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ipm in park MAGAZINE

#79 • volume 15, issue 3 • 2019
www.inparkmagazine.com

Innovation horizons

WhiteWater transforms
the park experience



Also in this issue

- Popcorn Revenge debuts at Walibi Belgium
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Do what you love and love what you do

**Martin Palicki,
IPM publisher**



This past spring I had the pleasure of visiting Europa-Park in Rust, Germany. I toured the park with press representative Noel Ebhart (see photo on page 31). He gave me information about Europa-Park's origins and plans for the future, took me to several key attractions and even arranged an early morning visit to the maintenance shed for the Blue Fire Megacoaster.

We saw the maintenance staff completing their morning checks and then got to take a test ride before the park opened to the public. It was clear that Noel was every bit as much of a theme park fan as I am.

Time and again I meet people working in this industry who are not just professionals, but also enthusiasts. I think it's beneficial to an industry when the people invested in seeing it flourish are truly motivated to achieve excellence.

As my example illustrates, we typically think of folks who love roller coasters as the prime example. But people are passionate about all sorts of themed entertainment, and waterparks too. Each year at the World Waterpark Association (WWA) conference I see countless vendors and operators that truly love what they do.

When a team can harness that passion and combine it with clear vision and a sufficient budget, amazing projects emerge. In this issue, we talk about several projects that fit into that category. Europa-Park's Rulantica waterpark is one to keep an eye on. It's a showcase for how folks who love themed attractions, waterparks and attention to detail can collaborate to create something special.

Don't forget to look for copies of InPark at the fall trade shows including IAAPA Expo Europe (September 17-19 in Paris), WWA (October 7-10 at the Walt Disney World Resort) and IAAPA Expo (November 19-22 in Orlando). I'll be at all of them to, so be sure to stop me and say hi to a fellow enthusiast.



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: Perfect Day at CocoCay welcomes Royal Caribbean cruise passengers with the iconic 148-foot tall Daredevil's Tower and a full array of waterpark slides, attractions and activities. WhiteWater worked with Royal Caribbean to make the park a reality.

Full story on p. 36

Creative risks and theme park attendance

**Judith Rubin,
IPM editor**



The TEA/AECOM Theme Index comes out about the same time each year, close to the beginning of June, sharing attendance numbers for the world's most-visited theme parks, waterparks and museums. Our industry and industry watchers soak up those numbers and put them to work in various ways. Communication and media channels buzz with analysis. As the season progresses, the numbers provide context for observing the current year's performance and identifying factors for future growth and success.

While enjoying historic international expansion and growth, the attractions industry is being challenged and reshaped by rapid cultural and technological change. Staying current and relevant in the market isn't just about tech breakthroughs anymore - it's about how a technically integrated audience has shifted the perspective on everything. It is reinvestment and innovation that drive attendance, but the definition of smart reinvestment has become more complicated.

Here's a salute to our innovators! The attractions industry is at all times a creative laboratory, operating on a highly visible public platform. This issue of InPark features many examples of the visionaries, creatives, operators and investors taking creative and financial risks to build a better industry. They deserve our deep appreciation. Their R&D and their reinvestments show what works and what doesn't - ultimately measured by attendance (but don't rush to premature conclusions - the researchers behind the Theme Index know to give something new a full year of operation to prove itself). Their innovations and their successes will influence what happens next. We hope you will be inspired.

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InPark Magazine (ISSN 1553-1767) is published five times a year by Martin Chronicles Publishing, LLC. 2349 E Ohio Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53207, USA. Shipping address: 2349 E Ohio Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53207, USA. Phone: +1-262-412-7107. Printing by Johnson Press of America.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to InPark Magazine 2349 E Ohio Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53207, USA. Subscriptions are available annually for \$45 per year (\$70 international).

Opinions expressed in editorial matter are not necessarily those of InPark Magazine or its publishers, Martin Chronicles Publishing, LLC.

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Leaps and bounds

Industry professionals making moves and creating waves

interviews by Martin Palicki and Judith Rubin

Romee Popelier

On track for success

Netherlands-based Romee Popelier has helped design some of Europe's most enjoyable roller coasters through her own business, RPRides. Recently, Romee joined Replay Profs in Playgrounds to expand her design horizons. We asked her about her new job and other changes in her life.

Tell us a bit about what your business, RPRides, does.

I've always dreamed about working on the development of roller coasters. After finishing my internship at JN Entertainment & Leisure Consultancy, which represents German ride manufacturer Zierer, I got the chance to start my own company. My main business is designing roller coaster layouts.

What are some of the favorite rides you've designed?

To be honest, I love them all. Every ride that I worked on means something for me. But I think my favorite designs are the ones that have not yet been built.

You also recently started work at Replay Profs in Playgrounds. Tell us about your role there and also what the company does.

Replay Profs in Playgrounds is a company very close to my hometown, where they design, manufacture and install playgrounds for schools, municipalities, and private play areas. My main job is to make sure that every playground is certified. Just as with theme parks rides, every piece of playground equipment from small swings to big climbing devices has to be certified by an inspection body. Along with the certification part I am also doing some engineering work. When our creative team designs a new playground it's my job to make technical drawings for the workshop.

How do you think your experience in themed entertainment and attractions is helping you in this new position?

There are many similarities to the themed entertainment industry when looking into safety standards. Some rules for attractions are almost the same as for playgrounds. For example, when designing a simple slide you have to think about the minimum clearance envelope, just as with a roller coaster.

When I design a coaster or a playground in AutoCAD or Inventor it feels all the same, and all the experience that I gained from my other work helps me at Replay.



In what ways can playgrounds learn from the world of themed entertainment?

I think current Western public playgrounds are fine. But if you look at privately owned indoor or outdoor playgrounds I definitely see some opportunity. Frequently they can use some theming to differentiate some of the standardized playground equipment.

Replay isn't active in the themed entertainment industry at this moment. I would love to directly connect them with the themed entertainment industry and see where this can bring the company.

You've also been on a personal transition journey as well.

Yes, that's true. I was born as a boy, but four years ago I realized that there was something wrong. I've been going through the wildest roller coaster ride of my life the past couple of years to find out who I really am. It wasn't easy to accept that I am transgender male-to-female but since I started with the medical transition I am way happier than I ever was. Everything fell into place and challenges from my past became clear to me.

How can colleagues make this journey easier for you?

Actually, they already do! They just accept me for who I am and still see what my innate qualities are.

My biggest fear of coming out was always being afraid for the reactions from the people in the themed entertainment industry. I was already working in the roller coaster business and I thought that I could never be a woman in this "man's world." But since I came out to the industry last year during IAAPA Expo in Orlando, all the reactions and support I received from my industry friends, colleagues and clients were so wonderful. I could never have dreamed how supportive people have been and I am truly appreciative. •

-M.P.

Anthony Esparza

Diving into a new position at Carnival Cruise Line

“There’s beauty and magnificence in every aspect of the seas,” says Anthony Esparza, who recently became Chief of Guest Experiences/Vice President at Carnival Cruise Line. Anthony has focused on creating great guest experiences and using storytelling to touch hearts throughout his career. His previous roles include nearly three years as Chief Creative Officer at SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment and more than 11 years as SVP, Guest Experiences at Herschend Family Entertainment.

What are primary responsibilities of your new position?

Our group will be conceptualizing experiences for new ships, ports, and private island destinations. My mission is to supercharge our ability to create fun, memorable, and safe experiences for our guests. It’s all about creating the right systems and atmosphere for our talented teams, advisors, and partners to focus on the best ideas for our future.

How has your prior position with SeaWorld helped ready you for this new venture?

As part of the turn-around team at SeaWorld, I learned that there’s nuance in the language of the oceans. There’s beauty, magnificence, power, and awe in every aspect of the seas. That’s why the ocean is the number one vacation destination. It’s the source of smiles, laughter, romance, and curiosity. And it’s why I love encouraging people to see our world and to inspire them to not only enjoy it, but to care for it. There’s so much out there to explore and do together, and I think what we’re doing at Carnival is many times the starting gateway for many people to begin a lifetime exploring our world with their family and friends.

What are some other ways your career and experience have prepared you?

I’ve learned that a good leader should serve their teams - To be supportive, have their backs and help clear the path for them to excel. It’s tough enough to do our day-to-day jobs, and if we’re truly focused on creating fun, I need to help create an atmosphere that’s inspiring and “creatively safe” to pursue new and innovative ideas.

Bringing clarity is also important. The definition of “being creative” is more than having your pulse on the latest trends or having a great team. These are important, but nine times out of ten, the best way to innovate is to really understand the mission, stay focused, and describe all the DNA of an experience in advance of launching a new product.

How do you see the cruise business as a part of the themed entertainment universe?

It absolutely is. We’re in the business of creating compelling experiences for our guests, and we have many of the same challenges as operators of theme parks and attractions. We need to stay fresh and relevant, while maintaining a safe environment.



But the best experiences are not only those that market well, but that can also hit an emotional chord with our guests in some way. That’s the power of storytelling. We can’t just provide nicely designed environments, but must create settings to have fun, touch your heart, be charming, silly, or filled with awe. It’s very competitive and we know we need to innovate appealing experiences non-stop. So we’re constantly seeking new ideas and partners that can help us do this.

What kinds of opportunities exist within the cruise business for creatives and suppliers?

The cruise business offers a myriad of opportunities. A cruise ship is a blend of a theme park and a resort destination in one. Sometimes the experiences we create are understated and meant to bring serenity or frame a destination, and at other times, they are the center of attention. But in all cases, they require the same business strategy, master planning, conceptual development, design, production, and operational skills of individuals and companies that are able to align with our company mission and brand. Carnival Corporation is the world’s largest leisure travel company with a portfolio of global cruise lines including Holland America Line, Princess Cruises, Seabourn, and several others. There’s 102 ships visiting more than 700 ports around the world. So you can imagine, we need just about every kind of talent there is.

Tell us about the culture of the company you have joined and the people you are working closely with.

Thinking about how to enable a guest to have fun is the chief business of Carnival. We live it and breathe it as much as or more than any other entertainment operator on the planet. The heritage of focusing on fun has been strong here for decades. It’s deeply rooted. We’re the Fun Ships and we Choose Fun every day. That alignment behind our mission and vision will serve us well into the future. We have many groups here that focus on all the dimensions of how a guest can have fun. I work with Entertainment, Culinary, Retail, Shore Excursion, Operations, and Maritime experts every day. And yes, we have meetings on the ships and in exotic locations. It’s tough work. I mean...fun! •

-J.R.

John Miceli

The new DE-ŽYN Studios

Throughout his career, John Miceli has worked in feature film, special venue, music production, visual arts, technology development and IP development. He founded and ran two highly successful businesses that sold to public companies. He recently founded a new company, DE-ŽYN Studios, after departing Technomedia. We asked him about his transition and plans for the future.

You were a part of Technomedia for over 17 years. Why did you decide to move on now?

Early on in life I realized I had a creative side and an entrepreneurial mind. That inspired me to launch Technomedia and co-found Soundelux before that. I've worked with the world's best clients for three decades while leading these two successful companies. Through it all nothing beats the joy you feel being part of a great team that truly shares the same vision. Both companies were acquired by public corporations and six years after Technomedia was acquired by Mood Media, the time came for me to step down and hand the reins over to the very competent team we had assembled there. Mood was a great parent company and supported my launching DE-ŽYN Studios to continue on my journey. I'm doing the things I really want to do... there's a sort of freedom that comes at a certain point in your career, I'm lucky to be enjoying all of that now.

Are you still connected with Technomedia?

I come from a traditional Italian family from Brooklyn, NY and for us, family is precious. In business, I've always felt the same way and my bond with the people at Technomedia will never be compromised. I believe I will always have a collaborative relationship with Technomedia. Much like family, your decisions are always made for the best interest of all involved – clients, company and employees. The relentless drive and dedication to clients and their projects, a true sense of urgency, transparency and honesty and most of all respecting family were the foundation for our company culture. I'm proud of Technomedia and confident the company will continue forward, holding true to the vision that led us through 17 successful years.

What is your work philosophy?

In 1989 when it was not popular to deliver both media and technology under one roof we built our existence on that foundation. I've had the good fortune to develop projects like Carnival Dreamscape, Primark Madrid, On Air at NBC, The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, many Universal Studios attractions, The Museum of the Bible, San Manuel Casino, Planet Hollywood at Disney Springs, Hard Rock Cafe (Atlantic City being the latest) and of course St. Louis Union Station's The Grand Hall Experience, among others. These projects all share the same idea that "art and experience... immersive physical experience" drive our very best work.



I always want to keep learning and challenging myself to become better at creating and delivering unique experiences for clients and their guests. If you go in with the goal of loving what you do and continually learning and growing, you're living the perfect career.

Tell us more about DE-ŽYN's capabilities and scope of business.

The DE-ŽYN Studios team embraces a strong vision and a relentless desire to evolve, grow, change the way things are done and bust through limits. For our clients, we continue to be the innovation lab they depend on for delivering way out of the box ideas. You will see our work in casinos, theme parks, entertainment precincts, immersive/interactives, AR/VR, visitor centers/tours, museums, retail and sculptural art.

Are you working on any projects you can mention now?

We are currently working with Lodging Hospitality Management and PGAV Destinations creating two attractions for the new St. Louis Aquarium project at Union Station. We are also project managing the media and technology scopes of the other attractions in development there. We have teamed up with long-time partner Falcon's Creative on several large scale immersive projects in Saudi Arabia. We are developing the immersive AV/media experiences for a theme park in South America. We are very excited to announce some very innovative developments and we are thrilled to be launching our website soon.

Are you hiring? If so, how can people find out more information?

We are always looking for the best talent to be a part of the DE-ŽYN companies. Our website (currently in production) will be the best place to stay up to date on what we are up to. And please feel free to contact me on LinkedIn or at info@de-zyn.com. •••

-M.P.

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Issue 79.5 - IAAPA preview issue

Editorial deadline: August 23; Ad deadline: Sept 6 • Published: late October, 2019

Bonus Distribution:

- IAAPA Attractions Expo (Orlando) *November 18 - 22*

Issue 80 - IAAPA

Editorial deadline: Sept 13; Ad deadline: October 4 • Published: November 19, 2019

Bonus Distribution:

- IAAPA Attractions Expo (Orlando) *November 18 - 22*

2020

Issue 81 - The best in themed entertainment

Editorial deadline: January 17; Ad deadline: January 31 • Published: March, 2020

Bonus Distribution:

- TEA Summit (Anaheim) *April 16-17, 2020*

Issue 82 - Asia / Tech

Editorial deadline: TBD; Ad deadline: TBD • Published: June, 2020

Bonus Distribution:

- Asian Attractions Expo *June, 2020*
- InfoComm *June, 2020*

Issue 83 - EME / Waterparks

Editorial deadline: TBD; Ad deadline: TBD • Published: September, 2020

Bonus Distribution:

- Euro Attractions Show *September 2020*
- World Waterpark Association *October 2020*

Issue 84 - IAAPA preview issue

Editorial deadline: TBD; Ad deadline: TBD • Published: late October, 2020

Bonus Distribution:

- IAAPA Attractions Expo (Orlando) *November 2020*

Issue 85 - IAAPA

Editorial deadline: TBD; Ad deadline: TBD • Published: November 17, 2020

Bonus Distribution:

- IAAPA Attractions Expo (Orlando) *November 2020*

Try a drop of this

Ten innovative technologies for water attractions

by Freddy Martin

A veritable tide of versatile technologies has triggered a deluge of creative and operational advancements in waterparks and wet attractions, offering operators and designers new options for improving guest experience and safety. Based on conversations with leaders in the field, we identified ten wet technologies currently making waves in themed entertainment.

As we dive in, we keep in mind that the motive is to help people connect in deep and meaningful ways at visitor attractions. As one of our experts, Denise Chapman Weston, Director of Imagination and Inventor, Infinite Kingdoms, said, “The park should become this place where you can play and engage in ways you never could do at home. That’s the real joy of using technology, not the technology itself.”

1. RFID wearables

RFID chips embedded in wearable, waterproof devices offer freedom, security and convenience, enabling guests in bathing suits to spend money on food, beverages and souvenirs without a visit to the locker. The benefits for both operators and guests can be significant.

“We’re seeing companies provide products that interface with all the ticketing and payment companies, in all the turnstiles and all the lockers,” said Michael Turner, Vice President of Global

Business Development at The Producers Group. “They’re able to track guest movements and ridership, providing insight into park throughputs and visitor flow.”

Universal’s Volcano Bay waterpark opened with their TapuTapu™ system, which offers virtual queuing to all slides in the park. This allows guests to spend more of their vacation relaxing and playing than waiting in line. Volcano Bay was honored with a TEA Thea Award in 2019.

As RFID technology matures, parks are exploring greater opportunities for guest interactivity, tracking, and management. “By having real-time access to more accurate data and guest profile information,” said Nick Neuman, CEO at Water Technology Inc., “we can better customize water ride and attractions experiences for different ages and experience levels. As a waterpark designer, this creates an entirely new dimension to explore within water attraction development.”

2. Regenerative media filtration

The sustainability of water-based attractions is rooted in their ability to store, clean, and reuse water. Eco-friendly technologies are necessary to maximize water usage while creating a clean and healthy environment for guests.



Guests at Universal’s Volcano Bay use RFID enabled TapuTapu wristbands to activate fountains and effects. Photo courtesy of Universal Orlando



Polin's Slide'N Touch combines a waterslide with an interactive game. Image courtesy of Polin Waterparks

Waterparks have high public visibility and are therefore vulnerable to criticism about their water usage. But, says Turner, “Compared to other industries that use a lot of water, waterparks are actually positioned to conserve water rather than waste it.”

Regenerative Media Filtration (RMF) is not new technology, but it is considered the industry standard for the removal of suspended particles of dirt, oil, and other contamination in high-bather-load water attractions. RMF filters use materials derived from volcanic rock which is far more efficient and effective for removing contaminants. A single pass through RMF filters captures the smallest particles, including many disease-causing microorganisms. The efficiency and effectiveness of RMF filtration results in significant reduction in wastewater, chemical treatment, and energy used for heating and pumping.

3. UV disinfection

While chlorine treatment remains the most effective method for sterilizing water, it is a harsh chemical and hazardous if not properly handled. “With UV sterilization that danger is virtually removed,” said Turner. Water passes under a spectrum of UV wavelengths killing microbes and bacteria and neutralizing the harmful chemical by-products of chlorine use. Even the chlorine-resistant germ *Cryptosporidium* can't survive UV treatment. UV disinfection does not completely eliminate the need for chlorine treatment, but it does significantly reduce its use.

4. Gamification

“Five years ago, a slide was a slide,” said Michael Turner. “Guests want something different now. Gamified slides make it really exciting for the guests to ride over and over again.”

Ride makers are now including gaming technology in slides to create a sense of competition, camaraderie, and excitement, encouraging repeat ridership and repeat visitation. In some, like Slide'N Touch from Polin Waterparks, riders tap LED light panels to earn points and achievements as they speed through

tubes.

In others, such as Slideboarding (from WhiteWater, honored in 2018 with a TEA Thea Award for technology) controls are built into the ride vehicle. Guests gain points by tapping the buttons according to cues in the slide. Integration with visitor management technologies encourages riders to keep record of their high scores from past visits and build upon their success in the future.

Others are integrating VR and AR technologies into slide experiences. Guests can splash down into virtual worlds while wearing waterproof VR headsets. The motion of the slide combined with timed visuals creates a unique sensation, all while targeting achievements inside the virtual environment.

Submersible VR headsets are also kicking off a wave of visually enhanced snorkeling experiences and underwater simulators that are pushing the limits of waterpark gaming.

5. LIM propulsion

It wasn't too long ago that waterslides depended on gravity for their momentum, and inevitably headed down. Engineers began adding strong water jets, speed belts, and magnetic propulsion to add ups to the downs. Today, we have Linear Induction Motor (LIM) technology taking water coasters up, up, up!

“LIM propulsion really gives the sensation that you're defying gravity, which is what everybody wants,” said Chris Lange, Creative Director and Consultant on various international LBE projects including Europa-Park's new water theme park, Rulantica [See page 30]. “I think that technology will keep getting smoother and smoother as it develops.”

Linear Induction Motors produce a magnetic field between the motor and a metal plate built into the raft to propel riders up and over hills. LIM technology is touted as giving operators exceptional control over vehicle position and speed. A prominent

example is at Universal's Volcano Bay: riders launch uphill seven thrilling times in Krakatau Aqua Coaster, a custom LIM water coaster provided by ProSlide, based on its "Hydromagnetic Rocket."

6. Electromagnetic control

Electromagnetic control is also turning the tide for higher capacity boat rides, with a strong recent example being the ride control system used in the Pirates of the Caribbean attraction at Shanghai Disneyland (another recent TEA Thea Award recipient). Boat rides have generally depended on water jets to propel boats through narrow channels; electromagnetic control technology, however, allows for programmable control of each boat's position, speed, and orientation. Show effects, dialog, and music cues can be timed precisely to a boat's position, and control over boat spacing makes it possible to isolate boats within scenes giving riders a secluded experience.

"What really excites me is feeling the boat react to the action of the story, perfectly timed to the music," said Lange. "You speed up and slow down perfectly and that really is like magic." According to Lange, Mack Rides "is developing and prototyping a completely different system for a boat ride that gives you even more flexibility and precise control over the boat; I think we will see them being used much more in the future."

7. Remote lighting

As AV technologies advance, park visitors increasingly expect more sophisticated sensory experiences. For waterparks, however, electrical equipment such as lights, lasers, and projectors introduce a safety challenge when used in proximity to water.

"One thing I learned while I was working on aquariums at Sea Life for Merlin, was that 'water will find a way,'" said Lange. "It's crazy how water is always a little unpredictable. So using high voltage equipment in water, underwater, next to water, is really tricky."



Guests riding Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure at Shanghai Disneyland are riding in complex electromagnetically controlled ride vehicles in water. Photo ©Disney

Water attraction designers use technologies such as fiberoptic illuminators or laser projectors to safely bring technology effects closer to the water. Fiberoptic cable can port bright and colorful lighting effects right up to the water's edge while the illuminator unit, the only electrical component of the system, can be operated at a safe distance. Laser projectors are reliable, accurate, and bright enough to be installed at great distances, far from where they can cause or be subject to damage.

"There are some really fantastic technology groups progressing the development of different systems to help achieve this next level of storytelling experience with water attractions," said Neuman. "Introducing complex storytelling and theming within water attractions has created massive opportunities to make each trip to the waterpark unique, be it through music, sound effects, projection, 3D mapping, or special effects."

8. RGB LED lighting

RGB LEDs continue to revolutionize the ways in which people illuminate shows and environments. The color range and flexibility of LED systems gives waterpark operators unlimited control over underwater lighting, for both show effects and safety.

For safety reasons, it's important to have good lighting in a waterpark's wave pool, and to have high visibility for lifeguards. But, "nobody wants a bright, shining wave tank, especially in an indoor environment where it reflects off the ceiling," says Lange. "Now we can play with the underwater lights to fit a certain mood or theme or we can adjust it according to the weather or time of day, or the situation."

The increased availability and decreasing costs of LEDs and fountain technology also provide better opportunities for smaller operators to create compelling water shows and effects to dazzle and delight their visitors.

9. New waves in wave technology

Competition in wave pool technology drives innovation - thanks to the popularity of surfing - and sends ripples through the waterpark industry. The resulting designs and prototypes are as diverse and daring as the adventurous athletes who test them. One or more of these could one day be adopted at a waterpark near you!

- Kelly Slater's Surf Ranch (California) prototype is a 2,000-foot-long pool with underwater hydrofoils propelled by a freight train-sized vehicle cruising down a track. The six-foot waves it generates are hyper-smooth, glassy barrels.
- The Cove by Wavegarden (Spain) is a diamond-shaped wave pool that delivers up to 1,000 programmable waves per hour. The ability to model size and shape allows athletes training opportunities unavailable in the ocean.

Tomorrow's wet techs

3D printing: rethinking materials and construction

Aggressive chlorine use and the gases it releases into the air are notoriously corrosive. Parks and suppliers are exploring a new world of creative possibilities that can help counter this challenge by rethinking the materials used for construction, theming, and attractions. And the increased use of 3D printing technology has opened up new options for engineering components that are long-lasting and corrosion-resistant – and may well lead to more comprehensive, large-scale applications that change the way facilities are constructed.

Said Christopher Foster, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at COST of Wisconsin, “We recommend materials for this environment – especially indoor facilities - that minimize maintenance costs and maintain good aesthetic appearance over long periods of time.”

“Mechanical effects and animated figures don’t need to be made from marine steel anymore,” said Lange. “3D printed mechanical parts made out of plastic or other new materials will make it possible to achieve cool new effects that support the storyline without using steel that rusts away.”

Energy conservation

Weston poses an interesting question that her firm has embraced as a challenge. “But what if we generated energy on our own? What if the attraction actually powered itself?”

Many parks strive to be part of the energy solution by integrating solar, wind, and hydro into their operations. The kinetic nature of waterpark environments can inspire parks to introduce energy generating technology in creative ways.

“We are working toward harnessing play as a ‘natural resource’ for powering some of our attractions,” said Weston. “Our latest inventions, which we’re calling ‘DNA,’ part of the Impact Attractions Series, are these unusual new play experiences for waterparks that are not only zero-net energy consumers, but actually give back to the grid.”

RFID alternatives

Some innovators are looking at RFID alternatives for visitor management. The new frontier may be to



Trees fabricated by Cost of Wisconsin become part of the water playscape at Lost Island Waterpark. Photo courtesy of Lost Island Waterpark

ditch the wearables and make use of image or object tracking. “In waterparks, we commonly think that wearable, embedded technology is the way to go,” said Weston. “But we’re banking on a future where we won’t need that. By simply showing up and registering for the experience, guests will have access to all of the benefits the technology has to offer. We will have the ability to virtually recognize specific guests on sight and to curate really cool, interactive experiences for them with more trackability and less friction.”

Social media solutions

One challenge waterparks face with technology is the selfie paradox. When guests stow their phones in lockers, they separate themselves from social media for the day and cut off one of today’s most valuable park promotion opportunities – the selfie. Neuman said, “There is a significant relevance for owners and operators to be able to tap into these networks for promotion and advertising. Waterpark users desire to capture dynamic memories and share them among their friends and families in real time. As designers we are looking to capitalize on that desire by providing platforms for it to be memorialized online.” •



The very first installation of SlideWheel was at Chimelong Water Park, shown here. It slowly rotates to move rafts through the slide. At night a special lighting package makes the attraction dazzle. *Photo courtesy of Chimelong*

- PerfectSwell (Texas) uses air pressure to generate ocean-like swells for a natural surfing experience. The waves aren't as cleanly defined as others, but their rough texture is more like the ocean to help inlanders prep for the real deal.
- Surf Lakes (Australia) is a 1400-ton, buoy-shaped plunger that is like something out of Waterworld. Its massive body plunges down and up in the water generating concentric circles that break like real waves for dozens of surfers at a time.

10. SlideWheel

A list of revolutionary water attraction technologies wouldn't be complete without the SlideWheel, the world's first rotating water slide, honored with the IAAPA Impact Award & Brass Ring for Best New Product, the WWA Leading Edge Award, and a TEA Thea Award in 2019. The outrageous design is part Ferris wheel and part waterslide, and creates a visual spectacle by day and night in addition to the thrill of the ride.

Like all new technologies, it had to be built and tested as proof of concept. "To be honest, when the prototype was built and we did the first tests, nobody knew if it would really work," said

Rainer Maelzer, formerly of weigand.maelzer, the developer of the attraction. "We tested it with dummies. We had cameras in there with them and we said, 'Hey, it could work!' It wasn't until it was completely built that we could really know."

In June 2019, Canadian firm WhiteWater gained exclusive licensing rights to SlideWheel. from weigand.maelzer (now weigand.waterrides) [See feature on WhiteWater in this issue, page 36]. The first SlideWheel opened in Guangzhou, China at Chimelong in 2018, and the second will open soon at Aquapark Reda, in Poland. ••



Freddy Martin (freddy@themedattraction.com) is a writer, storyteller, and independent consultant. He began his theme park voyage as a skipper on the Jungle Cruise at Disneyland. Freddy co-hosts the Themed Attraction Podcast with Mel McGowan of Storyland Studios, and is a regular contributor to InPark as well as ThemedAttraction.com. He also blogs at FreddyMartin.net.



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IAAPA leadership kick off the opening of the Expo with special guests Minnie & Mickey Mouse.

Inside IAAPA Expo Asia

Over 11,000 showed up in Shanghai for IAAPA's premier event in Asia

by Martin Palicki

IAAPA Expo Asia 2019 (formerly called IAAPA Asian Attractions Expo) opened with VP of Asia Pacific Operations June Ko dressed as a flight attendant (shades of her former career) welcoming attendees to the Expo and advising everyone to keep their phones, tablets and electronics *in* transmit mode to share everything that was going to happen that week. Later, IAAPA CEO Hal McEvoy and Board Chairman David Rosenberg of Monterey Bay Aquarium welcomed guests to the largest (to date) IAAPA Expo Asia with over 400 exhibitors, 100 of them exhibiting for the first time.

“This region is rich in culture and imagination, and I love how this expo brings together people from all over the world,” said Rosenberg. “What I find exciting is how the expo provides a space for innovation and sharing of ideas to happen. Those connections seem to be increasing every year.”

Ko credits the show's success to a robust market in the Asia Pacific region, particularly China. “The middle class

is still expanding in China and the tourism/attractions industries have responded well to the market in the past few years,” said Ko. “All indicators say there is still opportunity to be had here and I see growth continuing in the entire region, with more investments continuing to be made.”

While the show had a successful turnout with over 11,000 attendees, the energy at the event was more calm than in the past. Frenzied speculation seems to have given way to stability in the marketplace. While deals and new projects were apparent, the pace felt more realistic, with most people agreeing that more sustainable projects are better for everyone in the industry.

“Our pre-arranged business meetings have been high quality and taken good advantage of our on-site booth,” said Triotech's vice president of marketing, Christian Martin. “IAAPA does a good job producing shows. We consider this show a success for us.”

Many other companies made announcements and released news during the Expo. Here are some of the highlights:

WhiteWater

WhiteWater announced that Rainer Maelzer has joined the WhiteWater team as a consultant. He brings with him the exclusive rights to the SlideWheel product, which has been honored with several awards, including a TEA Thea Award earlier this year. WhiteWater also highlighted the recent opening of their Spinning Rapids ride at Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park (which IAAPA attendees experienced during the IAAPA Expo Asia Opening Party). Legacy Entertainment CEO Taylor Jeffs, who helped design Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park, first rode

a spinning rapids ride at Parc Astérix and knew one would be a success at Haichang. “The spinning rapids ride at Haichang is a monster,” said Jeffs. “It is almost a kilometer long, includes four lift hills and features WhiteWater’s iconic Manta element to the ride. WhiteWater took their spinning rapids ride and made it even better.” [See cover feature story on page 36.]

Elsewhere in China, WhiteWater has several projects opening in 2019 including OCT Nanjing Playa Maya Waterpark, Wuxi Sunac Land, Wuxi Sunac Water World and Guangzhou Sunac Water World. Additionally, three Shoot the Chute attractions are scheduled to open in China in 2020.

In the US, Island H2O Live! is now open with WhiteWater’s new Vantage system installed. Vantage allows guests the opportunity to better plan their day at the park and centralizes park services for guests. For operators it offers a suite of data and information to help optimize their planning and operations.

Dynamic Attractions

CEO of Dynamic Attractions Guy Nelson signed a multi-park agreement during the trade show with Fu ShuQuan, Chairman of Jialong Tourism Group. Dynamic will provide up to nine key ride systems for new parks still under development.

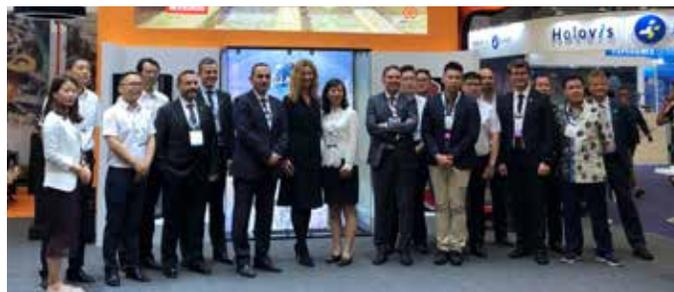
“We’re pleased that [Jialong Parks] have asked us to provide the marquee attractions at each of their inaugural theme parks across China,” said Hao Wang, President and COO for Dynamic Attractions. “We are motivated by creating rides that ‘wow’ park operators as much as their guests.”

“Every Jialong Park is designed to provide exceptional experiences for guests,” said Fu ShuQuan. “Our rides and attractions will have a level of sophistication, technology and entertainment that is unlike anything ever seen before in these regions.”

Jialong Parks is planning properties in Chengdu, Beijing, Qin Huangdao, Fujian and Hainan.



Holovis creative director Peter Cliff demonstrated the Holovis Cave during an open house Holovis hosted during the Expo.



Polin Waterparks and MCC Group announced a new partnership during IAAPA Expo Asia.

Holovis

Holovis’ recently opened innovation center in Shanghai played host to guests during the Expo. Covering five floors of office space, the new building allows Holovis, along with their partner KingJoy, to expand their presence in China. On display during the event was a haunted house VR experience, a Magic Mirror screen that allowed guests to play virtual dress-up, and Holovis’ 3D cave environment, created for designers to explore attraction space concepts before they are built. Amidst the offices and conference rooms, the building also houses a secret karaoke bar, complete with projected animations that react to how impressively and accurately a person sings.

Polin

Polin Waterparks announced a partnership with MCC Group to help build the MCC Kunming Rainforest, Indoro Snowpark and Adventure Park in Kunming (Yunnan province of China). Covering 4,500 acres and opening in 2022, the project is designed to be constructed in three parts. Part one will include an indoor snow park focusing on heavily themed sports attractions. The second part will include a tropical rainforest waterpark, with slides and attractions provided by Polin. Part three will center around an adventure park for more thrill-oriented visitors.

Birket Engineering

Birket Engineering launched their inThrall hands-free captioning devices (featuring Disney Sync Link® technology). Designed to be used with off-the-shelf glasses from Epson, caption texts are sent wirelessly from an Alcorn McBride media server and show control system to a small receiver worn around the user’s neck. The glasses, connected to the receiver, display the text in the user’s field of vision, no matter which direction they are looking.

Disney originally developed the technology for use in its theme parks, and Birket’s display included examples from several Orlando theme park attractions. But Disney would like to see the adaptive device be more widely used, and licensed the technology to Birket to integrate into a turnkey system that could be dropped into a variety of situations, such as national parks or stand-alone visitor attractions. While the technology will likely continue to shrink and be easier to use over time, it’s an important step in utilizing technology to create more inclusive experiences for all guests. •••

STORYBOARDS & DRAGONS



Awakening the Eight Immortals in China

by Gene Jeffers

A swirl of copper and light, the Qing Show Theatre rises from Starlight Island in Qingdao, China. Built for one purpose and one purpose only, its 1,500 seats focus guests' attention on a 50-meter-wide (165 foot) stage backed by a 15-meter-high (50 foot) projection screen. Here, for the next 10 years, a full spectrum of performers, lights, water features, lasers and special effects will daily bring to life the action-packed story, "Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea."

The "Eight Immortals" show is the keystone attraction of a tourism strategy for the Oriental Movie Metropolis, a 400-hectare (1,000 acre) development of Sunac China Holdings Ltd. It is a massive complex of sound stages, facilities and resort properties intended to become the new Hollywood of Asia. The complex includes 30 film stages equipped to the highest standards for domestic and international productions. To date more than 100 full-length films have been produced on the property, including "The Great Wall" and "Pacific Rim: Uprising." Eight billion Euros have been invested to construct the metropolis and to attract filmmakers and tourists to Qingdao City, a major commercial port on the Yellow Sea with 10 million inhabitants that was, until now, perhaps best known as the birthplace of Tsingtao Beer.

The eight immortal beings whose adventures are recounted in this epic tale represent archetypes within traditional Chinese society, each applying their unique strength as they work together to cross the sea. Along the way they encounter armies loyal to dragons and a variety of obstacles and must work together to succeed in their quest. It is an ancient saga of success and setback, of combat and collaboration.

As old as the story itself is, the seeds for this new and immersive presentation go back only a few decades to a young dreamer from faraway Belgium. As a five-year-old, the show's creative director, Luc Petit, built miniature circuses filled with characters and stories, movement and color. Even then, he fantasized about creating spectacles and events that would touch audiences, awaken their dreams.

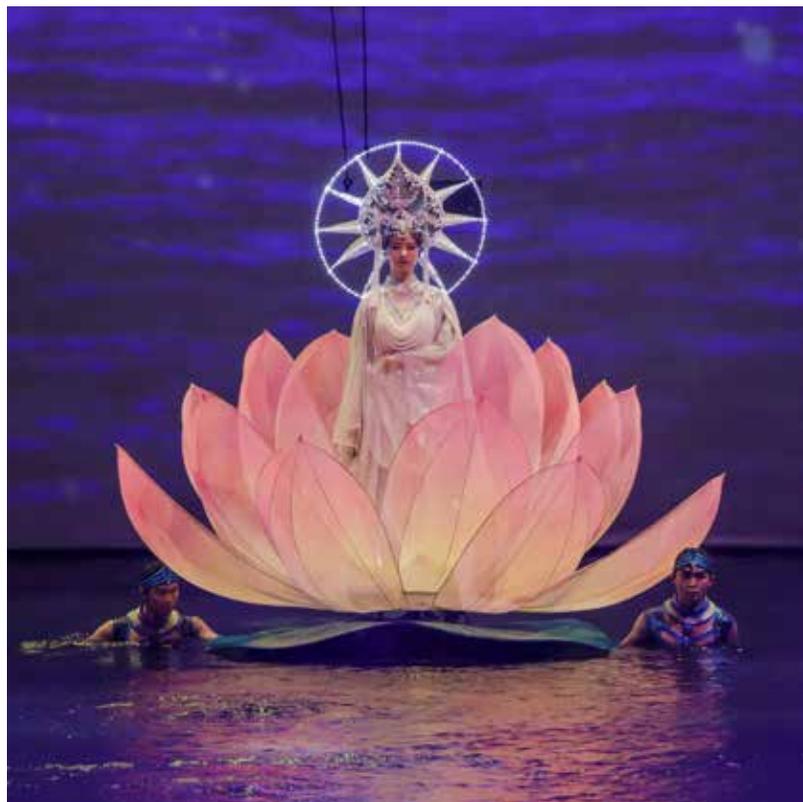
As time passed and his interest grew, Petit pursued training in film and production at the Institut des arts de diffusion (IAD) in Louvain-La-Neuve. Launching an audiovisual media career in the 1990s, he soon found himself working with bigger names and larger audiences. Musician Jean-Michel Jarre asked him to shoot the making of a mega-concert for 2 million spectators at La Défense in Paris. He directed actor Gerard Depardieu in a public service campaign on Down syndrome. He collaborated for

ten years with Franco Dragone, another Belgium-based director, staging Cirque du Soleil and other spectaculars in America, Europe and Macau. Every experience, every production helped to hone and focus his aesthetic vision and directorial skillset.

"I have always dreamed of creating dreams," Mr. Petit explains. "I love starting from nothing and producing a show with a team of people who grab onto my ideas and overcome every obstacle to see them through. I hunger for that moment when my team builds everything I have dreamed, and we give it to the public."

In 2010, Mr. Petit formed Luc Petit CREATION (LPC) to offer clients design and implementation of tailor-made shows and events. Since the formation of LPC, the team has created a number of memorable productions, including "Decrocher la lune VI" (literally "Unhook the moon," metaphorically "Reach for the stars"), which received a TEA Thea Award in 2017; "Peter Pan: The Never-ending Story," a reinvention of that favorite story delivered to audiences around the world; "Inferno," a reenactment of the Battle of Waterloo. Together with his team, Mr. Petit has never backed down from a difficult concept or a demanding schedule.

Four years ago, LPC won the bid to interpret the ancient Chinese tale of "Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea" within a semi-aquatic venue that would be built to his specifications. Firmly anchored in the poetics of Western spectacle, Mr. Petit had to take a dive deep into Chinese culture and a production paradigm that would overlay the ephemeral with timelessness, the ancient with the modern. He emphasizes the responsibilities he has when interpreting a classic, revered tale for an audience primarily not



The Qing Show Theater in Qingdao, China is home for the next ten years to the show "Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea," produced by Belgium-based Luc Petit Creation.
All photos courtesy of Luc Petit Creation.



Eight Immortals relies on a talented cast, along with detailed sets and the latest in technology.

of his own culture and background. “This was a crazy challenge with a crazy deadline,” he acknowledges.

“Because the Oriental Movie Metropolis is a place for making films, we needed to create a cinematic-style spectacle,” Mr. Petit explains. “Not a circus spectacle or a dance spectacle, nor one about magic or combat. It is all of those and more. Everything was storyboarded like a movie even though we were creating a live performance that would be performed daily for years.”

Perhaps more daunting for Mr. Petit was the audience’s familiarity with and reverence for the characters and their story. “We were addressing a very Chinese story,” he notes. “Each character has been created within Chinese legends; each represents a typical role within Chinese society.”

Grateful the client chose LPC for the project, he adds, “We were very honored that they entrusted this story to a foreigner. It is not my culture, so I had to pay very close attention to the symbolic and mythic details. I had to protect the Chinese sensitivities and, at the same time, transport the audience somewhere high, somewhere new.” Everything held meaning: color palettes and costumes; the meanings and subtexts of wind, water, fire and earth; the style of portraying each character as part of a whole and yet uniquely distinct.

“I could not present this story the way a Chinese director would,” he says. “It was very rewarding to see the Chinese appreciate how well we explained their story. Because the story of the Eight Immortals is so well known, we were constrained by its familiarity. My role as creative director was at times more like a conductor working with a known piece. Yes, we could add and adapt scenes, but the sequences and characters were fixed.” This sequential specificity is different from most other live action shows. “In a Cirque du Soleil show, you can move scenes within the sequence, but not in this case. We could change the technical presentation, but Scene Eight could not replace Scene Three, for example,” he notes.

Mr. Petit’s concept of what a story is and what it should be about had to be adjusted to this culture. “The Eight Immortals is not like a classic European fairy tale or a Disney story. Yes, there are action and conflict. In this story, as the immortals cross the sea, they awaken dragons. There is a lot of action and many battles, but they are gentle battles, never nasty, never violent. Not at all like in Western stories. In China, for example, dragons are good, they are not evil.”

Every aspect of the project required the LPC team to adapt and improvise. “Much as in the tale itself, we had our own ‘dragons’ to overcome,” Mr. Petit remarks. “Working with a very different culture is quite complicated. We were confronted with very

different mindsets and ways of working together. At times we were like the characters in the show, running into obstacles that had to be resolved, battling to make sure we delivered this project on time. It's true, we were working in parallel with the story we were building."

"First, we had to design the theater and stage on which the show would take place. We had to work from a show concept with water and changing scenic elements, develop a platform that had not existed before," he explains. "This is one of the few theaters with a purpose-built permanent set. Only this show can run in this theater."

From the start, challenges delayed the construction of the 220 million Euro venue. "Our show production team was amazing," Mr. Petit recalls. "They installed and rehearsed in hardhats for months alongside construction workers in the unfinished theater. Fortunately, every scene was storyboarded, so we were able to adapt and proceed out of sequence, using what was available day by day."

The LPC team also faced cultural and language challenges, worked through translators to develop a common vocabulary for choreography routines, fight sequences and lighting changes. They built an understanding of the role colors play in Chinese iconography as each of the eight characters came with a unique palette, each dragon world had its own hue.

"Everyone worried we would not make the opening date," recalls Mr. Petit. "But I told them if we work together, we can make it happen. We've put on major shows in the past with as little as three days on site. We have to work that same way to make this show happen."

On the opening night, water screens and projection mapping flexed colors and shapes, dragons, and laser battles. Radio-controlled turtle and crane drones ghosted above the audience. Warriors and acrobats flew across the stage with stretched bungees in the service of advancing the eight immortals along their storied course across the sea -- all to the delight of the audience.

There were elements of the unexpected in store for the LPC team. "Sunac originally said the show would be for adults," says Mr. Petit. While most younger Chinese were aware of the eight immortals, relatively few would know many details of their story. "I designed a program I would enjoy watching as an adult," he adds, "and so it was a surprise when we saw at the first performances that at least half the audience were children. Most heartening was to see how the show brought generations together, to watch Chinese parents explain details about the eight immortals to their children."

LPC's job of designing and creating the Qing Show being complete, the team has now stepped away. "We produced the

Top left: Luc Petit speaks at the premiere of the Eight Immortals show. Top right and below: Actors bring the story to life.

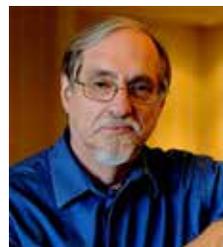




The Eight Immortals show takes place in front of a 50-foot tall and 165-foot wide projection screen.

show and have transferred it to a Chinese team to run for its duration,” Mr. Petit says. “We trained them, explained how to run the show, and now it is up to them to operate it. This is a good thing. They will learn so much from the experience of operating a complex, demanding spectacle. For us, it is on to the next crazy challenge.”

That project will no doubt raise more obstacles and dragons to be overcome. The team is ready. It is no accident the photo of the LPC team on their website has them all looking up, reaching for the stars, searching for innovative ways to unhook the moon and immerse a new audience in their creative director’s next dream. •••



Following his retirement several years ago as TEA Executive Director, Gene Jeffers is currently serving as Board chair for the San Gabriel Pomona Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross and is a Board Member of the Historical Novel Society. He was recently invited to and attended the Tucson Literary Festival’s Master Class; is writing an historical novel and a series of short memoirs about growing up in the Congo; and is drafting a research article based on a survey he conducted about perceived success factor differences between theme park designers/builders and theme park operators worldwide. Gene and his wife, Carol (also a writer) travel often, and enjoy their two daughters and three grandchildren. More at [www. OurWriteHouse.com](http://www.OurWriteHouse.com).



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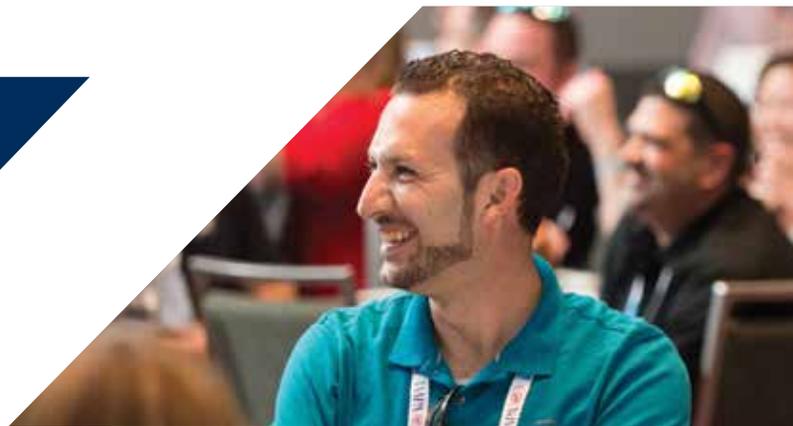
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AV evolution

InfoComm 2019 Orlando

by Judith Rubin

InfoComm 2019 took place in June in Orlando. The show alternates between Orlando and Las Vegas. The official report from the organizers states that by show's end, InfoComm 2019 counted 44,129 registered attendees, of which 37 percent were attending for the first time and 18 percent traveled to the show from 117 countries outside the U.S. There were nearly 950 exhibitors, and the industry remains vital with more than 40 percent of registered attendees under age 40. InfoComm 2019 was sponsored by Presenting Show Partner Samsung, Strategic Show Partners Blackmagic Design and Crestron, and Supporting Show Partners Epson and Maxell Corp. of America. InfoComm is the largest technology exhibition and conference in North America focused on the pro-AV industry. InfoComm is part of a global alliance of trade shows, produced by AVIXA and its partners, including Integrated Systems Europe, Beijing InfoComm China, Chengdu InfoComm China, InfoComm India, InfoComm Southeast Asia, InfoComm Brasil, InfoComm Colombia, InfoComm México, Integrated Systems Russia, and Integrate.

Medialon and 7thSense close the deal

Medialon recently became part of the 7thSense Design family. Matt Barton, CEO of 7thSense Design, a leading manufacturer of media servers for high-end AV applications, is now also CEO and part of the new Medialon ownership team - a leading provider of show control software for entertainment applications. Eric Cantrell, VP Business Operations, Medialon, has been the face of Medialon since 2008 and continues in that role. This marked the departure of Medialon from Barco, which had acquired the show control provider in 2016.

Adam Neale, a founder and prior owner of 7thSense, has returned to the fold to be a part owner of Medialon, which is taking the form of a sister company to 7thSense. The Medialon name is seen as an asset and will be preserved. "It's a recognized and respected name within the industry," said Barton. "We want to make sure people know there is separation there, while building on the complementary element of our two product lines."

Since the initial announcement in June, the alliance has been very well received by the professional community, according to Cantrell and Barton, who referred to the new arrangement as "a natural fit."

Cantrell characterized it as a progression with benefits for all parties. "Our joining Barco helped refocus them in themed



7thSense's Matt Barton and Medialon's Eric Cantrell.
Photo by Judith Rubin

entertainment markets, and they are continuing to serve those markets with projection and image processing products," he said. Moreover, "Barco helped us approach a broader audience, which deepened our connection to themed entertainment. Medialon will now have more agility and freedom to adapt to the niche needs of themed entertainment."

The three companies have much history together. Barton related that the 7thSense founders worked with Barco previously in flight simulation, and that the two companies held a soccer match in 2001. Over the years, Barton and Cantrell, and their respective companies have "run into each other a lot," as Barton put it - sometimes on Twitter, as Cantrell is an active participant in a Sunday morning Tweetup, #AVinTheAM. Both are active within the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) as sponsors and volunteers. Barton is currently President of the TEA Europe & Middle East Division Board, and Medialon is Storytelling sponsor of the 2019 TEA SATE - Seattle conference.

Meanwhile, in the 7thSense booth at InfoComm 2019, attendees could test out a demo of the latest iteration of Medialon Manager (version 7, appropriately enough). According to Cantrell, key features include enhanced compatibility with Windows 10, and improvements to the workflow that shorten show programming time. It will begin shipping in fall. And 7thSense recently introduced Juggler, a pixel processor to complement its standard-setting Delta Media Server line. Juggler received a "Best of ISE" rAve Award in February 2019.

What's next? "The creative sparks are flying," said Cantrell. The new Medialon team is committed to business as usual as they continue to develop the product range, provide ongoing customer training and support, and engage in a six-month "listening phase" as the new roadmap takes shape.

Christie's year of innovation

We toured the Christie showcase at InfoComm 2019 in company with Larry Paul (Executive Director - Technology and Custom Solutions Enterprise and Entertainment), Mike Garrido (Senior Product Manager) and Deborah Noon (PR Specialist). Christie's display array included some recently rolled-out, high-profile products that InPark recently reported on in depth: the two stars of the new RGB laser projector line - the Mirage SST (showing at InfoComm for the first time) and the D4K40-RGB - and the new MicroTiles LED (also for the first time at InfoComm). [See "Screens to fill, markets to disrupt," InPark #77, and "Everything is under octrol," InPark #78 as well as the planetarium feature story on page 50 of this issue.] The RGB laser projectors and MicroTiles LED are both second-generation improvements of innovative products. Garrido and Paul emphasized that the company takes pains to keep consistency among its product lines, ensuring compatibility with Christie's Guardian and Mystique software, and that the RGB projectors use the same lenses as Christie Boxers.

Not everything AV need be high-end laser or LED. Also being shown to the industry for the first time was a new product on preview: Christie's new LCD panels, with a "razor-narrow" bezel of just .88 mm. Christie's "value video wall," the Core Series LED was also on display, new to InfoComm in 2019. As Garrido pointed out, the company continues to manufacture and support the popular and robust Boxer projectors. And at InfoComm 2019, Christie introduced the next generation of its Roadie family of projectors, the Roadie 4K40-RGB, an all-in-one laser solution touted as road-ready, rugged and reliable.

Garrido indicated that this steady flow of new products is driven by global competition and demand. "This is a year of innovation for the entertainment group," he said.

"Christie has made a deep R&D investment, learning along the way to create unique solutions that answer and anticipate market



Christie's Larry Paul shows off the latest MicroTiles LED.
Photo by Judith Rubin



Alcorn McBride's booth at InfoComm 2019
Photo courtesy of Alcorn McBride

needs," said Paul. "Our dialog with creative partners is essential. We stay very close to our long-term customers to understand how they really use the products, striving for whole solutions."

Alcorn McBride and the Geekout

On the InfoComm show floor at the booth of Alcorn McBride Inc., Hunter Olson, Director of Product Development, showed us products featured for 2019, for themed entertainment markets. RidePlayer is an onboard, 16-channel audio player with show control that, said Olson, "provides a fully digital networked audio system on the ride itself." It has a rugged form factor to meet the demands of dark ride vehicles, parade floats and the like. The power of RidePlayer can be scaled up by its new Dante-enabled companion, RideAmp (new to InfoComm in 2019). Alcorn McBride's new show controller, the V16X, is an offboard product that talks to RidePlayer vehicles to sync audio, video and effects with the rest of the action. Winscript Live version 5, the latest release of Alcorn McBride's programming interface, now enables simultaneous deployment of script changes to multiple RidePlayers.

"We're building up the ride and show ecosystem," said Olson, "with better control, integration, speed and sync," moving on to Alcorn McBride's V-Page line of multi-zone intercom and paging systems that are Dante and Q-SYS compatible, and the VC32 circuit board that lets customers build a custom console.

After the show closed for the day on June 12, Alcorn McBride hosted some 60 people for the Geekout in their elegant new company headquarters. John Huntington of ControlGeek.net and Jim Jannick of TimberSpring Inc. have presented the Geekout during InfoComm week for a number of years, at various locations. It is an informal gathering and presentation centered on show control.



The 2019 Geekout event was hosted by Alcorn McBride and included happy hour at their new office tiki bar. Photo by John Huntington

The 2019 Geekout branched out from its usual case study format. Huntington, who is Professor of Entertainment Technology, sound engineer, and author of the book “Show Networks and Control Systems, states: “This year, Jim and I decided - instead of doing the traditional case studies we’ve done for many years - to address the issue of timecode and the way it’s being used these days on live shows, which seems to be in the show control zeitgeist these days.”

Alcorn McBride shared the following report: “Industry professionals gathered at Alcorn McBride in Orlando to discuss Timecode and Show Sync. Discussion began regarding the TLX Effort - the SMPTE project for a next generation timecode - and how thus far the effort focused on post-production, more than the Show Sync industry. Facets of the TLX project were discussed, including its heavy use of tags, and other meta-data that would be of little use to the Show Sync industry. Participants then discussed various shortcomings of the existing SMPTE standard, such as being locked to a frame rate, when a show may potentially have no video playback at all, or when different elements of a show have been recorded at various frame rates.

“Conversation among the attendees was progressing toward authoring a wish list to submit to the individuals charged with defining the SMPTE TLX standard. A transport specification was high on the attendees list, hoping for a standard to define where exactly timecode could expect to be sent and received from, with respect to modern networks. Attendees also expressed a great deal of interest ensuring the new timecode would be compatible with other Timebases, such as PTP and NTP. At the conclusion of the discussion, attendees were invited to Alcorn McBride’s new, immersively themed “TikiTeria” for refreshments, and to foster further conversation.”

Techni-lux and the darkriders

Techni-lux was the lighting designer on all seven installations to date of the dark ride JUSTICE LEAGUE: Battle for Metropolis at Six Flags parks. [See “Lighting Jokers,” InPark #78.] The most

recent installation, at Six Flags Magic Mountain in Southern California, was honored with a TEA Thea Award in April 2019. So it was not surprising that during our visit to the Techni-lux booth at InfoComm two months after the Thea Awards Gala, we met reps from two other companies involved with the JUSTICE LEAGUE projects: Steve Phillips of Oceaneering, which provided the ride vehicles and Dave Jones of Sally Corp., the company leading the external creative team.

Alex Gonzalez, Tony Hansen and Lisa Hansen of Techni-lux were sharing a new product announcement: the company, which is a manufacturer as well as lighting design firm, recently began offering the full line of Par lamps that had been discontinued by the manufacturer. Gonzalez explained that many theaters, worship spaces and other venues currently depend on Par fixtures and have neither the budget nor the inclination to replace their lighting systems. As a result, this news has been received with delight and with product orders.

Techni-lux is one of a relatively few companies with a strong track record in lighting attractions and rides of various kinds; for such projects they tend to favor mini-LED fixtures from Gantom, combined with various Techni-lux proprietary fixtures and effects widgets such as their “blinky boxes.”

Lisa Thorburn honored

Congratulations to Lisa Thorburn, CTS, LEED-AP, Co-founder and President of Thorburn Associates on being honored at InfoComm 2019 with a “Women in AV” award. Thorburn Associates, specialists in acoustical consulting, technology engineering, and lighting design, was founded in 1992. Over the course of her career, Lisa has been dedicated to sharing technical knowledge, not only with InfoComm attendees and AV professionals, but also with members of the architecture, engineering and construction industry. While leading her firm of five national offices through 3,000 projects across all markets, Thorburn has shared her insight with related industry groups such as the Themed Entertainment Association, Society for Marketing Professional Services, and Construction Specifications Institute.



Lisa Thorburn



Smart Monkeys' Jason Pontius, Zach Strauss and Stephan Villet
 Photo by Judith Rubin

ISAAC gets smarter

Smart Monkeys' Stephan Villet and Jason Pontius were representing Smart Monkeys Inc. at InfoComm 2019 and showcasing - in tandem with RealMotion company and its creative studio FLOAT – Smart Monkeys' latest update of ISAAC, and the integration of the RealMotion server platform with ISAAC.

A recent high-profile example is the 2019 upgrade of the iconic "Time Tower" clock tower display in the Tom Bradley Terminal at LAX (the terminal opened in 2014). Smart Monkey's ISAAC rose to widespread attention and garnered many awards as the innovative content delivery and control system behind the extensive LED multimedia display in the terminal; ISAAC is an acronym for Integrated Scheduling And Automation Control. [See "ISAAC takes control," InPark #60, and "Building Bridges," InPark #53.]

"ISAAC acts as a full CMS for the RealMotion platform, and ISAAC continues to get smarter," said Villet. A leading feature of the current version of ISAAC is what Villet termed its "new integratory content media management capability." A drag-and-drop interface enables it to ingest new content - then distribute, manage and archive it, and make it available for editing - without the user needing to load it onto the server. "Using templates, it can be incorporated and part of the display within seconds," said Villet. Benefits include protecting IP and brand consistency.

As ISAAC gets smarter and is adopted by more integrators, it augurs a paradigm shift for the industry; not just in the way technology is configured and used, but in the software/hardware ratio and reduced physical space requirements for equipment. This is because what has traditionally existed as hardware – a group of networked PCs, for instance – can exist virtually on ISAAC, carrying out the same functions and providing redundancy.

Smart Monkeys is growing and looking for talented professionals in engineering, project management, show control, AV/IT and technical sales. Joy Burke recently joined the team as Senior Manager of Special Projects, specializing in the Orlando market.

From the server to the screen

AV Stumpf was promoting the PIXERA server and its many user-friendly features. PIXERA is a 64-bit system for real-time media processing, compositing and management, combining a powerful render engine with an innovative interface. According to company literature, "a radical new interface logic enables even first-time users to intuitively understand the main software mechanics. Entering the world of professional media playout solutions has never been easier."

Strong/MDI Screen Systems (part of Ballantyne Strong) is a leading manufacturer and innovator in specialty screens, screen coatings and unique products and custom solutions for giant screen cinema, immersive displays and media-based attractions such as flying theaters and dark rides. Dustin Small became a new asset to the firm in 2018 bringing his company Eclipse, expertise in curvilinear screens and theme park background. At the Strong/MDI booth at InfoComm 2019, Small reported that the themed entertainment division of the company is flush with projects over the next several years. In the midst of this, Small has kept the R&D mill going - he hinted at some exciting new products in development that might be unveiled to the industry in prototype form in the near future.

At the Barco booth we met Richard Marples, Inge Govaerts and Leander Werbrouck and learned about products suitable for dark rides, digital art displays and museum exhibits. These included: For video walls, the new LED XT series and the UniSee platform; for projection, three models shown configured with the three images seamlessly blended into a single image: the F80 (first launched at ISE 2019), UDX and UDM (new to the industry at InfoComm 2019). The UDX-4K40 outfitted with a Dynamic Projection Mirror Head was also projecting on the booth walls and exhibit hall floor. A key to the company's global success is staying close to the end user, said Werbrouck. "We respect the market dynamic and needs, we co-create and problem-solve."

At the Panasonic booth we enjoyed a product tour courtesy of Paul DeLorenzo and Fred Mitchell. The company has a strategic partnership with Disney and its projectors are in other major parks as well; other venues include The Shed in New York City. Some highlights: The ET series of short-throw lenses for projection in tight spaces and as an alternative to LED walls; the PT-RQ50KU 3-Chip DLP® SOLID SHINE 4K+ Laser Projector (new to InfoComm in 2019 and shipping in December). Panasonic's imaginative demos at the show included an active eSports arena, and an interactive digital art display.

Sony's Kevin O'Connor is helping build the company's presence in the theme park and visitor attractions markets. Laser phosphor projectors include the new VPL-FHZ75 (6500lm) and VPL-

FHZ70 (5500lm), designed to meet market demand for high brightness projection in midsize environments, and the compact VPL-GTZ240 2,000 lumen native 4K Projector catering to simulation and planetariums and other multi-projector situations. The modular Crystal LED display system, honored with a 2019 “Display of the Year” award from the Society of Information Display, is designed to deliver high contrast, precise color, and a near-180-degree viewing angle. The Sonic Surf VR spatial audio solution combines multi-channel speakers, displays and specially developed software designed to simulate placing, moving and partitioning sounds in one space. The result is an interactive area where sounds move freely around within a space to create immersive experiences. Museum and planetarium customers and collaborators include Adler Planetarium (Chicago), Burke Baker Planetarium (Houston); California Academy of Sciences (San Francisco), Sky-Skan and Evans & Sutherland.

Thanks to Digital Projection’s Chuck Collins, Richard Hill and Kyle Greetham we were able to sample the intriguing INSIGHT 4K HFR 360 – a high frame-rate solution immersive, collaborative, and interactive 3D experiences. This multi-viewer 3D projector allows up to three users to view native 4K-3D content while interacting with one another in a shared, virtual environment. With head-tracking technology and the HFR 360’s ultra-fast frame rates, each user experiences a unique perspective of the on-screen content that remains consistent with their changing position. The INSIGHT 4K HFR 360 won

two ‘Best of InfoComm’ awards, from Commercial Integrator and Projector Central; the possibilities for themed entertainment seem rich. The company is well established in planetariums, museums and specialty cinema with various high-end projector lines for domes, 3D and immersive applications.

We visited the booth of Stewart Filmscreen, a company long established in theme park and specialty cinema markets. Stewart Filmscreen, headed today by Mary Stewart, is well positioned and experienced to produce the custom products needed in the attractions sector, whether front- or rear-projection. “We can make a 90’ x 40’ seamless screen, we can perforate a 60’ screen - these are examples of things that are customary for us but would be very challenging for other providers,” said Mark Robinson, CTS, Vice President of Customer Experience, who has been with the company 33 years. The company makes its own fabric. A recent project was a 180’ x 15’ screen provided for the National Museum of the United States Army in Fort Belvoir, VA, for a 270-degree panorama. The company’s new website features a screen configuration and pricing tool. •••

InfoComm 2020 will take place June 13-19 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Prior to that, look for InPark at ISE 2020 in Amsterdam, February 11-14

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The lion roars

Meet Lionsgate Entertainment World's new general manager, Selena Magill

interview by Martin Palicki

Lionsgate Entertainment World opened in July 2019 in Zhuhai Hengqin, China. Covering 22,500 square meters over four floors and featuring over 20 attractions, the new indoor theme park blends technology and traditional rides in exciting new ways. We talked with Lionsgate Entertainment World's general manager Selena Magill for her take on what makes the project special.

Tell us how the partnership between the developers, designers and operators came together.

The project developer, Lai Sun, built a new mixed-use shopping mall with entertainment and hotel facilities in Hengqin. They wanted to add an anchor attraction that would be a big draw. Since Lionsgate has many film and television properties that are very popular in China, they were chosen as the IP partner. Thinkwell was selected as the main designer and they were responsible for engaging with additional design and creative vendors. Village Roadshow was chosen to operate the park.

Why is the vertical theme park concept important?

Everyone is used to the traditional model for a park in China, but we wanted to build a different theme park experience in a small footprint. We have about 22,000 square meters of space, but we focused on density and packed a lot of experiences into the park. The way the park is designed there is a central courtyard area where you can look up and be surrounded by all of the different themed areas and attractions in the park. It's very different than the traditional model where different lands are very separate from one another.

Additionally, we did not follow the traditional model for entertainment. There are no specific show times. From the guest's perspective, it will feel like pop-up entertainment that can happen anywhere around the park.

VR and AR are used heavily in this park. How are you planning on addressing some of their operational limitations?

At Village Roadshow we have had experience working with VR before. The technology has continued to improve and become more stable over time. At Lionsgate Park, we have purpose-built VR technology, so it was designed into the attraction from the beginning, not as an afterthought.

For example, our roller coaster was created solely for use with VR. Each ride will take two laps around the track, with the first



Selena Magill

one being slower and the second one fast. It's fun to watch as an operator, because riders don't really know they are repeating the same route.

Also, our Midnight Ride motorbike simulator uses VR, wind, motion and vibration to create the full experience. Guests feel the bike throttle, smell the pine trees of the forest, as well as see their virtual hands and other friends riding. We also integrated an element of personalization, so even though the ride is pre-programmed, guests can choose some variations in the route. Since our target market is the young adult group, it's important to have this individualized experience.

How does The Escape Plan – Prison Break evolve the escape room experience?

This is more technologically advanced than traditional escape rooms. It involves actors, requires collaboration with other people in your group, and progresses through several rooms in the attraction. I've been so impressed with how the Thinkwell team has been able to take IP and turn them into attraction ideas, and I think The Escape Plan is one that will stand out.

You've held a variety of positions at Village Roadshow, what led you to this project?

I began at Warner Brothers Movie World's opening team and have been heavily involved in Village Roadshow's new ventures. It feels like things have led me to this point. I opened up Wet 'n' Wild Hainan, and so as this role became available, I wanted to be able to continue to pursue my love for this business while staying with a company that I love.

How will this property fit in with other Lionsgate projects?

It's kind of exciting to be a part of this, because this is the biggest thing that Lionsgate has done in the attractions space to date. Their other projects have been more limited in size and scope, so this really expands the opportunities for them and I'm honored to be able to help continue to build their brand in this way. •••



Exploring Rulantica

InPark takes a tour behind the scenes at Europa-Park's new waterpark opening in late 2019

by *Martin Palicki*

Rising out of the fields on the edge of the town of Rust, Germany, a new hotel and indoor waterpark are taking shape. Kronasår, a hotel themed as a Scandinavian museum, recently began welcoming guests at the end of May. Behind it stretches the indoor waterpark Rulantica, connected physically and narratively to the hotel. As the story is told, the Kronasår museum was gifted a selection of artifacts by various seafarers who claimed to have visited the mythical island of Rulantica. After a great deal of research and effort, the museum decided to purchase the old “fish market” across the bay and turn it into a large (and hopefully expanding) recreation of Rulantica. It just so happens that guests wishing to visit the exhibit are best served by bringing a bathing suit.

This storyline is flexible and allows for future expansion of the park under the guise of creating new exhibits. It also relieves designers from having to explain why an island exists under a roof. According to Rulantica operations manager Kevin Kruschwitz, it also allows his staff to be modern in appearance and wear things such as watches and sunglasses. They are, after all, not historical residents of Rulantica, but present-day museum docents.

It also was important to creative director Chris Lange to not create a waterpark similar to others in the area. As Lange said in an interview for InPark [“Designing Rulantica,” issue #74]: “I did not want to do a sunken city, but knowing that we had to include some element of water I thought we could integrate a ‘shipwreck beach’ concept... We did not want to go with a tropical or pirate theme as those have been done many times. So we created this mystical, hidden island of Rulantica located in Scandinavian waters.” Keeping in line with that concept, and with the environment created at Europa-Park, Lange designed Rulantica with small walkways, plenty of plants and trees, and a general cozy atmosphere.

Day guests will exit their cars in the parking lot with hills and trees blocking their view of the park. Once they follow the path through the hills, the Kronasår hotel appears on the right, with Rulantica behind the façade of an old fishing village on the left. The hotel was designed as a noise barrier for the waterpark, situated between it and the town of Rust. As the park extends beyond its current walls, the hotel is designed to expand also, providing that continuous sound barrier, as well as added capacity.

The harbor area between the two is created to be a fun space where day guests waiting to enter the park will be entertained. When finished it will include animated objects and interesting scenes to observe.

The hotel is connected to the waterpark by a walkway on the second level. Hotel guests use this to gain entry to the park, while day guests arrive on the ground level. According to Kruschwitz, this was designed to allow hotel guests to have special access without making it obvious in front of the other guests. The same is true for the park's private rental cabanas, which will be themed like houses in the wooden stilt fishing village. They will be located on the balcony level of the park in order to be less obtrusive.

Rulantica will take a lesson from long-operating Europa-Park and plan new attractions every year. With the extended permitting process required in Germany, the park already has the next phase of expansion approved, but Kruschwitz wants to listen to guest feedback to see what matters most to them. "For instance, our initial thought is to keep the family together as much as possible in this hotel and waterpark, so for Krónasár, we opted to not include a wellness and spa area, as that is typically an adults only area," said Kruschwitz. "But we are happy to add that if people request it and feel that it is missing."

On opening day, the park will have two towers of waterslides, at opposite ends of the park, with the majority of the slides working their way outside the building. This was designed to create two major points of interest and draw people in different directions, while keeping the main park space open and visible from just about every vantage point. This also builds on a Europa-Park lesson to mix different types of attractions together, avoiding clumping all the thrill rides in one spot but instead mixing family-friendly rides near the more aggressive attractions. That way the family can stay close together.

One iconic family attraction will be the lazy river, which encircles the park and includes an extensive underground tunnel



The mythical island of Rulantica is recreated as an exhibit in a museum.

section that helps tell the story of the park's new mascot, Snorri. Additional attractions include a wave pool, a total of 17 waterslides, an activity pool and more. For those wanting a bit more sunshine, an outside pool with swim-up bar and action river are also available.

Themed areas of the park are as follows:

- Skip Strand: Anchored by shipwrecks, this area will primarily house the wave pool and activity pool.
- Rangnakor: Rulantica's old fishing village will consist of huts and buildings perched up on stilts. With a distinct Scandinavian feeling, this is where the cabanas will be located.
- Vildstrøm: The outdoor section of the park will allow guests to float through an action river and relax in the sunshine.
- Trølldal: Inhabited by mystic creatures from Scandinavian folklore, this area of the park will focus on kid-friendly attractions.
- Lumåfals: A man-made grotto is home to mermaids and mermen that used to guard Rulantica. The lazy river and wave pool will provide views of this area, which is anchored by a giant floor-to-ceiling video wall (which when not being used to project images of a waterfall can be used for movie nights).
- Skog Lagoon: Designed as an oasis, the relaxation pool will be surrounded by pine trees and rocky outcrops. Whirlpool seats and a swim-up bar will be key elements of this area.
- Vinterhal: Representing the frosty northern parts of Rulantica, the icy structures present the perfect opportunity for some waterslide fun.

When the park opens, guest will utilize an RFID band ticketing system, and day guests will be encouraged to purchase their tickets online prior to arriving. According to Rulantica front



Noel Ehard (press department), Kevin Kruschwitz (operations manager) and Julian Oszwald (front office supervisor)



Guests staying at Krønásår will have this view of Rulantica's facade, themed as an old Scandinavian fishing village.

office supervisor Julian Oszwald, the bracelets will be used for entry, locker access and can also be used for shopping or dining purchases.

Europa-Park hotel guests will get to use a towel for free, but day guests will need to either bring their own towel or purchase one at the park. Rental towels will not be available for day guests. Lockers will be available essentially for free. They will cost one euro but that euro will be given as a credit to use within the park's retail outlets.

While Krønásår's guests can walk from the hotel right into the park, guests from other hotels on property will rely on a shuttle to transport them back and forth. Hotel guests will also benefit from a one-hour early entry into the park.

Europa-Park has invested around €180 million to build Rulantica, Krønásår and related infrastructure. Rulantica is scheduled to open on November 28, 2019. For more information, visit europapark.de/en/rulantica/rulantica-new-europa-park-water-world •••

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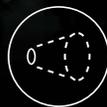
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The 2018 Theme Index

Integrated resorts, transportation infrastructure and smart marketing boost attraction attendance

by Joe Kleiman

The 2018 TEA/AECOM Theme Index and Museum index was released on May 22, 2019. InPark’s Joe Kleiman explores some of the trends and changes within the industry that led to attendance increases and decreases at the world’s most-visited theme parks, waterparks and museums.

According to the figures in the 2018 TEA/AECOM Theme Index, the ranking of the top ten theme park groups (see above chart) remains unchanged from 2017; it is also rather apparent that each of these operators saw an increase in attendance during that time period. Major increases in attendance were found with those parks benefiting from changes in marketing strategy, the expansion of integrated resorts, and improvements in transportation infrastructure. Parks in South Korea suffered due to a diplomatic issue with China resulting in a reduction of visitors from the Chinese Mainland, while Dubai parks find themselves in competitive numbers with local attractions and waterparks due to the accelerated attraction development model in the region.

The regional park model

One of the biggest turnarounds revealed is a dramatic increase in attendance at SeaWorld’s flagship parks in Orlando (+16%) and San Diego (+20.1%), reversing a series of declines that began in 2013 following the release of a critical documentary film. Brian Sands and Kathleen LaClair write in the report: “SeaWorld’s good performance is creditable to investments in new rides and programming and leveraging the Sesame Street IP (photo at top), in addition to working actively to change the conversation about the parks — internally and externally — and making other positive changes.”

In addition to adding a new ride or attraction each year, SeaWorld has increased the number of festivals and events at each park, with new ones taking place year-round at its Orlando property. This is a strategy often used by park operators to increase season pass sales and entice return visits for passholders, resulting in an increased per cap for food & beverage and retail sales.

RANK	GROUP NAME	% CHANGE	ATTENDANCE 2018	ATTENDANCE 2017
1	WALT DISNEY ATTRACTIONS	4.9%	157,311,000	150,014,000
2	MERLIN ENTERTAINMENT'S GROUP	1.5%	67,000,000	66,000,000
3	UNIVERSAL PARKS AND RESORTS	1.2%	50,068,000	49,458,000
4	OCT PARKS CHINA	15.1%	49,350,000	42,880,000
5	FANTAWILD	9.3%	42,074,000	38,495,000
6	CHIMELONG GROUP	9.6%	34,007,000	31,031,000
7	SIX FLAGS INC.	5.3%	32,024,000	30,421,000*
8	CEDAR FAIR ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY	0.7%	25,912,000	25,723,000*
9	SEAWORLD PARKS & ENTERTAINMENT	8.6%	22,582,000	20,790,000*
10	PARQUES REUNIDOS	1.5%	20,900,000	20,600,000
TOP 10 ATTENDANCE GROWTH 2017-18		5.4%	501,228,000	475,767,000*

The top ten theme park groups worldwide in 2018. Courtesy of AECOM and Themed Entertainment Association

Fully integrated resorts

In our coverage last year of the 2017 edition, we reported that stronger attendance performances resulted from those parks within fully integrated resorts (indicating on-premises accommodations, and often a second gate or retail/dining district). The 2018 Theme Index shows that this trend is effective and continuing. Of the 25 top-attended parks worldwide, only three – Universal Studios Japan, Universal Studios Hollywood, and Lotte World – do not have on-premises lodging, though they do partner with adjacent hotels, and offer other amenities such as non-gated retail/dining districts and aquariums.

Not all of the worldwide top five saw significant increases, however. South Korea’s Everland dropped 7.3% and Lotte World 11.2%, primarily due to the a continuing political skirmish between China and South Korea over the latter’s deployment of an American-supplied anti-missile network. As part of its strategy, the Chinese government banned group tours to South Korea. Although this ban was partially lifted at the beginning of this year, Properties owned by Lotte, a South Korean multinational conglomerate, remain off limits to Chinese tourists due to the Korean company’s provision of the land for the anti-missile system. This includes Lotte World in Seoul. [“Chinese tourists: A primary and growing market,” InPark issue 75, <http://www.inparkmagazine.com/chinese-tourists-a-primary-market/>]

In Europe, Europa-Park, which experienced a fire that destroyed a portion of the park in late May, saw an increase of only 0.4% – but nevertheless an increase in a challenging year for the operator – while other key European parks, Efteling and Tivoli, saw a 4.2% and 4.5% increase respectively.

China and Dubai

The biggest attendance increases in the world's top 25 theme parks took place at two Chimelong parks – Chimelong Paradise in Guangzhou (+11.9%) and Chimelong Ocean Kingdom in Zhuhai (+10.6%). AECOM's Chris Yoshii and Beth Chang partly credit increased attendance at Ocean Kingdom to the opening of the Hong Kong-Macau-Zhuhai bridge. The bridge also helped fuel an 8% increase at Hong Kong Disneyland and a stabilization of attendance at Ocean Kingdom, as did a new high-speed rail line linking Hong Kong to Mainland China.

We looked further into how this new transportation infrastructure has helped boost tourism in the region and found that the new bridge has had a significant impact on visitation to Macau as well as Zhuhai and Hong Kong. According to data from the Government of Macao Statistics and Census Service, overnight stays in Macau increased 1.25 million and same-day visitation increased 1.9 million from 2017 to 2018. As the rail line opened in late September and the bridge in late October, we will need to wait until next year's Theme Index to get a better evaluation of how these projects affect park attendance over the course of a full year.

Reporting on parks in the Middle East for the 2018 Theme Index, AECOM's Jodie Lock writes: "We see strengthening results from the newer properties such as IMG Worlds of Adventure and the multi-gate Dubai Parks and Resorts as well as the more established Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, and various water parks."

None of the Middle East parks yet has sufficient attendance to land on the TEA/AECOM chart of top parks in the EMEA region. However, there are some publicly available figures. Dubai Parks and Resorts operator DXB Entertainments, as a publicly traded company, released an attendance figure of 2.784 million for 2018. This cumulative figure includes attendance for MOTIONGATE Dubai, Bollywood Parks Dubai, and LEGOLAND Dubai and its attached waterpark.

There is an indication that Dubai Parks and Resorts and IMG Worlds of Adventure may not be competing for market share with one another, nor with other UAE theme parks, so much as with local attractions and waterparks. Supporting information for this can be found in the 2018 Theme Index: In the special feature on Observation Experiences there are figures for the observation floor on the Burj Khalifa, with 2 million visitors; and the EMEA waterparks table shows Aquaventure Water Park at Atlantis The Palm, with 1.4 million. Weighed against the 2.784 million figure for DXB, these attractions come within a competitive attendance range to the local parks.

Part of this skew in attendance may be due to the growth pattern of Dubai's attractions industry. According to Jodie Lock: "At present, the number of visitor attractions in Dubai is large, relative to the size of its market. It is comparable to emerging markets in Asia, such as China, in that it has grown its leisure

sector at a very rapid pace, but without the equivalent of China's vast, resident population. This is a more high-risk process than the slower, organic growth that typified mature Western markets such as Orlando."

Museums: government shutdowns and strong social media

While most museums saw a significant increase (most noticeably the California Science Center in Los Angeles, which celebrated its 20th anniversary with a special exhibition of the treasures of Tutankhamen, resulting in a 19.7% increase), federally operated museums in Washington DC did not fare well, with most Smithsonian museums and the National Holocaust Museum losing attendance. Although the government shutdown started December 22, the Smithsonian used existing funds to remain open through the end of the year. However, due to the continuation of the shutdown into 2019, government operated museums did not reopen until the last three days of January, which will have a significant impact on attendance numbers for 2019. Not all Smithsonian museums suffered losses in 2018. The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) held steady on attendance, while the National Portrait Gallery saw an increase of 76.9% – a million additional visitors – with the unveiling of the official portraits of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama.

In Europe, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in Poland broke into the top 20 EMEA museums with 2.152 million visitors, a significant achievement that is, per AECOM's museum specialist Linda Cheu, "not an easy feat in this mature market." Linda also writes that "Its inaugural appearance in the TEA/AECOM Museum Index is attributed to broad awareness created through social media platforms."

We explored the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum's annual report to learn more. According to the museum's published figures, 275,000 people follow it on Twitter and another 277,000 on Facebook, and the museum's website received 27 million page views in 2018. This dedication to the use of social media and the internet is one part of an extensive plan that has transformed a memorial on the grounds of a Nazi concentration camp into a leading research center, archive, and museum about the Holocaust, resulting in sustained attendance growth over the past 18 years. The museum continues to expand with a new exhibit center and new education center in the works. •••

The 2018 Theme Index and Museum Index is available to download in its entirety for free. Archives of previous editions are also available. Visit teaconnect.org/Resources/Theme-Index





WhiteWater brings continuous innovation to parks

WhiteWater works hand in hand with operators to raise the bar and enhance the guest experience

by Rona Gindin and Martin Palicki

Docking at Royal Caribbean's private island and the new "Perfect Day at CocoCay," cruise ship guests are greeted by a colorful waterslide tower nearly as tall as the ship itself-rising above the palm trees and beaches below. It's the waterpark version of Oz's Emerald City, beckoning families to a day of both adventure and relaxation in the Bahamas.

CocoCay is cutting edge, a game changer for the cruise industry and a result of a collaboration between Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines (RCCL) and waterpark innovator WhiteWater. Together, they designed and built a tropical island destination that balances artistry and engineering, all with an eye towards family fun.

Based in Vancouver, Canada, WhiteWater has been supplying waterparks since 1980 and is well known for waterslides, play structures, pools, surfing rides and other waterpark and theme park attractions. Increasingly, they are also being recognized as problem solvers and partners on some of the market's most promising technologies and projects. From engineering feats to ride management and safety features, the company is living its motto, "Be Boundless."

The last six months provide several examples. In addition to designing Perfect Day at CocoCay, WhiteWater recently opened its first integrated technology waterpark and built the world's longest spinning rapids ride.

Building a Bahamian behemoth

Today's cruise lines market themselves to multiple generations, including families and younger adults. Ships have been "plussed" with new amenities like ice rinks, waterparks and zip lines. As Gen Zers start to book more voyages, ships will cater to their tastes with even more new experiences, which is a Gen Z preference, according to the 2019 Cruise Trends & Industry Outlook study by the Cruise Lines International Association.

More recently, the quest to offer the most in terms of activities has spread from ship to land. Cruise lines are putting resources into their private islands to provide a broader range of appeal. For RCCL this meant taking its mostly undeveloped CocoCay and reimagining it into Perfect Day at CocoCay.

Taking RCCL's vision as the starting point, WhiteWater sat down with Royal Caribbean's marketing and development vision teams, a landscape architect and an aquatic designer to figure out how they could design a waterpark to meet the client's needs. The conversation involved traffic patterns, relaxation opportunities, thrill and adventure areas, and a logical layout that flows seamlessly. As an upcharge attraction, Thrill Waterpark had to be designed to accommodate many of the 16,000 passengers who might arrive from two ships on any given day, yet not feel sparsely populated if only one ship was in port.

"Today, passengers disembark onto a beautiful pier, and they see this amazing tower with all of these waterslides surrounding it," says Franccen Gonzales, WhiteWater's executive vice president of business development for the Americas. That spire-like structure, Daredevil's Tower, is a 148-foot-tall icon for the waterpark, Gonzales explains. "Royal Caribbean had a clear vision of a waterpark with a beacon at its center that cruise ship passengers would see as they approach land. It emerges to the sky."

Daredevil's Tower is a hub of swirling colors and houses seven slides, including Daredevil's Peak, which at 135-feet is said to be the tallest waterslide in North America. Among its companion attractions are a wave pool, over-the-water cabanas, a separate slide tower, a zip line and the Adventure Pool – with a built-in obstacle course and rock climbing.

Daredevil's Tower included its share of challenges for the design and engineering team. It not only needed to achieve its notable height, but also had to be iconic, withstand wind speeds of up to 180mph and built on a remote island to which supplies could only be delivered by barge. "Deliveries went to Miami or the Bahamas, then were put on a little barge and driven right up onto the sand to be unloaded," Gonzales shares.

Most waterslide towers are basic steel, concrete or wooden staircases. But since RCCL wanted an eye-grabbing structure, WhiteWater's structural engineering team opted to cover the tower in "super lightweight" aluminum cladding and bolt it on to the structure. "We made a special design for the panels and another custom design to affix the panels to the tower," Gonzales explains. "It looks elegant and can withstand hurricanes. It had never been done before, and that's kind of our sweet spot."

All the innovating seems to have paid off. Since Thrill Waterpark opened in June 2019, Daredevil's Tower has proven to be especially popular. "We'd wondered how many people were going to want to climb up 135 vertical feet worth of stairs," Gonzales admits. "By golly, that ride has the longest line. People love it."

Tackling a tech-trendy waterpark

Orlando, Florida is a fiercely competitive market for waterparks. Not only are world-renowned Disney, Universal, SeaWorld and LEGOLAND resorts nearby, but they each include highly themed waterparks as well. In addition, many area resorts have smaller waterparks, lazy rivers and splash pads. So, when Horizon Waterpark, LLC began developing a property collaboration with Encore Capital Management and Innovative Attraction Management, its principals knew they had to include a waterpark that could achieve visibility in a crowded marketplace. The Island H2O Live! waterpark at the new Margaritaville Resort Orlando sought to differentiate itself with an integrated technology theme that capitalized on social media trends.

Guests enter Thrill Waterpark with the 148-foot-tall Daredevil's Tower awaiting them. The park is part of the new Perfect Day at CocoCay, a private island for passengers on Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's ships. *Photo courtesy Royal Caribbean Cruise Line*



Perfect Day at CoCo Cay includes an extensive waterpark designed and built by WhiteWater, along with beaches, zip lines, a hot air balloon experience and more. *Photo courtesy Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines*

Waterparks are naturally shared experiences. Visitors swim in wave pools, float along lazy rivers and slide down flumes alongside friends, family and other guests. Sharing those experiences with others, however, can be a challenge, since people typically can't bring smartphones in the pool. Island H2O Live! found other ways to use technology to connect guests with social media and lets them easily post about their time spent at the park. Attractions even have Instagrammable names like Hashtag Heights and Reply Racers.

The project was a timely fit for WhiteWater, which had recently developed the Vantage technology platform (since spun off as a separate entity called Vantage Technology Ltd.). From the guest perspective, Vantage is the transparent system behind a host of interactive tech features embedded in the park— all designed to enhance their experience. On the operator's side, Vantage supplies snapshots of helpful information meant to help managers identify and fix immediate problems and forecast long-term solutions.

The Vantage experience can begin before the guest even arrives at the park by downloading the mobile app. Guests can complete profiles on an app or at an in-park kiosk, where they can fill out basic information such as what kind of music or colors they prefer.

Vantage pairs this information with an RFID wristband (Smart Band) the guest wears during their visit. Guests “tag in” to each

ride by touching their wristband to an LCD screen near the start of each experience. Then, as they zoom down one of Island H2O Live!'s slides, the slide might illuminate with their favorite colors, or their favorite music may echo through the slide.

“We offer a new layer of experiences with the ability to personalize a guest's day,” says Aaron Mendelson, director of customer success and product innovation at Vantage Technology Ltd. “That's almost an expectation at theme parks, and now we're bringing it to waterparks.”

Vantage was designed with an open architecture to take advantage of systems and products already available on the market, as well as ones not yet developed. In this way, Vantage functions as an agnostic platform, and can be programmed to work with virtually any product. “The future possibilities for integration are exciting,” says Mendelson. “Vantage is a creative catalyst that can bring functionality to designers' concepts and ideas.”

At Island H2O Live!, Vantage also allows guests to earn Park Perks for activities, such as entering a ride or buying a hot dog, that they can trade in for rewards like food, merchandise or a secret song playlist. Vantage also sends guests photos taken by on-ride cameras and at selfie stations around the park, offering the chance to easily post those images on social media through the park app. Another bonus: Vantage lets parents see where their kids are at any time.

Island H2O Live! blends traditional waterpark attractions from WhiteWater with the integrated technology platform Vantage. *Photo courtesy Island H2O Live!*



Vantage is focused as much on the operator as it is on the consumer, and Mendelson says the program offers features new to waterpark managers. Explains Mendelson, “Vantage tells the operator, for example, how many wristbands went down a ride in the last 10 minutes,” along with other information related to ride usage, throughput, management, staffing and maintenance. It uses graphics to show how many churros have been sold over the past month, along with customer demographics. Operators can also use Vantage to steer people to rides with shorter queues and balance out attendance around the park.

Long-term, Vantage statistics illustrate trends, as well as identify areas for growth. “If I see that toddlers are always only on the same two rides, that might tell me that I should add more for that age group so I can attract more families,” Mendelson adds.

Vantage is available both for new installations as well as retrofits. Its network of sensors can use Power over Ethernet or low-voltage power to operate and connect via WiFi signal, meaning installation is simplified and easily scalable.

Building the future in Qatar

Thinking of themed entertainment venues in the Middle East, the UAE comes to mind. Dubai and Abu Dhabi both have invested heavily in the last decade to make tourism and entertainment a part of their larger economy. But they are not alone. Other players in the region are stepping up their plans to incorporate tourism and entertainment into their planning.

Qatar is a small country, a peninsula jutting off Saudi Arabia into the Persian Gulf. It’s hosting the World Cup in 2022 and is at the tail end of a decade-long \$200 billion building boom to prepare.

Officials in Qatar are aware of the potential tourism boost from the World Cup, as well as the competitive market for leisure dollars in the nearby UAE. To best take advantage of the influx of visitors, they have tasked WhiteWater with a remarkable challenge: to build one of the Middle East’s largest waterparks. Aquatar will be loaded with 48 water slides, wave pools and attractions. It has been described as the largest single investment in the waterpark industry’s history, according to Geoff Chutter, WhiteWater’s president and CEO.

“Sheikh Nasser bin Abdulrahman Al Thani of Qetaifan Projects clearly wanted to make a statement,” Chutter observes. “He wants something that will become the global icon for leisure entertainment in Qatar while breaking records in waterpark construction. The industry has not seen a slide tower this tall, nor family raft slides at this height. His attitude was ‘Go bigger!’ and we did.”

Size and logistics are just the beginning of what makes building Aquatar one-of-a-kind. Qatar sits on the world’s third largest reserve of natural gas, and Qetaifan wants to embrace the nation’s resource as the theme of Aquatar. The signature element will be Icon Tower, an 80-meter (260-foot) slide tower rising on its own manmade island. The tower will resemble an oil derrick, including a natural gas flame burning day and night from the top.



Guests use a Smart Band at Island H2O Live! to tag into attractions and enhance their riding experience. Photo courtesy Island H2O Live!



Aquatar will be one of the largest waterparks in the Middle East when opened in 2021. Icon Tower is seen on the top left corner on a separate island. Photo courtesy of Qetaifan Projects

Icon Tower's 18 waterslides will include WhiteWater's Abyss, which will be built an incredible 40 meters in the air featuring unparalleled views of the Gulf, and a half-kilometer long high-speed AquaTube body slide that will last more than a minute.

The engineering feat enabling Icon Tower to become a reality was a challenge that required WhiteWater to put aside all the parameters they typically deal with. Slides traditionally built close to the ground will weave in and out all 180 meters of the structure. The entire tower must be able to withstand both earthquakes and strong winds. Finally, the exceptional height will require that guests take elevators to reach the slide platforms.

In addition to Icon Tower, Aquatar is set to have the first SlideWheel in the Middle East, a wave pool, dueling Master Blasters and an AquaPlay multilevel play structure. Special effects using video, lights, projections and fiberglass veiling will add additional entertaining dimensions.

This Doha newcomer will not only be a huge undertaking, it will be a fast one. The plan is to complete the waterpark by the end of 2021 so it will be ready to greet World Cup crowds in November 2022.

Reving up spinning rapids rides

Like many of WhiteWater's major projects, the construction of the world's longest spinning rapids ride got underway with WhiteWater's team meeting with a noted park design firm. The ride is a new twist on WhiteWater's spinning rapids product that has been in the market for nearly 25 years. Lava Drifting at Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park in China represented another welcome challenge for WhiteWater's designers and engineers.

Taylor Jeffs, president and chief creative officer of Legacy Entertainment, has always been a huge fan of the Spinning Rapids Ride since first riding L'oxygénarium at Parc Astérix in 2002, and wanted to use that inspiration as a point of departure for the Shanghai park his team was designing. He contacted WhiteWater and asked for the longest themed spinning rapids ride in the world, which at almost a kilometer long would meander through a great portion of the park.

"Legacy wanted a water ride that goes up a volcano, comes tumbling down and has extensive water rapids sections," recalls Nathan Jones, WhiteWater's president of park attractions, noting that Lava Drifting is for a theme park, not a waterpark, so guests ride in street clothes, not swimsuits.

The assignment was even more complex than expected. Legacy wanted multiple conveyor lifts, tunnels, drops and a giant Manta slide feature, which provides a fast drop and a zero-gravity moment. Plus, of course, the actual rapids.

The WhiteWater team got to work to address the design challenges using sophisticated R&D software. "We played with water flow, angles and different velocities as the raft moves through the course. We looked at how the vehicle reacted in the water," Jones says. After computer testing proved concept feasibility, WhiteWater's team conducted additional on-site testing for fine-tuning.

The team also questioned whether guests would enjoy such a long ride. In the end, the answer was yes, specifically because of the variety of experiences during the adventure. "Guests like that there's enough going on throughout the ride to capture their imagination," Jones says. "They can't see what's coming around



WhiteWater's spinning rapids ride, Lava Drifting at Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park, includes a special Manta slide feature (pictured above in green). Photo courtesy Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park

the corner, they're constantly moving, they're lifted up, they spin, they finish on the Manta. They remain engaged throughout."

Creating Lava Drifting was like the other three projects highlighted here: they all built on current trends while raising the bar for the guest experience.

"When clients come to us with an idea or a request, we use our decades of experience to help develop a solution, whether it's advanced technology, a bespoke waterslide or an entirely new park," says Franccen Gonzales. "We do it all from the very

beginning of planning through to the very end of construction, and beyond." •••



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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Bellewaerde includes many play areas for kids. Photo courtesy of Bellewaerde.

Bellewaerde adds water

Europe's newest waterpark provides family fun in Belgium

by Yelle Kleykens

After an investment of 17 million euros and nearly two years of construction, the brand-new Bellewaerde Aquapark in Ypres, Belgium officially opened its doors in June 2019. Designed to complement the Bellewaerde amusement park, it follows a strategy that more and more European amusement parks are employing to attract additional visitors and extend the park season.

“Multiple market studies showed the potential of combining Bellewaerde [amusement park] with an indoor waterpark,” said Bellewaerde CEO Stefaan Lemey. “The entire Bellewaerde team is proud that we have been able to realize this important project.”

Owned and operated by France-based Compagnie des Alpes, Bellewaerde Aquapark focuses on family fun by providing attractions and activities for all age groups. Three different areas and a slide tower are complemented by an outdoor area with lounge chairs and a small lawn.

The distinction between indoors and out is minimal, however, as the park has worked hard to bring nature inside throughout the

facility. The façade of the building is finished with wood while plants create a living roof. Inside, more than 1,000 plants have been added, including ten large trees. Together with a choice of soft colors (green and brown tones), natural looking materials (wood and stone) and a lot of natural light, the Aquapark fits perfectly into the Bellewaerde philosophy of appreciating and conserving nature. Half of the Bellewaerde amusement park property includes a zoo, so the park tries to emulate the conservation-based ideals common with zoos. The result happens to be aesthetically pleasing and enjoyable for guests as well.

For the little ones

Activities for children are spread throughout the park, each designed with different age ranges in mind. The first area, Bambino Beach, is a small toddler zone for children up to five years old, and includes a splash pool and several small waterslides, provided by Polin Waterparks, an international supplier headquartered in Turkey. The two other areas, Aqua Fort and Junior Explorer, include larger water playgrounds with small slides for children from 6 to 12 years and 5 to 10 years,

respectively. In addition to traditional water play activities, the Aqua Fort play structure also incorporates a longer and faster Tunnel Body Slide as well as a Wide Slide, both from Polin. Junior Explorer, themed as a large boat, includes Polin's short Aquatube slide.

For the more adventurous

The lazy river Jungle Expedition encircles Aqua Fort and Junior Explorer and is one of the showpieces of the park. Bellewaerde added special effects and activities to the river to make it more of an adventurous attraction. Several rain curtains and fountains dot the course, along with tipping buckets and tunnels. Theming encompasses the entire lazy river. Visitors float past a ship, into a submarine and through a small jungle. The river also passes by a climbing wall and an aquarium.

The extensive lazy river takes the place of a more traditional swimming pool or wave pool. Given the small space available for the park (3,000 m² including the outdoor area) park owners felt the river met needs for guests seeking a place to relax as well as those looking for more excitement. For those desiring even more relaxation, a sauna and several jacuzzis are available in the park.

For thrill seekers

Bellewaerde Aquapark also features a slide tower with two larger slides: Aquaventure and Splash Clash. Both slides were manufactured by the German waterpark supplier weigand.waterrides. Aquaventure is a Big Swing waterslide - a first in Europe. Rafts of riders accelerate down the slide into a

brief outdoor section onto a leaf-shaped ramp that provides a moment of weightlessness before sending the raft down the rest of the slide and back indoors. It provides a bit of thrill, but also remains family-friendly.

Splash Clash is a double racer slide that allows guests to race against each other in individual tubes. Of special note for the truly competitive: the slide calculates in real-time who is ahead and adjusts colored LED lights in the slide tubes: green for the fastest and red for the slowest.

Comfort and convenience

To make the guest experience as positive as possible, a tube lift from German ride manufacturer Gerstlauer eliminates the need for guests to drag tubes up the stairs. In addition, sound-insulating panels throughout the park ensure better acoustics and a more calming environment.

When designing the waterpark, Bellewaerde also planned for the future. Space for an outdoor rapids river has already been allocated for future expansion. The slide tower also was also designed to accommodate extra slides. Already popular with guests, the aquatic fun at Bellewaerde Aquapark is guaranteed to continue for years to come. •••



Yelle Kleykens is an editor at Brakection Magazine and has a great love for the leisure industry. He is currently still a marketing student, and a fan of data analysis.



The outdoor section of the Aquaventure slide.
Photo courtesy of Yelle Kleykens

Continental connections

SATE Europe makes magic with education and networking

by Martin Palicki

Held in early May, SATE Europe 2019 created a conference based on the theme “Moving People.” The event started with all the people moving around for a structured networking activity in the meeting rooms at the Hotel Les Trois Hiboux at Parc Astérix.

Yves Pépin (recently profiled in InPark Magazine issue #75) gave the keynote conversation, where he spoke about his early experience as a violinist. “Music taught me how to convey ideas and meaning without words,” said Pépin. “I have kept that lesson with me my entire life.”

He continued by asserting that shows must be inherently meaningful so that even someone who doesn’t understand a word of the show will still find impact in the performance. This is why, he explained, it is important to remember that you have to satisfy the client, but you are really working on behalf of the audience and must consider how they will experience the finished show.

One way to do that is to continually innovate because “it brings a new feeling or experience to the audience and creates an interaction with them.”

“If there is not a challenge in each project, then you must go further,” said Pépin.

Additional speakers at SATE Europe included:

Fri Forjindam (Mycotoo), Sabrina De Carvalho (Heide Park Resort), David Grey (Oasis Enterprises), François Fassier



Yves Pépin gave the keynote address.



A magician at Parc Astérix amazes Mycotoo’s Fri Forjindam with a card trick while Chris and Linda Conte look on during a SATE Europe event.

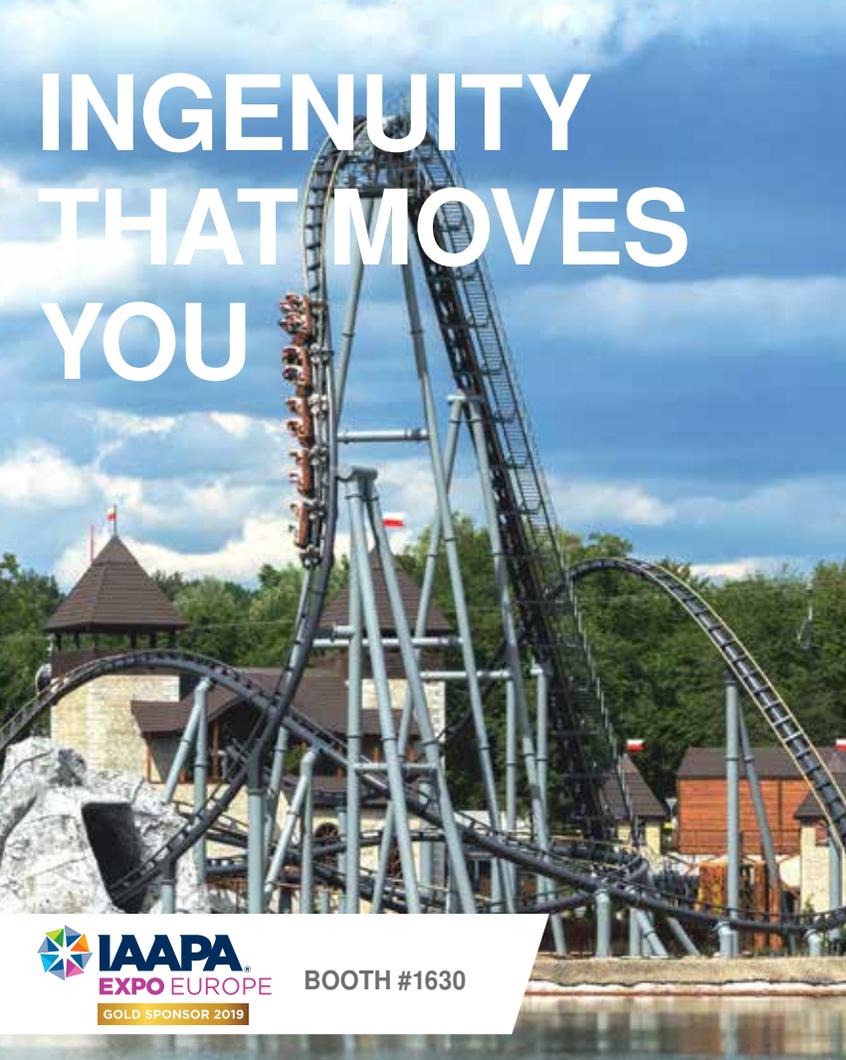
(Compagnie des Alpes), Nathan Jones (WhiteWater West), Alfredo Fajardo (Meow Wolf), Victoria Salazar (Port Aventura), Philipp Van Stratum (P&P Projects), David Willrich (DJ Willrich Ltd), Blair Parkin (TEECOM), Dr. Chris Kee (Christie), Manuel Faria (Indigo Sound), Leander Werbrouck (Barco), Nick Farmer (Farmer Attraction Development), Sebastien Georget (So SG Concept), Lesley Morisetti (Morisetti Associates), Zsolt Hormay (Walt Disney Imagineering), and Paul Osterhout (Century Culture and Tourism).

The event also included a session presented by NextGen TEA members. They briefed the crowd on a project created last year and overseen by Alex Korting and Laura Marakowitz. The team included folks from seven countries who spent the better part of the last year pitching and planning a theme park project to Alex and Laura, who acted as client developers. The finished project, La Isla Perdida, was designed as a highly themed land with multiple attractions. Throughout SATE, team members were on hand to answer questions about the design and showcased drawings, models and a VR simulation of the project. Team members felt they had acquired a great number of real-world skills through the project and only wish La Isla Perdida were scheduled for construction!

In keeping with TEA and TEA SATE culture, the event included many networking activities. Each evening consisted of a delicious dinner complete with entertainment and merriment provided by Parc Astérix. Guests were also treated to the park’s new 4D theater: Attention, Menhir!

An optional post-conference excursion took place at Puy du Fou. Continuing the 2019 cycle, TEA SATE Asia took place in Shanghai June 15-16 with TEA SATE - Seattle set for September 26-27. •••

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Expo 2020 Dubai Update

by James Ogul

In 2013, the city of Dubai was selected to host a six-month world's fair – the first such to be held in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia region in the 170-year history of world's fairs. The United Arab Emirates government is investing \$7 billion in this Expo which will cover 1,200 acres and include pavilions from 192 countries (see InPark's video previews of many Dubai 2020 pavilions; part 1, part 2 and part 3). The Dubai 2020 theme is "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future"; sub-themes are Sustainability, Mobility and Opportunity

The Dubai 2020 organizers have brought a creative approach to the project. During its six-month run (October 20, 2020 – April 10, 2021) organizers project 25 million visits, 70% of those to come from outside the United Arab Emirates. No other world's fair has factored in such a high percentage of foreign visitors (see inparkmagazine.com/dubai-2020-the-tourist-destination/).

There are two types of world's fairs sanctioned by the Bureau International des Exhibitions (BIE) – larger ones that last six months and occur every five years, and smaller, three-month fairs that occur between the larger ones. Most recently there was a three-month expo in 2017 at Astana (now Nursultan), Kazakhstan, preceded by Milan's six-month event in 2015, which drew 23 million visits. Although the United States has not hosted a world's fair since 1984 in New Orleans, since then there have been 14 such events in other parts of the world.

Unique architecture and exhibits

So far, at least 35 countries participating in Expo 2020 have published pavilion designs. One of the things that distinguishes a six-month world's fair is that many, if not most international exhibitors design their own pavilion buildings in addition to the exhibits those buildings will house, to present themselves to the world in the context of the expo theme. Each strives to make a unique statement and stand out among the others, which results in the event being something of an architectural competition. The intense competition and the remarkable, often pioneering pavilion designs that result are part of the attraction of world's fairs. Out of the 192 participating countries, 81 will build their own pavilion and 111 will lease space in Expo-built buildings. A joint venture between UK engineering firms Jacobs and Mace has been named Expo 2020 Dubai's Official Programme Delivery Management Provider and will monitor the plans and construction of the 81 self-build pavilions by other contractors.

Several countries have already begun building their pavilions, including the Czech Republic, the U.K., the Netherlands, France, Germany, New Zealand and Thailand. No word yet on the



The planned Netherlands pavilion for Dubai Expo 2020. Photo courtesy V8 Architects

United States as its pavilion is dependent on raising \$60 million from the private sector and construction cannot be started until sufficient funding is assured. The U.S. is the only G7 country with no government financial support, a policy since 1994.

Construction milestones

A major milestone was recently achieved when Expo 2020 completed construction on its three Thematic Districts. Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability. Forming the largest built-up area of the site and including 86 low-rise buildings that will house dozens of country pavilions, food and beverage outlets, retail, performance spaces and leisure areas, each district will be anchored by its own thematic pavilion and connected to the central Al Wasl Plaza. The three districts include façades resembling traditional Emirati wind towers and walkways lined with plants indigenous to the UAE. They incorporate smart shading, solar cells and moisture capturing devices, as well as an underground network for logistics support.

The next major construction milestone will be the completion of Al Wasl Plaza, the site's iconic centrepiece. Designed by Adrian Smith – Gordon Gill Architecture, it is being built by Cimolai Rimond Middle East Contracting. The structure has been designed to resemble the Expo 2020 logo and is a long-span shell structure that surrounds the central plaza area and rises to a height of 67m.

"Arabian Business" recently reported that approximately 40,000 workers are expected to be on-site at the peak of construction activity this year and over 25,000 suppliers from 149 countries are registered to do business with Expo 2020.

142,000 daily visits

When the Expo opens in Dubai, organizers have to be prepared for 142,000 expo visits a day through the six months of the expo. If, as predicted, 70% of the visits are from overseas, a large component will come from airport traffic. At present, 79 million travelers pass through Dubai's airports each year, but most do not stay over. Expo officials intend that the attraction of the fair will change that.

Local transportation needed to move the large influx of visitors has stimulated road improvements, airport upgrades, and a new dedicated metro line. In all, Dubai's government has spent over \$40 billion on infrastructure improvements. Hosting a world expo positions a city and a region to accomplish infrastructure improvements of this kind and is one of the big incentives that drive cities to compete for the hosting privilege.

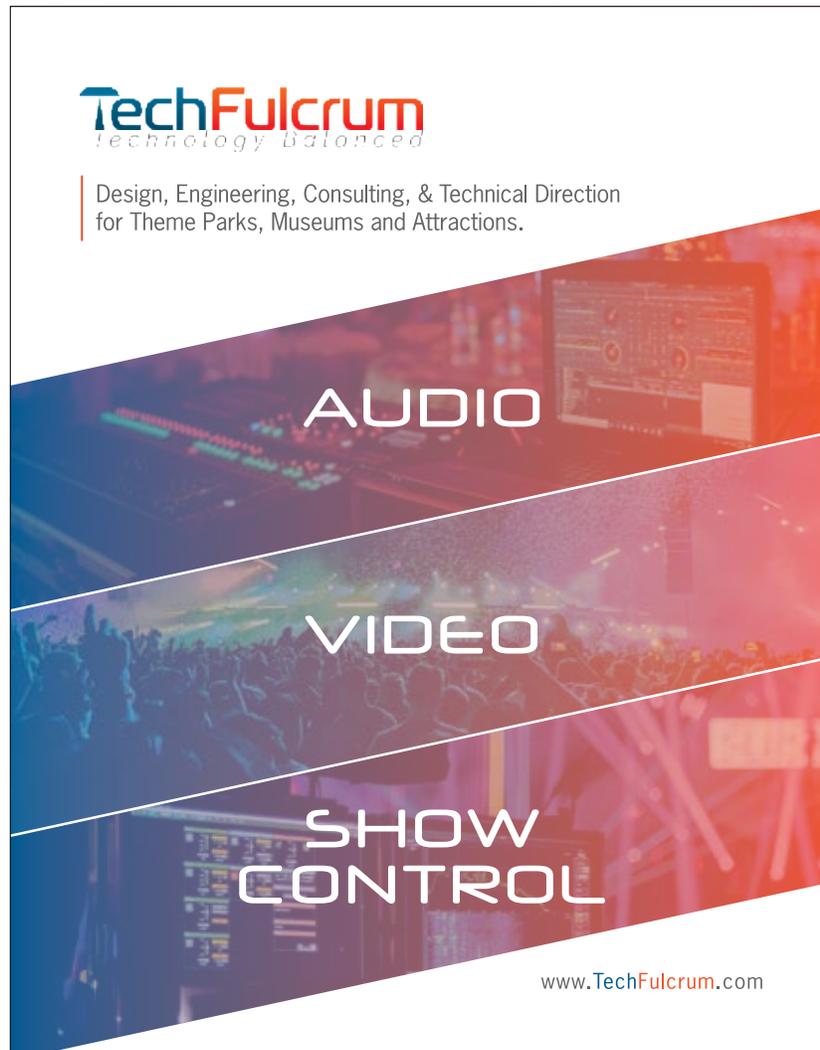
Naturally, the influx of visitors for a world expo means that overnight lodging demands will grow, and the host city must prepare for these. At the beginning of 2015, Dubai had approximately 94,000 hotel rooms available, according to the GCC Hospitality & Leisure-Recreation 2016 report. In June 2019,

that number had grown to 100,000 rooms, with some 164,000 rooms projected by the time the Expo is underway.

For 170 years, world expos have invited countries to focus on furthering humanity for the common good through innovation, cultural exchange, creativity and collaboration. As Vicente G. Loscertales, head of the BIE, recently pointed out, "By inviting all countries of the world to take part, the organizers of Expo 2020 are genuinely reflecting the universal spirit of world expos." •••



Since retiring from the US State Department in 2011 after a 30+ year career in world expos, James Ogul has remained on the scene in an advisory and consulting role. He writes regularly for InPark Magazine about world's fairs. His book, "Tales from the Expo" is free online at inparkmagazine.com.



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From film dome to fulldome

US Space & Rocket Center's new INTUITIVE Planetarium

by Judith Rubin

“Huntsville deserves a world-class planetarium,” said U.S. Space & Rocket Center (USSRC) CEO and Executive Director Deborah Barnhart at the ribbon cutting for the new, 248-seat INTUITIVE® Planetarium on Feb 28, 2019. And now they’ve got one.

Named for its investor - local aerospace engineering and analysis firm Intuitive Research and Technology Corporation - the new planetarium takes USSRC from analog to cutting-edge digital, and from film dome to fulldome. By virtue of the custom technology package featuring five brand-new Christie D4K40-RGB laser projectors supplied by Evans & Sutherland (E&S), this venue is a pioneering example of RGB laser projection in planetariums, a new standard-setter in many ways and for multiple markets.

“We hope everybody will go and see this installation to witness the astonishing capability of these projectors and this system,” said Doug Boyer, senior account manager at Christie, specializing in custom solution development for immersive systems including giant screen, dome theaters, and 3D visualization centers. Since

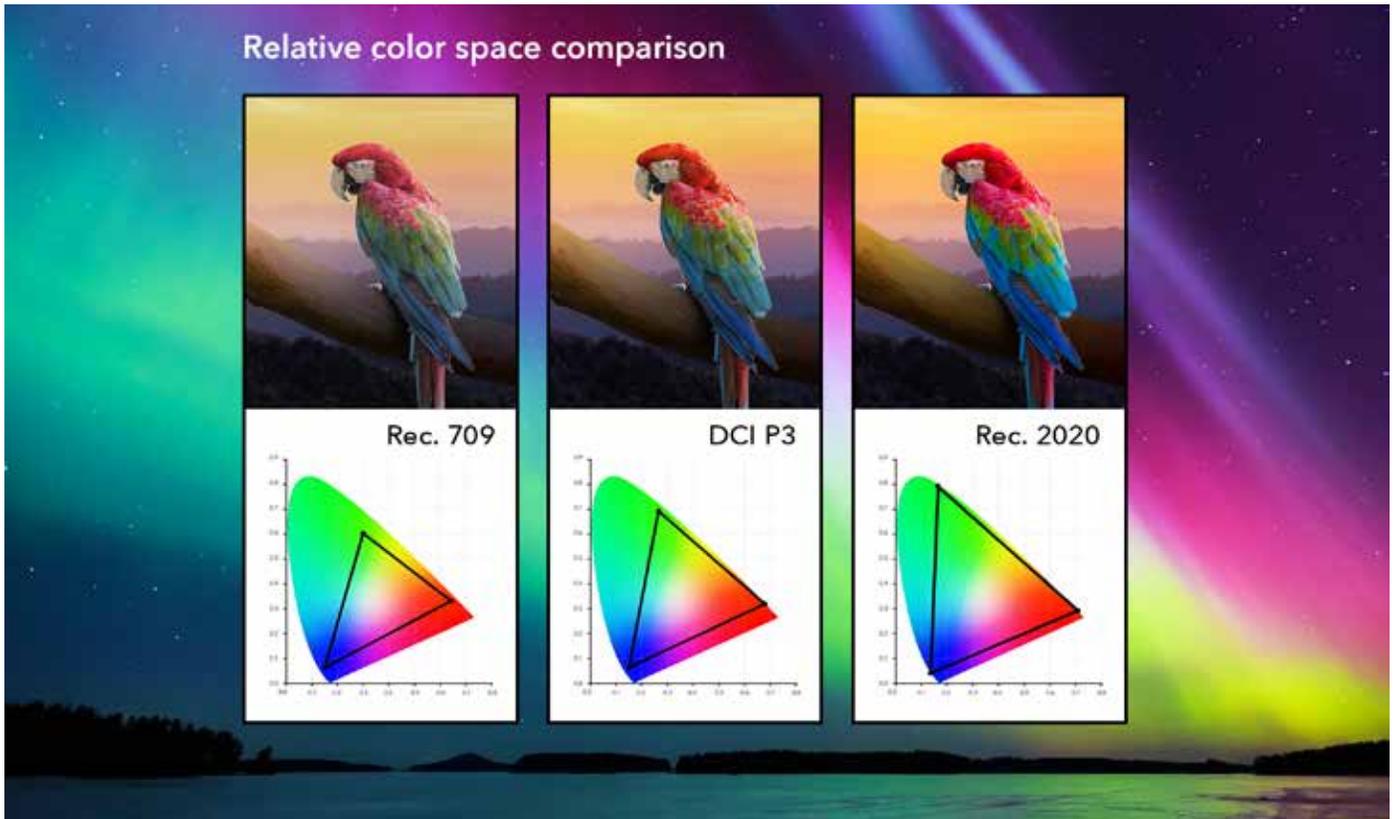
its rollout the Christie D4K40-RGB projector has been singled out for high marks and multiple awards in the AV community with respect to color, brightness, versatility and form factor. RGB laser projection technology, also called true or pure laser, uses individual Red, Green and Blue lasers to generate ideal light. This is unlike the more commonly known laser phosphor projectors, and key to the ability of RGB laser projection to deliver the expanded color gamut known as Rec. 2020 (explained in more detail below). “At the INTUITIVE planetarium, they’re learning to take full advantage of all these colors – making it possible for audiences to see deeper into the cosmos, to see things that were not visible before,” said Boyer.

“The images on the screen are sharper than a knife – the black sky of the Milky Way providing a brilliant backdrop to the colorful Earth,” wrote Paul Gattis, who attended and reported on the opening for AL.com.

E&S quickly snapped up 10 of the new projectors: five to install at its corporate headquarters in Salt Lake City for planetarium

Entrance to the INTUITIVE Planetarium *Image courtesy of USSRC*





RGB laser illumination is the only projection technology to support the Rec. 2020 color space, offering creates a whole new, expansive color palette with colors that have never been seen before. *Image courtesy of Christie*

and dome cinema demonstrations, and five for the USSRC installation, an E&S ESX 8K system that integrates the Christie projectors with Digistar 6 and a Spitz Nanoseam™ screen to fill the entirety of the planetarium’s 67-foot diameter, 30-degree tilt dome. “Together with our world-class alignment and blending system, the image looks stunning. We are excited to be the first to offer this powerful new Christie RGB laser technology to the market,” said Kirk Johnson, President and COO, Evans & Sutherland.

According to Johnson, the relationship between E&S and the USSRC developed through participation at various conferences for the planetarium and giant screen sectors organized by IPS, IMERSA, GSCA and others. E&S and Christie often collaborate to provide the industry with opportunities to see their products and systems in action, and in the past five years this has included demonstrations and comparison shootouts at the Science Museum of Virginia, Richmond (2014); The Tech Museum, San Jose (2015); Ontario Science Centre, Toronto (2016) and McWane Science Center in Birmingham, AL (2018). “These demonstrations illustrated how the ESX and Digistar systems could be utilized to fulfill the USSRC’s mission,” said Johnson.

Once the Rocket Center was ready for bids, things moved quickly. “We began the bidding process in January of 2018 and signed in May,” said Johnson. “The dome installation was completed in December of 2018, and system install was in February, followed not long after by the grand opening.”

Replacing giant-screen film systems

As digital dome projection systems continue to improve, they find more applications. In addition to planetarium upgrades they are increasingly embraced by themed entertainment operators for immersive, media-based experiences, and by museum and science center operators as a versatile replacement for aging giant-screen film dome systems. E&S has actively worked to fill the latter need, with many successes, many of which use Christie projectors. The INTUITIVE Planetarium is one of the newest examples.

Journalist David Hitt summarized it aptly in his report on the new planetarium for Huntsville.org. “...the Rocket Center’s Spacedome IMAX theater...was state-of-the-art itself when it opened more than three decades ago. It had its own impressive bit of technology – a 70mm projector that went on to be one of the last of its kind. Visiting the IMAX theater for classic space movies like “Hail Columbia” and “The Dream Is Alive” was a rite of passage for generations of students in Alabama and beyond. It would take something special indeed to live up to that legacy. The INTUITIVE® Planetarium is up for the task.”

“The U.S. Space & Rocket Center wanted to replace their aging partial dome 1570 film solution with a top-of-the-line 8K digital system,” said Johnson. “E&S designed, engineered and integrated the system in their facility, as well as provides training and



The INTUITIVE Planetarium *Image courtesy of USSRC*

ongoing support to help USSRC bring astronomy and science education to audiences of all ages.”

Of the many benefits cited for the new system, a very noticeable one is reclaiming the sweet spot for audience use. The five new projectors are installed in a ring overhead, replacing the single, massive film projector that formerly sat in the middle of the auditorium. As Johnson said, “One benefit of the redesign was the ability to add premium quality seats in the center of the theater after the IMAX projector was removed.”

Projector bragging rights

Christie has rolled out two models representing its second generation of RGB laser technology: the Mirage SST and D4K40-RGB. These are the result of considerable market research and R&D aimed at raising the bar, in many respects designed to appeal to large venues, planetariums and domes. The D4K40-RGB is the all-in-one model installed at USSRC whereas the Mirage SST has a more compact head and remote light source. The product literature touts 40,000 lumens; all-in-one, energy efficient design; long lifespan and minimal maintenance; small form factor with no external chillers; optimal illumination performance of 20,000 hours to 60% brightness, 5000:1 contrast ratio, frame rate up to 120 fps; new, patented, sealed optical path; operating on single-phase 220V power and ability to deliver more than 95% of the Rec. 2020 color space.

“From a user standpoint, the difference in color performance is very noticeable,” said David Weigel, USSRC Planetarium

Director. “You can pick out every single star in a star cluster. I have noticed that the color range on the screen can’t be quite reproduced in photos – people’s everyday cameras don’t have the same range as these projectors.”

Along with color, there are brightness and uniformity. Said Johnson: “The combined brightness of the five projectors off the Spitz NanoSeam was measured by our technicians at 4.5 foot-lamberts. This brightness is uniform across the entire dome image. The system brightness does not drop off nearly 50% towards the edges like a traditional film or single digital projection system does.”

“The projectors are amazing,” said Weigel. “The depth and vibrancy of color and the clarity they provide are fantastic. The image is super bright, and yet the contrast is great. The brightness is to the point where people can take flash photography and it doesn’t ruin the experience for others. We can fully light the stage for special events and you really don’t lose that much on the dome at all because of the super bright projection,” adding that “the surround sound system can really rock the house.”

Johnson said, “E&S works closely with Christie as they develop new projector technology. We not only have relationships with the sales team, but we maintain relationships with Christie engineering and product management and service. This close working relationship enabled us to offer brand-new technology right off the production line and into USSRC’s theater.”

“E&S is very hands-on and knowledgeable, especially in the planetarium space,” said Boyer. “Because it was a new product, prior to this install there was a lot of education up front, a lot of conversation between Christie’s project manager and the E&S tech team, as well as training on laser safety. This product is based on our TruLife electronics platform, and E&S is very familiar with that and how to interface it with the Digistar 6 configuration.”

The compact form factor, omni-directional function and lampless, solid-state construction are all held up as significant benefits to installation and operations, by supporting non-standard mounting positions (within laser safety guidelines). That can be a critical factor for new construction as well as a retrofit. Larry Howard, Director of Sales, Entertainment at Christie said, “The optimal positions for mounting projectors in a planetarium are sometimes very steep, odd angles. That’s no problem at all with the D4K40-RGB.” Software tools, he points out, have eliminated the issues of blending and alignment that used to raise concerns about replacing one projector with several and mounting them at odd angles.

Boyer said, “Some projectors on the market can’t tilt over a certain degree. If you tilt a xenon bulb past eight degrees, you will start seeing flicker from the lamp trying to maintain the arc. The D4K40-RGB is designed to be used at any angle or tilt, landscape or portrait mode.”



The Christie D4K40-RGB projector supports the Rec. 2020 color space, offering creatives an expansive, rich color palette not previously available. *Image courtesy of Christie*

The conversation on color and cross-reflection

Christie is keen for users to understand the leap in color capability facilitated by RGB laser and has published resources online, including the white paper by color scientist and entertainment specialist Matt Cowan, co-founder of Entertainment Technology Consultants, available at www.christiedigital.com/techpapers/rec-2020-whitepaper.pdf. and a free e-book, “Illuminating ProAV” available at christiedigital.com/illuminationguide. Christie also hosts color demo shootouts for first-hand, real-life comparison viewing of three color gamuts: Rec. 2020 (facilitated by RGB laser) vs Rec. 709 (associated with HDTV) and P3 (associated with DCI, the Digital Cinema Initiative).


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The Christie D4K40-RGB projector supports the Rec. 2020 color space, offering creatives an expansive, rich color palette not previously available. *Image courtesy of USSRC*

Cowan describes Rec. 2020 as a superior color space in terms of representing the real world and achieving precise color matches that can reproduce colors not possible with Rec. 709 or P3. He writes, “Rec. 2020 color provides the opportunity to display a better representation of real-world colors than the commonly used color spaces for television and cinema. The standards committee for Rec. 2020 chose color primary coordinates that are at the extreme edge of the visible color space...RGB laser illuminated projectors are ideal for achieving this.”

RGB laser projection can deliver this expanded color space, but laser phosphor projection cannot. Both are lampless projection technologies; the key difference is how the light is produced. Laser phosphor uses blue laser diodes as the primary light source, generating the three primary colors by shining the blue light of the diodes onto a spinning wheel coated in a phosphor compound. The blue light excites the phosphor, emitting yellow light; dichroic coatings are used to further segment the colors.

RGB laser is lamp-free, wheel-free and solid state. It employs individual red, green and blue laser diodes as its light source, and they are scalable. The scalability supports ever increasing levels of brightness and the individual, primary color diodes support the Rec. 2020 color palette.

A longtime bane of dome projection is cross-reflection. The concern that brightness will create cross-reflection in a dome theater often leads to specifying projectors of relatively low lumen output. This assumption is being challenged. “Based on extensive testing done using Christie projectors in contemporary dome environments, we are comfortable with higher brightness in today’s planetarium settings,” said Howard. “Thanks to new technology, we can set aside some of the old specs from decades ago and stop dancing around cross reflection.”

Loving it live

Weigel’s approach to planetarium programming emphasizes real-time, in-house custom content and audience participation

and reflects his own, palpable enthusiasm for astronomy and space science. “Live shows connect with audiences in a way other programming can’t,” he said. “I try to engage with the audience as much as possible. We want to give them something high end, but also to keep things current and cutting edge - an experience that is welcoming, engaging, entertaining and educational without feeling like a lecture or a tour guide. We’re all in it together, on the journey through the cosmos, learning and sharing the excitement, being wowed by the sheer awesomeness of the universe.”

In the months since opening, Weigel has been on a journey through the Digistar 6 universe of tools and resources to produce a steady stream of live shows, while also dipping into libraries of pre-rendered shows for fulldome exhibition.

Enumerating some key features, Johnson said, “Digistar combines image quality, simulation power and ease of use. Planetarium shows can be developed quickly and seamlessly with the Digistar 6 show builder. Users have access to comprehensive and frequently updated astronomy data and can share content in the Digistar Cloud. There is also an extensive library of science and STEAM content, connectivity to live scientific data feeds and support for 3D and virtual reality.”

Weigel’s experience with Digistar 6 would bear out Johnson’s description. Weigel’s first day on the job as INTUITIVE Planetarium director was Feb 27, 2019 – one day before the ribbon cutting. He brought with him a wealth of experience using World Wide Telescope but only limited acquaintance with Digistar. Nevertheless, on Feb 28 there he was – creditably and confidently enough - demonstrating Digistar 6 to a VIP audience. “We flew live with an X-box controller and did a brief tour of leaving the Earth and going to the Moon, and it was very well received.”

Weigel brought in some new presenters and content creators, and trained some of the existing staff, adding up to a core staff of five fulltime people plus several part-time. “Every single Friday we have a unique presentation that we’ve basically been working on for the week,” he said. “Evening programming is almost exclusively our own content. Thanks to Digistar and the amazing new projectors, the visuals we are presenting are stunning.”

Along with its investment in the planetarium, INTUITIVE® (the company) is the Apollo 50th Golden Anniversary Sponsor for all U.S. Space & Rocket Center anniversary activities. At this writing, programming celebrating the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11 and the moon landing was fully underway, including a distinguished panel presentation with Apollo-era scientists and engineers, moderated by Weigel, who is clearly loving his profession. “It’s a neat thing to be a part of and a ton of fun.”

“This is the finest investment INTUITIVE could have made in our community for space education,” said Dr. Barnhart. “This is an investment for decades to come.” •••



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Vehicles converge in the “lobby” of Popcorn Revenge before heading into one of the themed theaters for more game play. All images courtesy Alterface, unless otherwise noted.

Kernels of truth

As its name implies, the Erratic Ride provides for an unpredictable yet rewarding experience in Walibi Belgium’s new Popcorn Revenge attraction

by Martin Palicki

What would YOU do, if popcorn suddenly tried to eat you? That Seussian-style question is what riders are faced with at the new Popcorn Revenge ride at Walibi Belgium. The dark ride, created by pairing Popcorn Revenge IP with the Erratic Ride® system (both developed by Alterface), is as whimsical and unpredictable as a Dr. Seuss story. The IP and ride technology are available separately or as a package, as is the case at Walibi.

“There’s something magical about not knowing what is going to happen next,” says Alterface Founder & CEO Benoit Cornet. Erratic takes a traditional trackless dark ride and allows for variations on the ride path and effects, creating almost limitless combinations of experiences, and encouraging repeat riding.

Founded in 2001 and headquartered in Belgium, Alterface has 68 dark rides installed worldwide. Erratic marks a shift in how the company approaches dark rides. Traditional dark rides (and storytelling in general) have followed a linear format, where scene A is always followed by scene B, always followed by scene C and so forth.

More recently we have seen multi-linear style rides, such as Mystic Manor at Hong Kong Disneyland, Antarctica at SeaWorld Orlando and Symbolica at Efteling. There, vehicles travel in groups through the same A, B, C scenes, but the guest might experience a different path or effect in each scene. The car you are seated in determines which path you get to experience.

The non-linear style of ride pioneered with Erratic allows each car to go to different places in any order, and in fact, a complete ride will likely not include all the scenes in an attraction. Additionally, scene lengths and gameplay differ based on a wide variety of factors. A vehicle may travel A, C, D, B or maybe D, E, B, C or perhaps A, B, C, D. Although the system is random, the experience does not come across that way. It’s highly choreographed with a large number of variations and designed to be a high capacity ride. The ride can occupy a very small footprint and fit in a variety of spaces.

The name Erratic actually refers to a family of rides, all of which are non-linear. They can be compact or large, and don’t have to have the same design style or layout as Popcorn Revenge.

Walibi welcomes the popcorn

With 1.5 million in annual attendance, park CEO Jean-Christophe Parent considers Walibi “one of the key players in the leisure market.” Walibi Belgium is part of the French group Compagnie des Alpes, which owns and operates theme parks, ski resorts and attractions across Europe.

Being close neighbors for over 15 years, Popcorn Revenge marks the first real partnership between Walibi and Alterface. Cornet first pitched the idea to Parent several years ago, who fell in love with the idea and incorporated it into Walibi’s park planning.

The attraction is part of a multi-year enhancement program announced in 2017 that includes new attractions and extensive re-theming of lands throughout the park. By 2023 guests will be exploring eight new immersive worlds. To date, Exotic World and India-themed Karma World have been completed. Karma World’s Grand Maharajah Theater is home to Popcorn Revenge, which blends a western movie theater with the sights and sounds of Bollywood.

Bringing popcorn to life

Alterface decided to use an IP of their own for the attraction to help people understand how a non-linear Erratic ride could actually operate. According to Alterface creative director Laurence Beckers, the popcorn in Popcorn Revenge have come to life and are upset that they never get to see the end of films (because they are eaten). They think it’s time for us theater-goers to learn a lesson, so they are on the attack. Armed with shooting devices designed as popcorn topping dispensers, we are able to neutralize the angry popcorn kernels, who have already wrought havoc in the theater.

The team at Alterface took six years to develop the characters, which they now license as IP directly to the parks. Compared to major studio IP, the Popcorn’s Revenge IP is reasonably priced



Players enter a theater and neutralize popcorn targets invading a space-themed film.

A fruitful Benelux collaboration

In addition to Belgian-based Alterface the Netherlands’ design/build company Jora Vision and ETF (trackless ride vehicles) made for a Benelux-centric production team. Other partners include Belgian-based Barco for projection technology and Painting with Light for light technology. [Editor’s note: Benelux refers to the three countries Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg]

Jora Vision worked on Popcorn Revenge’s storyline and design. “We wanted to provide a precise level of detail,” says Robin van der Want, project development director for JoraVision. Every movie theater room has custom-designed wallpaper themed to each film, and the main lobby of the theater has all the projectors piled in a heap – the result of some popcorn shenanigans.

ETF has long partnered with Alterface on attractions and since 2014 they have been a 45% shareholder in Alterface. ETF’s vehicles have been used in countless rides, and Popcorn Revenge utilizes their standard trackless car, which follows a guidewire buried in the floor. According to ETF CEO Ruud Koppens, the trackless car provides several advantages. Aside from being able to move in different routes, staff can quickly add or remove vehicles from operation, vehicles can almost always return back to the station for an evacuation operation, and the battery powered vehicles can use lower-cost electricity overnight to charge for the following day.

Popcorn Revenge Facts

Time: 3-4 minutes long, randomly

Length: 99 meters of track

Throughput: 510 people/hour

Vehicles: 7

Shooting devices: 42 (6 per vehicle)

Projectors: 9

Maximum score: 500,000

so smaller parks can include a story-based attraction with an IP that isn't tied to a particular film or TV show. The IP license also includes merchandising opportunities on a revenue-share basis. This allows a stream of revenue for the park, but also income for Alterface to put into updating and improving the attraction.

The IP is not limited to the Erratic-style of ride and can be used on other dark rides or attractions. According to Alterface, merchandise sales have exceeded expectations at Walibi and more products are in development.

Through queue theming, riders are armed with the backstory information and then board one of seven six-seater vehicles. Once dispatched from the loading station, every vehicle proceeds

to the first scene. Here, guests see the popcorn come to life and can start a bit of target practice. From there the car moves into the theater lobby scene, which is circular. Radiating from the lobby, four curtained doors lead off into individual theaters. Only one vehicle will be in a theater at a time, but multiple vehicles can be in the lobby area at the same time, meaning riders will likely see others during the course of the ride. Vehicles can travel clockwise or counter-clockwise around the lobby on the way to the next scene. Depending on where the Erratic ride sends the car, it may linger in the lobby for a little bit, or it may proceed directly into one of the theaters.

Inside, popcorn have taken over the film and riders have a few seconds to use their topping dispensers to vanquish the



Top: Realistic projection creates the appearance of a movie theater stage with animated popcorn wreaking havoc in the theater. Bottom: Players in trackless vehicles move unpredictably throughout the Popcorn Revenge attraction. Bottom right photo by Martin Palicki inparkmagazine.com

The future is Erratic

by Benoit Cornet, Founder & CEO Alterface

The idea of non-linear experiences has been on our mind for a very long time, as far back as 2001, when we presented the first concept of a non-linear walking experience featuring screens and interactivity. At the time, however, there were still technical challenges involving the ride vehicles and other tools needed to create a successful experience. Additionally, these non-linear attractions present challenges for storytellers, who must ensure a storyline is not compromised if a guest does not experience every element of an attraction. Now we have been able to address those challenges, both technical and creative, and developed the Erratic Ride®. In addition to being a new concept attraction for the market, it is well-designed to take advantage of three driving forces in the industry:

1) Non-linear attractions are valuable commodities. In recent years, operators have begun to understand the value of a non-linear attraction. By their very nature, non-linear attractions create nearly unlimited experiences within a single attraction. That drives demand for repeat ridership, which in turn means repeat visitation to parks.

In recent years there have been more attractions that allow for some differences within a singular ride experience. But in these attractions (Mystic Manor, Symbolica, Antarctica, Star Tours, etc...) the variations between the different experiences are limited. Erratic allows the operator the option to set the limits of the variability. When parks decide to install an Erratic Ride, we provide a simulation system that can detail all of the various paths, variations and options possible in a given attraction. This allows the team to select the ones that make the best sense for a specific location.

2) More throughput, please. All operators understand the value of a great guest experience. A critical component of that is ensuring enough people are able to experience an attraction, and visit enough attractions during a day to make their visit



feel worthwhile. This is why throughput matters. Rides have to be able to absorb more people as attendance increases. Erratic excels in this area, especially when comparing throughput to the size of the attraction. Depending on the venue Erratic can process 500-1,000 people per hour. Erratic helps keep lines moving and people cycling through an attraction reliably, day after day. Because the ride continually makes adjustments while operating, throughput is rarely affected, even if one vehicle has a maintenance issue.

3) Space is almost always at a premium. There aren't many venues out there that don't have to deal with some sort of space limitations. Most parks have limited acreage available for development. More than likely an attraction will need to be worked into an existing space or converted from an older attraction. Erratic can be shoehorned into small spaces without a lot of infrastructure investment on the part of the park owner. Because vehicles don't have to travel in one line from start to finish, structural elements such as pillars or "dead ends" can be worked around. The vehicles from ETF have tight turning radii and can enter and back out of scenes with ease. Of course, Erratic will also work in a large venue, but it is truly designed with the small venue in mind, including FECs and indoor parks. We have already designed some packages that allow for adjustment of each attraction to different geographies and type of partners. •

angry popcorn appearing on the screen. Because the shooting system is camera based, both screens and objects can be targets. Animatronic targets could also be added easily.

Vehicles then either back out into the lobby or can move laterally into another theater. Most riders will experience three of the four theaters before entering the final scene and then returning to the station.

Cornet discloses that there are "Easter eggs" hidden within the ride: special routes and vehicle movements that can be unlocked based on players' scores. He won't share these secrets but advises checking the scoreboard after exiting the ride. It shows which high-value characters have been caught, and also shows which

other ones were missed. A team that captures them all will have had access to the Easter egg rewards during the ride.

Behind the scenes

According to Cornet, Alterface's Salto show control system operates as the "master of ceremonies" for the attraction and runs the Erratic ride. Each vehicle operates independently and is sent directions of where to go periodically throughout the ride. Roughly every 45 seconds, Erratic sends out another information update to all the vehicles, instructing them where to go next and what to do. Cornet likens this to a dance instructor clapping to keep the rhythm. Each clap checks in with every vehicle and the computer decides where to send all of the vehicles based on that



In this Alterface rendering of the Popcorn Revenge attraction at Walibi Belgium the central lobby of the attraction is visible, along with the four themed theaters, entry and finale scenes and load/unload areas. As is evident, the attraction fits in a relatively small footprint.

moment in time. These periodic updates keep the ride moving smoothly, yet unpredictably. In this application there are seven different paths the vehicles can traverse, but there could be more.

Unlike a traditional linear ride where each scene lasts for a specified amount of time, the cars in Popcorn Revenge may stay in each scene for around 20 seconds. This variation in scene duration allows for the differences in ride paths. In essence, Erratic can tell a vehicle to stay in a scene for a few seconds longer so another vehicle can clear out of its way before moving.

The media facilitates this timing flexibility by having three components. An intro loop plays while a vehicle enters the room and continues until it is time for the next scene. Then a special event (custom to the theme of each film) happens in the media to transition into an exit loop, while the vehicle moves away from the screen.

“The whole ride is really dynamic, because the computer is constantly adjusting the media content and duration for each scene based on the location and paths of all the other vehicles,”

explains Cornet. “It’s a very sophisticated system of movement required to keep the ride from slowing itself down.”

According to Cornet, a non-linear dark ride allows changes to the attraction to be made easily. Without a precise linear story for the ride, adjustments can be made without affecting the narrative. At Walibi, the park opted to have a soft opening for the ride as soon as it was ready and has been open to making adjustments to the attraction based on guest feedback and experience. Already there are plans to start the gaming action in the opening scene sooner, and enhancements are coming to the Hall of Fame at the end of the ride.

“Walibi is a place where old and young can have fun together with their family and friends, and Popcorn Revenge epitomizes that philosophy,” says Parent. “It’s a perfect addition to the park and a good example of how the park will evolve in the future.”

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Painting with Light boosts visual & sensory experiences at Popcorn Revenge

Painting with Light, the Belgium-based light technology specialist, was commissioned by Alterface to design and install the complete lighting at the new Popcorn Revenge dark ride in Walibi Belgium. The main requirement was to have lighting enhance and support the highly detailed video action appearing on the screen in each space, along with additional elaborate scenic elements. It had to help ramp up the gameplay and blend seamlessly with other visual elements in the ride. “We really had to get our heads inside the psychology of the Popcorn Revenge characters and storyline,” says Luc Peumans, CEO of Painting with Light.

Eleven areas in total needed imaginative lighting, including the individual theater spaces through which the ride cars pass plus the queuing area and car loading station. After receiving the technical drawings of the scenery and descriptions of the visual material in each space, Painting with Light created a technical lighting design, including illustrations of how the lights would be used and explanations of practical aspects like cabling and maintenance.

Maintaining flexibility in the lighting design was a major challenge. All the movies playing in the theaters might be changed or modified in the future, so lighting had to be thought through not just for what is there now, but also for potential updates yet to come. The Painting with Light team chose a mix of architectural and show lighting fixtures. Most

of the architectural units highlight the many highly detailed decor aspects of the ride. In the theaters, effects lights are instrumental in building a sense of anticipation throughout the ride.

The central lobby area alone features four different moods: black light and UV denote darkness and suspense; angry is evoked with blue chasing lights; happy sees the space lit with bright and positive colors; melodrama has lighting descending into a gaudy, chaotic atmosphere with flashing and clashing colors.

Over 100 Gantom LED fixtures light the primary architectural areas, 80 Gantom DMX RGBW Floods are deployed for highlighting and accenting props, curtains and other set pieces. Six Gantom Precision Z Spots in cool whites are picking out the graveyard theatre space spiderwebs, bringing their intricacy alive with crisp bluish tints. Gantom One Pinspots are used in all the theatre spaces, crowning the tops of the stages, and six Gantom Precision Z Floods are deployed lighting the popcorn machine outlets in the queuing area.

“We have enjoyed great teamwork, creativity and fusion of ideas and skills with Alterface and the other expert partners,” says Peumans. “Together we produced a world class attraction that is a huge success and a whole lot of fun for the park visitors.” •



Exploring IAAPA Europe

Meet recent additions to IAAPA's European team

interviews by Martin Palicki

In anticipation of IAAPA Expo Europe 2019 (September 17-19 in Paris, France), InPark interviewed some of the IAAPA EMEA staff who recently joined the team. All will be on hand during the Expo.

Christian Bürkle Manager, Marketing and Communications

How did your career lead you to this role at IAAPA?

I previously worked for one of Germany's largest media companies, where I was responsible for online marketing activities and online shops. Along with my Bachelor's degree in digital media, the skillset I learned there was a match for this marketing and communications role with the IAAPA EMEA team. As a theme park lover, I knew I had to apply for the job.



What are you responsible for as marketing and communications manager?

I'm responsible for marketing activities throughout the EMEA region so we can best serve the needs of our current members, as well as future members.

What do you hope to accomplish in your first year with IAAPA?

I want to bring people together and help our IAAPA team continue to build the attractions community and connections.

What new things should people expect when they attend IAAPA Expo Europe 2019?

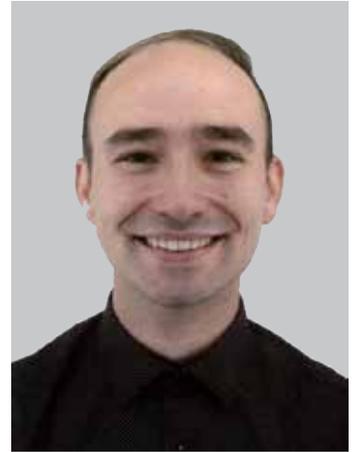
This year we have the largest trade show floor ever! Attendees at IAAPA Expo Europe will see more than 600 exhibiting companies, many that are here for the first time.

The Expo will also have an extensive conference and education program including a brand-new ticketed event "Future Feature" (September 19, 12-2 p.m.). During this session, industry veterans from Disneyland Paris will share highlights of what is ahead for the resort and the Disney brand.

Ignace Woinin Coordinator, Membership

How did your career lead you to this role at IAAPA?

My longstanding avocation as an amusement park enthusiast drew me to IAAPA. I have written for theme park industry magazines in Belgium for many years. Prior to joining IAAPA, I also worked with McDonald's, which taught me how to work in a busy environment!



What are you responsible for as membership coordinator?

When a new member joins the organization, I am their first point of contact. My role is to assist with everything from processing membership, to creating logins and credentials, to helping ensure they know about all the benefits and resources IAAPA offers.

How do you think IAAPA members can best maximize their membership in the association?

IAAPA is all about connection. Membership with IAAPA helps connect industry professionals with others around the world.

The best advice I give to members is get involved! Attend events, such as IAAPA Expo Europe and the regional networking events. Volunteer to serve on a committee and get to know the IAAPA team. We are here to serve our members and help them make connections, build relationships and grow their businesses. I love working with our members and being a part of this industry.

What are some of the networking opportunities at IAAPA Expo Europe 2019?

The opening reception, held at Jardin d'Acclimatation, is a great place to meet many industry professionals. This will also be a great opportunity to meet the IAAPA EMEA team.

The Young Professionals Forum and Reception at Le Manoir de Paris is ideal for people new to the industry to connect with their peers. The event will be held at a "haunted" mansion in Paris. The attendee young professionals will enjoy a reception followed by the opportunity to bravely enter the house. A good laugh or scare is always a great way to break the ice and meet new people!

**Manjana Roth
Director, Office
Operations**

How did your career lead you to this role at IAAPA?

I have a business degree in marketing and commerce. For the past 15 years, I have had the chance to organize many international events including corporate meetings, incentives, galas, trade shows and hospitality programs. I also have a strong background in marketing and communications as well as leading multi-cultural team structures.



What are you responsible for as director of office operations?

IAAPA is a busy association, and the EMEA region is continuing to grow. My main responsibilities are to manage the day-to-day operation of the EMEA office in Brussels, which includes human

resources and finance matters, event organization and marketing and communications. I am also the Government Relations liaison for the IAAPA EMEA GR Sub-Committee.

Tell us about IAAPA's growth and resources in the EMEA region.

IAAPA EMEA has grown a great deal over the last few years, and we will continue to do so as we tap into new constituencies and areas still in development. We also partner with many national associations that help provide combined potential to address key topics which are relevant and important to our industry including accessibility/inclusion, employment laws, visa & tourism regulations, sustainability and more.

And of course, this Expo is a very great resource. IAAPA Expo Europe continues to grow and evolve each year. By moving each year, we give our attendees the unique opportunity to experience incredible cities and to visit so many members in the regions. We can also highlight the many, vibrant cultures found throughout Europe. I'm excited and proud to be a part of this team and look forward to the Expo in Paris. •••



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The photo souvenir

How photo prints can be used to enhance the park experience, drive revenue streams and encourage return visits

by Suzanne Seagle, Director of Marketing, DNP

For park guests, a photo represents the excitement of the moment; a way to preserve the memory and the emotion of the experience. Offering printed photo souvenir packages allows guests to take home a personal memento of their visit and creates a deeper, stronger emotional bond, and a connection to the brand that will ultimately lead to repeat visits.

Park-goers routinely make—and indeed want to make—spontaneous, unplanned purchases in theme and amusement parks. Branded prints with a park logo or custom borders and folders are among the most popular items sold at attractions around the world. Branding a photo print increases the exposure of the park’s brand and is a great way to showcase the experience to prospective guests.

The Photo Imaging Division of our company, DNP Imagingcomm America Corporation, is a leading supplier to amusement parks and attractions and delivers award-winning digital photo printing solutions that provide custom photo souvenirs. “Park visitors want to capture the moment, and they take thousands of photos on their smartphones every day, but they often have no way of viewing those photos off-screen, and they very rarely print photos at home,” said Cliff Reeves, Director of Sales. “The growth in printer hardware and media sales

suggests that consumers are rediscovering and appreciating the emotional power of printed images. For the attractions industry, this represents a major opportunity to improve the bottom line.”

Many parks have considered print on-spec with the hope that seeing the finished product will spur sales and convince customers to purchase packages. Having prints on display and ready for purchase immediately after a ride, or a green screen photo, is critical for driving sales. Short wait times and small crowds will increase the chances of a sale. DNP gives park operators the ability to produce large quantities of high-quality images quickly and capture their guests in the moment.

“There are two rules that apply to maximize souvenir photo and photo package profitability,” said Reeves. “The first is to take photos that are hard or impossible for people to take on their own, and the second is to provide a level of print quality, sizes, and finishes that can’t be duplicated by consumer inkjet printers.”

Reeves explained that park operators have consistent success with mascot photos and entry gate photography. For parks that branch out and look to deploy photography in more areas, they have had success with haunted attractions, seasonal events and even hiring a roaming photographer to capture photos of guests.



On-ride photos provide opportunities to create souvenirs for guests they can’t get elsewhere.
Photo courtesy DNP.

The Tech Matters: Dye-sublimation

While the capture device is vital to the success of in-park photography, the technology behind producing printed packages is equally important in ensuring the best possible quality product. The two most widely used photo printing methods available are inkjet and dye-sublimation. Inkjet printers spray droplets of ink onto specially-coated papers, whereas dye-sublimation printers use a dry technique that diffuses dye onto paper. This dye comes in the form of a ribbon, which is converted into a gas by a heated print head that is then absorbed by a special receiving layer on the photo paper.

Dye-sublimation printing offers several advantages for park operators, including high margins, low maintenance, and speed. When it comes to printing with a dye-sublimation, since there are no expensive ink cartridge refills, the price per print is the price per print. Dye-sublimation media (paper and ribbon) prices generally don't fluctuate and are usually good for hundreds of photographs in a single roll.

And unlike ink jet technologies, there is no smudging, running, or blotching because prints are dry and ready to touch as soon as they leave the printer. Dye-sublimation prints are resistant to fingerprints, dust and fading, and typically are available in glossy, matte, fine matte, and luster finishes. Implementing a high-quality dye-sublimation solution also minimizes downtime, ensuring photo operations are running and producing prints without delay.



DNP's dye-sublimation paper and ribbons.
Photo courtesy DNP

There are a variety of advantages to dye-sublimation printers, but for a park operator, it often comes down to a much lower cost of ownership, including the hardware, software, and paper. Dye-sublimation printing gives the user predictable costs.

“Park operators need to be able to produce unique, high-quality, profitable prints before guests lose interest, and dye-sublimation printers are the fastest, best quality, most flexible photo printers available,” added Reeves. “Our dye-sublimation printers can print high-quality, full-bleed, customized images in a matter of seconds, ensuring every print is ready and available for purchase, even before the ride is over.” •••



Suzanne Seagle is the Director of Marketing for DNP.

A large advertisement for 'Seasonal Entertainment Source' magazine. The background is dark blue with teal geometric shapes. At the top, it says 'FIGHT MEDIOCRITY AT YOUR ATTRACTION' in large white letters. Below that, it says 'InPark Readers Receive a FREE Print Subscription here: www.SeasonalEntertainmentSource.com'. In the center, there are three magazine covers: 'MEMORABLE MOMENTS', 'ILLUMINATION', and 'INNOVATION IN INTERACTIVITY'. At the bottom, it says 'EDUCATION & INSPIRATION FOR SEASONAL ATTRACTION PROFESSIONALS' and 'SEASONAL ENTERTAINMENT SOURCE'. A small text at the very bottom reads: 'We Provide seasonal attraction industry professions a quarterly magazine of in-depth education they can use to combat mediocrity and make their events both memorable and profitable.' The advertisement is framed by images of people at a seasonal attraction.

WWA heads to Disney

Exclusive conversation with World Waterpark Association Chair Damien Latham

interview by Martin Palicki

Damien Latham is the Board of Directors' Chair for the World Waterpark Association (WWA). He recently left a position at Emaar Entertainment to start his own consulting business. InPark spoke with Latham about his role at WWA and the organization's upcoming conference in Orlando (October 7-10, 2019 at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort within the Walt Disney World Resort).

Tell us about your recent professional transition and your new role.

Having left Emaar as CEO of Entertainment to pursue the opportunity to work on some new world-class projects, I have now set up my own consultancy and currently have business in the UK, Middle East and China. However, I do plan to return to an operations-based role in the not too distant future.

Where do you think the waterpark market is heading in the EMEA region?

There are some amazing parks that have opened over the last five years and some significant reinvestment into well-established parks. I think the combination indoor/outdoor park with a signature hospitality model is a well-documented route for this region. Still, for obvious reasons the boundaries of what the customer expects need to be constantly challenged by bold investor-operators and designers and continual innovation.

How did you first get involved with WWA, and what led to becoming WWA Board Chair?

Roger Currie from Neuman Aqua introduced me to the 2005 WWA Las Vegas show and I instantly engaged. I think the educational sessions were the first I had ever seen specific to our industry. I saw this as a huge benefit which was closely linked to the largest waterpark show I had ever seen! From there I volunteered as a speaker and committee member and was elected to the Board of Directors in 2012 - a proud moment for me.

What are you most looking forward to at this year's WWA conference in Orlando?

This year we are at the *Walt Disney World Resort* in Orlando and we have a packed agenda of educational and social events with a full show floor of the world's foremost waterpark suppliers. Meeting with key suppliers is always a thing I particularly enjoy, and I relish discussing new projects and finding solutions to existing ones with colleagues. The show is really a one-stop shop to accelerate your parks.



Damien Latham

What are some key benefits WWA provides to international members and vendors?

Above all it gives you a massively diverse platform of learning and development, keeping your finger on the pulse of safety, design trends and customer experience enhancements.

Are you optimistic about the industry today? How can we identify the great new projects?

The size and quality of new projects is encouraging for our industry and shows great confidence in its growth on all fronts. There are some fantastic projects across the globe - way too many to call out here - but we do recognize them through our annual awards: the WWA Leading Edge awards. They are given to individuals or parks for creativity in the development of new themes, facilities, programs, services or operational concepts in the water attractions industry; and/or to suppliers who have developed new concepts, products or services to the benefit of park members, their customers and the water attractions industry. We announce them each year at the conference.

What's the best way for people to get involved with WWA?

Planning a trip to the *Walt Disney World Resort* in Orlando on October 7th – 10th for our show is the biggest move you could take to get involved. As a first step, consider becoming a member and engaging with our online platform. I look forward to welcoming you, however you choose to get involved. Visit wwashow.org for more details. •••

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THE WWA SHOW brings you face to face with some of the most brilliant people working in waterparks and waterpark resorts all over the world. Reenergize yourself and your business by attending our high-impact educational programs and networking with our innovative exhibitors. Visit WWAShow.org to book your room at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort and get registered today. Questions? Call +1-913-599-0300.

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