of value to cost. Casinos, as everyone knows, are having a tough time, in Vegas, Macau -- just about everywhere. But in all of these parts of business, there are exceptions to the rule -- no broad paintbrush can speak for an entire sector. We are in an interesting time of change throughout the world.

How have market and political forces changed the international scene?

I am not an expert in politics or market forces, but I do know that no matter what, people need to be entertained -- during times of stress even more than when the good times are rolling. Families need time together where they can, for a day or for a week, leave the stresses of day to day life behind for a bit, and to enjoy shared

experiences. Wherever I travel, I see that people want the same things -- to have a safe and secure life, to be able to feed and support their families, and to find time in the midst of the hectic schedules everyone faces today, to have quality time with the loved ones. I believe change is a constant in life -- things change - they always do. This applies to every aspect of life - and our industry is not immune to the ups and downs of life. I think - to some degree - we cannot wait for opportunities to knock - we have to find them, seek them out, and in some ways, make our own opportunities. This is something that every successful firm must do, regardless of market or political forces.

You have a project in Sweden – what is happening in Europe?

Well our focus in Europe right now is particularly in Sweden through a project that is built upon the history, the



Lavish themed environments are combined with classic stories of heroism in the "ADVENTURE TALES" section of the park (courtesy of Gary Goddard Group).

legends, and the myths and epic sagas of The Vikings. I can't really go into more detail at this point, as the project is still in the formative stages. We have been approached by parties in Italy, Germany and the U.K. recently, but so far, nothing is moving ahead to a point of discussing it here. There seem to be a lot of museum projects going on in Europe, and there continue to be new attractions by many of the long-standing theme parks there, but so far, our work in Europe has been much lighter than in Asia. To some degree I think that's due to the fact that Europe has a very vibrant and dynamic leisure industry design and production force and a great deal of the work does not require the U.S. design companies for support. But if any European developers or designers are looking for some U.S. support, we would welcome that opportunity.

Last year we spoke a lot about China. Do you still think the financials are there for great expansion?

At this time we are doing more work in China than ever before, so clearly, for us at least, we are upbeat about this market. I believe, for the foreseeable future, expansion throughout China will continue. It's a huge market, it's an expanding market, it's a market that is filled with people who want to see, touch, and discover new experiences. The Chinese people enjoy family and friendships, they love to share meals together both in social circles and in professional ones as well --- they are in the midst of remaking and reshaping their world on every level. Our ability to bring unique experiences to them, in the form of design, entertainment, and showmanship, is something they appreciate. For us, we believe we have a long term interest in seeing that our clients and partners there find overwhelming success through the projects we are creating for them.

You are working on projects in Korea, what future does that region have with an unstable North Korea?

I am not sure I am the guy to ask about geopolitical landscapes. I am a creative

guy and I know from working in South Korea that the people there love life, they love to have fun, they also are very earnest and work hard --- very much like Americans in many ways. Because they are industrious and hard working, and because they place a high value on their children and their families, I think this is a country where the desire for family entertainment will continue to grow. The larger issue here, if anything, has more to do with technology. South Korea has the largest number of dedicated online gamers of any country in the world, and they love their computers and computer games. Our largest challenge in Korea is to give them all reasons to get out of their homes, and away from their computers, to enjoy non-virtual entertainment - the real thing. Ultimately, I don't believe North Korea will have any effect on South Korea. It's really not had any major effect on South Korea since the end of the war there. I certainly would hope that North Korea will soon have an awakening, with messages from everyone including China, that life is good. And if anything, when North Korea finally elects to join the rest of the world, that within a decade or so, there may be a viable market for our industry there as well.

Last year you said that Dubai needed to create "a better mousetrap." Is that still the challenge for them?

We were fortunate to have been selected by Six Flags to develop their concept and master plan for the Six Flags Dubailand project. Our work with Six Flags was very illuminating and we enjoyed a very positive working relationship with both Six Flags and the Dubailand team. My comment about "a better mousetrap" had more to do with the idea of how Disneyland was first developed, and then how Walt Disney World was first developed. (And then, if you want to take it a step further, you can look at how Universal Studios in Hollywood began, and then Universal Studios Orlando.) These are the success stories --- new projects that became magnets for people. It's a simple equation: Build the magnet first. Easily said, but hard to accomplish in reality. When people are

drawn to that magnet, there is a world of opportunity to add hotels, retail malls, golf courses, spas and every other imaginable amenity and development - up through and including residential homes. But the magnet is required first and foremost. The magnet is, and always has been, a place of entertainment, or of enlightenment, or of discovery. Great monuments, great "tours" through exotic places, great entertainment or retail destinations -- all of these places or events that draw people fall into one of these three basic needs for human beings. So what Dubailand had in mind was in fact, right on the money! It would be a place of great entertainment, of great discoveries, and even in some areas, of great enlightenment. But for whatever reason, financial or otherwise, the secondary elements (hotels, residential, retail and so on) were realized ahead of the visionary elements - the magnets for people did not materialize soon enough. Having said that, I think in the long term, that perhaps all is for the best. The leader of the country is a man of vision - and he has a large vision for his country. Dubai has now had time to reflect on what it is and where it is going. I think that with this time to think and reflect on things, a better and stronger approach to realizing Dubai's vision will come to reality. With their infrastructure in place, now they can focus on creating the necessary magnets -- focusing on those special destinations that will fulfill people's desire to be entertained, to be enlightened, and to discover new things. The "better mousetrap" comment simply refers to doing what Mr. Disney did in Anaheim, and then in Orlando, and what Universal did in Hollywood, and then also again in Orlando -- which is -- to create a place, with unique and original offerings - that are so compelling and original - that the world will beat a path to their door. They were halfway there when things slowed down. I believe, upon reflection and with renewed energy, Dubai will create the necessary magnets to bring all of the parts together into a shining success. A vision that strong will not rest until it finds its way to the world. **ipm**



World's largest multi-level
interactive play structures!

Taking Advantage of your TEA Membership

I recently sent out an email to some of our members asking how their summer was, how they were doing, what they needed from TEA. I received mostly positive responses from our members, stating that they were busy, working hard to meet deadlines.

Some members, however, have not been as successful. They were asking how they can better utilize their TEA membership, something that they were already paying for. Though each e-mail was worded a bit differently, my responses were all the same:

- Read the eTEA updates as well as the News and Notes. These two information heavy communications are rich with possible jobs and leads. Each issue has RFPs (Tenders) for you to follow up on. The process is simple. Just respond back to the e-mail listed and we will forward you the RFP!
- Attend TEA Events. Your divisions and TEA staff have been working very hard to ensure that members who do not live in Orlando, London or California have the ability to attend events. Just in the past six months, there have been events in Wien, Bath, Arizona, Chicago, St. Louis, New York, Toronto, Philadelphia and San Francisco! If you would like to host an event in your area, let us know.
- Send us your press releases! We publish press releases in both our eTEA and News + Notes. This is just one more way to get your company out in front of the TEA membership.

Do you have other ways that you leverage your TEA membership? Let me know:
brian@teconnect.org.

-Brian Szaks
Manager of Member Relations
Themed Entertainment Association
brian@teconnect.org

TEA offers amazing benefits
allowing you to help
your business grow!

Contact us today to
learn how.



Hershey, Pennsylvania



Chime Long, China



Orlando, Florida



whitewater@whitewaterwest.com
Tel: +1 604.273.1068 • www.whitewaterwest.com