

Theme park AV pros Technomedia & ACE team up in China



主题乐园音视频两巨头，Technomedia & 安恒利在中国强强联手

Team sport, with star players

**Martin Palicki,
IPM publisher**



The 24/7 technology laboratory

**Judith Rubin,
IPM editor**



I always get a little giddy each year at the TEA Summit and Thea Awards. The compilation videos shown for each of the awarded projects highlight the amazing experiences our industry creates.

I also am reminded that there are highly skilled teams designing and building these experiences. But there are incredibly talented individuals integral to the process as well. Increasingly, these star players are recognizing the value of building and growing their own brand, whether they have struck out on their own or lend their skills to a larger organization. As I joked with Brian Morrow during his interview for this issue, it feels like there are no more NSYNCS, only Justin Timberlakes.

Some folks have their names in lights, while others work diligently behind the scenes, but this issue provides a forum to learn about what makes these star players tick, and how they help enhance whatever team they are working for.

Even our cover story, which features two major established companies forming a joint partnership, highlights the star players from each organization, and the one who helped make the deal a reality: Brian Paiva.

Look for many of these players (and InPark) at the upcoming IAAPA Asian Attractions Expo in Hong Kong. See you there!

Greetings from the intersection of storytelling and technology, aka Experience Design, aka out-of-home leisure, aka themed entertainment, aka the home of InPark.

Technology is part and parcel of themed entertainment now – it’s core to the project process and to the user experience – in theme parks, museums, science centers, visitor centers, world expo pavilions and similar venues.

We all know that today’s visitors expect technology to work better and more seamlessly than ever. In themed entertainment, the challenges are especially formidable. Technology has to do its job 24/7/365. And it’s got to be innovatively applied, year after year. That’s because themed entertainment is an industry that needs to top itself, regularly, with re-investment to keep the customers coming back for a shared adventure they can’t experience at home.

Themed entertainment is a continuous laboratory, and it’s an important niche market with an international playing field. IP holders are making it part of their multiplatform rollouts. Manufacturers are forming verticals.

Themed entertainment is always creative, always challenging, always building toward the next thing. And it’s where InPark lives. If themed entertainment is one of your markets, or you want it to be, we hope you’ll get to know InPark, and let us get to know you.



Joe Kleiman is News Editor for the InPark website. He has 25+ years management experience: in tourism, museums and attractions, in the giant screen industries and as a zookeeper.

COVER: Bingo Tso of ACE and John Miceli of Technomedia celebrate the signing of their corporate partnership, surrounded by their supporting team. **p 16**

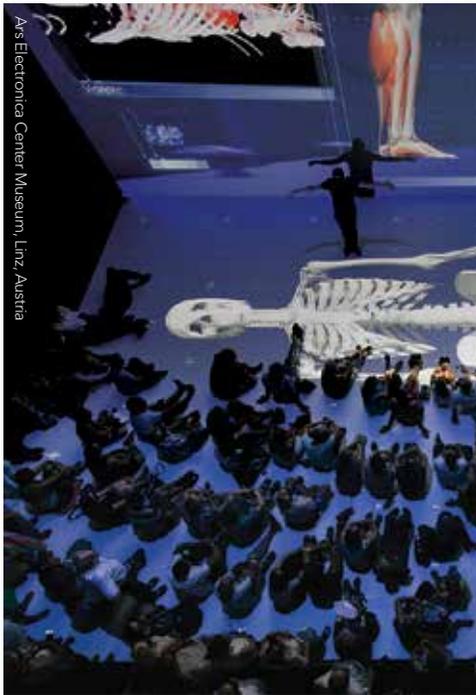
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Rethink chosen for Nickelodeon park in China

Rethink Leisure & Entertainment named as principal designers & master planners

Rethink Leisure & Entertainment, a Los Angeles-based design agency and international subsidiary of Al Ahli Holding Group, has been awarded the design and master planning contract for China-based Elite Global Group Limited's (EGGL) Nickelodeon theme park, a major part of the Foshan Cultural and Ecological Coastal Park. The contract-signing ceremony in Foshan was attended by representatives of Rethink Leisure & Entertainment and Elite Global Group.

Rethink will provide a full suite of design services to the multi-million dollar project, including master planning, park design, attraction development, and IP selection in coordination with Elite Global Group and Nickelodeon. Rethink will be working closely with its partners to create the most immersive and extensive Nickelodeon experience ever built, featuring such beloved characters as SpongeBob SquarePants, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Dora the Explorer and many more.

"Rethink is ready to bring its extensive themed entertainment experience and practical knowledge to this exciting, world-class development," said Michael Sinks, Executive Producer, Rethink Leisure & Entertainment. "We're excited to work with both Nickelodeon's group of brand experts and the talented team at

Elite Global Group to bring some of the world's most unique characters to life."

The US\$1.85 billion, 250-acre Nickelodeon-themed project is a central feature of the 750-acre, Foshan Cultural and Ecological Coastal Park, a master-planned environment encompassing cultural, tourism, sports and science and technology components. Groundbreaking was held on January 4, 2017 and is anticipated to open between 2020 and 2021. The project is located in Foshan, a city in Southern China of more than seven million people, part of the affluent, greater Pearl River Delta mega metropolitan region. Including the large cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, more than 22 million people live in the Pearl River Delta, which is also adjacent to the Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions.

"We are excited to be working with Rethink Leisure & Entertainment," said Michael Chang, Director, Board of Directors, Elite Global Group. "They have demonstrated a unique combination of creative and technical capability which makes them invaluable partners in the resort design process. The unique designs being developed for this resort project will undoubtedly delight the millions of Chinese guests which will visit the park." •

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Miziker produces 24th Annual Thea Awards

Miziker Entertainment impresses as producer of annual gala at The Disneyland Resort

Every year, hundreds of entertainment professionals from around the globe pour into Anaheim, CA to join their colleagues for the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) Thea Awards Gala at Disneyland Resort. The TEA Thea Awards, created in 1994, honor excellence in the creation of compelling places and experiences. Thea Award recipients are people, projects, and technologies from around the world, nominated and judged by a committee of their peers, and celebrated at the annual, black-tie Gala. This year's star-studded event featured Emmy and Golden Globe award winner, and member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, Debbie Allen.

The Thea Awards have grown in prestige and scope in the course of a quarter-century, and expectations naturally run high among an audience of professionals dedicated to the creation of guest experiences. To produce its 24th Annual Thea Awards Gala, held April 7, 2018 in the Grand Ballroom of the Disneyland Hotel, TEA turned to one of the top creative firms within its own industry of themed entertainment: Miziker Entertainment, led by Ryan Miziker.

Miziker Entertainment is a world leader in the design and production of shows and parades, media-based attractions, and memorable guest experiences. The Miziker name has long been associated with TEA and the TEA Thea Awards: Company founder Ron Miziker produced the Gala several times and received the Buzz Price Thea Award for a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements in 2015.

As producer, Miziker was, therefore, in an ideal position to speak the language of themed entertainment and capture what was unique about each of the 20 award recipients. "Our theme for the night was 'Celebrate the Creative Spark,' and it informed everything we did, every decision we made," said Ryan Miziker. "We wanted to show the fun, the passion and the importance of projects in the industry."

Ryan Miziker said, "I wanted the emphasis at the Thea Awards to be on the live show experience, to convey the feeling of what these location-based experiences are like, with an economy of words and an abundance of fun. We created short, punchy, fun performance numbers in between award presentations that gave the audience the feel and style of some of the projects. From the very start, our goal was to capture a spirit of inclusiveness that reflects the diversity of the projects, the diversity of the creators, and the diversity of the audiences around the globe."

The audience, TEA and the industry responded to the Gala show with enthusiasm, applause and accolades. Bob Rogers, chairman of leading experience design firm BRC Imagination



Chimelong Founder and Chairman Su Zhigang shakes hands with Ryan Miziker, Partner and Creative Director, Miziker Entertainment at the 2018 TEA Thea Awards. At left (holding the Thea trophy): Dale Su, Chimelong Group. Photo: TEA

Arts, and a member of the founding committee that created the Thea Awards, said, "Every detail was flawless. It was intelligently written, intelligently sequenced, technically outstanding, well designed, well cast, smoothly produced, well organized – every detail attended to with precision!"

"Our TEA Thea Awards serve our mission and members by honoring excellence and celebrating the individual creators, companies, and teams who make these honored projects come to life," said TEA COO Jennie Nevin. "This year's show, produced by Ryan Miziker and Miziker Entertainment was fantastic, full of fun, excitement, and inspirational, life-changing moments. Every moment of the Gala reflected Miziker's passion for this industry as well as their deep understanding of it, and their dedication to high production values and great storytelling. We can't thank them enough for bringing their great gifts to what was our largest Thea Awards Gala ever."

Miziker Entertainment enjoyed a dual role at the Thea Awards in 2018; In addition to Gala show production responsibilities, Miziker was honored with a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement for Chimelong Ocean Kingdom's Journey of Lights Parade. Chimelong Group, headed by Chairman Su Zhigang, is a leading tourism operator and one of the most successful theme park developers in China. "Chimelong is that rare client and collaborator who puts the guest experience first," said Ryan Miziker. "Working closely with the great team at Chimelong, we approached each phase of the Journey of Lights parade, from development and fabrication through installation, with a passion for entertaining Ocean Kingdom's guests. I believe that is Chimelong's strategy for creating fun, successful and profitable destinations." •



Wicker Man at Alton Towers park Photo courtesy of Holovis

Creative coasting

Holovis collaborates with Merlin Magic Making on new coaster experiences at Alton Towers and Thorpe Park

Peter Cliff, creative director at Holovis

Musings on the evolution of the roller coaster

Experiences within theme parks are changing. Gone are the days when roller coasters used to be two-minute thrill rides, now it's all about wrapping guests in a narrative to create lasting memories and experiences that can be shared.

Immersive technologies are playing a more important part than ever within the theme park of the future to draw guests into a compelling story both on- and off-ride, creating an adventure and bringing meaning to the experience. This is what creates memories that guests will talk about for years to come and in this age of social media, results in more content rich shares as they send out snapshots (or Snapchats) from their journey.

What's even better for park operators is that these new experiences aren't just limited to new coasters, existing attractions can be given a multisensory overhaul without needing any major structural changes.

A notable coaster for first embracing this trend is Mystic Timbers at Kings Island, US which launched last year with the mystery of #whatsintheshed. The coaster itself is a wooden construction from Great Coasters International. A preshow mystery builds throughout the queue line, planting clues in people's minds and culminates in the finale multisensory experience, revealing what is in the forbidden shed but with a massive media twist. [See "The Mysteries of Mystic Timbers," InPark issue 69, August 2017 www.inparkmagazine.com/the-mysteries-of-mystic-timbers/]

Wicker ride

We're seeing more operators embracing this trend in roller coasters around the world. Leading the pack this year, in our opinion, is Wicker Man, which opened at Alton Towers in the UK this March. A multisensory preshow experience puts guests at the heart of a terrifying story before they board the park's first wooden coaster.

Holovis designed and delivered all elements of this, working with Merlin Magic Making to concept and script the preshow, then produce the media and deliver the complex AV elements throughout the attraction.

The preshow takes place in the ceremonial hall, a tall wicker room, and focuses on a seamless and dramatic combination of straight up and 3D mapped projection. Initial shadow puppetry forms the exposition of the ride's backstory before merging to create the mapped face of the deity. As guests realise that they are to become the sacrifices, the face transforms to grow twisted wicker horns and becomes the Ramshorn skull. Surround subsonic audio is designed to convey the sense that guests are being encircled by the wicker people, heard through their whisperings.

Moving through to the loading station and when on-board the ride, the audio immersion continues with adoring

shouts of "It's him!" and "He's here!" recorded and mixed in the Holovis Audio Studio. The multimedia experience combines with special effects including pyrotechnics, programmed to synchronize with the storyline throughout the experience.

The effects even continue within the Wicker Man structure itself. When on the coaster, guests speed into the wicker head which appears to be rising in flames, an effect created using 6.2mm pixel pitch LED displays and featuring media created by the Holovis team. This can also be seen from the outside so the Wicker Man looks to be ablaze at all times.

Walker ride

Another UK attraction reflecting these immersive trends launched two weeks after Wicker Man, this time at Thorpe Park with The Walking Dead: The Ride. The experience wraps guests in the story from beginning to end, starting

The Walking Dead: The Ride at Thorpe Park Photo courtesy of Holovis



with the initial queue line and continuing with the preshow, dramatic on-board effects and a death defying finale.

The preshow sets the scene for guests, placing them in the Safe Zone then seeing this be compromised through a series of visual and sensory special effects that are disseminated into the theming. This includes mock CCTV footage showing Walkers attacking the area of the queue line they were just in and clambering against a window, which is actually a 4K screen.

Guests then move through the rest of the line as a batched queue, with zonal surround audio and lighting giving the illusion that they are the only group there. The immersive media scenes continue into the loading station and on the coaster, with interludes at key moments combining physical and digital effects with real actors.

This is another project that Holovis delivered as a turnkey attraction, working with Merlin Magic Making from the initial design phase through to capturing and creating all the media and integrating it with the AV and lighting across the whole attraction and special effects. This has

allowed us to really maximize the impact and de-risk the project, as the repercussions from things that are being seen and heard are interconnected to fit the gripping story.

Interestingly though, the attraction is a retrofit of X: No Way Out, which launched in 1996 as the world's first backwards roller coaster in the dark, and it is completely unrecognizable. This is a prime example of how existing attractions can be given a new lease on life through an overlay of integrated media, special effects and theming making it a relatively quick and easy transition, with minimal structural work required.

Immersive pre- and post-show scenes have now become a staple of the traditional roller coaster experience, extending the thrill of the ride from just a few minutes to something that guests will remember, talk about and share for years to come. •••



Peter Cliff is creative director at Holovis. He works with clients to create experiences that utilize an array of emerging and multisensory technologies, allowing guests to explore, interact with and immerse themselves into fantasy worlds.

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Visioning forward

nWave builds their brand

Janine S. Baker SVP, distribution and development, interviewed by Judith Rubin



Janine S. Baker

“When I think of nWave I think of a company that is always thinking two steps ahead of the industry. That they always want clients to see what the future could look like and they offer the best in 3D/4D entertainment.”

Charlotte Brohi
*VP Film Programming & Distribution
Houston Museum of Natural Science*

“We have been working with nWave for over 15 years. They helped us open our first 3D theater and have always been a visionary in 3D/4D entertainment. We choose nWave because of their quality and our audiences love Sammy from “TurtleVision.”

John Rouse
*VP of Operations
Aquarium of the Pacific*

“I like working with nWave because the entire team is enthusiastic, professional, passionate about what they do and committed to getting films out to audiences across the world.

The California Science Centre opening for ‘HURRICANE,’ organized by nWave and the CSC, was a truly informative and fun event. We are looking forward to collaborating with nWave again on our forthcoming production ‘SNOW.’”

Jacqueline Farmer
*Producer & Co-Director
of Hurricane & Snow*

InPark: nWave is taking a new direction in growth - could you expand further?

Janine S. Baker: As markets change, it is clear to us that in today’s entertainment industry, owning your own IP is the key to the future. Platforms for viewers are changing and growing with technology and consumers have limited leisure time. The mandate is clear: to make content available anytime, anywhere for the best fit in the viewer’s busy day. Device viewership is growing, with a need for high-quality, original content as well as a demand for content on the usual platforms that have always been our bread and butter. nWave owns all of its IP and is moving forward to continue to grow the brand that is familiar to family audiences worldwide.

nWave is the pioneer of cross-platforming – making the most of digital assets on as many specialty platforms as possible, whether giant screen, attraction, ride film, feature film, broadcast, VR, AR... Is this still the best strategy to get maximum content distribution? What platforms are strongest in today’s market? Can all content be formatted for all platforms?

The audience always drives the direction of the market, and evolving technology is changing the landscape at a fast pace while feeding the consumer’s demands. It’s imperative that our content plays on all platforms in order to fully serve the family and school group audiences that are our core markets.

nWave keeps pace with evolving markets and evolving technology. High-quality 3D is a core product for us; it is unique and a major factor in keeping our content moving forward, and the result is growth – growth in features, attractions and giant screen, growth in all our markets, in-home and out-of-home. New technology for VR headsets will promote growth in the home markets and AR promises to enhance design of exhibits as well as the

pre-show/queue experience in specialty theaters, tied in to IP from the main show.

Is 3D still important?

Yes, 3D remains important, still and always - especially in our attraction and giant screen markets. Some have tried to exhibit 2D in the 3D theaters but 2D just doesn't perform or bring in the numbers like 3D does. It is the best way to immerse the individual as well as enable friends and family to share the joy of the experience. Each member of the audience still reaches out to touch our snake in "TurtleVision," or gasp at the sound of the hurricane ripping through the city in "Hurricane" - they are living each moment and creating memories that they will talk about for weeks and years.

An example is a client who contacted nWave because they had experienced our film and 3D while on a family vacation, and couldn't stop talking about it! The result is the theater reached out to license that film - telling us that they want that same experience for all their patrons and knew we could give it to them.

What's the ideal length for a show nowadays, and why? Does it vary depending on venue/audience?

Ride films are always under five minutes, and 4D attractions have been a 10- to 14-minute experience. And now, more and more giant screen clients are requesting lengths similar to planetarium shows which run about 20-25 minutes. Basically, school groups and families are spending less time overall at the venue - the average time spent is three hours with 10 minutes at each exhibit, so they don't have a lot of time for a 45-minute film. nWave packages its content accordingly to serve all these venues and needs.

What guidance do you have for today's owners and operators about delivering a great guest experience that is differentiated as well as competitive?

Think guest immersion. Think of the film as part of a larger, integrated experience at the site. Moreover, the theater itself needs to be designed as an experience - which can be as simple as 4D effects, background music with multiple tracks to set the mood as guests walk in, or

Animators work inside the Brussels office of nWave Photo courtesy of nWave





A still shot from the nWave film "TurtleVision" Photo courtesy of nWave

even trivia from the film playing as a slideshow on the screen or on monitors outside of the theater, while other sites partner a film with an exhibit. While you're figuring it out, be up front with your providers about what you need and expect, and what resources you have. Some sites have their own creative teams in-house while others hire design teams - it just depends on the site and budget.

nWave has had some high-profile successes with giant screen films, including "Hurricane 3D" and "Planet Power." Tell us about those launches and how they are being presented and received.

"Hurricane 3D" was part of the new Laser IMAX Theater at California Science Center - it was a fantastic launch [October 10, 2017]; the science center created a great event, with selfie stations that were hugely popular, pictures from space depicting the eyes of several historic hurricanes, and a family day event for which the education department created activities to inform young audiences about how a hurricane is formed.

"Planet Power" just launched [March 22, 2018] at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum featuring a special guest appearance by Solar Impulse co-founder and pilot André Borschberg, who completed a historic flight around the world in 2016 in a plane powered only by the Sun. They participated in a panel discussion after the screening, alongside director Pascal Vuong. This launch was very

successful; the audience was very engaged and asked many questions regarding the flight. And of course, there was a selfie station where guests could take their picture beside, and interact with, Ben Franklin.

What's new in attraction films from nWave? Internationally?

Our new films always debut at IAAPA Orlando (November) and the GSCA annual conference (September in Chattanooga, TN), both still to come, so that's where the industry will be able to learn about our 2019 slate. The newest titles currently in our library are "Son of Bigfoot," "Return to Lost World," "Hurricane" and "Planet Power."

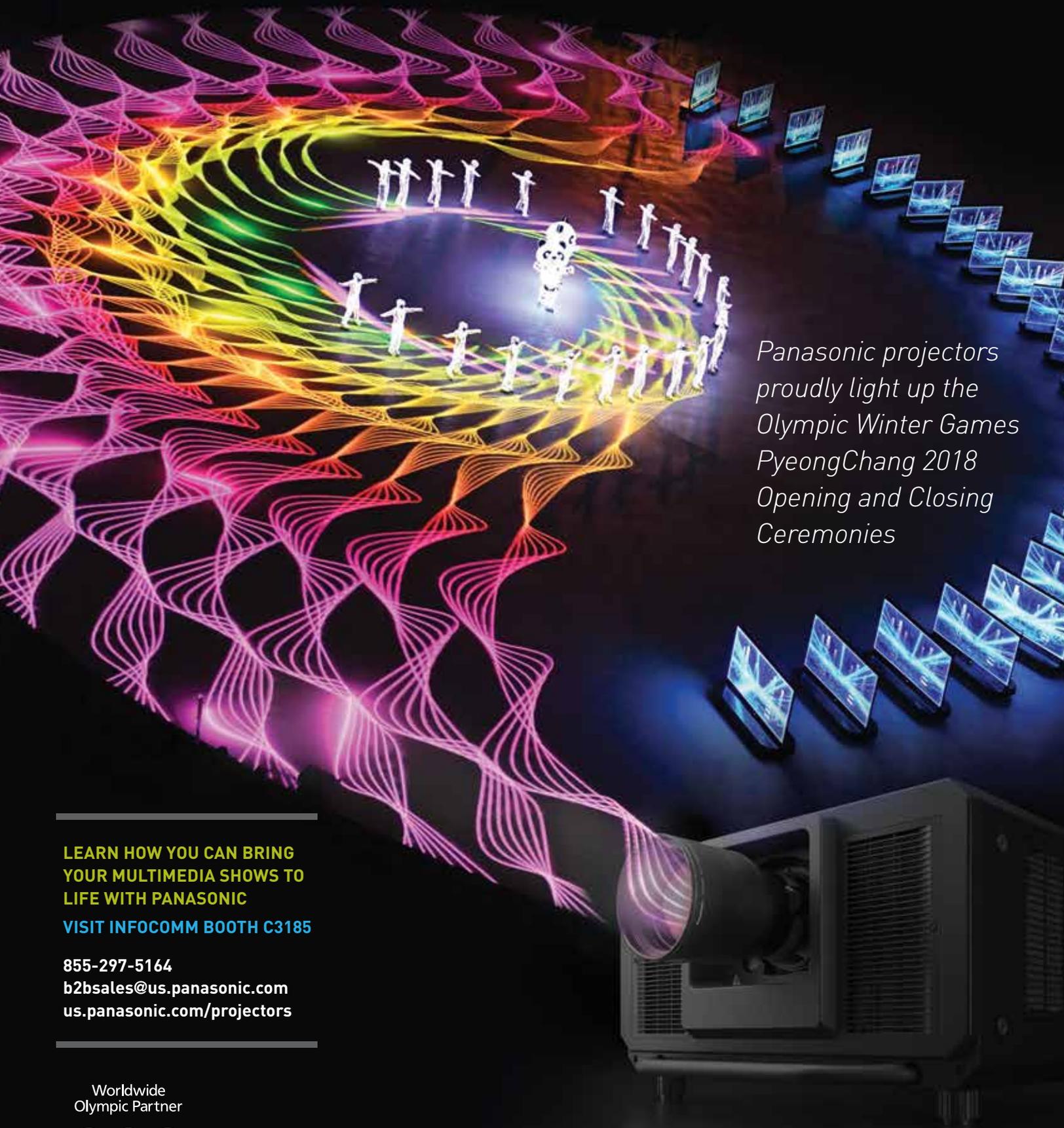
How is "Son of Bigfoot" doing?

Great! It did really well as a feature internationally and the attraction just debuted in March this year while we created a giant screen version as well. The theme is about acceptance and loving who you are even if you don't really fit into the mainstream. And that is a theme for nWave as well - we have always been a little different than others in our industry - but thinking differently has always been a key to our success. •••



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A match made in Asia



ACE provided engineering and technical services as well as audio and lighting systems for the Impression Putuo live outdoor spectacular in Zhoushan, China Photo courtesy of ACE

ACE and Technomedia's new audiovisual alliance will serve attraction development in China

by Rona Gindin

*It's a match made in Asia, based on **guanxi**.*

In the US, John Miceli, president and chief creative officer of Technomedia Solutions LLC, runs his media and integration company - based in Orlando with additional offices in Los Angeles - with a quest for perfection, the ability to keep pace with changing technology and client needs, and decades of attraction industry experience. Meanwhile, in China, Bingo Tso, senior vice president of Hong Kong based ACE [Advanced Communication Equipment (International) Company Ltd.], heads a respected AV integration business with 700 employees, theme park experience, multiple offices across China, and Harman product distribution rights.

On February 2, 2018, the two formed a strategic partnership that expands both companies' ability to serve themed entertainment markets in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau.

The nature of the ACE and Technomedia strategic partnership is twofold: 1. Each will take on complementary

responsibilities. 2. The duo will bid for business as a single entity. That will allow clients and partners to get the best of both sets of expertise with one hire.

"Technomedia will focus on the design and media aspects of projects – the creative side of the technology," said Brian Paiva, who has known the principals of both companies for many years. He and his company, Enigma Group, brokered the strategic partnership between the two companies. (Enigma is a business development firm and consultancy, specializing in the attractions business, with offices in the US, China and the UAE.)

"ACE's skill set, which is more system design, engineering, procurement, fabrication, logistics, integration, programming, production, testing and ultimately maintenance of systems, ties in very well with Technomedia's," said Paiva.

Synergy and *guanxi*

This synergy is well-timed, as the entertainment business in China continues to grow rapidly, with increasing demand for guest experiences and venues that are of

与亚洲公司的联姻合作 -- ACE 和 Technomedia 新视听联盟 将为中国的景点开发服务 由 Rona Gindin

这是一次与亚洲公司的联姻合作，以关系为基础。

Technomedia Solutions 有限责任公司 (Technomedia Solutions LLC) 是一家美国的传媒集成公司--总部位于奥兰多，并在洛杉矶增设了办事处，其总裁兼首席创意官约翰·米凯利 (John Miceli) 追求完美，技术与时俱进，能够时刻跟进客户需求，并拥有数十年的景点开发经验。与此同时，中国香港 ACE [安恒利 (国际) 有限公司] 总公司高级副总裁曹荣臻，带领 700 名员工影音集成业务，有建设主题公园的经验，公司在中国各地设有多个办事处，并拥有 Harman 产品分销权。

2018年2月2日，两家公司建立了战略伙伴关系，拓展了两家公司在中国内地、香港和澳门等地主题休闲乐园市场的服务能力。

ACE 和 Technomedia 的战略伙伴关系有两层含义：1. 双方需承担互补的责任。2. 双方将视为一体参与竞标。这将使客户和合作伙伴能够在每次合作中获益最大化。一次性同时获取两家公司的专业服务。

布莱恩·派瓦 (Brian Paiva) 说，“Technomedia 将专注于项目的设计和媒体方面--技术的创造性方面”，他认识两家公司的负责人多年了。他和他的 Enigma 集团公司促成了 ACE 和 Technomedia 之间的战略伙伴关系。(Enigma 是一家商业开发和咨询公司，专门从事景点开发，在美国、中国和阿联酋设有办事处。)

“ACE 的专长，侧重点是系统设计，工程、采购、制造、后勤物流、集成、编程、测试和系统的最终维护，这与 Technomedia 的技术专长非常好地结合在一起，” 帕瓦说。

协同与关系

这种协同是正合时宜的，因为随着中国的娱乐业务持续快速增长，客人对高质量、技术先进、沉浸式和媒体驱动的场馆及体验的需求不断增加。随着上海迪士尼乐园的成功开幕和第一年的成功举办，人们的期望和标准也随之提高，北京环球影城也将紧随其后，同时也将推出像长隆集团这样的领头区域运营商产品。

中国的娱乐市场离饱和还有很长一段路要走，因为随着中国中产阶级的不断壮大，人们自由支配收入增加，旅行更为频繁，休闲



安恒利为中国舟山的室外现场演艺，普陀印象，提供了工程，技术服务和音频，以及灯光系统。

higher quality, technically sophisticated, immersive and media-driven. Guest expectations and standards rose with the successful opening and first year of Shanghai Disneyland, soon to be followed by Universal Studios Beijing – as well as the products of leading regional operators such as Chimelong Group.

Entertainment markets are still a long way from saturation in China, as the Chinese middle class continues to grow, with people having more discretionary income, traveling more and in quest of leisure activities. East-West collaboration has produced great results over the past 10 years or so as Asian operators tap expertise from across the Pacific Rim, while also valuing the ability to utilize and cultivate physical and professional resources at home.

In China, relationships and trust – as well as a good portfolio and a track record – are important to doing business, and those same factors have always been core to themed entertainment culture due to the team-based, collaborative nature of the industry.

Which leads us to *guanxi*.

“I’d say this match is based on *guanxi*,” said Paiva, using a Chinese term that in English equates to ‘trust and mutual

This is ACE

ACE stands for Advanced Communication Equipment (Int'l) Co. Ltd. The company is a professional audio, video and lighting service provider, and a major supplier and system integrator in China, Hong Kong and Macau. It develops and installs equipment not only at attractions but also for TV stations, recording studios, theaters, stadiums and more.

Founded in Hong Kong in 1982, ACE now has branch offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xian, Shenyang and Chengdu. Recent major projects have been the sound system for the 20th Anniversary Military Parade in Hong Kong, and the Encore Dunhuang production in 2016. ACE theme park clients include Shanghai Shendi Group. It has a staff of 700 nationwide. Website: www.acehk.com

Bingo Tso and John Miceli celebrate after signing their strategic cooperation agreement in February Photo courtesy of ACE



活动的需求也在增加。东西方合作在过去的十年中取得了巨大的成果，因为亚洲运营商利用了来自整个太平洋地区的专业知识，同时也重视在国内利用和培养物质资源、专业资源和资产的能力。

在中国，人际关系和信任--以及一系列优质的代表作品和一份良好的记录--对做生意很重要，这些因素也一直是主题休闲乐园文化的核心，这是由该行业团队至上，具协作性质所决定的。



在2月份签完战略合作协议后，曹荣臻和约翰米凯利共同庆祝

我们建立“关系”的原因

“我想说，这次联盟建立在“关系”的基础之上，” Paiva说。他使用一个中文术语来形容英语中‘通过努力和时间而获得的信任和相互尊重。’这一意思，“这真的很合适。”

“联盟能为双方公司互利共赢，从而巩固加强我们服务客户的实力，” Miceli说。“ACE和Technomedia都是有着极高职业道德的公司。双方都非常坦诚、公开透明、有实力。在我的职业生涯中，人们总是认为我是个有远见、有创新精神的人。在我的职业生涯中，我一直追求远见和创新。这些年来，我一直在不断地革新我们的公司，使公司保持领先地位。在中国的行业中，ACE和曹荣臻与我们很相似。这就是我们找ACE寻求合作，也是ACE找我们寻求合作的原因。我们的理念一致。”

“我们在中国很成功，”曹荣臻(Bingo Tso)说。“我们数量雄厚，技术精湛的员工可以为最具挑战性、令人振奋和独一无二的视听项目创建出最优质的技术解决方案。”曹荣臻如今仍旧会在业务中亲历亲为，与创意人员密切合作，并在项目中亲自做一些音频混合工作。他广博的戏剧技术知识使他和ACE受益无穷，自1982年ACE创立至今，他将他的热情与青春奉献给了这一行，当时主题休闲乐园在中国才刚刚开始发展。ACE代表产品包括许多精心布置，壮观的现场演出设备。

Paiva说：“很合适是因为每一家公司都独立地在其区域内建立了产品系列、客户基础和专业声誉；双方都赢得了彼此的尊重；双方都拥有东西方合作的历史经验。他们有共同工作的信任基础，刨除技能和资源的明显互补性，他们的客户也可以信赖这种信任基础。ACE自1982年开始在中国做集成业务；对于主题公园开发，ACE比Technomedia接触的稍晚一点--但由于ACE在近期开业的重大项目中发挥了重要作用，它对主题公园开发并不是一无所知。这样，ACE能够获益于Technomedia在视频和媒体技术、先进音视频沉浸式创意设计和创造性技术设计方面的本领，增加与西方公司打交道的经验。”

从世俗层面上讲，是文件和规章的东西。双方在处理各自领域的技术必需品、区域和本国语言方面的优势都会使双方受益。

ACE给我们带来中国项目建设经验和处理能力。中国的休闲发展模式与世界其他地方的发展模式截然不同。政府在项目的进行方式和/或去向上往往举足亲重或拥有发言权。在中国，娱乐发展往往只是大型房地产计划（通常在国有土地上）的一部分，伴随着一系列相

respect that have been earned through effort and over time.’ “It really fits.”

“Each company brings something to the alliance that solidifies the offering,” said Miceli. Both ACE and Technomedia come from a place of a very high work ethic. Both are very honest, transparent and capable. In my own career, I have always led with a vision, driving innovation. All these years I kept reinventing our company and staying at the forefront. ACE and Bingo Tso are regarded similarly in the industry in China. That’s why we migrated to ACE and why ACE migrated to us. We are of like minds.”

“We have flourished in China,” said Bingo Tso. “Our large, technically sophisticated staff can create top-quality racks and technical solutions for even the most challenging, exciting and one-of-a-kind audio-visual projects.” Tso still takes a very hands-on approach to the business, working closely with creatives and doing some of the audio mixing himself on projects. His broad knowledge of theater technology has stood him and ACE in good stead and he remains passionately dedicated to the business since ACE was founded in 1982, when themed entertainment was just starting to gain momentum in China. The ACE

This is Technomedia

Technomedia Solutions LLC is an award winning audio-visual integrator with offices in Orlando and Los Angeles. It was founded by John Miceli, whose belief in pushing the creative possibilities both media and technology-wise, has carved out a unique position for Technomedia in the world. The company has a long history providing services to top theme park operators and developers around the world, including Universal Creative.

Prior to founding Technomedia in 2002, Miceli was president and CEO of Soundelux, which served the film industry as well as themed entertainment, working on soundtracks for blockbusters such as Braveheart. When Mood Media acquired Technomedia in 2012, the integrator gained a global boost due to Mood’s having 100 offices around the world, including China. Website: www.gotechnomedia.com.

ACE provided lighting & audio services for the Opening Ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, pictured here Photo courtesy of ACE

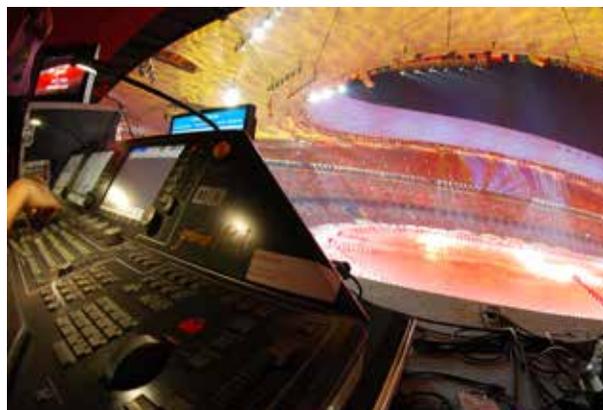


关的要求，这些将影响到项目进程很多方面的审批。

或者就像Technomedia负责商业开发的高级副总裁Dan Moalli说的那样，“拥有值得信任且互补的坚固的合作伙伴，对于美国公司成功进军中国市场的非常重要。”

取得合作

尽管如此，CEO布莱恩·佩瓦(Brian Paiva)为Technomedia和ACE牵桥搭线还是很有战略性的。“在亚洲，我们并没有积极寻求一名合作伙伴，” Miceli说。“我们只是为潜在的项目寻找与之合作的人，诸如这样的合作联姻，把区域性合作关系推向了一个新高度。”



ACE提供了灯光&音频服务为2008年奥运会开幕／闭幕式

然而，ACE正在积极寻找一个战略合作伙伴，而Paiva已经与ACE合作了四年，一心想找到最合适的人选。“我的任务是帮助他们在中国主题公园市场上成长，因为中国的主题公园市场正迅速达到一个新的增长和成熟水平，”他说。“随着新的机遇出现，ACE高管希望有人帮助他们与西方主题公园所有者和经营者合作，最好是一家拥有良好关系的美国公司，并能带来更多的专业技术。同时希望该公司能位于该行业中最优的地理位置，如奥兰多。我们在Enigma（谜格集团）考察了几家不同的公司，并意识到Technomedia才是ACE的最佳合作伙伴。”

“ACE和Technomedia都保持着类似的高标准，我们的优势是互补的，” ACE项目部门副总裁本·吕(Ben Lui)说。“我们尊重对方的工作，这是一个极好的基础。最终，客户将获得一套凝聚两家理念的方案，大大提高了创造力、生产力和效率。我们也将完成这项工作，满足东西方客户和合作伙伴的需求。”

“两家公司的合作确实为市场带来了更多东西，” Miceli说。“ACE在当地的历史和人才，以及它在其国家所做的令人难以置信的项目，使我们十分折服。”他举了2008年北京奥运会上ACE的工作为例，ACE为开幕式和闭幕式提供灯光控制网络和音频系统等服务。

ACE和Technomedia之间的第一次会议由Enigma（谜格集团）主持召开，于2017年6月Info-Comm展会期间在奥兰多举行，包括参观Technomedia位于奥兰多的办事处。随后的奥兰多会议于次年11月在IAAPA景点博览会期间举行。接下来的会议是在2018年2月举行，首先是参观ACE位于北京的设施，然后是正式的签约仪式。“曹荣臻和John一拍即合，”莫利(Moalli)说。签字仪式由一连串活动组成，包括参观考察、会见主要工作人员、临时的客户演示、签合同以及ACE主办的庆祝宴会。

合作启动和项目展开

签约仪式结束后不久，ACE和Technomedia联合起来，对一家国际领先开发商的“巨大”任务书做出了回应，该公司计划在中国建新的主题公园。



The projection mapped ceiling of St. Louis' Union Station, a Technomedia project Photo courtesy of Technomedia

portfolio includes many elaborately staged, spectacular live productions.

Paiva said, “It fits because each company has, independently, established a portfolio, client base and professional reputation within its community; each company has earned the respect of the other; each has a track record of East-West collaboration. They have a basis of trust for working together, and their clients can rely on that basis of trust as well, in addition to the obvious complementarity of skillsets and resources. ACE has been doing integration since 1982 in China; it is a little newer to the theme park industry than Technomedia – but not that new anymore due to a significant role on a major project that opened recently. That said, ACE benefits from Technomedia’s flair for visual and media technology, innovative AV creative immersive design as well as its experience dealing with Western firms.”

On a more mundane level are documentation and regulation. Each company’s expertise in dealing with these technical necessities in its field, its part of the world and its native language will benefit the other.

Part of what ACE brings to the table is the experience and ability to deal with the way projects are structured in China. The leisure development model unfolds very differently there than in other parts of the world. Government often has a stake or a say in how a project goes, or where it goes. Entertainment development in

China has often been just one segment of a much larger real estate scheme, often on state-owned land, with an associated labyrinth of requirements that will affect many aspects of the project process.

Or as Dan Moalli, senior vice president, business development, Technomedia, said, “Solid partnerships based on trust and collaboration are the key to success for US companies seeking projects in China.”

Making the match

Still, it was somewhat organic that CEO Brian Paiva came to link up Technomedia and ACE. “We were not actively seeking a partner in Asia,” Miceli said. “We always seek relationships for potential projects, but this marks a new level of commitment to the region.”

ACE, however, was actively in search of a strategic partner, and Paiva – who’d been working with ACE for four years – was bent on finding the best fit. “My task was to help them grow in the China theme park market when it was just taking off,” he said. “With new opportunities visible on the horizon, ACE executives wanted someone to help them navigate working with American theme park owners and operators, preferably an American company that had good relationships of its own and could also bring additional technical expertise. It was hoped that company would be in a prime geographic location for the industry, such as Orlando. We at Enigma looked at several different companies, and realized that Technomedia was the best possible partner for ACE.”

“对于双方来说，这是最好的结果，”派瓦（Paiva）说。“他们已经启动合作，推进项目了”

Miceli说：“我们现在一起为中国成功的景点开发提供最好的方案。”

“ACE和Technomedia之间的联盟将有助于我们两家公司实现在中国创建大型主题公园的目标，”曹荣臻说。

补充 (2)

ACE

ACE 代表安恒利(国际)有限公司。该公司是一家专业的音频、视频及舞台灯光服务供应商，是中国、香港、澳门地区的主要专业设备供应商和系统集成商。公司不仅为景点开发和安装设备，也为电视台、录音棚、剧院、体育场管等提供设备。

ACE公司于1982年在香港成立，现在北京、上海、广州、西安、沈阳和成都等地设有分公司。最近的主要项目是为香港20周年阅兵式提供音响系统和为2016年《又见敦煌》演出提供设备。ACE主题公园的客户包括上海申迪集团。ACE公司在全国有约700名工作人员。
网址：<http://www.acehk.com>

Technomedia

Technomedia Solutions LLC有限公司是一家获奖的视听集成公司，在奥兰多和洛杉矶设有办事处。它由约翰·米凯利（John Miceli）创立，他的信条是：“从媒体和技术智慧两方面来最大限度的进行创意，使得Technomedia的服务在全球独一无二”该公司历史悠久，为世界各地的顶级主题公园运营商和开发商提供服务，包括环球创意公司。

在2002年创立Technomedia之前，米凯利（Miceli）是Soundelux的总裁兼首席执行官，该公司为电影业和主题休闲乐园服务，为诸如《勇敢的心》这样的大片制作配乐。当2012年Mood Media收购了Technomedia，受益于Mood全球100多家办事处，这家集成商在全球范围内获得了巨大的发展，在中国也是如此。网址：www.gotechnomedia.com。

• • •



圣路易斯联合车站投影映射天花板，Technomedia的项目

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“ACE and Technomedia both maintain similarly high standards and our strengths are complementary,” said Ben Lui, vice president project division, ACE. “We respect one other’s work, which is an excellent platform. In the end, clients will have two sets of minds and hands for creativity, productivity and effectiveness. We will get the job done, meeting the needs of clients and partners, Eastern and Western.”

“Together the two companies really do bring more to the market,” Miceli observed. “The history and talent ACE has on the ground, and the incredible projects it has done in its country, sold us.” He cited as an example ACE’s work on the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, providing the lighting control network, audio systems and services for the opening and closing ceremonies.

Enigma engineered the first meeting between ACE and Technomedia to take place in Orlando in June 2017 during the InfoComm show, including a tour of Technomedia’s Orlando offices. A subsequent Orlando meeting took place the following November during the IAAPA Attractions Expo. The next meeting was in February 2018, beginning with a tour of ACE’s Beijing facility and concluding with the official signing ceremony. “Bingo and John hit it off right away,” said Moalli. It was a whirlwind

finale, including the tour, meeting key staff, an impromptu client presentation, the signing itself and a celebratory banquet hosted by ACE.

Off and running

Not long after the signing ceremony, ACE and Technomedia teamed up to respond to a “huge” RFP from a leading international developer planning new parks in China.

“This is the best of both worlds,” Paiva said. “They’re off and running now.”

“Together, we now offer the best-case scenario for successful attraction development in China,” said Miceli.

“The alliance between ACE and Technomedia will help both of our companies achieve our goal of helping to create great theme parks in China,” said Tso. •••



Journalist Rona Gindin (www.ronagindin.com) has been covering travel from various business and consumer angles for three decades, and today follows the attractions and travel industries from an Orlando, Florida base.

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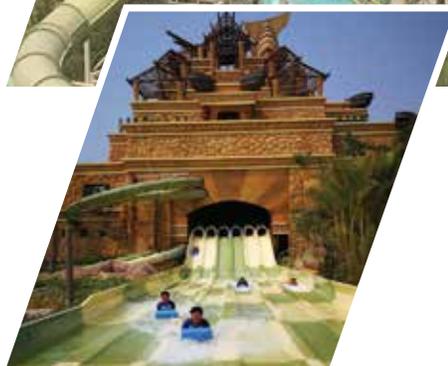
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The strength of storybuilding

JRA's Colin Cronin speaks to the power of crafting stories before designing experiences

interview by Martin Palicki

“Storybuilding is not narrative. Storybuilding refers to the environment we want the guest to be in, and what role they are playing in that environment. The storybuilding concept ties into rides, shows or exhibits, but it’s also critical with food and beverage, retail, and general area development.”

Colin Cronin
Senior Designer, JRA

In his role as senior designer at JRA, Colin Cronin has contributed to the successful launch of a number of theme parks, attractions and museums around the world. Through his work in master planning, conceptualization and idea generation, Colin has learned to wield the concept of storybuilding as a key tool in JRA’s design process. With InPark, Colin discussed how the process of storybuilding is affected by today’s emphasis on IP, technology and increasing demands for immersive experiences.

First, tell us how you got started in the industry.

Initially, I went to the University of Cincinnati and trained as an industrial designer. As is common for a lot of people in this field, I didn’t realize themed attraction design as a career was even possible. While I was in school, JRA (also located in Cincinnati) was working on a dinosaur theme park and they were offering an internship. I thought it was the coolest thing ever, so I applied - and got it. I started out doing illustration and concept design and over time found myself working on all kinds of different aspects of JRA’s projects. Now, almost 10 years later, I’m working on the master planning side of the business.

What is storybuilding?

The basic premise of storybuilding is that we approach a project from the perspective of the guest experience as a whole. We aim to figure out the story that we want to tell to the guest – which is different than a specific narrative. Storybuilding refers to the environment we want the guest to be in, and what role they are playing in that environment.

Figuring out how the guest fits into the overall experience informs the individual storylines in the attractions – and it applies equally to theme parks and museums. A science museum may have a storybuilding concept that “kids are the scientists” or “matching predator to prey.” It can be a much simpler story, but it’s still integral to the experience. Sometimes the story is right up front in the experience, and sometimes it is an unseen narrative. When JRA planned and designed LEGOLAND parks in California and Windsor, UK, we were told that the underlying story was “the child is the hero.” Every attraction within the park had to make the child the dashing knight, brave firefighter, or daring racecar driver. But you will never see the words “the child is the hero” anywhere in the park.

I think for every single type of attraction, folks think first about how the storybuilding concept ties into the more narrative based experiences (rides, shows or exhibits), but it’s also critical with food and beverage, retail, and general area development. This is what the lighting in that area would look like. Here are the plants one would find in this zone. This is what people who lived here would eat.



Colin Cronin Courtesy of JRA



Conceptual artwork of Lionsgate Park Courtesy of JRA

Storybuilding helps guide us and lets us know right away if we are on target and things fit together. I think it also adds a lot to the immersive experience.

A really effective example of this is when Disney's California Adventure opened Guardians of the Galaxy – Mission: BREAKOUT! The park added a pop-up food truck area near the ride. Each truck sold alien-like food based on the IP. I ordered something silly like nachos that came with weird-colored sauces, but it helped to make the experience more immersive for me.

How do you integrate IP into storybuilding?

There are certain things with IP that are easy, aesthetic stuff that you can get out of the way right away, like logos, color matches and fonts. Then, if we are applying the concept of storybuilding to an IP, we have to boil down the IP to its essence. We strain out superfluous information and figure out what makes this particular brand different from the others – why do people react to it in a certain way?

How we treat the storybuilding can depend on the IP. For example, a lot of film IP is driven by characters, and so we have to figure out who the guest is in relation to the characters. In a Batman world, for example, you don't get to be Batman, but you might get to be Robin. Other IPs

are centered around being part of a larger group. Maybe you are in a rebel group fighting evil, or you're having fun with a group of pirates. Some are focused on an environment and allow the guest to experience a place. The Lord of the Rings IP, for instance, is all about being in Middle Earth and experiencing those locations.

Figuring out the guest's role in relation to the IP and the action happening is critical in developing the rest of the attraction. For example, TRANSFORMERS: The Ride 3D and The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man utilize similar ride systems at Universal parks. In Spider-Man, you are not directly a part of the action. You are playing the role of a photographer, observing and experiencing, but you're not a superhero. In Transformers, the IP is based in part on humans helping the Autobots save the world, and you are helping protect the AllSpark throughout the attraction. Of course, on both attractions you are merely riding a vehicle, but I think a lot happens subconsciously.

In most cases, the studios and the IP owners already know the essence of their IP because that helps them grow the IP. But some of it comes from our own experience. It is rare that we don't have someone in the office who isn't a fan of whatever IP or brand we are working on. When JRA was working on World of Coca-Cola, we had an office full of people who could talk about how the brand fit into their lives. For our current project with Lionsgate,



Inside the Crayola Experience Courtesy of JRA

the fact that so many of us are fans of their various film properties has really benefited our planning and design work for Lionsgate Movie World.

Who is involved in storybuilding and IP decisions?

We call that group the content creators or owners, although whom that includes is different every time. With many IPs you just have the movie studio. Sometimes the original creator may come into the discussions. Studio marketing teams also have an interest.

The IP holder always has final sign off and approval. In most situations there is a brand czar - a group or an individual person - who has to approve everything. Sometimes it will be the original creator. Sometimes it is a legal team that is approving things. More and more, however, IP holders have dedicated people covering the LBE market.

Ok, so you've figured out the essence of a story, how do you align the IP with the experience?

A lot of times they coalesce at the same time. We are storybuilders but we are also designers. We look at the overall experience and meeting different guests' needs.

Usually you can get three-quarters of the way there by letting the IPs tell you what kind of attraction they want to be. Then you have to go over the whole thing again with the mindset of creating a well-rounded experience. When you realize there is an element missing, you have to figure out where it fits in best and why.

Does the process end up becoming formulaic?

I don't think so, because each IP is so different. We are moving past what I call our Mt. Rushmore of pop culture and moving into niche experiences. I would consider AVATAR to be a niche IP. It made a lot of money, but hasn't had a commanding presence in the world for the last 20 years. Batman, by comparison, has been part of pop culture since 1939. Nevertheless, Disney was able to identify what people connected with in Avatar, and made a whole land focused on that essence, creating a jolt of that emotion for guests. The success of Pandora and its attractions proves that the interval did not hurt.

How do you work with and manage digital assets related to the IP?

We start out working with what they have. Typically, at a base level it will be some marketing materials, maybe some

dailies from films, logos, posters and things of that nature. From there we start to ask them for items that we find we need. In a lot of cases it's not reasonable to ask for everything, which amounts to terabytes of data. Once we start doing our homework we can ask for specific details. Then the studio may send us 3D models from a flyover shot, or photos from specific buildings. It makes our work easier but, even more importantly, helps us know we are on track.

How is technology changing the way you build stories?

Technology has changed what is possible, but it still has to fit the IP. For example, when we worked on the first Crayola Experience in Pennsylvania, Crayola wanted to include some technology based experiences, But because their IP is so intimately tied to physical interactions with paper, they didn't want it to be full of screens.

An interactive touch wall of monitors would not be appropriate for Lord of the Rings. But you could do that

for something like Hunger Games and it would fit really well. I like to let the tech be driven by the needs of the messaging.

At their core, theme parks are an essential way to have a communal experience with pop culture. There is a lot of debate about personal tech (smartphones, VR, AR, etc.) and how it has a tendency to make communal experiences individual. Figuring out how to have both is the Holy Grail that has not been solved yet. The most effective so far is Pokémon Go. It's an app based on personal technology, yet it is communal and people engage around it.

Looking ahead, we have had a lot of discussions about multiple rides in a zone that could talk to one another, allowing something you do in one ride to affect your experience in another. With the growth of projection mapping and 3D tech, we are in a place where a dark ride experience could easily be different for different people. For a storybuilder, that's very exciting. •••

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Toy Stories

Hasbro bolsters its family play experiences as brands expand into LBE markets

InPark exclusive interview with Matthew Proulx, Sr. Director, Global Branded Experiences, Hasbro

by Judith Rubin

The international attractions industry and the public alike will be seeing a lot more of Hasbro and exploring its many beloved, family-friendly brands as the company's LBE-dedicated team reaches out to new potential partners, and those partnerships develop into new guest experiences and venues.

The company describes itself as having evolved into an entertainment company from having been a toy company. Can you tell us something about how that evolution took place internally, and the time period?

Yes, Hasbro has evolved from a traditional toy and game company to a global play and entertainment leader, and developing our storytelling capabilities through Allspark Pictures and Allspark Animation has been a significant component to realizing that vision. Our focus is on taking inspiration from some of our iconic brands to telling engaging and creative stories in new ways while giving us greater control of the content creation process.

Within the past few years as an entertainment company, we've released new stories featuring TRANSFORMERS (TRANSFORMERS: CYBERVERSE, Machinima's PRIME WARS trilogy), MY LITTLE PONY (FRIENDSHIP IS MAGIC and EQUESTRIA GIRLS), LITTLEST PET SHOP, HANAZUKI and more. In 2017 we released our first full-length animated feature, MY LITTLE PONY: THE MOVIE, distributed by Lionsgate. On December 21, 2018, we are releasing BUMBLEBEE, starring Hailee Steinfeld and John Cena.

Do you take a holistic approach in developing experiences around your brands, visioning multi-platform development in tandem with product development? What are some examples? What is your ideal model?

We certainly take a holistic approach to our brands. The Brand Blueprint is our strategic framework for bringing



Matthew Proulx

our brands to life in exciting new ways. Through insights, storytelling and innovation, we are bringing meaningful brand experiences to life for audiences around the world.

Our one-of-a-kind omni-screen storytelling strategy that utilizes our brands and characters to drive innovation in entertainment is an important strategic differentiator for Hasbro. We've rapidly built expansive, multiscreen storytelling capabilities – globally reaching kids and families everywhere that they are consuming content, in many forms and formats, across films, television and new media.

We're also always searching to expand into new categories, audiences, channels and platforms – and live entertainment and experiential licensing is a priority for all of our brands. Fans around the world feel a close connection to brands like NERF, MONOPOLY, TRANSFORMERS and MY LITTLE PONY, and live event experiences allow us to bring them inside those properties in new ways.

We've brought our fans closer to beloved properties with theme park attractions such as the TRANSFORMERS ride at Universal Studios and a TRANSFORMERS experience in China from Victory Hill Exhibitions. Live events have also been successful for our brands. On the retail side, earlier this year, we collaborated with eight Indonesian designers to create looks inspired by MY LITTLE PONY which were sold at a pop-up shop in addition to traditional retail.

We're flexible in how we work with partners and platforms, and we have relationships with Paramount, a joint venture with Discovery, an original series with Netflix and our own animation studio in Ireland.

We recently announced the world's first MONOPOLY Hotel, Monopoly Mansion by Sirocco, located in Kuala Lumpur and a partnership with Kingsmen to create, build and operate NERF family entertainment center attractions across Asia Pacific.

Which brands does Hasbro see as most eligible for LBE platforms, and why? How does this play out internationally?

In terms of our advantage to potential clients and partners, we have a very significant stable of Hasbro brands – such as Transformers, My Little Pony and Monopoly – that are a good fit for almost any LBE space. These brands have three key attributes: relatability, shareability and repeatability.

Relatability means that everyone understands or has a general sense of the brand. People have grown up with these brands and have experienced them over time which makes them relatable to fans. Fans also share these brands with others and create experiences around them. For example, Monopoly has been around for 86 years, and

multiple generations of people have been setting the game up on the family table. Now, they also have the opportunity to go to the Monopoly hotel opening in Kuala Lumpur at the end of this year. For newer generations, our brands provide several interactive and social elements. As for repeatability, this means that people want to come back and engage in an experience over and over again – that's the dynamic nature of what our brands are, whether for entertainment or gaming. For instance, Nerf is an active play experience for friends and family – it's not pre-programmed, and the outcome is different every time.

Beyond Monopoly and Nerf, there's a whole suite of game brands, such as Connect 4, Battleship, Clue, Candyland, Chutes and Ladders... the list goes on and on.

Our brands are all proven in ways that dovetail with what makes LBE successful, and that's true on a global level. Our brands and IP are global brands and IP. There are fans around the world for Hasbro game products, and development has already been taking place.

Do you see Hasbro brands and IP as having an advantage over other IP, in terms of the LBE market?

Our brands have longevity and power. Hasbro has brands turned on 365 days a year. We are continually marketing and advertising and creating stories and content.



Renderings of the Worlds First Monopoly Hotel: Monopoly Mansion by Sirocco, Kuala Lumpur, coming in 2019. Photo courtesy of Hasbro





Fans experience the Autobot Alliance Experience from Victory Hill Exhibitions Photo courtesy of Hasbro

Transformers is a box office blockbuster and one of the biggest franchises of all time – but that’s just one part of what we do. We also have TV shows for older and younger consumers and are developing video games and novels. We are reaching consumers anywhere they want to consume content.

When you consider the value of an IP, think about repeatability. Will it work 5-7 years from now? We keep investing and reinvesting in our brands. For example, Mr. Potato Head was the first TV-advertised toy in the history of toys and games. He continues to be relatable today and we utilize him wherever we can; for instance, he was a long-term spokesperson for Lay’s potato chips. He’s an iconic toy, product and character.

You’ve mentioned the Monopoly Hotel. Can you talk more about Hasbro’s embrace of hospitality platforms, which of course tie directly into the integrated resort model favored by many entertainment developers?

We see hospitality as a great opportunity to have that stay-and-play model, helping to create memorable experiences and continuing to evolve the business. A play-themed hotel provides a decision factor that goes beyond the room rate to the quality of experience. It’s a great mechanism for operators to differentiate themselves and create a long term sustainable model. Hasbro has multiple alliances with hotel operators and we are currently building My Little Pony and Transformers hotels that will feature themed rooms and play experiences within the hotel. We see it as part of the continuing rollout.

How might a Hasbro collaboration unfold, if you were approached by, for instance, a creative wanting to pitch a Hasbro-branded experience to a client; an entertainment operator looking for compatible Hasbro brands and ideas to develop a new attraction

or guest experience; a developer of traveling museum exhibits; or a specialty cinema producer looking for content to create a media-based experience?

We’d talk to any and all of them, first of all! We’re willing to work with any well-qualified partner or type of individual across the board. We want to ensure that they understand how to work with brands and can bring our brands to life. It’s not just about today, but we ask ourselves, can they continue to develop the IP and work with us over a period of time to ensure an experience is highly repeatable?

If it’s a creative, for instance, we’d work with that creative or design firm hand in hand, making sure it’s not just pretty pictures but that there’s a practicality: how are these brands expressed in this experience, and does it deliver on everything the developer needs? A collaborative process, holding hands day-to-day, makes sure of the best chance to succeed. Let’s have the conversation!

What in-house resources and experience does Hasbro bring to the table, in addition to the brands themselves?

It’s important that we understand what we do and don’t know. We do know our brands and their consumers and fans. We have regional leads around the world dealing with regional tastes and needs on a day-to-day basis. On the global side, we are also dealing with design and project management to ensure consistency. We partner with franchise teams and internal brand teams to understand their brands and iterative impact, to help us determine where to go in the future with brands.

We surround ourselves with the right consultants, such as, in the LBE space, Dave Schmitt of Management Resources, and George Wade of Bay Laurel Advisors. We make sure we understand the nuances of what a developer partner needs. Holistically, we have created a team, and we do what is necessary to ensure we are working in good collaboration and to fill any knowledge gaps.

Hasbro finds the LBE markets valuable enough to have made it a core business, to have a company vertical in place. What do you find exciting about the out-of-home markets?

As we look ahead, Location-Based Experiences are a key growth category for us globally. With our family-friendly, globally-relevant brands like TRANSFORMERS, MY LITTLE PONY, MONOPOLY and NERF, we’re uniquely positioned to expand our LBE business. We found that there is so much potential for LBE to help

grow our brands and engage both new and latent fans.

We're particularly excited about the NERF family entertainment center attractions Kingsmen is building across Asia Pacific. The collaboration will allow us – for the first time ever – to offer a wholly immersive and true play experience that unlocks a totally new and exciting way to experience the NERF brand for fans of all ages. With the first location to open by 2019 in Singapore, each stand-alone indoor entertainment facility will feature multiple activity zones, merchandising and food & beverage areas that will engage and entrench all family members into the fun and action of the NERF brand.

What excites us about the LBE space is that it provides another touchpoint for consumers to interact with our brands. We can see the impact this has for audiences, along with the ability LBE has to drive business for our partners.

Transformers attractions at Universal Studios theme parks had a huge attendance impact and broke attendance records when they opened. Before that, when people thought about Transformers, they could only imagine what they had seen on movies or TV, but didn't get to see a 20 foot robot up close and in person. When we had the Bumblebee character show up in person to the global licensing show a few years ago, people were literally standing in line and jostling one another for the photo opportunity. You get a sense of the size of these brands when you give people a chance to smell, touch and feel them. The excitement we see when people are able to interact with their favorite characters is amazing.

For the operators and developers, Hasbro is a company that understands who its consumers are and what they want, and we can deliver this unexpected wow factor that we believe has not been experienced in this space before. That's due to the breadth and iconic nature of these brands. My Little Pony is just about 36 years old now; think about generations of parents, girls and boys and how this generational sharing connects and binds people together.

People want those shared experiences. Ultimately, that's what our brands bring to the table, and that's

what's exciting to me. We bring families together to have that true family experience. We are a family company that is about bringing families together through play.

In our company mission statement, we talk about ourselves as being a branded play and entertainment company, creating the world's best play experiences. We're not just about toys and games, and that ties directly into LBE, which is about play and the fun activities that bring families together, which is at the heart of what we do. Table top gaming and face to face connectivity – these foster emotional connections between families and generations, and we've enabled those brands and the multi-generational experiences around them to cross platforms. •••

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The complex block features a background image of a control room with multiple computer monitors displaying data and graphs. The text is overlaid on this image, with the company name and service description at the top, and three key service areas (AUDIO, VIDEO, SHOW CONTROL) listed in large, bold, white capital letters. The website URL is at the bottom right.



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The psychology of imaging

Panasonic's Ron Martin discusses the company's approach to "technology under creative control"

interview by Martin Palicki

Vice president and director of Panasonic Hollywood Labs, Ron Martin is well connected to the entertainment industry, both film studios and theme parks. As his team puts additional focus on themed entertainment we asked Ron to share his 40 years of experience in crafting imaging solutions.

You've had a long history with the film industry. How did you get started at Panasonic?

I was born and raised in Hollywood and initially wanted to become an architect. My father was a bit actor in old Western films so I was around movie sets and sound stages my entire childhood. I went to work for ABC TV Network after finishing engineering school in the late '70s, and quickly moved into technology for post-production and visual effects. I later worked as chief engineer for Merv Griffin's Trans American Video, a TV production house that also offered visual effects and film production services. During that time, I also helped launch the Disney Channel back when it was an early satellite service channel.

That got me involved in media development for the theme park side of things because it overlapped with film and television production. After Panasonic acquired MCA/Universal in the early 90s, studio head Lew Wasserman called and asked if I would work on making the studio digital, even though he didn't really understand what digital was going to be back then. That kind of opportunity only comes one in a lifetime, so I said "Yes!" That became the start of Panasonic Hollywood Lab (PHL), essentially a tech incubator inside of a movie studio. The world of digital filmmaking and distribution was spawned in part out of that effort, and that overlapped significantly with parks and visual environments. In 2001 we made PHL more of an active R&D effort for Panasonic. After many years of developing imaging technologies like DVD, HDTV, Digital Cinema, Blu-ray and UHD Blu-ray, PHL shifted our strategy to pursue the themed entertainment industry more formally.

Why pursue themed entertainment?

The thing that tied the cinema and park efforts together was this idea of the evolution of imaging. In both film and parks, things used to be purely



Ron Martin

physical set pieces. That evolved into set pieces with limited projection and now it is largely sophisticated projection imaging with some set pieces.

We like to look at our focus as where the science of imaging meets the psychology of imaging. The human visual system is a physiological system that science and technology address. But how the image impacts you is the psychology of imaging. We take the technology core and infuse it with a creative effort to make imaging different. What better place to do that than in the physical environments of themed entertainment?

You're still a technology company, correct?

Yes, but I call it technology under creative control. The technology itself should be invisible. Guests should walk into an experience or an environment that they respond to and not be aware of the tech. The physiology of imaging says as the technology breaks down the barriers or limiting factors of imaging (color gamut, color volume, frame rate, resolution, etc.) then the psychological effects come into play. We can actually measure differences in heart rate, respiratory rate, perspiration, etc. as we change resolution or color in images. This changes the dynamic of how people are responding to the images and can impact how cinematic and park creative decisions are made. In a themed environment where you are creating a

physical world, this attention to the psychology of imaging enhances that experience in a unique way. From an R&D perspective we focus on this effort not only in our products, but also in how our products become solutions.

How does PHL handle the R&D process?

Most R&D departments have pools of engineers. We are unique because we bring our engineers to work on projects in development to explore why the creative designers have done things a certain way. We want our team to conceive different imaging solutions. Our engineers are not just involved in the installation, but they are part of the creative process working with project teams, oftentimes in the early stages of blue-sky concept development. In many cases we have created new product offerings because of this process.

Creativity is contagious, so I want to get engineers out of their cubicle and into that creative environment. Then, when they go back to their engineering task, they think differently about it. That's what happened to me over decades in this industry. Innovation isn't taught, it is mentored. It adopts you. The most creative people I know have been mentored by creative people above them.

What kind of technologies are you working on?

Panasonic is 100 years old, and the company touches many areas in technology, but PHL is principally involved in imaging solutions and the support systems that make imaging unique. In a traditional environment a digital sign might be a screen on the wall, but we want the entire wall to be the sign. Although we do a lot of work with projectors we also seek out solutions where we don't need projectors, in this case where the wall is the raster itself.

Can you give us an update on your strategic partnership with Disney?

We have a strategic corporate alliance for the North American Disney parks and resorts. That has allowed us to do two things. First, it formalizes our involvement in themed entertainment. Secondly, it allows us to get a deeper understanding on the areas of impact from imaging. It leads to wonderful results in the larger market, and validates what we are trying to do.

Working with Disney Parks & Resorts is spectacular. It goes back to that idea of creativity being contagious. That impacts our business effort and other people that we are working with.

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What is your typical project scope?

PHL is pretty unique in that we go from concept development with creative, producer and tech teams right into staging and production of the physical environment. An average attraction development is a 2-3 year process or more, so we would engage along the entire life cycle of that project.

It's a remarkable privilege for us to be involved so early and it helps the client because we know needs and limitations much earlier in the process. By sitting down with the creative teams and understanding what they need, we can customize a solution for them. Of course, that takes some time.

Not all customers or projects have that long of a development window, but they are still looking for innovation in their own markets. We can also work with them, find out what they want to achieve and help develop solutions. We can scale very quickly, and can offer solutions for smaller operations that are timely and appropriate for their market.

What challenges in the marketplace are you addressing?

I think the challenge for any tech company is the idea of keeping innovation alive. In a very real way, today's innovation is tomorrow's noise. Every innovation can become static. Part of our goal is to be aware of the issues that make things static, then address them and keep them evolving and dynamic.

Because the entertainment industry is so broad, we at PHL have to be constantly aware of industry trends. The next generation of imaging is all about breaking barriers of resolution and frame rate. Panasonic has developed a projector that reaches nearly 2000 frames per second that can revolutionize the impact of storytelling with images. Volumetric imaging is right around the corner. Holographic displays, which are usually seen as bluish floating transparent images, will soon have full color volume and a sense of solid texture. We constantly have to pay attention to what is next in order to maintain dynamic products and solutions.

Is PHL branching out into other markets also?

The Hollywood Lab is primarily chartered to service the studio production and theme park industries. But Panasonic does have sales and marketing verticals in many other areas with a wide array of products, solutions and services. So frequently our work does apply to business opportunities like food and beverage, retail, and even airline entertainment. Media and entertainment permeate our culture, both on a personal and business level and at the core of those experiences are images that tell stories. Those stories are delivered as a whole new technology experience, spawned and enabled in part because of Panasonic's efforts at PHL.

What should people do to learn more about PHL?

We are always available for customers and inquiries. You can visit our website panasonic.net/cns/projector/ or if you are in the Los Angeles area, schedule a visit to the PHL offices. •••

Orbi Osaka uses an array of Panasonic projectors to create a number of media-driven experiences. [See "Inside Orbi," InPark issue 50, 2013 www.inparkmagazine.com/issue50/] Photo courtesy Orbi Osaka





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Ride hybridization

Alterface builds interactivity for unique hybrid roller coaster in China

by Anja D'Hondt for Alterface

With local teams at two offices in China, Beijing and Xiamen, Alterface has worked to establish a strong foothold in Chinese and Asian entertainment markets to engineer interactive mixed-media rides that fit the needs of leisure clients building parks and attractions. The company reports new successes with recent projects and partnerships.

Thrills, interactivity, effects, multimedia and Chinese legend: Qingdao Wanda

A new ride is in the works for Qingdao Oriental Movie Metropolis in China, a film and television industrial park established by Wanda Studios. The client is Qingdao Wanda. Alterface is responsible for designing and installing all image generators and the shooting system across seven different scenes, using a total of 42 3D projection screens. There are nine trains running on the tracks at nine meters per second. Each train consists of three vehicles that hold four passengers each, for a total of 12 players per train.

At this writing, the ride opening date was set for April 28, 2018. Ride design and theming, and overall supervision, were being handled by local partner Pico Beijing. Rui Shi (Sherman), senior project executive at Pico Beijing, says, "The idea is based on the ancient Chinese myth,

'Investiture of Gods,' which tells a story about people, spirits and warriors. The great master and generals are leading their people to overthrow tyranny and build one of the greatest dynasties in China, Zhou Dynasty. Everyone admires their great sacrifice and heroism."

Louis Vanhomwegen, project manager at Alterface, says, "Each of the seven scenes represents a popular Chinese legend about a deity. As allies of the great master, visitors have to defeat each deity in every scene in order to become the strongest one. It's a great story with compelling gameplay. In addition to combining interactive shooting and the roller coaster experience, there are many effects, including transducers, liquid nitrogen, and hot wind."

Vanhomwegen explained, "One game lasts 522 seconds, from boarding to departure. After each game, guests ride onto the next scene. On average, 800 visitors can be entertained per hour, which is a great throughput! The embedded audio triggers the ride and leads visitors to each of the scenes. All objects are virtual 3D; physical elements are used only for design and decoration."



The shooting device is highly themed and integrated into the ride vehicle Photo courtesy of Alterface



Detailed set pieces surround the game screens Photo courtesy of Alterface

According to Vanhomwegen, guests are invited to begin the experience with a training session, where they enter one of two preshow rooms to use a shooting device and practice on an individual screen. “This way they are able to learn and improve their shooting skills, getting a first taste of the story,” he says. Following the preshow is a short queue with theming to further set the mood.

Sherman adds, “Experiences are being fed from all directions: the ride itself, video and audio, design and decoration, lighting, SFX...we made sure that visitors can feel the excitement from the moment they walk into the gate.”

“This project demonstrates the versatility of the Alterface technology, as we have had to deal with many new challenges due to the type of action, speed and vehicles,” says Alterface CEO and founder Benoit Cornet.

Concepts and collaborations

“We like to say that Alterface goes beyond the hype and delivers proven concepts to guarantee fun and exciting, unique guest experiences,” says Cornet. “We have found that there is a growing demand in China and Asia for dynamic, mixed-media rides, driven by advanced technology such as Alterface’s. Mixed-media rides require a specific set of skills, and a number of companies have come to us for assistance. Increased and closer

collaboration between manufacturers and customers seems to be the path of the future, and toward success.”

Over the past years, Alterface has contributed to a number of interactive rides introduced across Asia, such as the interactive Rapid River ride, in Yumiyuri land, Tokyo (Japan), and a series of Alterface dark rides in China for LEGO Discovery Centers in Shanghai and Shenyang. “We work to ensure that smaller rides provide the same quality as larger installations,” says Cornet. “The recipe behind our success is the fact that Alterface is responsible for delivering a result and not just a bunch of equipment.”

Cornet adds, “We see the Chinese market evolving very rapidly and eagerly. After having witnessed the debut of interactivity in the parks, we now see interest in higher quality projects with more features and detail, based on strong concepts. It is a great pleasure for us to bring our experience and know-how to the table and share them with our partners to create solutions that will fulfill the expectations of today’s and tomorrow’s park visitors.” •••

Show control 101

Barco's Eric Cantrell on advances in show control systems, and challenges facing the market

interview by Martin Palicki

With a career rich in AV technical theatrical experience, Eric Cantrell has spent the last ten years with Medialon, now a part of Barco. In this exclusive interview with InPark, Eric draws on his decades of knowledge to help demystify show control and identify areas of future development for this critical piece of themed entertainment technology.

Let's start with the definition. What is show control, and what is it capable of doing?

I like to tell people that they are already familiar with AV control systems when they use their television remote. It can change channels, adjust volume and select different device inputs. Now imagine you had to coordinate the television with five other devices in your living room. AV control systems are used to send commands to all the devices, making it easy to switch between watching the news and playing a movie on the Blu-ray player. Show control technology adds to this multi-device coordination by adding in timing accuracy and the ability to synchronize actions. Basically, any time more than one type of AV special effect, or lighting device needs to coordinate or synchronize with another type, that's when you'll see show control systems used.

That is important because lighting, audio and effects products are very complex and perform a lot of functions, but they are not built specifically to synchronize with one another. Show control functions as a central arbitrator using the native languages of the devices it manages, and tells each device when to perform its function. It becomes a single point of interface that operates all the other equipment, making a coordinated show possible. Additionally, it allows the same show to run over and over - sometimes without an operator.

Are show control systems becoming more critical in themed entertainment?

Absolutely, because the storytelling being done in shows, attractions and exhibits is becoming more and more complex. They are increasingly media-based and immersive. Audiences are experiencing movement, projection, wind, water, smells, lighting and more.



Eric Cantrell

But if the timing of any one of those elements isn't synchronized to support the story, then the quality of the experience suffers.

There is also an increased necessity for higher throughput – pulsing more people through an experience more often. Show control resets equipment for each experience (or each scene in the case of attractions) quickly and repeatedly.

Finally, show control also helps maintain a consistent experience by taking care of back-end processes. When projector lamps are ending useful life, show control can alert maintenance to prevent extended downtime. If a playback device has an issue, the show controller can notice and route a backup player to the projector automatically.

How did Medialon get involved in show control systems?

Medialon started off as a French distributor for a Swedish show control system called Dataton Trax. Our company was known as Dataton Multimedia France then. Around the year 2000, Dataton stopped making the Trax product and so we changed our name and created our own show control system called Medialon Manager. It debuted for the opening ceremonies of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

In 2004, Medialon opened an office in Miami to help service the cruise line industry and build the market

in the United States. In 2013 the company moved its headquarters from France to Miami and Barco acquired Medialon in 2016.

How has being part of the Barco family boosted your ability to provide show control solutions?

We have had a long relationship with Barco. Not only did we provide show control drivers for their projectors, but we had an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) relationship. Barco multi-screen video processing desks shipped with a version of the Medialon Manager software included, specifically crafted to make running live events easier. The Barco Encore consoles could be used as a front-end trigger for big multi-image shows, so when a preset was recalled, the correct media was loaded on the correct players, and when the user pressed the Take button to send the preset to the screen, the video decks would play in sync. There was no need to manage multiple video players separately, which is difficult to do manually.

Now that we are one company, that kind of eco-systems thinking is one of the big benefits of working alongside the other product teams. When one of Barco's product line teams wants to create something new or make new functionality that involves managing or coordinating with other AV devices, we can step in with show control and help them develop solutions early on in the process.

How do your products adapt to the different type of venues in this marketplace?

Our systems have been designed as general-purpose show control systems, based on the idea that entertainment technicians will most often be the ones programming it. It's designed with nomenclature for the theater world, not for software developers. It is also very intuitive. If I want to open the shutter on the projector, I drag the shutter command onto the timeline and at that point the shutter will open. It's a fairly straightforward workflow based on knowing that most people don't want to code.

But you can easily create a museum control system or attraction control system with the same tools. It is fast to deploy because of that graphical programming interface.

What other things can show control do that people might not think about?

Show control can be quite effective in making experiences more interactive. Input can come from sensors, virtual reality environments, or even Twitter feeds. For example, show control can activate a fan when a guest enters a windy location in a VR scene. The tools of VR and gaming engines can continue to define the rules, story and gameplay of virtual experiences, but show control produces an outcome that occurs in the physical world. At

Wings of Time, a show created by ECA2 for Sentosa Island, Singapore, uses Medialon show control equipment. This view from the control booth shows the show control stations with the show running in the background. Photo courtesy of David Birchall



its heart, show control processes and communicates data, so as we connect more and more data streams, designers have great potential to create new experiences.

You mention VR. Is that the future of show control?

Although the VR scenario I just mentioned has potential, I'm generally bearish on VR as an end-user attraction system. The headsets are isolating, which is the opposite of why people go with their friends and families to theme parks or museums, which are experiences groups have together. But there is an interesting other side to VR and show control. People creating attractions can use VR as a design tool in a pre-visualization environment so they can tweak details long before they move any dirt.

We can essentially connect a show control system (with its relative ease of programming) to the VR environment so that the VR is accepting commands from the show controller, triggering effects in the VR environment. It isn't necessary to build all that timing information into the VR engine, and your show control programmer can make changes on the fly, with the VR program reacting to those live inputs.

If you have this VR model and you're working on an attraction, your programmer can be off-site (even on the other side of the planet) making tweaks to the show control programming in the VR environment and then send the electronic show file to be tested in the real attraction. That's an ideal way to add updates without shutting down an attraction.

What new technologies can we expect to see in this marketplace?

We continue to make incremental improvements to our Medialon Manager software and Showmaster products. Showmasters embed the power of Medialon Manager show control system into rack-mounted hardware that is purpose-built for show control, with all the required ports – such as DMX, Timecode, Serial, Ethernet, contact closure inputs, and relay outputs – right on the box.

We are always updating our products to work with the latest new equipment and protocols in the industry. For example, energy efficiency standards in Ethernet switches are implemented to shut off network ports to save energy when they sit idle. Since show control systems need to be able to talk to devices regularly and with accurate timing, a port that is powered down impacts our ability to

communicate quickly with devices. Show systems are so reliant on the networks, that when a new network concept comes up (like IPv6, which is coming down the line) then we have to be ready for that.

We have now developed a new product, Overture, to sit as an umbrella interface level over multiple show controllers, so administrative users can have a single point of interface for all systems park-wide, but yet restricted in use for different types of users. For example, audio engineers need to have access to see info about audio around the park, and the lighting folks need the same type of thing, but only for lighting. Overture sits over the existing show controllers and talks to them - gathering information that each show controller knows about all the devices it is managing, and then Overture compiles that information and presents it based on the user and what type of information that user should have access to. It is the ultimate in user management and also provides system-wide status logging, usage statistics, scheduling, and alarm notifications.

It's ideal because you don't have to touch the individual attractions or exhibits in order to add Overture. It's a separate entity that uses info that is already existing in the individual show controllers. Overture can save you time on new projects as well, since programmers don't have to build or set up the logging programs, access control, scheduling, or maintenance interfaces at the local level, leaving the show control programming to only that: controlling the show. Overture handles all of the interface and back-end administrative stuff.

Looking ahead, I'm interested in what is happening with entertainment applications of drones. They have their own control systems that sit at the edge and are not purely show control, though it could be argued that their own control systems are a type of show control. They receive lighting, timing information and commands but they are not participating in the overall show control system. For safety reasons, they follow along with the show, similar to how pyrotechnic systems work, with their own safety interlocks which can override programmed show sequences.

It is interesting tech and I've seen some cool applications from Intel and Cirque du Soleil, but I'm still not sure what we are going to do with it that will make the "wow" last longer than a few seconds. How to best use drones for shows – and how they are integrated into show control technology – remains to be seen. •••

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Thea case studies day 2018

Celebrating heritage and culture through themed design

by Joe Kleiman



TEA's big weekend of education, celebration and networking around the 24th Annual Thea Awards took place April 5-7, 2018 at Disneyland Resort in Anaheim. Thea Case Studies Day is an exploration of the honored projects, and this year, a common theme of culture emerged. Each project showcased was a journey into a culture - be it real or fictional.

Education, celebration and networking

Once a project has been named for a Thea Award, the project owner must agree to fulfill two expectations: to be present at the Gala to receive the award in person, and to supply a comprehensive credits list. Most recipients also enthusiastically take part in Thea Case Studies Day, which comprises Day Two of the annual, two-day TEA Summit.

Certainly it makes the awards more meaningful for both the recipients and the industry to have case studies that help the themed entertainment world to know itself better: in frank, peer discussion that demystifies what the project process is, how that process unfolded and what kind of impact has resulted.

TEA COO Jennie Nevin explains that TEA is simply fulfilling its mission of serving the creative community that is the basis of its membership, and the owner-operators who make the projects possible, with this pairing of celebratory awards and educational case studies, complemented by the international networking opportunities these events afford. "Our TEA Summit provides a vital forum that includes a special behind-the-scenes, in-depth look at the creative process and storytelling behind the best projects each year," says Nevin.

And now, the recipients

While most Thea Award recipients are profiled during Case Studies Day, three were featured during TEA Summit Day One: Phil Hetteema, founder of The Hetteema Group and recipient of the Buzz Price Thea Award – Recognizing a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements; Cedar Point, recipient of the Thea Classic Award; and 3D Live, recipient of the Thea Award for Innovative

Technology. [See InPark Issue #71 for articles on all three.]

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)

African American culture resides not only in the name of this new museum, but within its architecture, collection, and interpretive exhibits. The historic journey starts in the early years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. When visitors enter the point on the timeline where the United States is founded, the gallery becomes a cavernous 3-story high space. Other galleries celebrate African Americans in the military, sports, and the arts.

In three Reflections booths located throughout the museum, visitors can take a private moment to record their thoughts or feelings. In the first year of operation, over 24,000 such video recordings have been made, bridging the gap between the communal and the personal. [See "Tracing the Long Arc of History," InPark issue 71]

Ghost Town Alive!

Before it was a theme park, Walter Knott established a real berry farm in Buena Park, CA. In those days, Knott's was famous for three things – the boysenberry (it's said every boysenberry in the world can trace its roots to Knott's), the chicken restaurant, and Ghost Town, which was founded in 1940 with real buildings from Western desert ghost towns. Seventy-five years later, Cedar Fair has honored the Knotts family by bringing Ghost Town to life in a low-tech, but highly interactive enterprise starring 35 cast members, three musicians, two horses, and a donkey.

The park took a "no promises" approach, eliminating any conflict arising out of advertised activities not happening. During this event, guests can enter Ghost Town's historic "peek-in" sets and interact with live actors, setting into motion a series of events throughout the day.

Aura

It's not every day that a Roman Catholic pastor - in this case Miguel Castellanos of Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica - introduces a themed attraction, but Aura



At the 2018 TEA Thea Awards Gala, Joe Rohde holds an armful of just-awarded Thea trophies, surrounded by colleagues from Walt Disney Imagineering who worked on the various Disney projects that were honored. OPPOSITE: Roberta Perry and Pat MacKay welcome attendees to the Summit All photos courtesy TEA

showcases the culture of both a religion and a city. Opened in 1829, the Basilica has become one of the city's most-visited sites, with close to 1 million visitors per year. Looking for a new and modern way to showcase the building, its art collection, and unique architecture, the Church enlisted design firm Moment Factory to turnkey a multimedia spectacle.

DreamWorks Animation Zone

Within the 43,000 square meter DreamWorks Animation Zone at MOTIONGATE™ Dubai are four themed areas, each based on a DreamWorks franchise: Shrek, Madagascar, Kung Fu Panda, and How to Train Your Dragon. Each area plays true to the culture of its brand, with its physical elements based on the unique animation design of the films.

Symbolica: The Palace of Fantasy

Throughout the years, Efteling has based a number of well-known attractions around fairy tales. In 1986, Fata Morgana, a journey through the world of fairies partially designed by artist Henny Knoet, opened as the park's first dark ride. Knoet also created the park's trademark mascot in 1989, Pardoos, an alien jester that comes from the planet Symbolica. To honor Knoet, the park decided to design its newest attraction around Pardoos. Entering the castle that houses Symbolica, a stairway suddenly splits into two, welcoming guests to the corridors beneath the castle. Once there, they board trackless vehicles for one of three rides, themed to treasure, heroes, or music.

Cittadella Visitors Centre

At a strategic vantage point on Gozo, a sister island to Malta, sits the Cittadella, which traces its roots back to Roman times. Sarner International won an EU tender to design the exhibition.

Built in a space formerly occupied by the Cittadella's underground reservoirs, the heart of the Visitors Centre is a trompe-l'œil depiction of the interior of the Cathedral of the Ascension's dome. Surrounding it are interactive information stations. Visitors are summoned down a hallway by the projected image of Calypso to a theater in a 10m x 10m space (complete with central support column) where eight historic five-meter-high arches act as screens, providing a 360-degree history of the Cittadella.

Jameson Distillery Bow St.

Whiskey is a cultural icon of Ireland. And Jameson is a cultural icon in the whiskey world. For a brand like Jameson, which is now pursuing brand loyalty and advocacy, a brand home can make a huge difference, as visitors tend to spend two or more hours in a physical environment. Jameson's visitor center opened on Dublin's Bow Street in 1997. A decade later, it underwent a small renovation. As John Carroll, Project Director for Irish Distillers, pointed out, "Another decade has now passed, and it's time for another cyclical refurbishment."

BRC Imagination Arts designed five key experiences: the distillery tour, whisky blending class, cocktail making class, tasting experience, and cask draw experience, each

designed as an intimate multi-sensory experience, staying true to the culture of the brand.

Journey of Lights Parade

For its first permanent nighttime parade, Chimelong hired Miziker Entertainment to create the show. The eight parade units have all the lights on all the floats and costumes interconnected, and are themed to Chimelong's own IP characters, animals found in the park, the circus (a staple of the Zhuhai resort), and pirates and mermaids. At certain points during the parade, all the lights on every unit synch up together. This is accomplished through a pioneering application of individually programmable LED lights.

Project war story: Miziker's Sean Chung related the discovery that the Chinese fabricator had already begun constructing the floats prior to full approval and with outdated specs, resulting in the fabrication being unable to fit lights. The solution was a special truss rigging devised by Miziker to fit on the inside of the float structure, giving it the needed shape – and to which fixtures were attached with zip ties.

Rainis' Museum

Rainis was a poet, playwright, and politician whose philosophy played a key role in the establishment of Latvia. Located in Tadenava, his birthplace, the museum welcomes more than 3,000 visitors annually to the

small town. The project is very low tech. Throughout the museum, a wooden ball is used as a central theme, continuing a narrative through several tasks. Mechanisms throughout the museum feature the words of Rainis, bringing his philosophy into the physical world through the interactive tasks at hand. Exhibit designer Holgers Elers of H2E Design Studio explained, "If we don't lose the ability to be open to the world, then the world is open to us and everything has meaning."

Les Carrières de Lumières

Culturespaces is a private firm that manages a number of leading historical sites, museums, and exhibits throughout France. One of its properties is the Castle of Les Baux de Provence, a 10th Century chateau in the south of France. Nearby are the Les Grands Fonds, an underground limestone quarry that operated in the 19th Century and closed in 1935.

In 2012, the city of Baux de Provence granted management of the quarry to Culturespaces, which renamed it Les Carrières de Lumieres. With no voiceover or written narration, visitors are invited to experience classic works of art in a new dynamic way. Ninety-seven projectors, illuminating over two million pixels, bring historic paintings to life with dynamic animation on the walls, floor, and ceiling of the quarry, creating a complete, 360-degree experience. Culturespaces has added a second location in Paris.

Attendees filled the Disneyland Hotel convention center for the largest TEA Summit ever



Gallipoli: The Scale of Our War

There are 4.8 million people in the nation of New Zealand. Te Papa, the national museum, has estimated that half of them have gone through its Gallipoli exhibition. The exhibit tells the tales of New Zealanders who participated in the famous WWI battle, in which 2,779 New Zealanders lost their lives. To tell the story with pathos, it was decided to concentrate on individuals, rather than on the Army as a whole.

Weta Workshop sculpted eight individuals that would each tell a different aspect of the war, each at 2.4 times human size. Their stories are real and are based on diaries. Realism of the sculptures was of utmost importance. Body parts, including eyeballs, were 3D printed, then painted by hand. The key to the success of the exhibit was the very personal connection with the visitors facilitated by the hyper-real style of presentation.

Frozen Ever After

Frozen Ever After was a retrofit of the Norway pavilion's Maelstrom boat ride in Epcot (Walt Disney World) that stays true to Norwegian architecture and culture, as does the Royal Sommerhus meet and greet area, which doubled the pavilion's size. The ride now tells a follow-up story to the FROZEN film. By reconfiguring the load and unload areas and transforming a former cinema space into additional queue, the Imagineers were able to add an additional minute to the ride time. An audio animatronic Elsa is there, belting "Let It Go."

Guardians of the Galaxy – Mission: BREAKOUT!

The Thea Case Studies audience was fortunate in that all the Disney presentations included participation from the legendary Joe Rohde, a WDI creative executive whose trademark flow of words and ideas is always compelling, punctuated by such apt observations as, "There's only so much you can do with a vehicle that just goes up and down." To create a new kind of experience, the GOTG attraction vehicle – which was part of a full re-imagining of the former attraction Tower of Terror, inside and out – switched from using a downward thrust, which promotes fear, to an upward one, which supports exhilaration, shooting directly up from the loading station.

The challenge with Guardians of the Galaxy – Mission: Breakout! was to remain true to the culture of the Marvel films (which have a subversive tone, so it was important to maintain that feel throughout) while retrofitting an existing structure with a new blockbuster attraction – while the team's deadline was approaching at warp speed, in only a few months. This was achieved by democratizing the design process and allowing the staff to take charge of a project without going a multi-tiered approval process. The



Sir Richard Taylor of Weta Workshop discusses his company's work on Gallipoli: The Scale of Our War

mantra for this project was: "If it's not wrong, it's the right decision."

Pandora – The World of Avatar

To fit a science fiction story into an animal park, Disney Imagineers worked to maintain three key aspects of Animal Kingdom within Pandora – it must be about animals, it must showcase natural landscapes over man-made objects, and the story is rooted to the land. In Animal Kingdom, the story is about the dimensional world, rather than about specific characters or a linear plot.

To accomplish this, the Imagineers created a version of the planet Pandora set decades after the events in Jim Cameron's "Avatar" films. The military and mining company are gone, though their relics remain, and the planet is now welcoming visitors on eco-tourism tours.

Plants and structures were built by Disney's Themed Finishes Art Studio, using a combination of modern and time-honored techniques, such as murals, color boards, and blacklight paint. There are no big marquee signs in the land, rather totems establishing the entrance to attractions.

Avatar Flight of Passage

Avatar Flight of Passage, like the rest of Pandora, plays tribute to the mythology of the film series, while also

honoring the park's conservation message, in a way that offers multiple opportunities for self-engagement.

Pandora is far from perfect, carrying forth the park's conservation message by openly conveying how humans can damage an ecosystem. Rohde refers to the queue of the land's signature attraction, Avatar Flight of Passage, as "one big superfund cleanup site." As guests wind through the queue, they encounter smaller and smaller spaces, traveling through a ritualistic cave of the indigenous Na'vi, the remnants of a mining operation, and a research laboratory.

The ride itself is the next generation of flying attraction. Guests ride in "link chairs," wearing 3D glasses, and hearing directional sound. A bladder on the chair simulates the breathing of the flying banshee they ride on. Throughout the ride, guests are constantly engaged by motion, music, sound, and effects designed to capture their attention for the ultimate flight simulation.

Record turnout

Things have grown in the two dozen years since the Thea Awards began in 1994 with a single award, given

to the late Harrison "Buzz" Price. Adam Bezark of The Bezark Company, who chaired the 2017-18 Thea Awards Nominating Committee, noted that several hundred submissions were received from which the 2018 slate of 20 recipients was selected.

Pat MacKay of Ones&ZerosMedia, who co-chairs Case Studies Day with Roberta Perry of Edwards Technologies, confirmed my impression that the number of people in the room had doubled since I last attended the event two years ago. "This year was our biggest ever with a record 550 people in attendance." (The Thea Awards Gala that took place the following day also drew a record crowd of more than 800 celebrants, plus some two dozen members of the press.)

Bezark ties the increased interest and growth to the continued globalization of the industry, and ever expanding international awareness. "Around the world, operators, developers and creatives recognize the Thea Award as something highly prestigious that helps put their project on the map." •••

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Tech Savvy: InfoComm 2018

The InfoComm show, as seen from an attractions industry standpoint

by Joe Kleiman

From June 6-8, AVIXA (the Audiovisual and Integrated Experience Association, formerly known as InfoComm International) will hold its annual InfoComm trade show in Las Vegas. The prime event for the professional AV integration community, InfoComm 2018 will showcase over 10,000 products, many of them applicable to the themed entertainment industry.

AV and tech systems being essential to visitor attractions these days, there are plenty of InfoComm exhibitors and attendees active in the themed entertainment space. To find out what themed entertainment professionals have to look forward to at InfoComm 2018, we spoke with a number of manufacturers and integrators.

WOWs and trends in projection, interactivity, content platforms and format

One common trend is an increased demand for interactivity and for increased complexity in design. According to **Alcorn McBride chief innovation officer Scott Harkless**, “These trends absolutely have an impact to core strengths of AV and show control. This is precisely why we’re developing solutions to make easy work of these complicated requirements.”

Eric Lehman, business development officer, 7thSense Design points out the advantages of interactive elements: “For existing attractions, this can be a great technology

and experience refresh. For new attractions, it can really make things easier when it comes to media creation. With the use of real-time assets, owners and operators can easily change an attraction to support night-time and seasonal events and revert to daily operation at the push of a button.”

“Visitors expect to be ‘WOWed’ when visiting theme parks, while experiencing all the attractions a theme park has to offer,” says **Cynthia Pawlowski, marketing manager, Panasonic Media Entertainment Company**. “By using high-brightness projectors, interactive professional displays and massive LED displays, 3D, 4K, and 8K content is being used to create special, immersive and engaging effects.”

Designers and integrators may be looking for a complete end-to-end AV solution. **Christie spokesperson Deborah Noon** says the company’s “collaborative relationship with end-users has resulted in developing technology to meet our customers’ needs now and down the road, designing projection and display solutions that include processing, playback devices, software and projectors, and backing our solutions with industry-leading service and support.”

Video servers, a key element in media-based attractions, are getting much more powerful, according to **Scott**



A guided tour on the show floor of InfoComm 2016 Photo courtesy InfoComm

Arnold, founder of TechFulcrum, a technical design specialist. “Every year you can do more in processing that you don’t have to do in post-production. You can be more creative in using video as a medium, through new techniques and technologies like blending large numbers of projectors, pixel mapping, etc.”

“During the past years we have seen a constant rise in video resolution and frame rates in the entertainment sector, trying to close the gap between vision and reality,” says **Gerd Trautner, manager partner and founder of BrainSalt**. “Ten years after our first 60 fps (frames per second) dome, we are now providing uncompressed 120 fps playback solutions for attractions, that would not work with less.” Trautner foresees that “the run for higher resolutions and frame rates will slow down and might stop somewhere around 16K@240 fps. He expects VR solutions to become competitive with projection and that there will be a trend to “very complex projection systems, with real-time content creation, tracking, moving objects and interaction.”

Hooked on themed entertainment

What makes themed entertainment an attractive niche market?

Lehman explains that 7thSense is “thrilled to be involved with everyone from the top down. We like to be involved as early as possible during the ‘blue sky’ phase so that we can help ensure the creative teams are aware of the tools available to support their vision. It is also an opportunity to feed information back to our product engineers about trends in the use of technology in storytelling.”

For Christie the joy is in the number of diverse canvases on which their projectors, equipment, and software can perform. According to Noon, the company “is proud to be involved in pioneering projects from inspiring storytelling in museums and real-time trips to the stars in full dome planetariums to the largest projection mapping spectacles and never-before-seen theme park attractions. Our focus is on empowering our customers to put pixels anywhere they can imagine.”



Scott Arnold



Eric Lehman



Hans Stucken



Gerd Trautner

Panasonic’s Pawlowski says the company prides itself on the industry’s ability “to give patrons an experience they just can’t duplicate at home . . . we work closely with our customers to provide highly customized solutions based on a wide range of technologies, taking a ‘live’ experience to a whole new level. Immersing visitors in the action more completely and creating storytelling experiences all adds up to a one-of-a-kind experience that enables a closer relationship with our customers, and their audiences.”

“The themed entertainment sector is searching for great attractions,” says BrainSalt’s Trautner. “Creatives and designers develop visions of an attraction and we try to provide the technology to realize this vision in the best possible way, trying to close the gap between vision and reality. This allows us to work on some of the world’s best and biggest attractions, together with the industries most talented experts and we are thankful and proud to be involved that way.”

Alcorn McBride’s Harkless says the great part of being in the industry is the relationship his company has established with the parks and vendors. “Our passion to help attraction designers achieve their creative intent pushes us to develop cutting-edge AV and show control solutions - purpose-built products that are designed to outlast the attraction. We love helping others to succeed in building attractions that guests and their families will enjoy for generations.”

For TechFulcrum’s Arnold: “What’s not to love? It’s not an easy vocation, but what Tech Fulcrum gets to do is new things all the time. People from all walks of life enjoy these projects and they get to smile.” His threefold summary: “We get to make people happy, we get to play with new toys, and because we’re always pushing the envelope, we never do the same thing twice.”

InfoComm show floor sampler

We asked those companies exhibiting on the InfoComm show floor to give us a preview of which products of interest to the themed entertainment industry will be on display in their booths.

Alcorn McBride will highlight several new products that are designed to streamline system architecture for themed attractions like dark rides, parades, and coasters.

- V16X show controller – described as a “next generation product which supports enhanced synchronization via network; designed to coordinate with other V16X-based sub-systems and RidePlayer-based vehicles to ensure microsecond precision and rock-solid consistency. This product embodies our goal to make challenging tasks like synchronizing on-board audio to off-board systems a simple and seamless experience for attraction designers.”
- RideAmp - New on-board audio amplifier that the company says “will serve as a natural companion product for RidePlayer for applications that demand high-power audio amplification. It offers four channels of amplification at 350W with the option to bridge outputs to achieve 700W; all in a compact package that’s designed to survive the brutal environment of a ride vehicle. Dante/AES67 network audio distribution ensures a nice clean audio signal and remote monitoring”

7thSense Design: High Frame Rate (HFR), native 8K and high bit-depth, or High Dynamic Range (HDR) displays are all key themes for the company’s Delta Media Server at InfoComm this year – described as “key solutions that the themed entertainment market is looking for.” The company doesn’t have its own stand at the show but its products are found in many locations on the floor supporting several of the company’s technology partners and feeding their displays and demonstrations.

AV Stumpfl global marketing manager Hans Stucken promises a “sneak-preview of a truly groundbreaking new software development, which we believe is the first true next-generation media server software solution. This software has never been openly shown to the public before, so InfoComm visitors are in for a real treat. In terms of projection screens, a number of different projection screen systems will be shown at InfoComm, with our new T-32 Shift screen system leg expected to be of particular interest to anyone interested in mobile projection screens.”

Barco’s Eric Cantrell, NA Sales Manager, Medialon Division reports that Barco will be focusing on its F70/F80/F90 and UDX projectors at InfoComm as well as its UniSee bezel-less LCD Wall, and its Medialon show control and Overture enterprise-wide AV management software. There is also talk of a 75,000 lumen projector making an appearance.

Christie will present numerous products expected to be of interest for themed entertainment applications:

- New Christie® Crimson Series of 3DLP® laser phosphor projectors, designed to deliver up to 25,000 ISO lumens, 60Hz processing, and Christie BoldColor Technology “in a compact and rugged package with a low cost of ownership for theme parks, attractions, museums, and staging and production companies.”
- New alignment technology, Christie Guardian will be demonstrated. It is designed to work with Christie Mystique to invisibly and automatically align multiple projectors. Mystique and Guardian are exclusive to Christie and are compatible with Christie Boxer and Christie Crimson projectors.
- New Christie 4K10-HS laser phosphor projector, designed to deliver 4K technology in a 1DLP® solution; equipped with Christie’s proprietary BoldColor Technology, which uses Blue + Red Laser Diode combination “for the most accurate, lifelike color reproduction and deeper blacks.” With 360-degree orientation, a small form factor, 10,000 lumens, and Christie Twist technology, the Christie 4K10-HS is described as ideal for public spaces and themed entertainment venues. The 4K10-HS is designed to be fully compatible with Christie Terra and features SDVoE connectivity so customers can send video directly to the projector. It has two expandable option slots and an integrated Camera for Auto Warp, Focus, and Zoom.

Panasonic’s InfoComm booth will include displays of the company’s latest innovative visual solutions and professional video technologies to back up its statement, “We anticipate the future, innovate continuously and integrate technologies into breakthrough solutions for our customers, to create technologies that move us toward a better life and a better world.” This will include the company’s new 4K projector and 4K professional display portfolios, along with audiovisual solutions for ‘live’ events, museum exhibitions, houses of worship, higher education, corporate offices, control room and broadcast venues and more. •••

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Creating change

InPark speaks with industry leaders taking on new challenges

interviews by Joe Kleiman, Martin Palicki and Judith Rubin

Laura Marakowits

A mega maverick

interview by Martin Palicki

A project leader with over 25 years in the global design and production of attractions and live experiences, Laura Marakowits balances creative vision, technical insight and operational efficiency. In addition to heading up TEAM, Laura works independently and she recently added Europa-Park to her diverse roster of clients.

Tell us about Themed Entertainment & Attractions Mavericks and what you do?

Themed Entertainment & Attractions Mavericks, or TEAM as we like to call it, evolved out of the joy of working with a diverse group of production professionals who all share the same holistic approach to projects, old school work ethic, integrity and outstanding sense of humor! These colleagues are The Mavericks.

We encourage ride vendors, fabrication shops, media specialists and others to expand the services they offer their clients. TEAM can easily fold into any company, offering only those services and roles required for a given project, while utilizing our client's systems for maximum transparency. A great example is a ride vendor who has a client that has asked that they deliver a full attraction – ride, theming, lighting, AV etc. Engaging TEAM will allow the ride vendor to answer this request with confidence.

You recently started working with Europa-Park. What are you doing there?

Yes, I am very excited! I get to work with the Mack Solutions Design team to realize Europa-Park's new waterpark – Rulantica! I'm show producing - supporting design with a priority focused structure, while interpreting the creative for better integration with construction.

I met Chris Lange (Creative Director, Europa-Park) several years ago through mutual friends. As the Rulantica project evolved, he felt it could benefit from my skills.



What other notable projects have you worked on?

I've had the good fortune to be involved in a variety of fun projects throughout my career - from different perspectives. Some highlights for me would include: Developed and produced the NFL's International Series Tailgate Party (London, first 3 yrs), recruited and managed the Workforce Volunteers (1,500 for production support) for the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Ceremonies, partnered with Daniel Hirsch to deliver the detailed design for Hub Zero (City Walk, Dubai), project directed four attractions at the 20th Century Fox World (Malaysia) and now Rulantica for Europa-Park.

How do you see the European and Middle East markets performing and evolving in the next few years?

We're seeing a lot of investment toward attractions development in mainland Europe right now. Parks are expanding, updating and diversifying their offerings – it's awesome! I feel more than ever that best practices are being shared and incorporated, resulting in improved guest opportunities and experiences.

For the Middle East, I have my concerns and will be curious to see how things evolve. Working globally always brings unique challenges. As business owners, or even independents, it is important that we each determine the terms by which we are willing to work, with progress milestones and payments spelled out as clearly as possible.

Much of your work has been in both sports and themed entertainment. How do you see those worlds working together or informing one another?

Actually, my work has really evolved across live entertainment, corporate events, sports marketing and themed attractions, which is why I am in such a unique position with TEAM. Regarding project management and staffing structures, there is a great deal of best practice that can be shared between live event and attractions that will result in greater efficiency and reduced costs, but it's the experience of both that informs the hows and whens, given each individual circumstance.

Concerning themed entertainment, it's my opinion that anything that can be experienced can be considered

themed entertainment. The theme may not be immediately obvious and may not be the result of an elaborate story, but it's always there.

We spend a lot of time discussing 'story' and how integral it is to the development of theme. For me, the key issue is depth of the 'story.' For an attraction that people will experience for a few minutes, we know we should develop a proper story arc to be followed throughout design development. Ideally, the audience will pick up on it and have a richer experience, but even if they don't, they should still have a good time. •

Brian Morrow

Creative reality

interview by Martin Palicki

Following a successful 12 year career at SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Brian Morrow recently launched his own company: BMorrow Productions (BMP). Based in Orlando, Brian has taken his decades of experience in the industry and is unleashing his creative prowess on a new roster of clients.

Why did you choose to launch your own company?

I have always had an entrepreneurial drive. It has manifested in many ways, but the launch of my own company is the largest expression of this passion to date. The main goal of BMP is twofold. First, it allows me to explore areas of passion inside the industry including gamification, invention, and production. Second, I can now fully jump into the creative talent pool of Orlando. There is amazing freelance talent in Orlando that I've always admired and now I'm one of the family!

What are the capabilities of BMorrow Productions?

I serve clients in three main ways: creative principle, production, and invention. There is a boom in our industry and talent is hard to find. Allowing myself the freedom to assist and support clients around the world with their visions and plans is a prime business goal. Some clients are choosing BMP to invent new product categories for the industry, others want to beef up existing creative teams to help push a project through. And some just need



straightforward attraction production leadership. There are so many interesting projects involving immersion, gamification and new ride systems that I find myself in projects I never imagined would be happening.

What did you learn from your time with SeaWorld?

I hold a special place in my heart for SeaWorld and Busch Gardens. I learned how powerful thoughtful design can be in engaging and inspiring guests. Most importantly I learned how to grow a creative studio from two people (including me) to over 14 by recruiting experienced talent and mentoring talent that just needed that one break.

Also key was setting up a structure that mixed creative talent with project teams, which proved to be a very efficient and clean way to execute projects. Even our office areas comingled engineers next to designers. It was a wonderful experience and the amount of freedom that SEA gave to the creative teams to develop attractions cannot be found in many other places.

**How are you assembling your team?
Are you looking for staff?**

I currently have a team of three working at BMP. I find and curate talent the same way I did at SeaWorld: from the ground up. Talent can be found in many genres of entertainment that applies perfectly to our theme park industry. I also take pride and passion in combining experienced talent with those that just need a chance. I truly enjoy watching teams and talent blossom. I have a few more projects that will come online in the next few weeks and we will be adding talent to support those efforts soon. And most exciting, we move into our new studio in a few months as BMP is co-sharing a space with

another small project management firm called Howes and Company.

What will the future BMP look like?

The future of BMP will mimic the future of our industry with smaller, nimble teams that are able to flex and adapt to client's needs. The future of creation in our industry will germinate from nontraditional sources and processes, you see it happening already. Guest experience models of the future lie within the intersection of invention, immersion and gamification and BMP was created to support clients to develop and deliver projects in this manner. •

Greg MacLaurin

No instructions

interview by Judith Rubin

Phil Bloom, known in the attractions industry as "the Ride Guru," has played a key role on numerous, major theme park projects over the years, including properties in Paris, Orlando, Hollywood and Osaka. In 2001 Bloom founded American Scenic Design Inc. (ASDI) which provides design and consulting services for theme parks, museums and other guest experience venues.

In addition to the creation and design of themed rides, ASDI specializes in attraction design, show set design and exhibit design.

Greg MacLaurin, a concept designer, master planner, special effects designer (and world's fair enthusiast, with encyclopedic knowledge) whose career has led him to work with some of the best companies and innovators in the business, recently joined Bloom's already impressive team at ASDI. No doubt magic is in the making in the form of new, breakthrough guest experiences. InPark caught up with Greg for an exclusive interview.

You've had every kind of employment structure in your career, it seems: freelance, consulting, big firm (Disney), smaller firm (BRC), pioneer firm (Iwerks, Art & Technology). What's the setup with American Scenic Design?

Phil Bloom's American Scenic Design is a medium-sized design firm. He's hired a really solid, experienced team of architectural/show/ride designers here. He encourages



senior and junior designers to team up and work together and meld ideas into one. ASDI is unusual in that. There's an exchange of ideas here that's freer than at any other place I've worked. And, Phil frequently talks about using our creative and technical skills simultaneously. We have to use both, and I like that.

What is ASDI offering to clients and partners in terms of services?

ASDI designs themed rides. Phil takes a client's rough, blue-sky ideas and develops them into buildable designs.

How large is the company? Are you working internationally?

American Scenic is in Pasadena, and is around 20 people. ASDI has done design for international projects: Japan, France, Holland, Dubai, China. So, yeah, everywhere.

What makes you and ASDI a good fit? What do you bring to the table, and what do you find most appealing about working at ASDI?

I was specifically hired to provide interactive design for games within lands, and devices inside queues. We've also used my skills of special effects design and concept design. The great thing about ASDI is that it's set up so that each of us can use all of our varied talents.

My role is flexible and it changes with the project. I like that Phil sees that I have a wide variety of skills. The past work I did for Joe Garlington at Imagineering on WDW's The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh queue games was important. I remember how challenging that project was; the age demographic for Winnie the Pooh is three- to six-year-old children, and it was the first time I designed devices specifically for that age. Remember, you have to design games that don't have any instructions. It was challenging and very fun.

Additionally, my skills of special effects design, concept design, and even model building (white board concept

models) have been useful here. It's been fun to get back into building some quick models of show ideas and to show the placement of proposed special effects. Phil recognizes my varied skills and lets me use them frequently. Each day I go from sketching ride layouts to building little study models of Pepper's Ghost illusions to writing story treatments for attractions. It's great.

How long have you been acquainted with Phil Bloom? Did you work on any projects together in the past?

The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man is how we all met. Spider-Man was a team of about 15 people, and Scott Trowbridge was our producer. Phil Bloom, Thierry Coup and Eric Parr were architecture/show/ride design, and I was special effects design. It was a difficult but wonderful project. •

Nol Van Genuchten

Triotech's showman

interview by Martin Palicki

Over the years Nol Van Genuchten has built an impressive entertainment industry portfolio applying his combined talents to large-scale events and experiences in unique and challenging environments.

After years with Cirque du Soleil, Nol founded Creative KAOS Management. He recently was named Vice President Creative at Triotech.

What are you responsible for at Triotech?

I lead the concept team and the media studio. As a team we develop the concepts and the media content for both the existing Triotech attractions product lines, as well as the concepts and contents for client specific projects.

Your career included time with Cirque du Soleil. How is creating attractions different from creating shows?

Although Cirque has been very present in my past, I've been fortunate that throughout my career I have touched on a large variety of projects in various fields: live shows, concert touring, brand activations, corporate and private events, hospitality, museums, television, film and commercials, experiences, festivals, etc.



It's taught me to approach a project less from the perspective of the medium, and more from the point of view of the guest. Ultimately there is no difference, because regardless of the platform used, we're always targeting the same goal: taking the guest on a journey into a different universe, telling them a compelling story, and making them experience strong emotions and sensations.

What have you learned in your first few months at Triotech?

At Triotech, just like anywhere else, it's the people that drive the success. I've landed amongst a great bunch of them and I look forward to continuing the collaboration with them in the pursuit of great rides and fun experiences.

Which technology will win: VR or 3D?

I don't see it as a battle between the technologies. It's a matter of using the right technology for the right application.

At Triotech there is a place for each of these mediums. It is up to us to create the most engaging experiences with them. •

Michael Daut

Building a bigger Mousetrappe

interview by Joe Kleiman

Michael Daut recently joined media-based experience design and production company Mousetrappe as director of business development. Previously, Michael was creative director/marketing director at Evans & Sutherland (E&S), where he'd worked since 1998. In the specialty cinema community, Michael is a familiar face and voice – he serves on the Board of the Giant Screen Cinema Association and co-chairs the GSCA Technical Committee, and is also a Board member of IMERSA. No doubt, his new role and relocation to Los Angeles will make him equally visible in themed entertainment and production circles.



What introduced you to Mousetrappe?

I first met Daren Ulmer [Mousetrappe founder and principal] three years ago, when he gave a presentation at the IMERSA Summit about Mousetrappe's specialty cinema work for the Space Shuttle Atlantis attraction at Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex. Daren and I kept in contact, which eventually led to this new working arrangement.

How would you describe Mousetrappe?

It's a very creative company with very extensive design skills, and a very fresh and smart approach.

Mousetrappe is well-known for their work on big, Disney spectacles, but have a wide variety of capabilities, and know how to give a client great value for the budget. They are a phenomenal organization that creates experiences people want. They value their people, their clients, and the end experience for the audience.

How has your past experience prepared you for your new role at Mousetrappe?

I know the industry, and I know the craft. I've built strong industry ties. I understand the grammar of production,

hands-on. My own production credits include more than 20 fulldome shows, plus a set of 4D super-widescreen presentations for a theater in China. I also co-produced an immersive dome attraction for Madame Tussauds in New York City in 2000. I understand what types of things people are working on and what they can do.

What kinds of opportunities will you pursue for Mousetrappe?

There are lots of opportunities for creativity to be applied. I'm a connector, and an exciting part of the position is to match Mousetrappe with people and vice versa who might not be aware that something spectacular is available. High quality and memorable experiences can be in all sorts of places.

This is about finding the right components to tell an immersive story, to reach out to the community and tell them what Mousetrappe can do.

How does your involvement with IMERSA and GSCA help set you up for your new role at Mousetrappe?

Both organizations have helped me learn the priorities and needs of the museum and science center communities. My involvement has helped me be able to see beyond the status quo, visualizing fresh applications for theaters, technology, and content. For example, when planetariums began converting to fulldome theaters, I realized early on that there was much more that planetariums could present than purely astronomical content.

The credo I adopted in those pioneering days of immersive dome experiences, “the dome is bigger than the planetarium,” still holds true today. That’s why one of the early fulldome shows we produced at E&S was a science-fiction “Fantastic Voyage” style race through the human body to save the life of a dying woman. “Microcosm: The Adventure Within” was a breakthrough non-astronomical show for fulldome planetariums, and it was definitely ahead of its time, but now over 15 years later, this show is still being licensed to theaters around the world.

I also realized that audiences in digital dome theaters were going to want to experience more than CGI across the immersive canvas, so E&S became a pioneer in creating a digital transfer of a 1570 film and warping it for proper projection in a dome. E&S completed the first such giant screen film transfer in 2007, and today there are more than 65 digitized films in the E&S library from giant screen producers.

My involvement in IMERSA has focused on connecting experts in various segments of immersive media production, distribution, and exhibition to share experience and knowledge to strengthen and enrich the immersive community.

We’ve heard you do some excellent theatrical voices in a light moment at conferences. Tell us more about your background and interests.

In many ways I guess you could say I grew up onstage. I am a classically trained high-baritone and was studying as a music performance major before I switched to media

communications. I also have an extensive background as an actor, and writer, producer, director of live stage productions and short films and documentaries. In St. Louis, where I grew up, I worked at a large church with a 5,000-member congregation for almost 10 years. At E&S, my production output included large-scale trade shows for the company and marketing videos. I love to experiment with new forms of storytelling and create experiences that truly engage and impact audiences emotionally.

Aren’t you something of a theme park geek?

Well that’s an understatement! I cut my teeth at Walt Disney World. This was a frequent spot for our family vacations, and growing up in St. Louis, we also frequented what was then called Six Flags Over MidAmerica. Once my wife and I got married we made an annual road trip to Orlando – and two of our three kids caught my deep love of themed entertainment.

There’s something incredible about being seamlessly transported into another world and carried through a layered sense of story that I can’t get enough of. It inspires me and recharges my batteries and keeps me young. When it works, there’s nothing quite like it. When we moved to Salt Lake City, Disneyland became our vacation destination, and we also spent countless hours at Universal Studios Hollywood, Knott’s Berry Farm, and other parks. I guess you can say I’m an EXTREME theme park geek. I’m so thrilled to have this opportunity to contribute toward immersive experiences that other families will be able to treasure for their lifetimes. •



Next Issue: EME region + waterparks

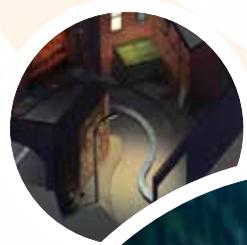
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