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MAGAZINE

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Thea Lifetime
Achievement
Honoree
**Jeremy
Railton**

Thea Awards 2017

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The positive power of associations

Martin Palicki,
IPM publisher



Having recently returned from the IAAPA Leadership Conference in Los Angeles, I'm feeling good about the state of the industry. During the conference, we were taken around to several key attractions in Southern California and heard from a range of qualified and optimistic speakers.

More importantly, though, the event afforded me the opportunity to meet with colleagues and friends. While there is always some uncertainty about the future, it seems there are enough new projects and plans in the works around the world: People seem upbeat.

As I write this, I am traveling to Dubai where, by the time you read this, IAAPA and the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) will have partnered on a behind-the-scenes mixer coinciding with the DEAL expo. Later in April, it's back to California where at the Disneyland Resort, TEA will highlight some of the brightest and best at the annual TEA Summit and Thea Awards Gala.

My positive take on the future is validated in the slate of recipients to be honored at TEA's big weekend. In addition to remembering the influential Peter Chernack and recognizing the achievements of Jeremy Railton (featured in this issue), the awards reflect the creative breadth and geographic range our industry supports.

On one end there's the House of Eternal Return by Meow Wolf (New Mexico, USA) that transformed an old bowling alley into a surreal trip through artists' imaginations. On the other is Shanghai Disneyland (Shanghai, China) with its advanced attractions and intricate weaving of Disney stories with Chinese aesthetics.

In the middle are a dozen other awe-inspiring attractions from Europe, North America and Asia. The Theas slate is an intriguing mix of better-known projects and those that deserve to be better known.

COVER: Jeremy Railton is the 2017 recipient of the Buzz Price Thea Award - Recognizing a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements. Photo by Alison Picard. **Full story on page 12.**

This is the value our associations bring to us. They inspire us, proffer new ideas, give us the means to explore, experience and examine, and connect us with the right people. So get out there and take advantage of all the opportunities IAAPA, TEA and other industry organizations offer. Associations support their industries just as trade publications (ahem) support them – and they need your support in turn.

Be inspired. Be empowered. And be involved.

The soft power of museums

Joe Kleiman,
IPM news editor



A few years ago, the San Diego Museum of Man, a traditional anthropological institution, changed its scope from "the life and history of humankind" to a much broader examination of "the human experience." Key to this new direction was an extensive public examination of race and racial perceptions.

The multi-year effort this museum undertook to ensure local communities' concerns were addressed was a topic presented during the California Association of Museums (CAM) annual conference, held in Sacramento March 29-31. Other topics of inclusion examined at CAM included gentrification, hiring the developmentally disabled, and art programs for immigrants and refugees.

These topics are part of a conversation about "soft power" – influencing behavior through persuasion, attraction or agenda setting. Soft power enables museums to step up and foster dialog on key issues for their communities.

Diversity, race, and inclusion are also on the agenda at the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) 2017 Annual Meeting & Museum Expo in St. Louis, May 7-10. As questions loom in Washington, with the NEA, NEH, and IMLS in peril, museums want to harness their soft power to expand their audiences by acting as catalysts for responsible change and discourse.



InPark Editor Judith Rubin will be out and about a lot in April and May. Look for her at the TEA Summit and Thea Awards Gala in Anaheim, or the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) show in St. Louis.



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InPark looks at some of 2017's Thea Award recipients

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Inside the TRANSFORMATIONS exhibit

Photos: Museum of Latin American Art

TRANSFORMATIONS

The Museum of Latin American Art makes it personal and experiential

by Joe Kleiman

At the age of 15, my father crossed the border from his native Mexico, speaking only a few words of English. This transformative experience opened doors allowing him to achieve a Master's degree in Public Administration and serve 25 years overseeing offices and programs for the State of California.

When the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) announced the latest slate of Thea Award recipients in November 2016, a small art exhibition at the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) in Long Beach, CA was among them. The exhibit, TRANSFORMATIONS, tells the stories of five people and that moment that transformed their lives, utilizing art from the museum's collection. The Thea award will be formally presented April 22, 2017 at the TEA Thea Awards Gala.

Being the son of an immigrant, I was instantly drawn to know more about TRANSFORMATIONS and the week after the Thea announcement, found myself sitting in MOLAA's café with Curator of Collections Carlos Ortega. Joining us for a discussion on the creation of the exhibit were

Michael Delano of COTU Media, exhibit participants Juan Gonzalez and Lorena Mercado, and MOLAA docent Laura Siqueiros.

Conceiving the experience

Throughout the years, art in exhibits I've visited has been grouped along parameters based on the art itself – the artist, the period (either when the work was produced or the period represented), movement, or style. TRANSFORMATIONS took a radically different approach to art – using it to tell others' stories. Because of this, in the bigger context, the exhibit was also about museums transforming how art is interpreted.

The genesis of the project was a photo series by famed New Zealand food photographer Henry Hargreaves, recreating the last meals of death row inmates. Upon seeing these photos, a concept began to take shape in Ortega's mind about overcoming tragedy and adversity and the individual's connection to art.

Ortega had learned a lot about applying experience design to museum exhibits in past employment at BRC Imagination Arts. "When I was at BRC," he said, "Bob Rogers [company founder] taught me the importance of telling a story in an exhibit."

The five selected participants in TRANSFORMATIONS were asked to look at artwork in MOLAA's permanent collection and select pieces that they felt relayed their emotions both before and after a major transformative event in their lives. To identify the participants, the Museum started out by asking 80 non-profits in the LA area to hand out a six-question questionnaire. Museum members were also invited to fill one out.

From 100+ questionnaires received, Ortega and his team determined 10 potential candidates. Each candidate was brought in for an interview with three members of staff, which allowed the sessions to remain intimate. Present for each interview was Michael Delano of the museum's media production partner COTU Media.

Once the final five were chosen, they then met with Delano for another interview, this one recorded on digital media for video playback in the exhibit. "It was really good having him there for the first interview," says Lorena Mercado, one of the exhibit's five participants, "I had already told him my story, so I felt very comfortable telling it to him again."

Selecting the works

Ortega pointed out that in most art exhibits, the curator receives much of the glory. In the case of TRANSFORMATIONS, the glory was, rather, the huge emotional connection between the public and the participants' stories. With MOLAA being home to one of the most prestigious collections of contemporary Latin American art in North America, Ortega knew that the entire collection would be too large for the participants to work with, so he preselected works that he felt would portray the participant's before and after experiences, 50 for each. Then he asked 45 museum docents to select 100 works that had not been seen for a while.

Docents and interns involved in the project were not told the artwork would be used for the TRANSFORMATIONS exhibit. "We didn't want them to be biased. Other than a few people and the Education Department, everyone thought we were putting together a new exhibit of lesser shown art." This didn't sit well with one of the docents, Laura Siqueiros. "I was extremely upset when I found out it was going to be used for something else. As an artist myself, that didn't sit well with me. But I was very happy when I saw the final result."

Two hundred fifty pieces were selected for each of the five finalists to review. Each would visit five to six times to review the images – all reproduced on paper with no country, artist, or other information listed. They were asked to select at least 15 images apiece, representing the before and after periods of their transformative experience.

Participant Juan Gonzalez described the challenge he faced in selecting art. "You have to understand that for 15 years, I was in a



Federal prison," he said. "For those 15 years, I didn't see images like these. All I saw were bars."

Moments of transformation

For each of the five participants, the moment of transformation came in different ways. For Gonzalez, it was watching his children grow up on the other side while he was incarcerated and learning a new trade while in prison – leatherworking. Mercado is a cancer survivor, who tells of the hardship of losing her hair from chemotherapy and her breasts from a double mastectomy and interacting with those around her who understand and those who don't. Willie Quinones escaped a rough childhood in the barrio by joining the Navy and seeing the world. Felicia Rivero ended up homeless on the streets as a teenager, doing what she could to survive. Eventually, she found her way to excelling in college. Another participant who found her way to college is Rocio Villalobos, who was paralyzed when shot during a carjacking in her native El Salvador, ending her plans to attend ballet school. Eventually, she found her way to the US, where she discovered her own way to dance.

TRANSFORMATIONS told each of the stories not only through the museum's art collection and the videos produced by COTU Media. Each participant was invited to share personal belongings which were also on display in a table in the gallery. Juan's items included photos of his children during his time incarcerated and samples of his leatherwork. A leather couch he designed celebrating civil rights leaders Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King Jr. became the first item by a Chicano artist to be accepted into the Museum's permanent collection.

Other items on display included a wig and prosthetic breasts from Lorena, an El Salvadorean news article titled "Little Victims," which includes a photo of Villalobos in the hospital, Quinones' Navy uniform, and a heart pendant, the only remaining item in Rivero's possession from before her time as a homeless youth. (A full, illustrated list of participants' personal items is available for viewing on www.inparkmagazine.com.)

A space for visitors to share their stories

While each participant had their own section of the gallery, a sixth area was set aside as a lounge, where museum visitors could discuss what they had seen and share their own transformative moments. Renowned conceptual artist Kendell Carter was hired to design this area. Said Ortega, "The key of this exhibition was to create a space of true inclusiveness. Kendell's line of work creates spaces that transcend cultures and borders. He was the perfect match for the concept of the exhibition and created a unique space that turned around the visitor from a mere spectator into the protagonist of the experience. His area had a comfortable and familiar space that resembled a cool living room, in which guests could share in a comfortable and intimate setting."

To carry forth this concept of a shared humanity, Carter had artists from four different ethnicities create paintings, which he then cut into strips and wove together into a new and unique work. Within the lounge, necklaces with postcard-type images attached were placed on one side. Guests were encouraged to place ones that spoke to them around their necks and to discuss how they related to their own story.

Laura Siqueiros, the museum's docent, found this to be a brilliant move. "I saw school groups come through and there was something about seeing the stories in the exhibit and then choosing their own image, they started to talk. Even the shyest kids would start sharing or people who had known each other for a long time would share something

previously unsaid with one another." For those who didn't share verbally, the necklace did the job of communicating and sharing a part of themselves.

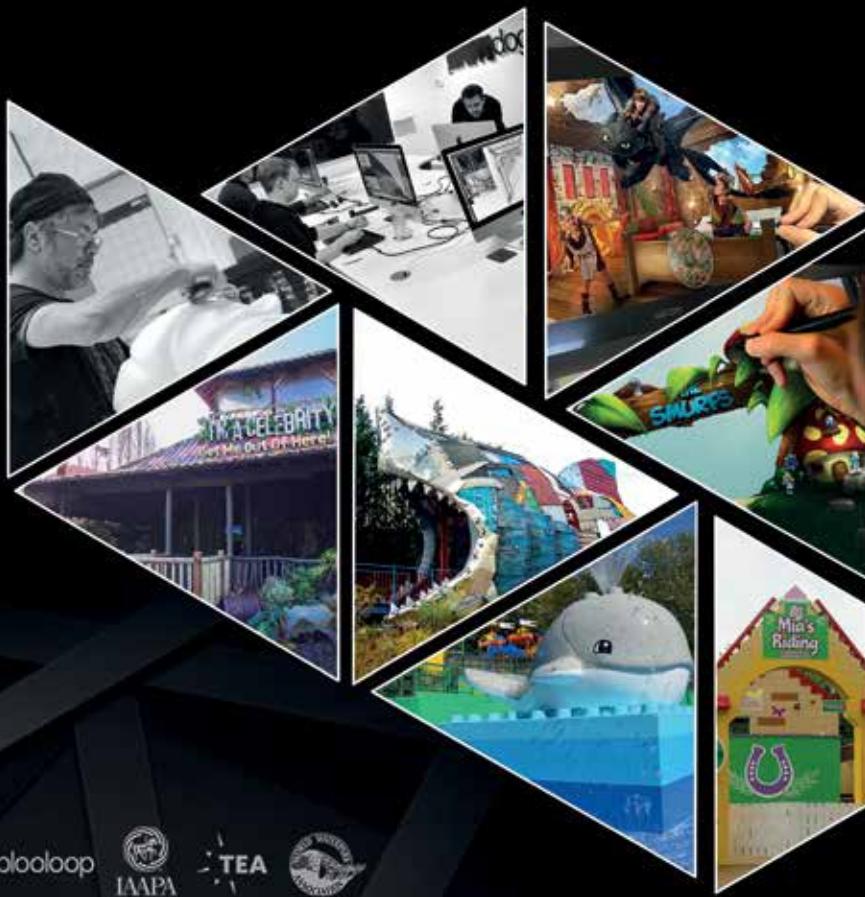
Mercado found the exhibit to be the perfect medium for discussing her cancer with her daughter, while Gonzalez found it to be an eye-opening experience, changing his perception of what art is.

An active experience with universal themes

MOLAA is currently in talks that may lead to TRANSFORMATIONS becoming a traveling exhibition. Ortega believes more such exhibits are necessary. "This exhibition was about empowering the audience over the museum. Traditionally, exhibitions are created to provide meaning for the audience through the eyes of the artist. Like listening to the radio, the visitors become passive learners.

"In our exhibition, we reversed the roles and allowed visitors to give meaning to the art through their own life stories. The guests became the protagonists by using the art from our collection to illustrate their inspirational stories. The guest moved from being a passive listener to becoming an active protagonist."

TRANSFORMATIONS is a story about all humans, as the stories it tells can be found everywhere, regardless of ethnicity or nationality. . . .



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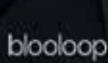
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Breadth of vision

The Elumenati brings media-based immersion to visitor attractions

by Hilary McVicker

Since launching our GeoDome™ program in 2008, The Elumenati has deployed more than 80 systems – with applications ranging from NASA and NOAA outreach programs to experiential marketing, medical research, and entertainment.

While we also build custom installations and offer components to designers, the GeoDome represents our line of turnkey immersive environments, including digital video globes, panoramas and large-scale dome theaters. Each GeoDome includes an immersive screen, projection system, image generating computer, and WorldViewer, our interactive platform for immersive media.

We're especially pleased that in the past year this technology has enabled two outstanding facilities, the Children's Museum of Manhattan, and the Institute for Creativity, Arts and Technology at Virginia Tech, to create unique, media-based, immersive experiences.

Children's Museum of Manhattan Panorama

A GeoDome Panorama is part of an exhibit on Muslim culture at the Children's Museum of Manhattan (CMOM). A recent New York Times profile reports that more than 350,000 visitors have explored the exhibit since it launched in February 2016. In the Panorama, museum visitors explore the interiors of mosques around the world. Placing a single OmniFocus fisheye projector overhead means energetic kids can stand inside the dome's 210-degree sweep, and move around close to the screen without casting shadows.

The CMOM project demonstrates the workflow we intended when we developed WorldViewer as a creative tool for our clients. It gives clients options for producing and modifying their own interactive media content for domes as they choose (with our support as needed). For CMOM's Panorama, the museum exhibit team provided the narrative and sourced 360 images

of the mosques, and then dropped them into the WorldViewer framework to build an interactive. The Elumenati provided training and support as they integrated the images; we also provided templates the team used to build a customized GUI for the touchscreen user interface.

The project worked so well that CMOM purchased a second GeoDome system for a new exhibit on dance, opening later this year – this time a Portal. At this writing, our development team is collaborating with them on the new exhibit's WorldViewer content.

While it's a straightforward tool for keeping museum content evergreen, WorldViewer has also evolved into a highly capable tool with complex features for advanced users. It's a media mashup tool that allows our users to incorporate the plethora of immersive media that has become freely available, from 360 video to Google Earth. Advanced OSC controls for scripting and external triggers mean that our systems can be easily integrated with show control.

Virginia Tech Cyclorama

WorldViewer can be combined with other Elumenati software platforms for more complex installations, like the 360-degree Cyclorama – a VR experience for up to 60 people - we built at Virginia Tech's multi-disciplinary arts and research institute in 2016. It's a rapidly deployable screen, 32' in diameter and 16' high, lit by four, edge-blended OmniFocus projection systems with laser light engines.

The system debuted a new iteration of WorldViewer for an active stereo Cyclorama with 8K combined resolution, supporting both stereoscopic and non-stereoscopic video. This version of WorldViewer incorporates the Spout application launcher, so Virginia Tech staff can drive content from their own VR data visualization platform. Our Omnitrix plugin for the Unity game engine makes it simple to port interactive content into the Cyclorama. Our system delivers warped and blended, 120Hz stereo movies at 4K resolution per screen from a single Windows-based machine.

Collaborating with the team at Virginia Tech's Institute of Creative Arts and Technology was a great experience. The project illustrates the way effective solutions emerge when the client's team and our team join forces to bring the best of both in terms of expertise and creativity. Custom project design serves as a form of R&D in the field, through which new approaches and designs emerge and enrich our product line and what clients can do with it.

We find that a comprehensive approach is ideal. Our clients work with a single point of contact for their dome, projection system, software, content, and integration, as well as long-term support.

About The Elumenati

The Elumenati's founders pioneered technologies that have become standards in the field of immersive technology. The company was founded in 2004. As we've evolved along with the industry, The Elumenati has developed a broad spectrum of

The Virginia Tech Cyclorama (previous page)

The GeoDome Panorama is part of an exhibit on Muslim culture at the Children's Museum of Manhattan (below)

Photos Courtesy of The Elumenati.



applications for museums, planetariums, theme park attractions and other visitor experiences.

Our domes and panoramas are a fun way to bring the "wow" factor to theme park experiences. Using visualization allows our museum clients to communicate complex data-based concepts and systems principles. Marketers need effective communication tools to make their branding stick, and business applications like architectural visualization and medical research are finding immersive screens a pragmatic alternative to VR headsets.

Our work happens along three channels – the GeoDome product line, custom installations, and work with integrators. We provide components and complete systems for integrators who are incorporating immersion into their own designs – OmniFocus projection systems, OpenDomes and globes, and software platforms for content creation and display. Leading design and integration firms appreciate the proven quality of our systems and our ability to offer emerging technologies like ultra-high resolution and laser light engines, as well as upgrade paths for future-proofing. It's our goal to build systems that are as efficient as they are elegant - such as fisheye systems that are simple and cost-effective, and competitive with multiple flat-screen projection, from installation to long-term maintenance. Our

software solutions are designed to optimize clients' resources for content creation and systems integration.

Even when working with integrators, we maintain a comprehensive approach. We engage with our clients to look pragmatically at the complete system, starting with the desired user experience and choosing products to build the technology from there. We find this design philosophy supports maximum return on investment. . . .



Hilary McVicker (hilary@elumenati.com) is Communicatrix at The Elumenati – a title that would translate to VP of Sales and Marketing at most companies. A background in communications and new media led to several years in the videogame industry, providing resources and creating community for game developers. Joining The Elumenati in 2008 was the next step in a career focused on the business of interactive technologies and their meaningful application.

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A designer's notebook

Jeremy Railton, in his own words

by Jeremy Railton with Richard Wechsler

Jeremy Railton, Chairman and Founder of Entertainment Design Corp., will receive the Buzz Price Thea Award – Recognizing a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements on April 22 at the TEA Thea Awards. Jeremy's multifaceted career has spanned theatre, dance, film, TV, theme park attractions, live concerts, touring shows, animal attractions and more. The work shown and described here is just a fraction of what Jeremy has achieved – see more at inparkmagazine.com and entdesign.com.

Jeremy Railton... A multitalented, multi-genre artist, creative genius; a designer who puts the "Kapow" into creating WOW experiences for audiences across our planet! A man with a BIG heart and easy smile! I have known Jeremy for 30 years, as a friend and colleague, and cherish each moment I spend with him as he has a way of shining light on everyone and everything he touches! – Roberta Perry, Vice President Business Development, Edwards Technologies Inc.

Some people get by on charm rather than talent. Some have talent but lack charm. Jeremy is doubly blessed with both. He is that rare combination of deep humanity, sincerity, collaboration and creative vision. When he presents an idea, it is instantly irresistible and when he implements it, it works! His audiences find themselves swept along on a rewarding emotional journey full of charm, grace and magic. – Bob Rogers, Founder & CCO, BRC Imagination Arts

UNLIKELY BEGINNINGS

When I reflect on the many unexpected turns and incredible opportunities that have come my way over a life in art and design, I can trace so many of the themes, influences, and inspirations to my unlikely beginnings, growing up on a farm in Zimbabwe, 40 miles from the Victoria Falls and the great Zambezi River.

Even as a child I was aware that I lived in Paradise. I loved the bush, the animals, and our mud-daubed pole house with a thatched roof, a hand-drawn well, no electricity, and a party line phone that we shared with five others. In the rainy season, some of the house wall poles would sprout and tree limbs would grow from the living room walls.

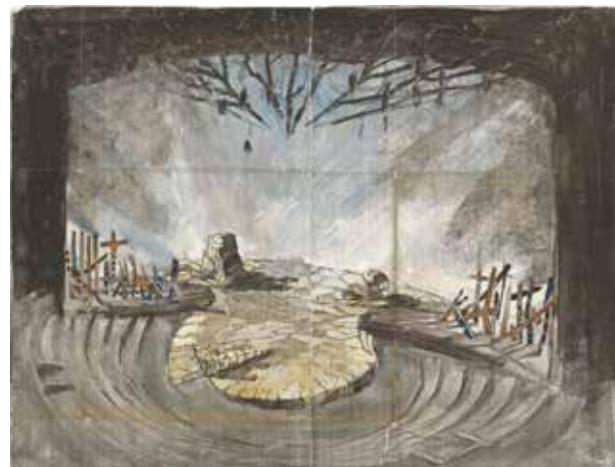
When I was nine months old, my parents bought me crayons. I drew all over the walls next to my cot and basically never stopped. By the time I was eight, I had figured out that I wanted to be an artist when I grew up.

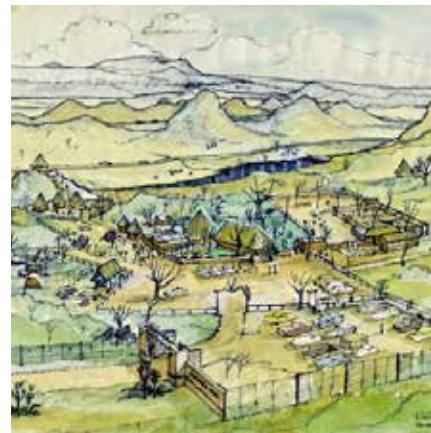


THEATRE DESIGN - FROM MARK TAPER TO PRINCESS CRUISES

I learned principles of set design and set painting at the University of Cape Town's Michaelis School of Fine Art. After graduation, I spent a year as a professional scenic painter at various theatres in Cape Town, earning enough money to go to London with my friends.

Off to Hollywood - On my very first art director job on a film in England, the American director, Lamont Johnson, discovered I was raised in the African bush. He was directing a play in Los





Angeles - Christopher Isherwood's adaptation of a George Bernard Shaw novella, The Adventures of a Black Girl in Her Search for God - would I like to read it and do some sketches? I did, and gave them to him.

A couple of weeks later, slumped on the floor of my apartment, depressed and without a plan, the mail slot started to jiggle. A huge envelope landed on the floor. It contained plane tickets, a salary advance, work visas, a scenic union membership and a contract to design the sets, masks and costumes for Isherwood's play at the legendary Mark Taper Forum. I arrived in Los Angeles a week later.

Cecil Beaton - The Civic Light Opera was putting on My Fair Lady with costumes by Cecil Beaton, who had done the costumes for the original Broadway production and won an Academy Award for the film. I flew to London to meet him. I felt like a farm boy in his incredible Kensington apartment. He looked me over and said, "I suppose you will do; they all seem to like you."

He handed me a bunch of sketches and said. "Use these. I don't like Liza's ball gown. Make another design, would you?" Gulp! He followed with the best advice ever for costume design. "Just because a design looks good on paper it does not mean it will look good on the body. Design to the body not to the paper!" I was suddenly Cecil Beaton's assistant. I even designed Liza's ball gown under the close supervision of Lilly Fonda, the head

cutter and fitter at the venerable Western Costumes, who took me under her wing and taught me how to design costumes that moved.

Donny and Marie Osmond - When Sid and Marty Krofft signed on to produce the Donny and Marie Variety Show pilot, I was set and costume designer. Donny was 18, Marie was 16 and their costumes were like Elvis jumpsuits with studs, great in their day but this was 1975! I rolled up my sleeves, jumped in, and discovered the sweetest, most talented, hardworking teenagers ever. We had fun coming up with crazy, young-and-hip clothes.

I would sketch all Friday and over the weekend. Monday morning, I would deliver the designs to the shop on the lot that I was supervising. The sheer volume and speed forced me to run through my entire repertoire of ideas. I even pulled out fabric painting from my childhood and noticed birds and flowers were still featured.

Zoobilee Zoo - I did some set and costume design for Zoobilee Zoo, a children's TV show featuring performers dressed as animals. As an African animal lover, my first take was that the animals should look 'real.' The producers were conscientious about test marketing every decision, so I designed a spectrum of test costumes - from 'realistic' to what I thought was 'gaudy, bright and ugly!' Surprise! The kids loved 'gaudy, bright, and ugly!' I came up with a prosthetic device for the actors' faces and won

my first Emmy for Costume Design because they had never seen this look before. Now those prosthetics are in every Halloween costume shop.

Diavolo - Jacques Heim, the brilliant director/ choreographer/ creator of Diavolo Dance Company, asked me to design some set pieces. I eagerly awaited his concept and couldn't wait to hear the music - just what I like: being told what to draw. His answer stunned me. "I have no music and I don't know what I want to do. Design me an interesting structure and I will use it as inspiration and create the dance around it." I did three pieces for Catapult and was honored with a Lester Horton award for Dance Design. Maybe I didn't have to be told what to draw anymore!

Princess Cruises - In the last 10 years, I've had the extreme pleasure to design many sets for Princess Cruises. There is very little room on board a cruise liner theater, especially when three different productions have to be pre-loaded. I loved the challenge of creating scenery that folded up into small pieces, drawing on my experience from touring shows.

FINDING THE ARTIST'S BRAND – TOURING SHOWS, 1975-2017

Since designing Bamboozled, the first Cat Stevens music tour in 1975, I've participated in a four-decade transformation of the touring industry, designing every genre from rock and roll to Country and Western. I've watched touring shows evolve into multimedia spectacle.

The touring business is above all collaborative. Everything must work in concert. Every department jostles for the best position on the stage to make a comfortable, branded home for the artist. Most of all, the sound must be perfect.

Set design must fit the music and travel well. But one most important aspect is reflecting the artist's unique creative identity.



Sometimes it would come to me in a flash, and other times it was more elusive and I would search for it.

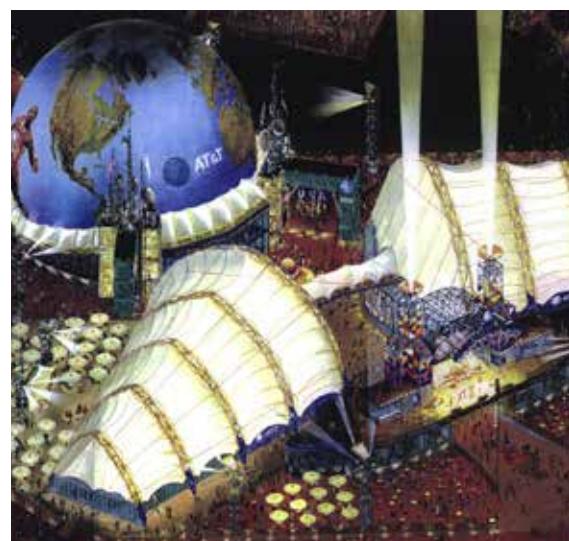
Barbra! - In 2006, Mickie Weiss asked me to design Barbra Streisand's new tour. Working with Streisand's director, Richard J. Alexander, it became obvious that this show was about designing for sound: Barbra with a 52-piece orchestra of hand-picked musicians.

We decided to go for visual simplicity, bringing Barbra up in the middle of the orchestra. Ultimately, the stage became a series of ramps surrounding a sunken orchestra. I put small Juliet stages on all sides, creating intimate visiting spots with a table, a vase of flowers and a pot of tea which allowed for each side of the audience to receive a visit from our beloved Diva!

In 2016, we were invited back to design the set for Barbra's nine-city tour. Like Cher, Barbra is always intimately involved in the creative design of her sets. If she hadn't been a singer she could have been a great interior designer. I loved collaborating with her.

Cher - Doriana Sanchez, my director/choreographer friend, introduced me to Cher and her management team after Dori and I had worked on the Dirty Dancing Tour. Dori was one of the lead dancers in the 1987 film. Cher asked Dori to give her dance lessons, which grew into a deep creative and personal friendship that spanned Cher's Love Hurts-, Believe-, and Living Proof tours as well as 192 performances at Caesars Palace.

Cher bubbles with creativity, sweetness and fun. I have been so thrilled to design four tours and two of her Las Vegas shows, but the best thrill is sitting with Doriana and Cher as they ping pong creative ideas back and forth and where nothing is too outrageous! There are very few experiences like this where the



designer gets to build on the ideas for a tour as if conceiving a musical.

DESIGNING FOR TV

My TV career started when James Trittipo, a television set designer, bought some of my paintings and hired me as his assistant. After that job, he recommended me to Renee Lagler, a brilliant young designer. Rene mentored me for a year, giving me the greatest gift of my career, the benefit of his experience. TV has come a long way technologically in 30 years, but pressure and speed are still the order of the day.

9/11 Concert - A few days after 9/11, I got a call from Joel Gallin asking if I would volunteer to design the benefit concert that was to be shot in NY and LA in five days. Of course I said yes. The trick, Joel said, was to make it all look like one show, using an art director on each coast. He had contacted my friend and design hero Lee Roy Bennet in New York who he patched into our conversation. On the spot, we came up with the concept of candles. By Monday we were loading in the matching sets and on Wednesday the show was being taped with stars like Celine Dion, Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young. No time for plans or lighting plots, everything was done over the phone and it all worked.

Elizabeth Taylor - My Dad never believed I would ever be able to make a living in the entertainment art field and warned that if I didn't stop fantasizing about Elizabeth Taylor and Hollywood, I would end up starving in a garret. So far, that hasn't happened, but I did meet Ms. Taylor and design a TV set for her 60th birthday at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood. But my father's dire warning still keeps me on my toes!

VEGAS, BEIJING AND SALT LAKE CITY

Big Screen Boogie - In 1993, visionary architect Jon Jerde called me to help him work his rehab magic on Fremont Street in downtown Las Vegas. The street had gone into a decline, overshadowed by the Strip.

Jerde conceived of a barrel vault spanning the 1500-foot length of the street and asked me to come up with a cool, innovative light parade. After more than a few anxious weeks, trying one idea after another, I thought: "Why not a giant, overhead TV screen?" I took inspiration from the great, overhead Italian frescos - and married that approach to MTV pop culture and storytelling, with a library of original shows to run on the unique screen.

When the Fremont Street Experience opened in 1995, it was an overnight sensation and the catalyst of an economic upswing. TEA recognized it with a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement. A direct successor in 2008 was The Sky Screen, a





700-foot-long, overhead viewing experience that I designed for The Place in Beijing, but using digital technology.

2002 Olympics - Leading a team of world-class designers, choreographers and special effect artists, I had the privilege to realize the concept of Director Kenny Ortega and Producer Don Mischler. Breaking tradition for the Olympic Winter Games, the venue was an arena rather than the mountain slopes. [For his production design, Jeremy received an Emmy and a Designer's Guild Award.]

DESIGNING FOR ANIMALS

In the early 1990s I met well-known animal trainer and bird behaviorist Steve Martin. His use of non-traditional, free flight birds combined with an inspiring conservation message sets his shows apart from many other animal shows. I realized all my "Hollywood" design experience could fold into my love of animals and desire to make a difference.

SOAR (A Symphony in Flight) – Steve and I collaborated on a nighttime show for the San Diego Zoo. The idea was for guests to have a beautiful, emotional experience watching birds free flying to music, and to tell a story without the banter of trainers.

SOAR [2009] began with a darkened stage. The sound of flapping wings broke the silence, and in silhouette, a giant bird flew above the heads of the audience to create a memorable opening encounter. One of the design challenges was designing theatrical lighting at nighttime that enhanced the beauty and



emotional rhythm of the performance in a way that would not affect the birds' sensitivity.

A Happy Bird Garden For China - The bird population of China has suffered many setbacks, including loss of habitat. Responding to the Government's desire to pay close attention to ecology, I designed an attraction to provide a safe haven for wild birds, with indigenous trees, grasses and shrubs. The design offered a multi-level, nature experience that would educate and entertain guests of all ages and levels of health and conditioning, from small children to parents and grandparents.

ATTRACTIONS, AND DANCING CRANES

Attraction design is very much an art form that unites storytelling, technology, media, sound, and theatrical lighting into a powerful experience.

Attractions can create iconic and branding images that generate press, and social media, reaching an enormous demographic at relatively little cost; they are gateways that say 'hello' and 'good bye' to guests; they can increase the time that guests stay at a venue; finally, they can be artworks of great wonder and beauty.

I begin by listening and absorbing clients' needs and expectations. Next, we develop an Attraction Master Plan that serves as a preliminary map to locate all the thematic entertainment elements - from architecture and landscaping - to show spectacles and retail. The refined plan integrates the elements into a coherent guest experience of exploration,





adventure and fun that ultimately translates into higher per capita revenue.

The Crane Dance - In 2007, Lim Kok Thay, Chairman of Resorts World Sentosa, asked me to create a dynamic work of public art that would embody the spirit of his new resort. He wanted something big and impressive. The first idea was to do a show using giant construction cranes moving to music and lighting. At first, I couldn't figure out how to create an emotional connection between the audience and a construction crane.

One night, staring at my drafting lamp, it occurred to me that the lamp had the basic joint articulation of the Crane, a well-known symbol of health and longevity in Asian culture. I started to pose the lamp in various positions. A bird lover, I was familiar with the Cranes' mating dance. I started to see two giant cranes/Cranes dancing with one another. For inspiration, I attached a second lamp to my table and sketched out a 10-minute show where the cranes meet, dance and fall in love. The finished show remains a big, international hit and is probably my best-known work. [Crane Dance received a TEA Thea Award in 2012.]

Entertainment Design Corporation (EDC)

Jeremy Railton founded EDC in 1991 in Los Angeles and it has built a reputation as a leading design and production entertainment firm. The company's work reflects Jeremy's own versatility. Fundamentally artistic and intrinsically cultural, EDC continues to immerse itself in the pursuit of fresh, inspiring, and out-of-the-box ways to ultimately wow, amuse, and entertain. For clients looking to pass seamlessly between multiple entertainment categories, EDC serves as a one-stop shop. Visit www.entdesign.com. . . .

PHOTO INFORMATION

Page 12:

Jeremy's Little Bo Peep drawing from age three; Jeremy's first set design at the Mark Taper Forum

Page 13, clockwise from top left:

Jeremy's first play (holding sword); Jeremy and his brother on Khamera; Jeremy's drawing of Khamera; Magic To Do show for Princess Cruises; Set design for a Michael Jackson special on MTV

Page 14:

A set piece from Diavolo; A 2002 Olympic Games venue

Page 15, top to bottom:

Barbra Streisand's 2016 touring set; An illustration of a set in Cher's Vegas show from 2008-2011; Cher in her pearl bubble entrance

Page 16, clockwise from top left:

Jeremy painting; Design for SOAR; Dancing Cranes; Elizabeth Taylor 60th Birthday television set

Page 17:

The Fremont Street Experience; Members of the EDC team: Kurt Gefke, Alex Calle, Richard Wechsler, Jeremy Railton, Alison Picard, Francesca Nicolas, Chris Stage



CHARACTERz

Jon Binkowski and Lisa Enos Smith share their love for the theme park industry through filmmaking

interview by Martin Palicki

CHARACTERz co-creators Lisa Enos Smith and Jon Binkowski are business partners in the multi-discipline production company Renaissance Entertainment, LLC. At Renaissance, the team is often involved in creating and designing major attractions for the theme park industry. CHARACTERz is the team's third feature film project, following the horror/comedy Scare Zone and supernatural thriller The Visitant.

InPark: Where did the idea for CHARACTERz originate?

Lisa Enos Smith: Jon and I have deep roots in the theme park business. One of my first jobs was as an Animal Educator at Busch Gardens Tampa; Jon's first job was as a costumed character at SeaWorld in San Diego. Every character in the film is drawn from people we've known or worked with over the years...maybe exaggerated a little for comic effect, of course.

Jon Binkowski: Lisa and I tapped into a lot of our personal theme park history when writing CHARACTERz.

Smith: At one level, CHARACTERz is a sort of love letter to the industry. But even though it's about this unique sub-culture, it's also universal. Everybody can relate to getting involved in something that doesn't pay much, that people misunderstand, that you work yourself ragged doing, but you still love it.

IPM: What were some of the challenges in filming CHARACTERz?

Binkowski: There are a lot of challenges in making "Ultra Low Budget" films, beyond the obvious inherent lack of funds. We had a handshake deal with a local amusement/ride park; two locations, lots of background potential, etc. Then, just a few days before shooting, we get a call. 'Changed our minds,' they said. 'Thanks but no thanks.' Fortunately, the good folks at Gatorland and Old Town Kissimmee really came through.

Smith: The shooting schedule was tight; it had to be to stay on budget. We couldn't afford to add days, or keep the pro crew guys on into overtime, which meant we sometimes had to scramble just to catch the last of the daylight available.

And the park locations—Gatorland and Old Town Kissimmee—were both open for business throughout, complete with background music, ride operations, car shows, and park visitors becoming curious onlookers.



IPM: The Moody Blues plays a role in the film; what's the connection?

Binkowski: "The Moodys" (as they call themselves) and I go back to when we worked on an awesome dark ride at the infamous Hard Rock Park. I got to know the band very well as we re-orchestrated "Nights in White Satin" and worked together with dark ride company Sally Corporation to create a unique attraction based on the song. It is still talked about on the internet today! Well, that relationship exists to this very day and they were happy to help me with CHARACTERz. They are wonderful guys.

IPM: Did you have any messages you wanted to convey through the movie to folks in the industry?

Smith: Just our sincere love for the industry. For most of us, this crazy business is our lives. We have made life-long friends, fallen in love and even introduced our children to the industry. I guess the message is: "Working in the industry can be dysfunctional at times, but we wouldn't want to do anything else!"

IPM: Can we expect a sequel or other films in the works?

Smith: Oh yes! Actually, we are in pre-production for a sequel to our second feature, The Visitant. This little paranormal thriller has well over 2 million views on YouTube alone. ReVisitant will be shooting this summer.

IPM: How has your film work informed your theme park design work?

Binkowski: The film reminded us that, sometimes, it's the little things that people take away from an amusement experience. The first time a kid met a costumed character can be as impactful as the most elaborate multimedia spectacular. It's a lot of hard work, wedged in between our 'real' paying gigs. They're not blockbusters; nobody's going to buy our action figures. We don't make a lot of money. But we love making movies....

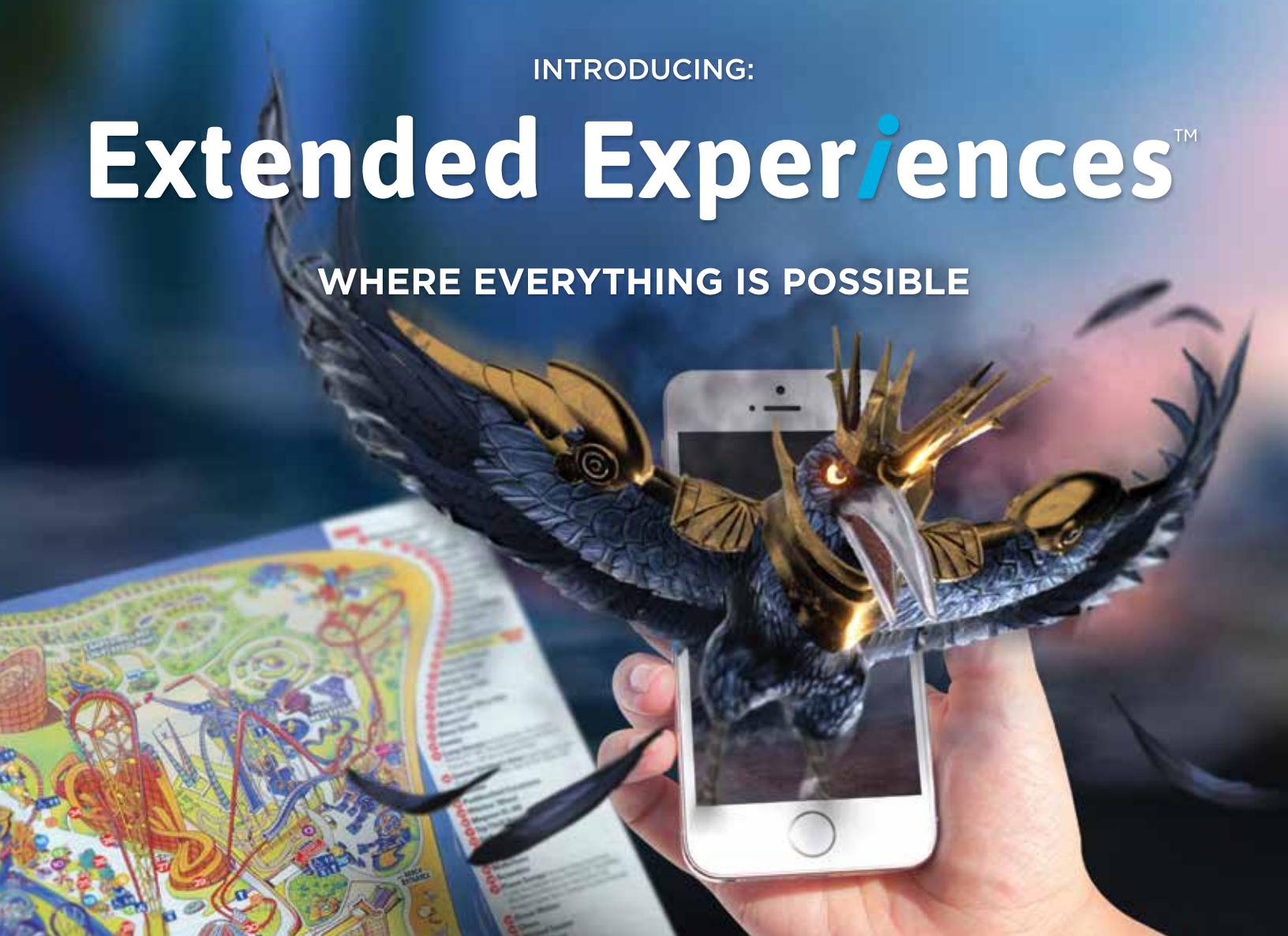
CHARACTERz was shot in 4K and produced with a 5.1 audio track. It is available for viewing on a variety of platforms including iTunes, Amazon, YouTube, Vudu, Google Play and Vimeo on Demand.

www.characterzmovie.com

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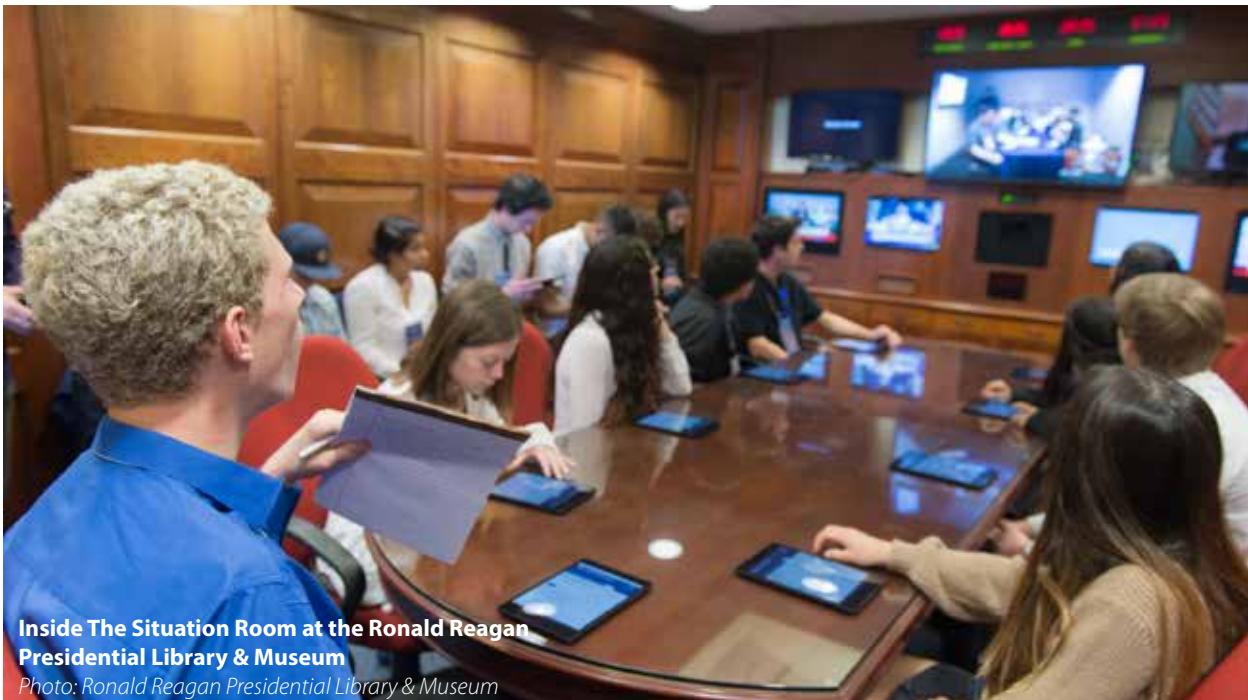
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Inside The Situation Room at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum

Photo: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum

The Situation Room

A new experience at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum provides a group lesson in foreign policy

by Mira Cohen

Editor's Note: The Situation Room experience is receiving a MUSE Award from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) this year. The three-hour experience is available by advance reservation only and is targeted to educational and corporate groups.

When the Conference Room and the Secure Video Transmission Site from the Situation Room at the White House were dismantled in 2006, all contents including furnishings, carpet squares, microphone, video equipment, the famous wood paneling and presidential seal were boxed, crated and sent to the George W. Bush Library. In a joint agreement with the Bush Library, the Reagan Library was able to receive the Secure Video Transmission Site with the Conference Room remaining in place at the Bush Library.

Once the Secure Video Transmission Site or "Command Center" was re-installed at the Reagan Library, we faced numerous choices. Were we going to share the space behind the traditional red velvet roped stanchion and allow visitors to view the space? Were we going to share the stories of what had happened throughout history in the space? We could film movies sharing stories including first-person interviews, have docents share stories, set up kiosks with games individuals could play interacting with the stories from the space in a single-player manner.

We could have an app with pictures and scenes and storytelling from the past as well.

Duke Blackwood, the Director of the Reagan Library, chose to go in a very different direction.

Crisis Scenario

The scenario for the experience is the day President Reagan was shot in 1981, 70 days into his presidency. Not only was President Reagan in the hospital but the Vice President did not have proven access to a secure line of communication for about two hours. This left the crisis management team, which had rushed to the White House, both in shock and without a clearly drawn chain of command. Synchronously the press needed to scramble to pull the story together on the ground, sometimes getting it wrong. Then National Security adviser Richard Allen had tape recorded the entire day and through the transcript (an open document) we had access to each of the major decisions discussed and made during that eight-hour period. Additional guidance was provided by film footage from the day, biographies, and other sources. Documents from our National Archives collection are also integrated in 450+ pages of text that were written into a database game format.

Believe in the past; communicate with the future

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, a nonpartisan federal institution in Simi Valley, California is a part of the National Archives and Records Administration. In crafting a visitor experience for educational audiences, the Reagan Library drew inspiration from the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library. At the opening of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, President Roosevelt stated, "It must believe in the past. It must believe in the capacity of its own people so to learn from the past that they can gain judgment in creating their own future."

FDR, the father of presidential libraries was then intending to create an institution which would straddle the study of history with an eye towards future generations. This raises the question – how does a presidential museum both tell stories from the past and embrace the future? How do the demands for attendance, engagement, design and contemporary technology in a museum merge with the needs of a presidential archive to preserve and protect valuable artifacts and documents – the real and authentic stuff of history?

And how, as each presidency recedes into the realm of history, do we continue to tell the powerful stories of the person and the administration while providing a visitor experience that is both authentic and current as well as engaging to new audiences?

In some cases, the decisions have been based on including newer technology and technological tools in exhibits – in the forms of kiosks, table games, apps, and audio guides. The theory behind this concept is that technology is new and changing the method of telling the story will appeal to younger audiences. In some cases, the choice has been to build a more modern facility relying on the architecture of the structure to wow audiences into attendance.

Story structure

This also brings up the question of the presidential library – do you tell a chronological story of an American President and his (maybe one day her) life or do you highlight major issues and decisions, and focal points from a presidency? The latter was the choice made by George W. Bush and his team. At the center of the Bush Library experience is the Decision Points Theater where individuals respond to questions about major policy decisions from the Bush Administration at shared kiosks. Individual decisions are then ranked in relation to decisions made by others playing synchronously at their stations.

Our vision was to place participants in a contemporized fictional story. The story would be based on the past, but not identical to the past. Additionally, we chose to focus on the decision-making process, the group dynamic, with the look from the past and the feel of the present. For the presidential library model, this choice was a significant departure from the norm. What resulted was the Situation Room Experience at the Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush Presidential Libraries. The Situation Room Experience was designed in Simi Valley, CA and installed in both locations.

Drawing upon the success of the Discovery Center at the Reagan Library which opened in 2008 with an initial target audience of fifth graders, we decided to focus the experience on meeting contemporary learning objectives for high school – creating building blocks of field trip experiences at varying levels. The entire story-telling framework now hangs on the educational framework created for the game. What results is the controlled chaos of a newsroom at work, a crisis management team in action and an experience which is completely devoid of proctoring and facilitation for 75 minutes of play. The participants run the show and the outcome of 40 different decisions made either individually, or by the group depending on the group dynamics, determine the outcome of the game and multiple points throughout.

Educational objectives

Creating an educationally driven experience in a museum means providing a meaningful event that meets the needs of current teaching standards especially at the high school level. Doing so makes it easy for administrators and districts to say "yes" to allowing the trip away from school and all that is involved in making this happen (e.g. excusing groups of students from many classes for a day and providing substitutes for each attending educator). Identifying, let alone meeting standards, can be challenging in an environment when standards vary from state to state and are in flux. We developed the learning goals for our simulation knowing that California standards were being reviewed for adoption. In consultation with a highly talented team of hand-picked educational advisory board members including teachers, site-based administrators, district-level administrators and a graduate school professor, we drew up a set of objectives:

Participants will:

- Engage in evidence-based reasoning to solve a real-world problem
- Source multiple materials in real time under pressure
- Inquire about the validity and reliability of information
- Engage in self-directed collaborative decision making
- Feel immersed in a real-world crisis scenario
- Use a variety of 21st century tools and platforms

The remarkable thing about all of these learning objectives is they meet trends in educational theory and direction and also provide opportunities for experiences that can be best designed for museums and other cultural venues. Full immersion, including the installation of permanent sets and high level of technological integration into the space, cannot be duplicated in a classroom environment. One major surprise for the team is that we have since discovered that the experience is scalable for university as well as executive and community groups.

Building the immersive experience

To build and produce the experience, we assembled an exceptional and nimble design team including Greg Anderson, Artistic Director, Trey Alsup, Writer and Game Designer, and from SenovvA – Curtis Kelly, Experiential Designer, Coty Shipe, Chief Engineer, and Lauren Kelly Sheridan, Head of Software Development.

One of our goals and challenges was to preserve the historical architecture of the Situation Room while integrating contemporary technology. (After all, the reason for retiring the Situation Room in 2006 in the first place was to technologically update the space.) We did not want to interfere with the original architecture, so multiple decisions had to be made. In one case, the team from SenovvA was able to integrate the microphones from the original Situation Room into the experience. In another case, we slipped computer screens into the spaces where old CRT screens used to live. In yet another instance, modern teleconferencing equipment was hidden seamlessly into the "Command Center" wall while keeping in place the actual camera formerly used in the space.

Reports show that presidential libraries primarily draw visitors from outside of their local communities. One opportunity these kinds of in-depth (three hours, in this case) experiences provide is to draw local audiences as well as audiences from outside the local area. Having an unmatched experience or scheduled event is one way to encourage people to make the trip and to generate return visitors as well.

Since the Situation Room experience opened in August 2017, groups who have visited the museum are already scheduling to return next year.

The Situation Room Experience has taught us that getting students to engage and immerse themselves in the past is the best way for them to apply history's main lessons to their own futures. . . .



Mira Cohen is Director of Education at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum and Project Manager of the Situation Room Experience. She spearheads all educational installations and creates and implements strategy and design for educational programs and projects. She pushes the boundaries of this passion with cutting-edge theories on education, game development and technological innovation. She previously taught high school and middle school and created curriculum and educational strategy for companies and organizations such as CNN, CraniaMania, UCLA and the Zimmer Children's Museum. Mira holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oberlin College and a Master of Education degree from the University of Maryland, College Park where she wrote her thesis on simulations in education.

The advertisement features a dark background with a central banner containing the brand name "eleventhhour" in white, lowercase, sans-serif font. A green five-pointed star is positioned above the letter "h". Below the banner, the word "CREATIVE" is written vertically in large, light-colored, block letters. To its right, the words "RECRUITMENT" and "for THEMED ENTERTAINMENT" are stacked vertically in a similar style. On the left side, a green speech bubble contains the text "LOOKING FOR NEW TALENT?". On the right side, a pink speech bubble contains the text "LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB?". At the bottom, the company's services are listed as "CONCEPT - DESIGN - ART DIRECTION - PROJECT MANAGEMENT" followed by the website "WWW.HOTFRESHTALENT.COM" and the phone number "310.821.6900".

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Five minutes with Eleventh Hour

An inside look at an employment agency specializing in themed entertainment with Jeff Ganter, President of Eleventh Hour

interview by Martin Palicki

Tell us about Eleventh Hour and where the company name came from.

The name is both literal and figurative. I grew the agency out of an immediate need, when my previous employer closed without warning. Not wanting to leave our loyal clients without options overnight, Eleventh Hour was formed. The name refers to the immediacy of our origin, and also the fact that many of our clients do call us at the 'eleventh hour' needing help, which we are happy to provide. Over a decade later, we are grateful to have been able to help fill freelance and direct hire roles for some of our clients since day one.

What makes you and your team experts at matching people to jobs?

Here at Eleventh Hour we collectively have 25+ years of experience in staffing and recruiting, and a genuine passion for and deep involvement in the entertainment industry. We take the time to build relationships with both clients and candidates, assessing not only the skills and qualifications of talent, but the social and cultural fit as well.

We know that personality, sense of humor and working style are crucial to a harmonious project, especially in creative environments, as you can't train or teach those as you would with a specific software or program. As a result, we have built a very strong, diverse database from around the world. Moreover, with our trusted network and experienced team, we are adept at searching out those very specific, talented people that one won't always find by simply posting a job online.

You're connecting creative people with creative jobs. What's your view of the current market?

We are connecting creative folks every hour of every day. It is Eleventh Hour's belief that no matter how the market looks objectively, our job is to make sure the best clients and the best talent are matched up. The first quarter of 2017 has been lucrative for both employers and job seekers, and we have seen a relatively large hiring upswing in the beginning of the year. Typically, companies will use their first quarter to assess their budgets and spending then react second quarter, but the forward momentum we are seeing in hiring is showing no signs of slowing.



**Left: Eleventh Hour Vice President Julie Reyes and President Jeff Ganter
Right: The highly themed and incredibly detailed Eleventh Hour booth at the 2016 IAAPA Attractions Expo**

Photos: Eleventh Hour



Do you help place individuals and small companies into the project-based teams so common in themed entertainment work? It feels like everyone has to be their own brand nowadays and maintain that brand identity from contract to contract.

This is a great question and yes, starting on a temporary project and growing that into something further is very common. With any candidate, it is important to be aware of what you bring to the table, what you have to offer a team, and be able to show what your impact is within a project. This is especially important in freelance and project based teams, as those other team members you are working with are your colleagues, and it is a small world and smaller industry! If you have been clear about your abilities and demonstrated that, those people will remember you and they will call you with other roles on the next project.

For example, something that Eleventh Hour specializes in is custom building freelance creative teams based on specific client needs, whether it be on site or remotely. For the past eight years, we have created an off-site model with a global theme park client where we hand pick creative talent for the client, and Eleventh Hour houses the freelance teams while reducing client overhead. Because we are always looking for talent to complement those teams, the people who package themselves distinctly, are great at communicating their strengths and weaknesses and have strong industry context are always our first calls.

What types of jobs are in highest demand?

Right now we are very busy searching for art directors, show set designers, production designers, architectural designers, project managers and producers with themed entertainment experience. Our workload is very client driven, however and changes often.

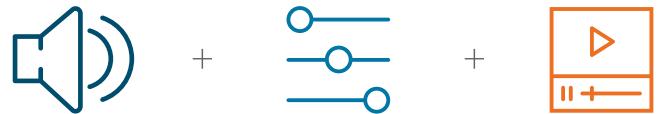
Regionally, where are you finding the most need for talent?

We place talent globally. As there are so many parks and attractions being developed in Asia, naturally we have many clients with needs there. The domestic (USA) market is also thriving.

If someone is interested in using your services, what should they do?

Reach out to us! You can find more info and our contact info at www.11thr.com and www.hotfreshtalent.com whether you're looking for a job or looking to hire talent. We meet and interview every candidate we represent, so be prepared to tell us all about yourself. Of course we are involved in many industry events and organizations like IAAPA and TEA, so always feel free to come and say hello, we're sure to be there! ...

Audio | Show Control | Video

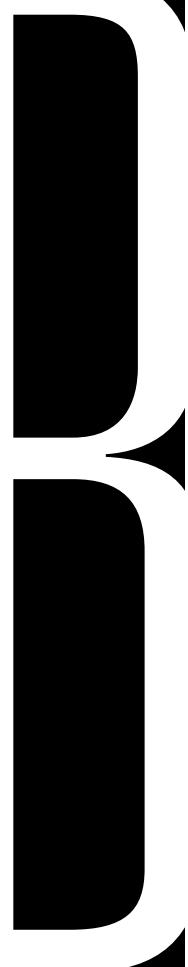


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Hundreds of professionals gather at the TEA Summit to learn from creators of Thea Award-honored projects

Photo: TEA

Ascending the summit

Conversations with TEA leaders about the Summit & Thea Awards

by Clara Rice

Industry growth is at a breakneck pace, and themed entertainment will soon be given the literal red carpet treatment during the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) big weekend in Anaheim that includes the TEA Summit and Thea Awards Gala (April 20-22). We asked TEA International Board member and occasional InPark contributor Clara Rice of Jack Rouse Associates to interview members of TEA's brain trust on some trending topics touching on the global economy, the state of the industry, the role and importance of the TEA and the continuous pursuit of knowledge.

So expand your horizons, get uncomfortable, and explore themed entertainment around the globe.

MONTY LUNDE: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Technifex President/CEO and TEA Founder Monty Lunde will moderate the Technology panel at TEA Summit Day One, showcasing Thea Award recipients Slideboarding and Mack Rides' Inverted Powered Coaster, examining the business motivations behind these technologies and their implications for the industry.

Why is technology so important to our industry, and how has TEA helped in its advancement?

Technological advancements that support the Themed Entertainment industry are one of the major drivers to creating more amazing, visceral and compelling guest experiences.

The TEA's value-add to the industry's technology story is as a conduit for communication between vendors, suppliers and project developers. Designers and conceivers of new attractions often learn about new technologies from SATE conferences and other organized TEA gatherings such as behind-the-scenes tours, member company open houses and via TEA member booths at IAAPA Expos. Through the Thea Awards, the TEA recognizes innovative technologies that have a direct impact upon storytelling, place making and quality guest experiences.

Advancements in technology can come from any themed entertainment discipline, or from other unrelated industries. Whether the advancements are in VR, AR, 3D/4D films, new ride technologies, LED lighting, advanced control and safety systems, or animation and special effects, the TEA highlights these achievements so that others can use these tools to create ever more compelling attractions.

BRIAN SANDS: UNLEASH THE POWER OF DATA

TEA Summit Day One brings "Industry by the Numbers," a global market forecast presentation led by top economics specialist AECOM, TEA's partner in producing the annual TEA/AECOM Theme and Museum Index, a comprehensive analysis of attendance and related trends at major attractions across the globe. Among AECOM's presenters include Vice President Brian Sands.

Tell us about the relationship between TEA and AECOM as regards the Theme Index and what folks can expect from your panel.

It is a great honor and serious responsibility for AECOM to prepare the Theme Index, providing us with the opportunity to carefully analyze attendance and other industry trends, and also giving us the chance to discuss these with a wide range of industry stakeholders.

The Index has grown in complexity, comprehensiveness, and sophistication over the years, adding more segments of the business, broadening its geographic coverage, and increasing the depth and quality of the analyses. With this growth, the industry has warmed to the idea over the years, and this has helped with industry transparency, cohesiveness, and utility, to the point that it is now the industry standard, with its release eagerly awaited by all.

Our Industry by the Numbers panel on Summit Day One provides the attendees with an overview across the globe of major trends affecting the commercial and cultural attractions industry, including early insight into figures and discussions detailed in the Theme Index. It also provides us with a unique opportunity to present these early insights to an in-person audience and gather their questions about the topics discussed and associated issues, facilitating a discussion that complements the written report [published in June].

ADAM BEZARK: MOVE WITH THE TIMES

Summit Day Two showcases industry blockbusters, offering case studies of the projects that will be celebrated at the following evening's black-tie, Thea Awards Gala.

Over the past two decades, projects nominated for Theas have evolved with the industry, growing in technological complexity, expanding in geography, and exploring new methods of storytelling. Thea Committee Chair, Adam Bezark of The Bezark Company offered his thoughts.

How has the culture of the themed entertainment industry changed, and how has that been reflected in the TEA Thea Committee's approach and the type of project submissions?

The ways are numerous and striking. There is the great new trend toward incredible, mega-scale story environments, which started Universal's

Harry Potter lands and Disney's Cars Land and has set the stage for even bigger and grander projects to come. There's also the explosion of new international projects of ever-increasing size and quality.

There is also rapid acceleration in entertainment technology: new types of show-oriented ride systems, sophisticated combinations of real spaces and advanced media, and increasingly smart interactive technologies. The tools keep getting better.

Because of these advancements, there are whole new categories of work that expand our industry and our ability to tell new, ever more engrossing stories, and fuel growth in other categories such as museums and visitor centers, an increasingly important part of our industry.

The number of Thea Award submissions hit an all-time high this cycle. We received over 200 project submissions in 2016, with over 50% coming from outside the United States. The Thea Awards are getting bigger, and better recognized, every year... and that's super exciting for all of us.

**THOMAS MEGNA AND MARGARET WONG:
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BURGEONING CHINA MARKET...**

Recently, I had the great pleasure of co-producing the "TEA Talks LIVE! Working in China," professional development session. Among those sharing insights were TEA Asia Pacific Division President Thomas Megna of Megna Entertainment, and Margaret Wong, California Center CEO and a member of the TEA Asia Pacific Division Board. Both are located in China with years of experience working there on an everyday basis.

Why conduct business in China, and what are some of top recommendations for breaking into the market?

Margaret Wong: China right now is changing. The middle class is representing over 50% of the population...and I think they are getting more involved with mobile phones, apps, online buying, sports, and entertainment. And all these areas are a huge market for the United States to get into China.

[But] doing business in China is not as simple as you think...Number one, you need a lot of patience. China is different from the US, all the way from decision-making, distribution systems, [to] the corporate set up. Secondly, you have to do a lot of due diligence... to understand how China behaves, how the decisions are made and how the organizational



Adam Bezark



Thomas Megna



Christine Kerr

structure is going to be. We need to be able to sell what the Chinese want and what the market needs. It's not as much translation as more of what they are looking for and how the companies work.

Thirdly, I recommend having good partners in China. You will be better off penetrating the China market with the government structure and taxes and currency, if you are able to find some type of local partner you can trust and work with.

Thomas Megna: The market is exploding right now. I have many developers coming to me saying, "I need good, qualified design companies and turnkey solution companies." And so there are numerous projects, almost 100 or more different themed environment projects that are happening all over China right now...so if you're anxious to come, if you want to get involved, the possibilities are definitely here... Be cautious, and join the fun.

DAVID WILLRICH: ...BUT DON'T FORGET ABOUT EUROPE

With all the buzz surrounding the burgeoning China market and park expansions in North America, it's important to remember that some of the greatest engineering achievements since the advent of the industry have come from Europe. TEA International Board President and DJ Willrich Managing Director David Willrich, has no plans for us to forget.

How is Europe woven into the fabric of the themed entertainment industry?

European parks can only dream of the attendance numbers (and dollars) that the top US parks enjoy. However, guest expectation is still very top-of-mind, leaving European creators figuring out how they can deliver illusions, quality and world-class attractions on significantly lower budgets.

Over the last 10-15 years, I would say that standards of many European parks have made a quantum leap in quality, partly due in part to market pressure but also partly due to a more experienced supply chain. More and more frequently, European companies have worked on projects driven by top creative teams and thus have a much better idea of the standards required. In fact, I would go so far as to argue that creative teams have to be even more creative in coming up with ideas that can scale to a budget but still deliver at the top level. Technology plays a major role here as well. It keeps getting cheaper to deliver the best and most immersive effects, not just at European attraction budgets, but also for museums.

Many European attractions have restrictions not experienced in other countries; particularly historic buildings or sites. Planning and environmental pressures can seriously curtail ideas, setting parameters that can be quite restricting and challenging. Our 'Historic Futures' themed SATE conference in Europe (May 4-5) will be addressing this very point.

The TEA plays a great role as an industry communicator, our events are growing in stature, and members around the world meet and chat with

the best people in the industry. It all helps in setting and improving standards in all regions.

CHRISTINE KERR AND KILE OZIER: NEVER STOP LEARNING, AND LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Learning is life-long, and even as we reach the pinnacle of our careers, we never have all the answers. Christine Kerr of BaAM Productions is TEA Past President and current Educational Programming Chair. Kile Ozier, a member of the TEA International Board, is co-chairing the "Elephants in the Room" segment of TEA Summit Day One.

What's the motivation behind the "Elephants" discussion topics, which may challenge some people's comfort level?

Kile Ozier: People tend to fear what they don't know and are skittish about some topics. The idea behind "Elephants" is to de-mystify and defuse such conversations so that people may acquire a fresh and clear, topical and relevant understanding of issues and events that might otherwise seem volatile or delicate (or of which they simply were not aware). Ideally, that information empowers the way they do business around the world.

How can TEA contribute to long-term professional development?

Christine Kerr: The TEA Summit focuses on professional development through a business lens. Day One sessions share trends and explore new topics that will have an impact on business practices. They provide attendees with the "how" and "why" of business in the themed entertainment industry, encouraging frank and open conversation.

Summit Day Two (Thea Case Studies) is one of the most incredible opportunities ever: to learn the story behind the development of a collection of diverse experiences from around the globe, all being recognized with Thea Awards. Summit attendees are provided with unparalleled access to insights and information.

SATE is TEA's creative conference, looking at the various elements that come together to create great Experience Design. SATE explores themes and trends and the varied ways experience creators are introducing new and interesting ideas into their work.

All these programs together, combined with many other TEA events around the world throughout the year, provide a well-rounded perspective of the industry and all that goes into creating compelling places and experiences. TEA will continue to develop and expand its educational offerings in response to the needs of the industry. . . .



Clara Rice (cricc@jackrouse.com) is Director of Communications at Jack Rouse Associates (JRA), a member of the Themed Entertainment Association's International Board of Directors, Immediate Past Chair of the TEA NextGen Committee, and a contributing writer for several industry publications, including *InPark Magazine*.



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Test your 3D industry knowledge!

nWave Pictures Distribution 3D Facts vs Fiction

by Janine S. Baker

Stereoscopic 3D (aka S3D) has been around since 1915, but never had commercial success until theaters traded in their film systems for digital projection. And after the success of Avatar, the demand for installing 3D theaters surged with many investors extending the 3D lure into the home market.

But the home market did not embrace 3D. Today the pendulum has swung back to an emphasis on specialty cinema, and S3D is savored as a special event for blockbuster brands, animation features, the giant screen and other media platforms within museums, aquariums, science centers and amusement parks.

Within those special venue markets, 3D is still thriving and even enjoying a new expansion among the top companies such as nWave Pictures Distribution.

nWave invites you to test your 3D knowledge – can you tell which of the following are fact, and which are fiction? If you are attending either the ACM (Association of Children's Museums, May 2-5, Pasadena) or AAM (American Alliance of Museums, May 7-10, St. Louis) conferences, present this article at the nWave booth and claim your prize!

nWave 3D Challenge FACT OR FICTION:

- 1.** 3D behind the screen is better than/as good as 3D in front of the screen.
- 2.** The 3DTV consumer market failed.
- 3.** 3D can play back on any projection system.
- 4.** 3D is just as easy to create as 2D, just make an extra file.
- 5.** 3D films need 4D effects to be successful.
- 6.** Virtual Reality will replace 3D and all new theaters.
- 7.** Technology improves the quality of 3D.
- 8.** Any 3D film can be successful in all 3D markets.
- 9.** 3D is passé and has no growth potential.

SCORING:

8-9 right: 3D - You're a 3D star! Claim your prize at the nWave booth
5-7 right: 2½D - Your 3D vision is not fully realized; visit the nWave booth for a touchup
4 or less right: 2D - you're missing a dimension, go to the nWave booth immediately for assistance



Janine S. Baker (jbaker@nwave.com) is SVP Distribution & Development at nWave Pictures Distribution.

1. 3D behind the screen is better than/ as good as 3D in front of the screen.

FICTION In-front-of-the-screen creates the classic 3D effects people respond to, and immerse the audience further into the magic and emotion of a story. Some producers find behind-the-screen easier - whereas nWave has been successful and continues to wow families with in-front-of-the screen 3D. Theaters and studios can have tremendous success with a well-crafted 3D feature.

2. The 3DTV consumer market failed

FACT Yes, the 3D home market failed but it wasn't because of 3D - it was due to technology not keeping up with consumer needs. The technology for 3D glasses was not available at an affordable price point during the time that demand for 3D viewing was high. The consumer also faced complicated choices among many different 3D TV platforms, and there was a general shortage of content. In other words, the whole product – viewing platform plus glasses plus content – didn't really exist in a way that worked for most consumers, and this caused the consumer to be frustrated and therefore discouraged. The good news is that while the home market opportunity has faded away, the inherent appeal of 3D remains and those consumers will still seek out 3D experiences outside the home.

3. 3D can play back on any projection system.

FICTION When projecting 3D in your theater, you will need a 3D projector or dual projection system with a 3D server. Many 2D theater clients have come to us thinking that the conversion of their theater to 3D would be as simple as adding a second projector but this is not the case. In addition, the type of projection system dictates what type of 3D glasses are chosen which can cost anywhere from US\$.60 cents to US\$60.00 a pair, so it is a factor when choosing 3D systems.

In addition, there can be many choices such as 2K or 4K resolution systems, MPEG or JPEG digital cinema and systems that can play high frame rates. And there are elements that, if integrated, can make the experience more immersive and spectacular: such as the new 12-channel audio systems being offered by some providers. Fortunately, there are many integrators who specialize in upgrading 2D theaters to 3D. It is always best to ask these professionals what is needed to upgrade a space.

4. 3D is just as easy to create as 2D, just make an extra file.

FICTION Many have tried but this isn't as easy as it may sound. Look for a reliable, experienced producer and distributor who knows 3D – such as nWave... Our company has been in the business of 3D for more than 20 years, winning awards for 3D animation. nWave is unique in having made the leap from the 3D simulation attraction industry to feature films, with continued success in both arenas. Fly Me To The Moon was released in 2007 and, 10 years later, Son of Bigfoot. nWave continues to move forward in 3D production of feature animated films as well as a short 4D version for the attraction and ride market. It is a business model that works.

5. 3D films need 4D effects to be successful.

FICTION Giant screen theaters do not have 4D effects and continue to do well when exhibiting top-quality 3D films. Some smaller family theaters do not have 4D and do very well. 4D can be a great enhancement to a 3D cinema experience or media-based attraction, and a revenue booster, but it must be done well and suited to the venue and the content.

6. Virtual Reality will replace 3D and all new theaters.

FICTION Virtual Reality is the new kid on the block, surrounded by all the excitement and wonder that any new platform attracts. Most sites are using VR as a companion piece to the film and theater or a custom entertainment experience. As with anything offered in entertainment, the experience is an additional option and it is the quality of content that will drive that experience forward toward future growth.

7. Technology improves the quality of 3D.

FACT Technology usually improves everything. More pixels and more light add to the quality of 3D. However, the 3D media must be of high quality when delivered to the theater. Of course, laser projection technology with the new 12 channel audio increases the film experience and brings a quality to a whole new level. And technology also improves the efficiency of servicing theaters as well as delivery of the media.

8. Any 3D film can be successful in all 3D markets.

FICTION Not all films work in every market. There is no shortcut to knowing your market. Our own company's success in 3D depends on having a good product and bringing it to the right markets in the right way. Our animation company centered in Brussels specializes in 3D animation with top animators from all over the world. This top talent helps to achieve success in creating animation features as well as the 3D/4D attractions and rides for the special venue market. We also distribute 3D films as a producing partner for top quality documentary giant screen films. We demand top quality 3D for visuals whether the topic is animation or a documentary, and our high standards enable us to attract others with high standards, such as award winning composer Ramin Djawadi. He has risen to notoriety through his "Game of Thrones" composition but began with nWave when composing for Fly Me To The Moon as an unknown artist. nWave attracts talent.

9. 3D is passé and has no growth potential.

FICTION 3D is better than ever and is still successful in all of our markets, whether on a giant screen or a smaller family screen in a children's science center, or aquarium - as well as in amusement parks and family entertainment centers. In addition, 3D continues to be used in media-based attractions such as dark rides and interactive theaters. With more than two decades of success in the business, nWave is still striving to improve the quality of the guest experience and every element that makes it up: media, storytelling, technology, integration, platform, software, control, customer service... As long as we continue to strive for that improvement, and keep our standards high, we will always be able to bring the audience an experience of value that they will remember and cherish forever. ...

A classic splash

Steve Birket's reflections on WaterWorld: A Live Sea War Spectacular

by Rick West

Unique throughout the theme park world for its impressive scope and scale, and its masterful integration of live stunts with special effects, WaterWorld: A Live Sea War Spectacular opened at Universal Studios Hollywood in 1995, coinciding with the release of the eponymous movie. This year, the ambitious and enduring stunt spectacular is being honored by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) with the prestigious Thea Classic Award.

The first WaterWorld was such a success that it was also produced for Universal Studios Japan in 2001, and Universal Studios Singapore in 2010. For more than 20 years, it has entertained tens of millions of guests from all corners of the globe. Steve Birket and his colleagues at Birket Engineering played a major role behind the scenes on the technical aspects of this large-scale attraction. InPark contributor Rick West caught up with Steve for a unique, personal perspective. WaterWorld was an important step in Steve's life, not only as a professional; it's where he met his wife, Wendy.

WaterWorld 101

Younger generations of fans may not even necessarily be aware that the genesis of WaterWorld was a feature film – a rare occurrence that shares similarities with Disney's Splash Mountain attraction, which is wildly popular at theme parks around the world despite the fact that most fans have never even seen Song of the South, the IP on which the attraction is based. Whether or not the film Waterworld was deemed successful at the box office is beside the point. That the theme park incarnation of it has been so well received by so many visitors for such a long duration

of time is testament to the men and women who took on the challenge of creating the stunt spectacular using the film's storyline as a creative blueprint, delivering arguably the greatest permanent stunt show attraction this industry has yet seen.

In the event you're not that familiar with WaterWorld, here's a crash course:

The story of WaterWorld: A Live Sea War Spectacular takes place after the events of the film. As the show begins, the show's heroine, Helen, arrives back at the floating atoll with dry dirt and the announcement that she has found land. Shortly after her arrival, the atoll comes under attack by a group of "Smokers," as well as the Deacon, the show's leading villain. Helen's love interest and hero of the story, the Mariner, also arrives at the atoll and both sides clash in an epic battle full of world-class stunts and explosive pyrotechnic effects.

- 1994: In the fall, Universal Studios Hollywood executives begin discussing how to replace the Miami Vice Action Spectacular, which had been in operation at the park since 1989. By the end of the year, Waterworld has been selected as the IP basis of an all-new, water-based stunt spectacular.
- Early 1995: Construction begins on WaterWorld: A Live Sea War Spectacular. Fall 1995 is the target date for the new show's debut.
- Summer 1995: Intense rehearsals are underway as final details are put into place within the show arena and back-of-house space.
- Mid-October 1995: WaterWorld stunt show debuts to rave reviews, following the summer theatrical release of the film.



WaterWorld combines live action stunts, pyrotechnics, and a giant sea plane flying straight towards the audience

Photo: Universal Studios

- 1996: WaterWorld at Universal Studios Hollywood receives one of the very first Thea Awards for Outstanding Achievement.
- March 2001: WaterWorld opens at Universal Studios Japan, where it continues to thrill crowds.
- March 2010: The third iteration of WaterWorld, nearly identical to its predecessors, opens at Universal Studios Singapore, where it remains highly successful.
- April 22, 2017: WaterWorld will receive the Thea Classic Award from the Themed Entertainment Association.

The beginnings of Birket Engineering

As is the case with all great attractions, the story of the people behind them is where we find the true magic. One such individual is Steve Birket, a long-time leader in the themed entertainment industry.

Many professionals in the business kind of stumble into this line of work. But for Steve Birket, the seed was planted at a very early age and took root, growing into a truly impressive career.

"When I was a child, my uncle was the buyer for the magic shop at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom," said Steve. "He would give me his samples and practice magic tricks with me. He often would take me with him and let me run around the park while he was at work. When I was in junior high, my brother Glenn was a Cast Member; he drove submarines at 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea while I continued running around the park! In junior high and high school, I was in band and found myself marching down Main Street during those years. Three months after my 16th birthday, I was hired into Magic Kingdom Entertainment and have worked there seasonally ever since. I got to know Goofy and his friends very well. What a pleasure to work with them; it paid for my college education and gave me a lifetime of memories and friendships."

Young Steve was on his way. Once he completed college, he began to set his sights on a professional career path. "I come from a family of engineers," he said. "I graduated during a beautiful May in Florida with a Bachelor's in electrical engineering. I was having a pretty good time working at Disney at that point, and wasn't really in a big hurry to do otherwise. I had waterskied, traveled, and done some filmings, and later would unicycle, stiltwalk, and juggle in the parades, all as part of Magic Kingdom Entertainment. By then, Epcot had opened and my brother Glenn, who was lead electrical engineer at WED responsible for The American Adventure, had left Disney and started his own company. One of his early freelance projects was bigger than his one-man shop could handle, and so he called on me to join him. In a blink, I went from being on stage at Cinderella Castle in a tri-cornered hat on the 4th of July, to working in California on July 6th helping to design the ride control system for Epcot's upcoming Maelstrom attraction for its Norway pavilion at World Showcase."

In hindsight, considering his own personal combination of athletic ability and engineering acumen, Steve was shaping up well to be a savvy contributor to WaterWorld one day!

The way to WaterWorld

Meanwhile, the company that Steve's older brother formed evolved to become Birket Engineering, which today has more than 80 employees with offices in Orlando, Shanghai, and Hong Kong; Glenn Birket remains Founder and Owner. The equipment that the company produces can be found in every Disney and Universal theme park around the globe.

During those early days, one big job led to another. "The Norway ride system was successful, and led to ride and show system projects for the Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular! and The Superstar Television Theater at the Disney-MGM Studios," Steve recalls. "We also did Jaws: The Ride and Earthquake: The Big One at Universal Studios Florida, all opening in our backyard. We grew quickly to support these projects, and were rapidly entrenched within the themed entertainment vendor and owner community, coming out of those projects with solid experience and a respectable contact base. Those projects led to Universal's Backdraft, The Wild Wild West Stunt Show, and the E.T. Adventure. Beyond Universal, we secured projects in Las Vegas, and linear induction motor-launched roller coaster systems for several regional parks. In 1995, we got the request to work on WaterWorld for Universal Studios Hollywood."

As Birket got to work on WaterWorld, the entire company gave it their all, including several folks Steve named specifically. "Hardware Engineer Marcial Godoy and Software Engineer Dan Birket [another of the Birket brothers] were key to making WaterWorld USH happen. Both are

Performers unexpectedly appear all over the set, including over the audience

Photo: Universal Studios





Wendy & Steve Birket

Photo: TEA

practical, no-nonsense guys you want designing your life-safety show control system. Both are still with the company, as is our Office Manager, Jan Martin. We are a family as much as we are an organization."

Steve also acknowledged other groups that became regular collaborators and part of Birket Engineering's industry family, as they found themselves on project team after project team. "The Attraction Services Company provided many of the special effects and show action equipment on WaterWorld in Osaka and Singapore. Attraction Services principal, Melissa Townsend, is currently on the TEA Executive Committee. Alcorn McBride has also been a constant force throughout the years. We have benefited from great industry relationships, beginning with Glenn's earliest Epcot days, and those made by our own Glenn McNair, Brian Kuhar and others along the way. Even the pre-professional career contacts made in Walt Disney World Operations and Entertainment will still resurface on various projects. I am convinced there are only 'five people' in the themed entertainment business, because you see the same faces over and over again!"

When Steve met Wendy

Steve has certainly worked with a host of professionals over the years, forming lifelong friendships. One bond in particular however, stands out above the rest.

"In the days when Birket Engineering was performing the WaterWorld USH show control scope, I was a direct employee of Universal Creative for the development of Islands of Adventure. A woman by the name of Wendy Kendall was also on the IOA project team. She had relocated from San Diego to Orlando; the opposite of what I'd done – Orlando to Los Angeles. Neither of us knew many people in Los Angeles, so we ended up spending time together, becoming friends. After work, we would walk up the hill to the WaterWorld site where the Birket team was installing the show; it was the only place everyone I knew was to be found. One night, Marcial was testing the wireless pyro system on the seaplane. He invited me up on the wing to take a look, but I declined because I didn't want to interfere with the testing – and I didn't want to leave Wendy waiting. Without hesitation, Wendy hopped up onto the

wing and started checking it out. I thought, 'Wow! This isn't your average girl!' We've been married for 16 years now, and have three children."

TEA and more

All three iterations of WaterWorld are very much alike. Steve said, "There is of course, an experience base that we gained from the first. No two attractions are ever exactly the same, however. The design rigor and safety requirements remain, with changes for updated standards and technologies."

While WaterWorld remains one of Birket's very memorable projects, there have been many others, including such world-class attractions as The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man, Mission: Space, Revenge of the Mummy, Fear Factor Live, Crane Dance, Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey, World of Color and Shanghai Disneyland. All those projects are Thea Award recipients.

Steve went on to play a leadership role within the industry at large. He has just completed two years as International President of TEA, and remains closely involved with the association. Besides his role as Immediate Past President, he instigated formation of a New Business Committee. "The TEA was forming in the early 1990s just about the time Disney-MGM Studios and Universal Studios Florida were coming out of the ground," he recalled. "In those early days, the Orlando TEA presence was a small group of individuals. I joined the Eastern North America Division Board, missed one monthly Board call, and the following month, was told I was the East Secretary! I started helping to organize Orlando events, and would later become Division President. From there, I joined the International Board. Because of the work of TEA's fabulous committees, boards and staff, it now has a phenomenal worldwide presence. It's been an amazing thing to witness over the years. The TEA is fulfilling the intent of Monty Lunde and its founding visionaries, to serve the members of our great industry. Today, the TEA benefits from the leadership of President David Willrich, and COO Jennie Nevin, with the organization seeing unbelievable growth, new programs, events, and industry relationships. A simple mixer in Orlando will have more than 300 attendees, and we now have over 80 events annually around the world. I am very excited about the possibilities we see in Asia now as well."

It is fitting that WaterWorld is set to receive the Thea Classic Award. In this day and age of ever-changing theme park landscapes, the fact that this particular show has not only remained – but thrived – at Universal parks for decades is an industry anomaly. "I think we can say that WaterWorld is the best stunt show in the world," said Steve. "It is notable that the show is better-known than the movie from which it spawned. The show is epic. I have seen its influence in recent stunt shows on the other side of the globe."•



Rick West (rickwestTPA@gmail.com) is founder/editor of *Theme Park Adventure*, creative director of *Midsummer Scream* and show writer for *Rethink Leisure & Entertainment*.



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Go East, young man

Founder & CEO of Alterface, Benoit Cornet, talks technology, travel and expansion in the Chinese Market

interview by Martin Palicki

Alterface has created interactive gaming technology for theme parks and attractions around the globe. InPark's Martin Palicki spoke with Benoit Cornet on how the company is evolving to meet the needs of the Chinese marketplace and the importance of Asia to the larger industry.

How was Alterface first introduced to the Chinese market? How have you prepped yourself and the company to work in the region?

As is often the case, we were introduced through existing relationships and clients. Our first exposure to the Chinese market happened nearly 10 years ago. After a couple of years of working to acquire a good understanding of this market, we had our first sales and the work has been growing steadily ever since.

Doing business in China is all about patience. There is no way you can rush a decision. Sometimes you have to understand that an initial enthusiasm can lead to a great partnership, but not an immediate sale.

It is important to maintain a real presence there, and I personally visit China almost every month, together with establishing a very highly skilled team to be as local as we can. We truly enjoy working with Chinese customers, media vendors and equipment vendors. We are also happy to include consulting along with our technology for customers who might still be discerning the very specific aspects of such rides.

Do you have any tips for other European companies doing business in Asia?

Asia is not one geography; you have VERY, very diverse cultures and habits, so there is not one unique recipe. I would say that you really have to try and literally embrace this diversity and be eager to discover the specifics of each country you are working in. Being open and curious of everything is probably the most important quality.



How do you profile Alterface in Asia, and what communication channels do you use?

We deal with China through mostly personal contacts and social networks, in Mandarin. I personally have been learning the language for a couple of years in order to really develop a good feel on the market and how we can best serve it. China is a very connected country and it is easier to develop a personal relationship with customers than in some other places in the world.

You are personally taking a more prominent role in the industry. What events and organizations have been most important for you?

We are great fans of the Themed Entertainment Association [TEA]! This organization is really bringing a distinctive value to the industry and I truly believe that it will be instrumental in making the market progress in the future.

We are always taking part in the Asian trade shows although the investment required is large and some shows provide more return on that investment than others. We are increasingly active in between those events, as we believe that attractions and projects need to be experienced and discussed at length, which is sometimes difficult to experience at a trade show. I would like to see some of the trade organizations rethink how they operate in light of this, as needs are changing and competition grows.

In which directions are you hoping to move the company?

We have been active since 2001 in Augmented Reality, 3D vision, gesture detections and all sort of new haptic devices, so we are extremely choosy when it comes to selecting new directions. Our strategy in this respect is designed to identify long term needs, not surfing on the hype.

We are teaming up with universities and industry partners to make rides more emotionally evocative and experiences more intense. Oddly enough, we are a technology company that is not obsessed by technology. This is our very own approach to the world and we are proud of it. ...

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2017 world's fair

by James O gul

Astana Expo 2017 [Kazakhstan] opens June 10 for a three-month run. As a world's fair in the category of Specialized Expo, Astana '17 is smaller in scale and shorter in duration than Milan Expo 2015, Shanghai 2010 or the pending Dubai 2020 (all six-month events). Its theme is "Future Energy." This mega-event also celebrates the 25th anniversary of the young republic of Kazakhstan.

The lead design contract for the Expo was awarded to Chicago based Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture. The 280-acre site has been developed with a central theme pavilion (the eight-story, 262-foot-diameter sphere housing the National Pavilion of Kazakhstan and the Museum of Future Energy), performance venues and accommodations for 115 participating countries and 18 international organizations.

Five million visits projected

Astana '17 organizers projected an attendance total of 5 million visits, with 85 percent from Kazakhstan, and 15 percent from abroad. The latter are mostly expected from the 10 countries that make up the Commonwealth of Independent States: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan and in addition, China. A significant number are also expected from Europe, Turkey and the United States. The average daily visitation estimate is 55,301, with peak-day attendance projected at 110,602.

To boost attendance from overseas, Kazakhstan is lifting visa requirements for 38 countries this year. The countries that will be visa-free are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech-Republic,

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the US.

The international body regulating world's fairs is the Paris-based, Bureau International des Expositions (BIE). In 2012, the BIE conducted a competition and awarded the opportunity to host Expo '17; Kazakhstan was selected on November 22 of that year, winning over Liege, Belgium.

Pavilion prep underway

Astana's international participants will install and operate their pavilion exhibits within buildings provided by the Expo. Pavilion spaces are provided rent free by the Expo and range in size from 3,154 square feet to 15,726 square feet. In this, Astana follows the usual model for a three-month specialized world's fair such as the 2012 expo in Yeosu, Korea. (In contrast, at six-month world's fairs, many participants design their own buildings.)

It takes a lot of people to operate an expo pavilion. For example, at Yeosu 2012 the US had 50-60 people on board. Multiply that by the number of participants and you have significant housing needs. To accommodate the pavilion staffs, organizers built a 1,374-apartment campus within the Astana expo grounds.

At this writing, participating countries were actively preparing their pavilions. The UK contracted with the Nussli Group to join its project team as construction manager. In a conversation with Expo organizers, Chairman and CEO of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Hiroyuki Ishige was reported saying that in its pavilion, the government of Japan would present the most advanced technological developments in the sphere of renewable energy. Tomiyasu Nakamura, Commissioner of the Japanese Section at Expo 2017, listed the Japanese companies involved in its preparation, including Toyota Motor Corporation, Toshiba, Sumitomo Corporation and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.



Artist's rendering of the 280 acre Expo 2017 Astana site.

Photo courtesy Expo 2017 Astana

France was quick to step up and become a participant in Astana '17. In a recent meeting with Expo organizers, Commissioner of the National Section of France Paskal Loro spoke of preparations being on schedule and said, "We were the first to sign the Expo 2017 participation contract. We were among the first countries which received the keys to our pavilion."

US, UN and Cirque du Soleil

The US was the 115th country to sign up following months of private sector fundraising to secure the necessary funding for a US presence at Astana. The US is one of the few countries in the world that does not spend government funds for expo pavilions. Through a Memorandum of Agreement, USAP Expo 2017 will manage the US Pavilion project with BRC Imagination Arts in charge of design and fabrication. US Ambassador George Krol, the Commissioner for the US Pavilion, and Chairman of the National Company Astana EXPO-2017, Akhmetzhan Yesimov, signed an agreement on US participation during a ceremony in Astana on February 24, 2017.

Having signed the agreement, the US began preparing for Astana in earnest. Commissioner Krol said: "We are enthusiastic about US participation in Expo 2017. The theme of 'Future Energy' is closely related to the principles of our bilateral relations. There is a lot of work ahead of us related to designing the US Pavilion. In the pavilion, American companies will be able to demonstrate their technological achievements using 'infinite energy'."

In addition to the activities associated with building and operating the Astana expo site, Astana EXPO-2017 has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the UN World Tourism Organization to hold a joint conference on "Tourism and the Energy of the Future" in Astana during the Expo in late June. Tourism ministers from 150 countries are expected to participate. And recently, Cirque du Soleil announced it will present 71 performances at Expo 2017 throughout its run. The performance will be inspired by the expo theme and the rich cultural heritage of Kazakhstan.

"A fantastic outcome"

World's fairs are temporary events. When Astana Expo 2017 is over, the grounds will be closed and the participants will have from September 20 to December 15 to dismantle and remove their exhibits. But what of the expo site and buildings?

Primary incentives for hosting a world's fair are land development and infrastructure, as well as stimulation of tourism and trade. Some host cities and regions have more success than others in creating and implementing their post-use and legacy plans. Historically, iconic elements of world's fairs have been preserved - such as the Eiffel Tower, the Atomium in Brussels, and the Space Needle in Seattle - but in a first in the modern history of Expos, the entire Astana Expo will be repurposed.

Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev announced the establishment of the Astana International Financial Center at the expo site following Astana

Expo 2017. Set to officially launch on January 1, 2018, the AIFC will use the innovative infrastructure already built for the event. It will be modelled on Dubai's financial center. The National Bank and the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange will relocate to the AIFC from Almaty.

Expo 2017 Astana will soon open to the public, and from all accounts its planners are delivering a first rate, world-class event. The expo will be a source of pride for the citizens of Kazakhstan and will be talked about for years to come. For international visitors, it will be an opportunity to see a part of the world new to them in many cases and enjoy a truly memorable event.

But are world's fairs worth the huge cost? Many question this even as visitors pour through the gates and cities vie to become hosts. Charles Hendry, Commissioner of the UK National Pavilion at Astana, expressed a valid take on this issue in an interview with the Astana Times. He said, "I know people often look at events like this and think, 'Oh, that's an awful lot of money they're spending.' We had exactly that before the opening of the Olympics in London in 2012. The press was critical and they would try to find faults in many aspects of it. But once it started, everybody joined the celebration. It became, I think for all of us living in the UK, one of the happiest times we've ever lived through and it brought the whole country together. I hope that people here will find in Expo something which will inspire, excite and change people's lives. People will come to Expo and think, 'I really didn't know that was possible.' And that's what I want to do. I want to be part of that and that would be a fantastic outcome"...

Key Dates for your Expo Calendar

June 15, 2016 – Lodz, Poland submitted bid for Expo 2022

November 22, 2016 – France submitted bid for Expo 2025

December 15, 2016 – Last day to submit a bid for 2022/23. Minnesota, Rio and Sao Paulo submitted bids for 2023.

March 9, 2016 – Lodz, Poland, Minneapolis, USA and Buenos Aires, Argentina submitted bid dossiers for the organization of Specialized Expo 2022/23 to the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE)

March 19-22, 2017 – BIE Enquiry Mission to Minnesota. Similar missions to Lodz, Poland and Buenos Aires planned within a month.

May 22, 2017 – Last day to submit a bid for Expo 2025. Possible bidders in addition to France – Manchester, UK and Osaka, Japan

June 10, 2017 – Opening of Astana Expo 2017

October 20, 2020 – Opening of Dubai Expo 2020



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The 5D Castle Theater at night

Photo: Chimelong Ocean Kingdom

And the award goes to...

Ocean genies, interactive waterslides and flying fun

InPark looks at some of 2017's Thea Award recipients

Here are excerpts from InPark past coverage spotlighting several projects being honored at the 23rd annual Thea Awards Gala on April 22, 2017 at The Disneyland Hotel Grand Ballroom.

5D CASTLE THEATER AT CHIMELONG OCEAN KINGDOM

Rebecca Lam interviewed Rick Rothschild (FAR Out! Creative Direction), Arish Fyzee (Prana Studios) and Manfred Meier (Kraftwerk Living Technologies) about the project in issue #57 of InPark Magazine ("Kaka's Great Adventure").

Located near the park entrance, the 5D Castle Theater introduces guests to the Chimelong Ocean Kingdom characters and helps set the stage for a day at the park.

The 18-minute experience is impressive for the sheer size of its 134,000m², semi-circular main theater and its components: its vast 3D silver screen (18 x 88 meters), 2,119-speaker audio system with 119 subwoofers, high-resolution 3D projection (10344 x 2120 pixels) and sophisticated, 4D motion seats, pneumatically powered with what is said to be the first implementation of special effects armrests.

Talent-wise, the 5D Castle Theater is the result of international collaboration between leading creatives and suppliers from around the globe. Installation teams from South Africa and Czechoslovakia complemented engineers and technicians from Germany and Spain,

along with the lead creative and technical teams from North America, India and Austria.

The guest adventure

Rick Rothschild: Guests get the first of two story chapters in a five-minute video, presented on six large screens across the width of the preshow. On a mythical planet, a situation is causing turmoil to the polar region where penguins, polar bears, and other polar creatures live. A monster deep in the ocean is sucking up magma and warming the ocean, causing the polar cap to melt. The Ocean Genie, a magical young whale shark pixie, is sent off by the Penguin King to search for strong and capable heroes who have compassion, heart and bravery. He finds teenage tigers Kaka and Kiki and believes them to be the heroes he seeks. The pre-show ends with the Ocean Genie leading them to start their Great Adventure.

The main show tells the story of how the trio struggles to reach and finally defeat the deep-sea villain, the Magma Monster. After the climatic undersea battle is waged and the polar cap is saved, appearing from a dimensional cloud special effect a large animatronic parrot plane swoops out over the audience, flying out from above the 3D screen on a cable system and coming within three meters of the audience area, carrying Kaka, Kiki, and the Ocean Genie, who wave as they fly away in the "kiss goodbye" at the end of the show.

State-of-the-art technology supports the storytelling

Manfred Meier: The goal was to guarantee that every single visitor experiences the same overwhelming and stunning 5D adventure – no matter where they are placed within the auditorium. This can be technically daunting, given the large scale of everything in this project. To meet these challenges, we developed special solutions particularly regarding the projection system and 4D motion seat special effects.

One key piece of technical innovation is the newly developed special effects armrest, with the ability to precisely adjust wind, scents, water blast, strobe lights, LED lighting and so forth. We believe this new approach guarantees enhanced performance, especially for large theaters such as this one – better than having effects coming from the ceiling, railings or seat backs. The special effects armrest also features a unique seat occupancy sensor that makes it possible to deactivate unoccupied seat units – a real breakthrough in terms of efficient and sustainable operation.

Arish Fyze: Accommodating the gigantic screen required creating specialized camera lenses in our computers to achieve a perfectly resolved singular image, stitching together multiple cameras. We also had to increase the resolution many more times than normal movies (each frame is over 22 million pixels as opposed to just over 3 million.)

The screen literally curves around the theater. That brought up the challenge of finding a way to view and edit the wraparound media. One of the devices we used for visualization was the Oculus Rift 360 virtual reality system.

SLIDEBOARDING AND INTUITION

Martin Palicki wrote about how WhiteWater conceived and developed Slideboarding (InPark Magazine issue #59).

The concept for Slideboarding came to Denise Weston, then Director of Imagination at WhiteWater [currently Director of Imagination & Inventor at Apptivations], courtesy of her son Aydon and his friends, who one day at the waterpark spontaneously turned a traditional waterslide into a game. "Aydon and his buddies were slapping the waterslide joints as they rode down the slides and comparing who was able to hit the most when they got to the bottom," explains Weston. "I felt this was a great way to combine a unique play experience into a traditional thrill attraction. Because it was so natural for them, I felt intuitively that it was going to work."

Slideboarding takes that gaming concept – the basic, competitive activity of slapping the waterslide joints – introduces technology, and riders become players. The concept is simple: Guests sit on a board equipped with red, green, blue and yellow buttons on the side handles. As they move down the waterslide, they pass under LED lights in four colors. Points are scored if they press the correct color button as they pass beneath the lighted target. Players receive feedback via small vibrations if they hit a target exactly.

The system combines existing technology such as RFID sensors and readers and analytical tracking and it translates over to iOS platforms and Android platforms as well to create the Slideboarding experience.

Perhaps surprisingly, combining water and electricity wasn't the biggest challenge the team faced. Ensuring that Slideboarding was completely user-friendly for both the operators and guests was critical before deployment. That simplicity factor was key to making the attraction appealing for parks and for guests.

"Slideboarding gives park operators the ability to tap into the massive market of gamers and tech-savvy kids while still appealing to parents and grandparents because the game is simple to play," says Weston. "Slideboarding was created by watching how kids intuitively play, so naturally it's something kids love."

SHANGHAI DISNEYLAND

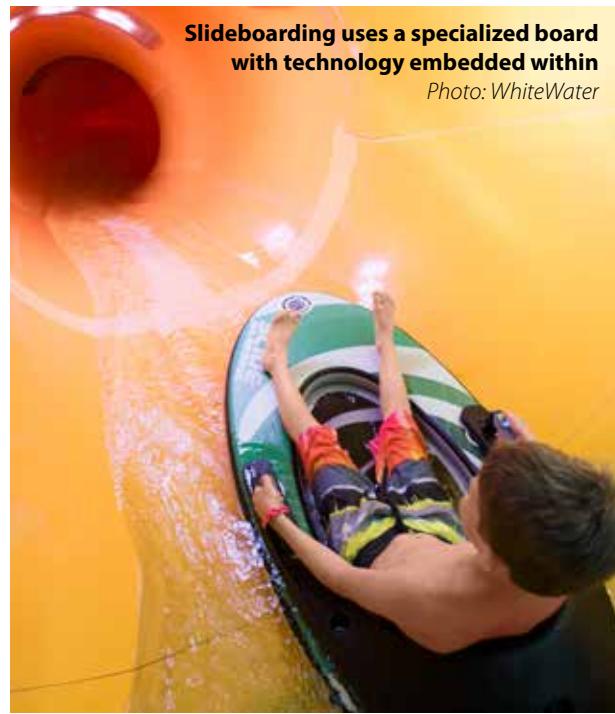
Disney's newest park was named for three Thea Awards: one for Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure, another for Camp Discovery and a third for the entire park. This landmark development opened in 2016 and has been fodder for much conversation in the pages of InPark Magazine.

Pirates of the Caribbean

Gary Goddard, The Goddard Group: The Pirates ride at Shanghai Disneyland is spectacular. I went on the ride, then rode it again right away, and then scheduled another visit to the park to ride it a third time. It's an excellently designed attraction. The big beats of that whole park are great and well thought out.

Slideboarding uses a specialized board with technology embedded within

Photo: WhiteWater



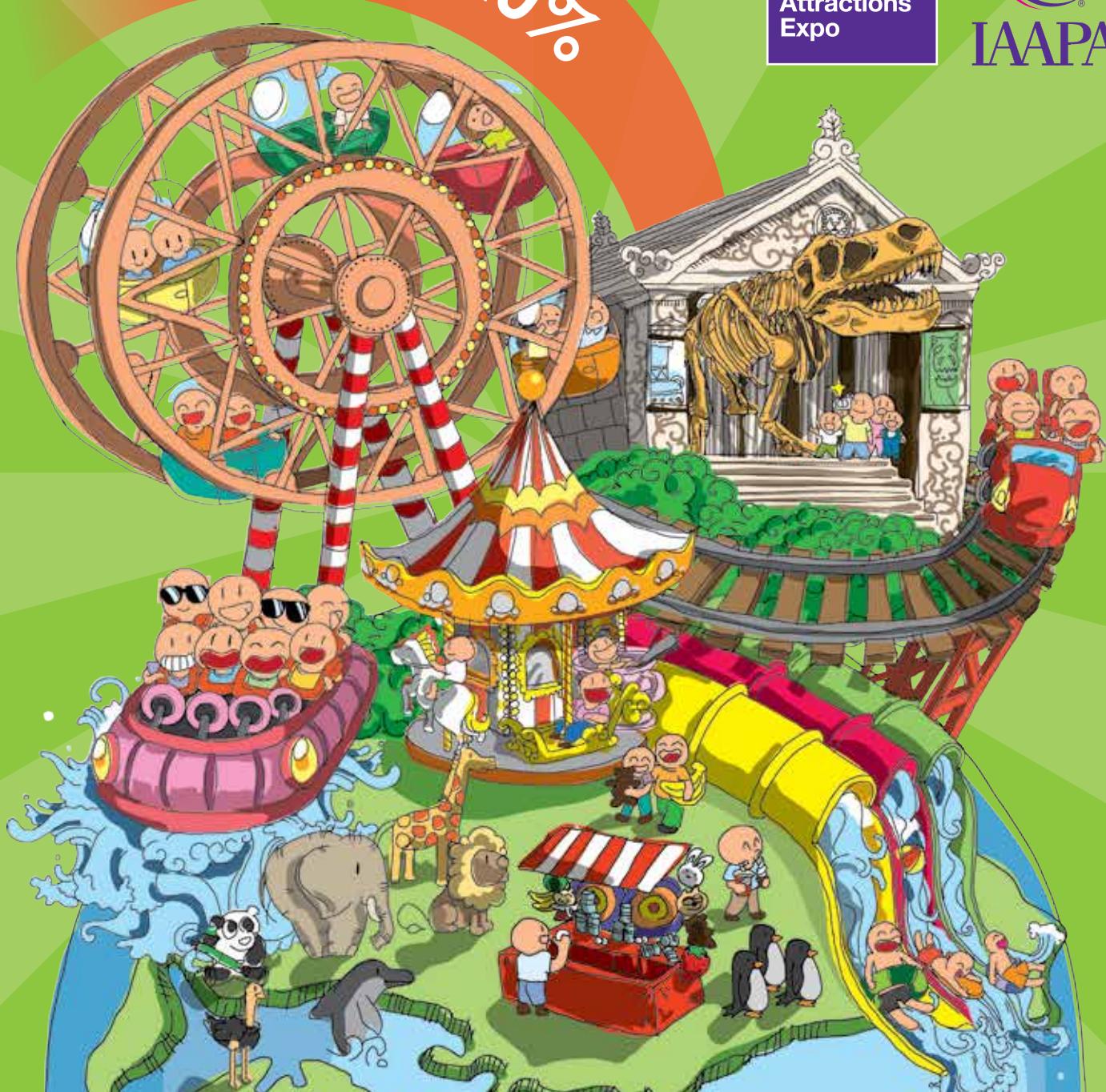
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The arrival of Disney in China

Mr. Yue Feng, Shanghai Happy Valley General Manager and Marketing Director: History indicates that where there are Disney parks, other theme parks have also been successful, like in Orlando, Hong Kong, Japan, and Los Angeles. Disney and Universal opening in China means all the theme parks in China will need to update their scale and service, so during the next few years there will be a quality increase in theme parks in China. So it's very bright for the future of theme parks.

TRON Lightcycle Power Run Coaster

Dave Cobb, Thinkwell Group: I rode it eight times, if that's any indication. It's really wonderful. The reveal of the launch in the preshow is one of the best gags I've ever seen. The vehicles are gorgeous, and

respond to your touch as you pull down the handles, "rezzing" from dark blue to white as you "activate" the safety restraint. The outside portion is so gorgeous at night. The onboard soundtrack brings the ride vehicle to life. And the indoor "game grid" section is so visually stunning. My only complaint is that it's a little short!

I've heard fans complain about the outdoor segment. Look, I'm the ultimate TRON fan, and I had my doubts. But, how they treat it – as an energy grid that keeps the vehicles rezzed while they're outside – is gorgeous and clever, even without an on-the-nose narrative story explanation. Plus, there's actually precedence for it in Legacy, because Quorra is rezzed outside of the grid into the physical world at the end of the film. It's a bit like complaining that there wasn't a 14-passenger LightCycle train in the movies – you have to make certain allowances for a high-capacity theme park attraction. Having it go outside is cool, and that's good enough for me. Your mileage may vary.

I was really blown away by the minimalism of the load station – it really felt like I'd stepped onto the virtual set of the movie's game grid.

Getting a second chance to fly thanks to "Soarin' Around the World"

Ken Saba, media producer/editor: In 1998 at Walt Disney Imagineering, during a semester off while I was working as an assistant editor, the late Tom Wright, who was in charge of film distribution, told me about this great project coming up and encouraged me to stick

Shanghai Disneyland comes alive at night, as evidenced in this photo looking at the iconic castle from Treasure Cove

Photo: Shanghai Disneyland



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Rebecca and Peter Chernack
Photo: Rebecca Chernack

around for it. However, I was partway through getting my degree at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, and had to go back so as not to lose my placement.

It was a tough decision. I remember telling Tom, "I'm going to kick myself for this." The project was Soarin' Over California. I would have been assistant editor. But there I was, 18 years later, the editor on Soarin' Around the World. If it doesn't happen now, it's gonna happen later! Life is a funny thing. I'm glad I did it this way – I'm a different person now than I was then, and came in with the experience and ability to be the one and only editor on the project, working with the highest caliber people.

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It was a humbling experience. There are days when I'm in awe, and can't believe I get to do this.

Shanghai Disneyland and the importance of retail

Martin Palicki, InPark publisher: Everyone is abuzz over all the benefits Disney's entry into mainland China will bring to the industry. While we collectively are most impressed with and tend to focus on the attractions found in parks, the real industry story is in the retail.

Disney is in China because it believes (with great amounts of research to back it up) that Chinese consumers are interested in and able to buy Disney products. Disney's presence in that market is a clear sign that what everyone has been talking about (a rising Chinese middle class with disposable income) is very real.

PETER CHERNACK - TEA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE HONOREE (IN MEMORIAM)

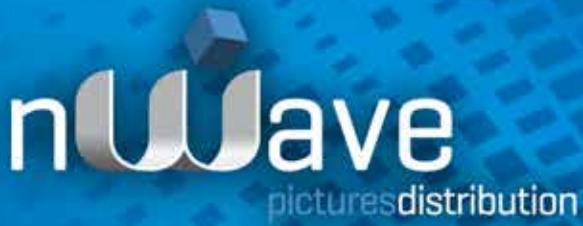
This year, the TEA Distinguished Service Honoree is Peter Chernack, and the award is being renamed in his honor and will be formally presented at the Thea Awards Gala.

Joe Kleiman, InPark news editor: If I were to describe Peter in a single word – it would be "space." From the Space Quest Casino and the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex to retail space and public space, he was a pioneer in experiential design. He would also make the space for others – like me – interested in not only what he, as an individual, did, but the accomplishments of the themed entertainment industry as a whole.

I first met Peter in my late 20s during a meeting of the Large Format Cinema Association, at the point when I was just starting my career in the attractions industry. He was there to discuss the design of the Space Quest Casino at the Las Vegas Hilton, which spatially and thematically linked the adjacent traditional casino on one side with Star Trek: The Experience on the other.

After the presentation, I approached him with a few questions and he sat with me for close to an hour going into even more detail on the project. He gave me his card and told me not to hesitate on contacting him if I wanted to discuss, well, anything. He loved to share and he wasn't mired in corporate censorship. As the years progressed, I took him up on the offer, calling a few times when I was managing IMAX theaters to ask his advice on preshow programming.

Peter spent 30 years at Metavision Corporation, the last 13 as President of the company. In 2009, he founded his own design company, The Chernack Group. Peter was also a founding member and past President of the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA). He was born in 1948 and passed away on April 3, 2016. Peter is survived by his wife Rebecca and his daughters Michelle and Daniella. . . .



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