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Have you ever wanted someone to just sort through all the newspapers and magazines you receive and only give you the most important clippings and stories? For several months now, IPM has been doing just that for news pieces related to the themed entertainment industry.

Our weekly Top 5+5 email is comprised of the five most viewed stories on the IPM news website, plus an additional five stories we think are the most important or interesting we've come upon. Finally, we pick one blog post of original content or other special item from the internet to highlight and give you a quick summary along with the link.

The emphasis is on the news itself. There's enough information to whet your whistle for each story, and the short format allows you to quickly scan the items and click the links that most interest you.

The email comes out once per week, every week (except those weeks that we release the digital issues of InPark Magazine). If you aren't receiving it already, you can sign up directly on our home page at www.inparkmagazine.com. If you are already receiving the digital IPM issues but NOT the weekly Top 5+5, simply adjust your settings as indicated at the bottom of your digital issue email. Or just drop me an email and I'll take care of it for you. Best of all, it's totally free...and you can change your preferences at any time.

In other news, it's trade show season time. Be sure to look for InPark at the WWA show in New Orleans in October and IAAPA in Orlando in November.



-Martin Palicki
martin@inparkmagazine.com

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people

Zuber & Taillieu continues to expand its corporate and finance practices with the addition of **Andrew Erskine**, a seasoned financial attorney. His practice addresses lending, regulatory, securities and other transactional activities of financial institutions.

Mr. Erskine has built his career on the skillful representation of financial institutions and their affiliates in a broad range of transactional and regulatory matters. His transactional experience includes secured and unsecured financing transactions, mergers and acquisitions, purchases and sales of financial and other assets, loan restructuring and corporate financing transactions. He has extensive experience in financial institutions' regulatory matters, including counseling of financial institutions faced with heightened regulatory scrutiny.



WhiteWater, The Waterpark Company, is pleased to welcome **Pat Finnegan** to its team of over 450 employees worldwide. Finnegan will represent WhiteWater as the Vice President of Sales - North Eastern United States.

Pat Finnegan is no stranger to the waterpark industry; he is a 26-year veteran who comes to WhiteWater from Chula Vista Resort, in Wisconsin Dells, WI. Pat joined the Chula Vista team in 2006 as the VP of Aquatic Development and Operations and went on to become Vice President and General Manager.

Prior to Chula Vista, Pat spent 18 years at Wet 'n' Wild Orlando, as Director of Operations, where he was a key player in modernizing the park, putting his experience in revenue operations, park operations, park services, food and beverage, catering, safety and security and guest relations to great use.

Finnegan is on the World Waterpark Association Board of Directors, Chair of the Children's Drowning Prevention Council, Vice Chair of the WWA Safety Committee and Chair of the IAAPA Waterpark Committee from 2006 to 2009. He is also an award-winning industry presenter, recognized with the WWA 2007 Best Speaker Award and the 2008 Kelly Ogle Memorial Safety Award.

projects

HOLLYWOOD, CA – When **Universal Studios Singapore** celebrated its official grand opening, the new theme park in Southeast Asia sported a Hollywood tie-in that includes more than just its namesake.

Brent Young, co-founder of the Hollywood-based new media production company **Super 78**, is one of the creative principals behind MADAGASCAR: A Crate Adventure, the highlight of Universal Studios Singapore grand opening celebration and the first attraction in the world based on the DreamWorks Animation film franchise. The nine-minute, indoor mega-flume ride features Alex the Lion, Marty the Zebra, Melman the Giraffe and Gloria the Hippo as animatronics along with digital projection, special effects and a bubbling volcanic cauldron.

"Madagascar: A Crate Adventure is unique to Universal Studios Singapore and transports guests into the worlds of these immensely popular DreamWorks characters using a range of special effects that immerse them convincingly into the story and the experience," says Young, who also helped design the theme park's Donkey LIVE!, a one-of-a-kind, interactive live show that lets guests sing along and even talk with another popular DreamWorks character, Shrek's side-kick Donkey. "Theme park enthusiasts and fans of the movie are going to love the remarkable attraction the teams from Universal, DreamWorks and Resorts World Sentosa have created."



Young's extensive experience designing cutting-edge, mixed media themed experiences for theme park attractions around the world not only put him in a lead role for the new attraction, it also landed him a role as a creative director for the new theme park at **Resort World Sentosa**, the \$5-billion integrated resort destination on an island just south of Singapore.

In addition to helping design and install new attractions at Universal's theme park, Young also is working as the creative director and film director for another area of the Resorts World Sentosa development -- The Typhoon Theater, the primary attraction inside the Maritime Xperiential Museum, which is expected to debut later this summer. This one-of-a-kind, 360-degree immersive attraction literally and figuratively sinks the audience into the story of 9th century merchants working the ocean routes of the Silk Road as a massive typhoon hits. The experience features a powerful story line, a world-class venue and state-of-the-art, in-theater effects that include projection mapping.

Young is accustomed to the challenges of working half a world away. In addition to the work in and around Resorts World Sentosa, Super 78 has also produced attractions for theme parks in Shanghai and Shenzhen, and is currently working with a theme park in the Jiangsu Provence.

"The appetite for themed entertainment around the world is enormous, particularly for experiences that feature characters made popular in Hollywood," adds Young. "And I don't see that enthusiasm fading any time soon."

places

AMMAN, JORDAN – **Rubicon Group Holding** (RGH), a diversified global entertainment organization producing innovative digital animated content and location-based attractions, will design and produce The Red Sea Astrarium (TRSA), a 184-acre themed entertainment resort located in Aqaba, Jordan, which, through a license from **CBS Consumer Products**, will prominently feature an amazing attraction inspired by the 2009 international hit motion picture, **Star Trek**. The “Star Trek” attraction is being creatively developed by Paramount Recreation.

That announcement was made by Randa S. Ayoubi, CEO of Rubicon Group Holding, at the Jordanian-American Business Forum, under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in a special signing ceremony attended by business leaders from Jordan and the United States. TRSA, which will look to the future to celebrate the heritage of the region’s past civilizations, will generate employment for more than 500 high-skilled workers in the local community, with RGH facilitating the training for these key jobs, as well. The themed entertainment destination will serve as a model for “green energy,” incorporating state-of-the-art renewable technologies throughout the facility, and hosting a “future” pavilion where businesses, students and attendees can learn about alternative energy sources ranging from solar and wind energy to greywater harvesting. The project, a milestone in the development of tourism in Jordan, will provide a progressive and entertaining “celebration” of the region’s culture and heritage.

From a stunning location in the coastal town of Aqaba, TRSA features classic story telling combined with immersive entertainment experiences to bring about a world-class leisure adventure. Capturing the rich history of the surrounding area, this wondrous attraction draws from Nabatean, Babylonian, British and Roman influences to provide an incomparable adventure. With an impressive array of technologically advanced attractions, five-star accommodations, captivating theatrical productions, nighttime spectacles and unique dining and shopping, The Red Sea Astrarium offers something for everyone.

To complete the chronological spectrum with a futurist perspective, RGH has joined with CBS Consumer Products and Paramount Recreation to create a stunning Star Trek-themed center that will deliver a variety of multi-sensory 23rd-century experiences, culminating with a state-of-the-art space-flight adventure that takes real-time immersive entertainment experiences to bold new heights. This exciting, world-class attraction will serve as the cornerstone of the TRSA sector’s world of tomorrow. This will mark the iconic property’s first themed entertainment venue outside the United States.

Architectural firm **Callison** has been engaged to work with Rubicon Group Holding and its team of visionaries, including Paramount Recreation and CBS, to master plan and create a world class destination resort. “At its core, Star Trek is about bringing worlds together and about a profound hope for the future,” said Liz Kalodner, EVP and General Manager of CBS Consumer Products. “We are proud to bring such a unique, interactive Star Trek property to this part of the world to be a part of Jordan’s future.”

products

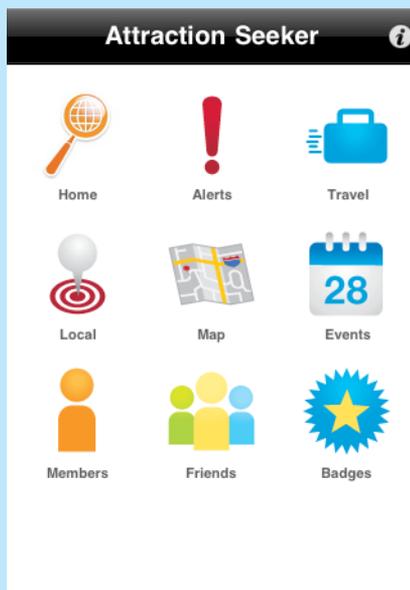
TheWorldConnection has launched two new websites (AttractionSeeker.com and AmusementMarketing.com) and an iPhone app (Attraction Seeker) for the Amusement Industry to build a real-time network between visitors and attractions using cutting edge technology.

Attraction Seeker is designed for the general public. Users can quickly register using Facebook, Twitter or Foursquare to track their adventures, share with friends and family, and earn badges. The system is integrated into Google Earth showing distance between attractions. The site is able to conform to many different attraction types. Thousands of events, amusement parks, water parks, zoos, museums, family entertainment centers, fairgrounds, monuments, historical landmarks, botanic gardens, ecotourism, rides, roller coasters and points of interest are currently identified. New information is constantly being added and kept up to date.

Amusement Marketing is designed for Attraction Reps and Strategic Partners to update and maintain their information in our robust database. It offers a marketing platform for attractions to reach their target visitors through mobile and web advertisements.

With smart phones rapidly replacing traditional cell phones, people are becoming more connected on the move than ever. Many attractions are introducing custom mobile apps, which keeps their fan base informed and coming back. But how about the new visitors? If someone has never heard of an attraction, they will not visit nor download the mobile apps. Many general search apps, like the Google App, have simple, out-of-date information. This is a major void bridging traditional marketing with digital marketing within the amusement industry.

Now there is a free iPhone application that fills this void, called Attraction Seeker. The app is designed to work with traditional media and inform the isolated traveler of the attractions / events around them. The user is offered relevant, real-time information and coupons depending on their current location. A majority of the features from AttractionSeeker.com are integrated into the mobile app; allowing the user to plan and guide their trips.



chinese acrobatics

edg goes international with a stunt show in china

by Mike Casey

When Atlanta-based edg (formerly Entertainment Design Group) received an invitation in early 2007 to submit a proposal to create major set pieces for what was billed as “The World’s Biggest Stunt Show” at a recently opened theme park, company principals Steve Guy and Rick Clark jumped at the opportunity.

Both had established their careers and reputations at Six Flags Theme Parks before setting out in 1990 to create their own event production and design/fabrication shop. edg quickly established itself as the go-to shop in Atlanta, throughout the Southeast, and ultimately across the country. Their key capabilities included scenic design and fabrication of themed environments, event planning and production, as well as audio visual and lighting services. Building scenic elements for a theme park couldn’t have been more up their alley.

The assignment – to create elements, including exploding boxes, collapsing balconies, a runaway mine car, a functioning submarine and a full-sized airplane that would crash during the show’s finale – seemed tailor made for edg.

But there was a catch...two, in fact. First, the project had an extremely tight schedule, as the stunt show was scheduled to open to the public in 8 weeks. Second, and no less daunting, the theme park was in Guangzhou (formerly Canton), China. edg had a well-established reputation in the states, but this would be their first international assignment.

Mirage Entertainment, Inc. – the company responsible for producing the “Danger Island” stunt show for the Chimelong Paradise theme park in Guangzhou – ultimately chose edg for the assignment.

“We knew of edg’s reputation in the States as a creative and innovative scenic shop, and we were impressed by their depth of experience within the theme-park environment,” said Bob O’ Neill, vice president for Mirage Entertainment, Inc. “When we met with the team and reviewed their ideas, we knew we wanted to partner with them and make this project edg’s first international assignment.”

Clark’s design and fabrication team immediately went to work on the required set pieces, while the install crew hastily set out to update their passports and secure their required work visas. The project became an “all hands on deck” endeavor, with up to 20 edg artists, artisans, fabricators, and even senior managers working to finish the pieces and get them shipped out to Guangzhou on time.



“Danger Island’s” crowd-pleasing finale prominently features several of edg’s creations, including the submarine, fighter plane, break-away balcony and runaway mine cart. Photo courtesy of edg.

The install team, headed by edg project managers Gary Tilt and Warren Umphress, arrived in Guangzhou with just weeks to install their scenic elements before Danger Island's opening day. The team quickly learned about the unique challenges inherent to many international projects.

"The time difference threw us our first curve ball," explains Tilt. "The jet lag was easy to get over, but we were literally halfway around the world from the home office – our day in China started when our Atlanta headquarters was closing up, and vice versa. Making changes to a design element meant losing a day due to the time difference."

Most of the elements were installed without issue and performed as designed. Two design issues that required on-site modifications involved the Submarine and the Airplane.

The submarine was designed to submerge and surface in the water with the help of four inflatable pontoons placed along four columns at each corner of the sub. The problem: if the inflatable pontoons did not fill at exactly the same rate, they would not raise the sub at the same rate, and the sub would come up front-end-first or back-end first (or not at all). The simple fix involved switching to a "scissor lift" mechanism that would be fixed to the bottom of the sub and the floor of the pool. When the scissor lift was extended, the submarine would

rise; when it was contracted, the sub would submerge.

The airplane (a "life-sized," futuristic fighter jet designed to be hurled over a wall and land in the water during the show's finale) had two issues that needed to be resolved. First, the belt drive, which hurled the plane over the wall, needed to be replaced with a more durable chain drive and chain dog. Second,

**"We were in China!
There were no
corner hardware
stores or supply
shops – and there
certainly wasn't
a Home Depot
nearby."**

the plane itself required extensive reinforcing to withstand the repeated trips over the wall and into the water.

These were normally fairly easy and routine fixes. But, as Umphress points out, there was one small problem:

"We were in China! There were no corner hardware stores or supply shops – and there certainly wasn't a Home Depot nearby. And,

of course, we couldn't drive ourselves to look for materials. We had to use our assigned drivers and travel with our interpreters.

"But we did learn that just about any item we would need could be found at what essentially were enormous flea markets. These places sold EVERYTHING – but there was no rhyme or reason to where a specific item would be sold at the market. An item found at a specific location in the market one day might not be found at that same location – or anywhere at all – the following day. We had to be creative and resourceful, and – most of all – patient when collecting the materials required to make the modifications that were being designed on the fly (and sight unseen) halfway across the world in Atlanta."

The edg team worked tirelessly - often around the clock, and even after the show opened – to make sure that the scenic elements they created would perform as desired.

The result: "Danger Island" opened to record crowds and enthusiastic reviews. Having "passed the international test" with Mirage Entertainment, edg has been tapped for other Mirage projects abroad, including the "X-Men Stunt Show" in Bottrop, Germany; additionally, edg remains on Mirage's short list for consideration for future assignments.



The Submarine set-piece for the "Danger Island" stunt show gets some finishing touches in edg's Atlanta-based shop before being shipped to its ultimate home in Guangzhou, China. *Photo courtesy of edg.*



Billed as the World's Biggest Stunt Show, "Danger Island" featured plenty of action – and plenty of spectacular pyrotechnic displays, courtesy of edg's design & fabrication and installation teams. *Photo courtesy of edg.*

speed in the desert

Claire Gollicker reviews Ferrari World's racy honeymoon period and asks how the world's largest indoor theme park is being received
by Claire Gollicker

Six months after the grand opening on November 30th, the attractions industry's eyes are still pinned on Ferrari World. Partly because images of the world's fastest roller coaster throwing 4.8g at goggle-wearing guests are hard to erase; and partly because we're all a bit curious to see if pasta al funghi and 240 km per hour entertainment will provide enduring appeal to Middle Eastern fun-seekers.

Ferrari World is so special because it is a first. It goes far beyond the familiar concept of a car manufacturer putting up an 'experience center' in its own backyard. The world's largest indoor theme park not only sets out to reflect Ferrari's brand values of "passion, technical innovation and excellence" but to draw tourists and businesses to Abu Dhabi (a goal it seems to be supporting with the news that the number of tourists in Abu Dhabi rose 10 per cent in the first quarter of 2011 year-on-year). For this was the brainchild of Ferrari and Aldar Properties, the Emirate's premier real estate development, management and investment company.

Although this might be the biggest single display of Ferrari, for the UAE, Ferrari World is part of something much bigger.

As far as the attractions are concerned, the brief to experiential design and realization company, Jack Rouse Associates (JRA) was clear: to select exceptional experiences in the form of appropriate extensions of the Ferrari brand. "We had to create a balance of attractions and strike as many chords as possible with each guest contingent, from very small children up to older adults, female as well as male," says Randy Smith, senior project director. "Ferrari World is not just about racing. We had to integrate a number of story threads, about heritage, Italy and culture." The result is a series of firsts, from the world's fastest Formula Rossa rollercoaster to the Junior Pilota racing school where kids can race in scaled down Ferrari F1TM cars.

The park reports that attendance and per capita spending on food and merchandising are exceeding estimates. With operations now

'bedded in,' the park is well into the serious business of keeping visitor numbers buoyant. It is creating regular themed events around the F1™ race calendar and global cultural events, extending opening hours to cope with holiday periods and attending fairs, such as the Arabian Travel Market in May this year, to attract the tourist trade. An annual pass was introduced in March.

"Our primary target is the UAE audience," says Troy Lindquist, director of marketing and sales, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi. "Seventy-five percent of people come here purely to work so Ferrari World is an ideal outlet for those who want to play hard too. We're pleased with the numbers of guests coming from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. They've all been very receptive."

Like any new opening, the operators have had a few surprises. "We've found the reaction to a couple of the attractions even more positive than we expected," says Lindquist. "The Speed of Magic 4D dark ride in which a young boy travels through fantasy landscapes to find a



One of two 'special' simulators – a Ferrari F430 Challenge GT sports car mounted on a platform on top of the (six degrees of freedom) motion base. Photo courtesy of Ferrari World Abu Dhabi



Many guests are quite happy to sit and watch the simulator attraction, just like for a real Formula 1™ race. Photo courtesy of Ferrari World Abu Dhabi

mythical character has really captured guests' imagination. Also, we probably underestimated the popularity of the Scuderia Challenge in which eight professional, full motion, racing simulators can be raced separately or linked up together."

The simulator provider, Cruden B.V. of The Netherlands was the first company to install its products under the iconic Ferrari World roof. It had a team on-site through the installation and various opening phases, led by operations director, Niels Leerdam. "Straight away, we noticed that as soon as the doors opened, people would run straight to the simulators. The word got out pretty quickly that this was the ride to go on," he concurs.

When it came to the selection of racing simulators for the Scuderia Challenge, JRA needed to find a high end system – one actually used by professional race teams – which could equal the immersive, high quality experiences of the roller coaster and dark rides. Their first stop was the Gestione Sportiva, the Formula 1™ part of Ferrari, which proposed to use Cruden as a supplier. "The simulators have helped to create an attraction that scores very highly on the deliverables we set for each Ferrari World attraction: the most sophisticated ride system available, a great show and a great story. The at-home and out-of-home market is full of racing games but we wanted to get out of that," says Randy Smith. "We wanted something you could only do in a few places in the world and then take that even higher." This was achieved by creating two 'special' simulators – a Ferrari Formula 1™ car and a Ferrari F430 Challenge GT sports car – by mounting the actual vehicles

on a platform positioned on top of the (six degrees of freedom) motion base. The park charges an additional 50 AED for these two driver experiences and they are continually occupied.

"Like any new park, we are now in the phase of comparing our theoretical operational process and throughput rates with reality," explains Lindquist. "With Scuderia Challenge, demand is exceeding supply. Loading time for the simulators is a crucial factor in determining hourly capacity and we've taken a number of steps to improve that. We've added an operator to assist guests climbing in and out the simulators while one administers the queue. In terms of queue management, we ask guests to reserve a time slot on arrival which allows them to get the most out of their visit. The great thing about this attraction is it enhances the whole guest experience, whether guests want to drive themselves or not. We've created an observation area where guests are just feet away from the motion systems and most people are quite happy to sit and watch, just like for a real Formula 1™ race."

So if high demand is the only problem facing Ferrari World (Lindquist admits that they've had to close the doors on occasions to maintain the guests experience), what is next for the Ferrari brand in entertainment? Michele Pignatti, head of new business at Ferrari, has suggested that the Yas Island attraction will not be the only branded theme park by the Italian carmaker. But for this year at least, there will be certainly be more than a few industry insiders vacationing in Abu Dhabi.

guest experience on the high seas

vision and hospitality by Royal Caribbean International;
Placemaking by FUNA International
by Judith Rubin

Royal Caribbean International's Oasis of the Seas (2009) and Allure of the Seas (2010) are the biggest cruise ships in the world. Each vessel is a 16-deck, 5,400-passenger, 225,282-ton, \$1.4 billion floating family resort. Each is 1,181 feet long and 154 feet wide with seven themed zones and 50+ venues featuring state of the art technologies for entertainment, display and communications. Time Magazine called Oasis "a giant leisure machine, with more spas, pools, bars and activities than you could probably hit in a week."

The modern cruise ship industry offers valuable lessons and opportunities for projects in all sectors. Whether on land or on sea, the successful realization of a "giant leisure machine" takes an extensive team effort and a symbiosis of creative and technical design. Notably, through a unique and effective blend of hospitality and placemaking, Royal Caribbean's vast cruise ships deliver a fertile, state-of-the-art environment for storytelling.

"Today's leaders in the cruise ship industry are taking the entire concept of themed entertainment environments and applying them," says Rex Stull, President of FUNA. He sees a "huge crossover" between cruise ships and land-based projects today. "Oasis has the Royal Promenade, carousel, comedy club, restaurants, theaters and large themed entertainment spaces." The crossover also manifests in personnel: Numerous senior FUNA employees have backgrounds in theater, at major theme parks and Las Vegas



The scale of Allure is apparent in this photo taken while the "giant leisure machine" was still under construction. Photo courtesy of Royal Caribbean.

resorts. "We try to have both creative people and tech people on the design staff – to use both sides of the brain," says Stull.

The family market is another parallel. "What we are seeing now," says Stull, "is demand for a more active vacation by families, and a younger crowd. Oasis has a 28,700 square foot Youth Zone with areas for four separate age groups: teen clubs, outdoor teen areas, more than 50 child counselors on the ship, plus zip lines, rock climbing, surfing machines... Entire families take these cruises."

In terms of building culture, "The cruise ship can be the model for the greenbuilding age, now that they are starting to rein in space requirements in buildings and developers want to consolidate to a smaller footprint," said Stull. As a model for entertainment complexes, "the ship is 24/7, multipurpose and multi-use, running 12 hours a day or more. You need things compact and reliable. You've got to have safety compliance." People flow is another finely honed art on a well-run cruise ship: Oasis and Allure can have more than 6,000 people moving among their multiple entertainment venues.

Multiple storytelling platforms

DreamWorks Animation recognized the potential to apply an overarching theme on Royal Caribbean's cruises by creating a series of DreamWorks-based guest experiences in the ships' wide variety of spaces and places. In a videotaped press interview, CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg spoke of integrating the company's characters, stories and storytelling and cited such creative options as character breakfasts, movie screenings and live interactions and entertainment shows.

In other words, the cruise ship environment offers a versatile series of venues that can be made story-rich. Its theaters, clubs, dining rooms, public spaces and even staterooms are all storytelling-ready platforms. By virtue of the current alliance, this plays out via DreamWorks productions and celebrity characters engaging guests by way of unique events and parades such as interactive character meals, photo opportunities and stateroom programming. All these

entertainment offerings are included in the cruise fare.

The addition of 3D cinema was a crowning touch. In a first for Royal Caribbean, each ship's main theater – the Amber Theater aboard Allure and the Opal Theater aboard Oasis – now has a top of the line 3D cinema system in addition to being a fully equipped, Broadway caliber performance space. In keeping with the current alliance, these theaters are able to screen the DreamWorks Animation line including premieres of new titles such as Kung Fu Panda 2, in addition to presenting Broadway musical productions such as Hairspray and Chicago. (Royal Caribbean's Freedom of the Seas and Liberty of the Seas now also boast 3D cinema systems and the DreamWorks Experience.)

Configuring 3D cinema on a cruise ship has its own special challenges. FUNA International supplied audiovisual system integration, engineering and technical design for the theaters and most other venues on these vast ships. On Oasis and Allure, FUNA's initial design team was led by Marc Goossens, assisted by FUNA senior project manager Derek Warner and senior technician Andy Clement. As the project transitioned from conceptual design to supply contract, Warner headed the team for detailed engineering from FUNA's Finland offices.

"No room to miss"

"We called upon FUNA and their team to come up with creative technical design solutions in a number of areas including physical placement, additional cooling and power and integration with the existing audio system, and the result is a 3D movie experience as good as or better than any land-based theater," said Christopher Vlassopoulos, Entertainment Technology and Technical Direction for Royal Caribbean International & Celebrity Cruises. "People at the highest level at Barco [projection supplier], DreamWorks and Dolby [sound system supplier] were 'blown away' with the result. It looks and sounds great."

Another of the ships' signature spaces, the Royal Promenade, is comparable to a large

NEXT PAGE: DreamWorks storytelling elements extend even to shows on the cruise ship's ice rink. Photo courtesy of Royal Caribbean.

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shopping mall atrium, super-charged with functionality. This community gathering space is three decks high with 18 passenger cabins overlooking it, and lined with shops and restaurants. Its central avenue accommodates a regular parade schedule. "You'd never know, walking through the Promenade, that it is equipped for all kinds of shows, live music, recorded music, background music and so forth, because you don't see any of the gear except a few moving light instruments," remarked Warner. "But it can transform via audio and lighting into a full-on entertainment venue."

Warner adds, "I worked on ships thru the '90s and it is hard to explain how much the industry has changed from then to the present day. The ships I worked on then, you could fit into the Promenade on Oasis. But it's not just the sheer size – the entertainment technology packages we're designing and installing are light years beyond what cruise ships used to have. These showrooms really do rival some of the best theaters in Las Vegas."

Stull feels that land-based projects would benefit by observing the planning phases of marine-based jobs. He emphasized that "because ships are cutting steel very early in the process, architectural coordination and integration, the process of defining your scope, and planning your systems" are more thorough. "Ships are forced into that because there's not a lot of room to miss." He also advises taking a harder look at the long-term footprint of a project. "That's something cruise lines do because they know their single biggest expense is fuel!"

This article uses excerpts from "Oasis of the Seas: How to build a world-class mixed-use entertainment complex in a floating metal shell" which ran in the March 2010 issue of Sound & Communications magazine, published by Testa Communications, www.testa.com. Reprinted with permission.

FUNA



Costumed characters help keep things lively on the ship's Royal Promenade, a multipurpose gathering space lined with retail and equipped for performances. Photo courtesy of Royal Caribbean.

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from the ground up

Judith Rubin talks with Phil Hettema and Craig Hanna about their involvement in two new parks planned for China



During a visit to New Orleans, Phil Hettema of The Hettema Group graciously took some time to speak to IPM contributing editor Judith Rubin about his company's new project

– developing the master plan and concept design for Sanrio's new Hello Kitty theme park. The park is scheduled to open in Anji, China, near Shanghai, in 2014. It will be Japan-based Sanrio's first theme park in China.

Hettema was in New Orleans for the annual gathering of the American Institute of Architects, to lead a private group showing of Beyond All Boundaries, the award winning 4D experience his company produced for the National World War II Museum. He praised the Museum for doing an excellent job of

maintaining the popular show, which depends on a precise coordination of media with theatrical props and effects to tell the story of US involvement in the war.

It might seem incongruous for a company coming off an American historical attraction to next announce designing an entire family theme park in China, but as Hettema points out in the following interview, storytelling is storytelling. And he's no stranger to large-scale undertakings: prior to establishing The Hettema Group about 9 years ago, Hettema oversaw the creation of Universal Islands of Adventure in the role of senior vice president for Universal Creative.

Judith Rubin: How'd you land the job?

Phil Hettema: The Hettema Group has an established relationship of trust with Sanrio – we've been working with them for some time, looking at a number of projects. We've

been developing the Hello Kitty theme park concept for more than a year.

JR: What kind of project site are you working with?

PH: It isn't your typical flat site; elevation will be a unique factor. The location is one of the greenest parts of China and is really lovely. It is part of the fundamental concept to incorporate a Nature theme and a sense of landscape into the experience of the whole park. We're working to create a landscape palette to help tell the story.

JR: What are some other unique design challenges of this project?

PH: It's very exciting to work with Sanrio and bring the Hello Kitty family of characters to life. We have the chance to take a fresh look at how those characters get interpreted into a theme park, and to build fans for Sanrio in China also.



The entrance to the Hello Kitty theme park, as envisioned by The Hettema Group. Photo courtesy of The Hettema Group

Sanrio has hundreds of characters, each with a unique personality. They have been an integral part of culture in Japan for decades. It's our job to capture them authentically and incorporate them into the fabric of this park.

This will be a contemporary spin. The existing Sanrio parks were done quite a long time ago, and there are new ways to use media now to bring these characters to life and give people the chance to interact with them. That plus the backbone story about the importance of caring for the planet equals a great story to tell. It's a fun, creative challenge that we welcome to develop the characters, craft the story, and make it all fit.

JR: Are Sanrio's Hello Kitty characters well-known in China?

PH: Hello Kitty has a pretty strong presence in China, but we will go beyond her immediate circle to have about 35-40 characters appear in the park. I think part of the reason Sanrio is doing this is to open their demographic amid the developing market in China. The first goal is to make it a great place for families to come: as the middle class in China grows, there's a corresponding need for family entertainment and family activities.

JR: How will you assemble your team?

PH: The core team and creative direction will be in-house at The Hetteema Group. And we will partner - as we always do, and as everyone does in this industry whether they admit to it or not - with other talented groups for certain technical resources, project management and some other services.

JR: How big will the team be?



Craig Hanna, Chief Creative Officer of Thinkwell Group, talks to InPark Magazine editor Judith Rubin about designing the Monkey Kingdom theme park, set to open in 2014 near Beijing.

Monkey King Co. Ltd, a subsidiary of the real estate, financial and cultural industry investment enterprise Zhonghong Real Estate

PH: In the first phase of this project, about 30-40 people. As it moves toward completion, that number will grow.

JR: With the team in place, how will the process unfold?

PH: We have become adept at working with all the latest conferencing technology - like everyone else now is in this industry. But ultimately, the work gets done across the table. We'll have our core team and regular status meetings. People get brought in and plugged into the plan, and everything will be coordinated with regular updates and sharing of information.

The secret of building a really great theme park is that all the elements combine: food and merchandise, landscaping, area development, the technology in the rides and so forth. It's all interrelated - so the biggest job on a project like this is communication. There is so much happening so fast. Once concept and design are complete, it becomes a real project management challenge to bring all the entities together and maintain the quality of design throughout.

Nowadays, these kinds of projects are built on business alliances with a combination of government involvement and private interests bringing talent together to make it happen. Theme parks are not simple projects, and they don't follow a typical process. Usually, a lot of education has to go on with local authorities and construction firms. The challenge is always in making sure that the bases get covered as the project gets executed.

JR: The park is projected to open about 3 years from now. Is that a fast timeline?

announced on May 28 that Thinkwell Group would design the park, which will form the first phase of a planned, major mixed-use complex and total investment of 10 billion RMB (\$1.53 billion USD). See the original press release here.

Judith Rubin: How did Thinkwell secure the contract for this job?

Craig Hanna: We have been working with Chairman Wang for about one-and-a-half years, thru our representation in the region. Thinkwell started on the blue-sky phase of the project about a year ago.

PH: For a complete theme park, it is not leisurely. We will be moving very quickly and I will be traveling to China frequently.

JR: The Hetteema Group is 9 years old now. How long after you started the company did it take to establish the Hetteema "brand" within the industry?

PH: It's the same as establishing any business: it takes about 5 years to get your legs under you. I like to think we've always delivered great creative products, but it takes a while to get a company to run, and we creative people are not always the best at running companies. It has been an education. I'm proud that today the company runs pretty well, and has a great staff.

JR: Your company's projects occupy the spectrum from entertainment to education. Does that pose a challenge in terms of presenting yourself and your abilities to a client?

PH: One thing that distinguishes us is that we try not to have a house style: We solve the problem that's in front of us. I think of it all as storytelling - who is the audience and what is the story we're trying to tell.

One of our strengths is that we blend architectural discipline (we have architects on staff) with everything from master planning to media to show production. Media and architecture are becoming inextricably blended together. As we undertake projects, we're thinking about the environment we are creating - bricks and mortar and also media. Neither comes up without the other. They play together to create the full guest experience.

JR: Is three years from now to opening a little bit of a fast track?

CH: Yes.

JR: The project is described as "highly immersive." Can you elaborate?

CH: Unlike other visitor attraction projects in China that are by and large amusement parks with some level of theming, this one is based on a vision of a world-class theme park. It has pushed Thinkwell creatively, resulting in what I believe is one of the best designs we have ever done. The environments are extraordinarily

rich and detailed, and the park will include a number of proprietary attractions that are very innovative and which I believe will be unique not only to China but to the world. I have to hand it to Chairman Wang for wanting to have that level of offer in China. And of course it will utilize media, technology and all the best theme park techniques in our repertoire.

JR: Please talk about the cross-cultural collaboration in the application of the Monkey King theme and the overall project.

CH: The Monkey King exists in a series of fables and stories with 100% penetration in China. The closest you could liken it to in the US is Santa Claus. Every man, woman and child in China, from the oldest to the youngest, knows what the Monkey King looks like, about his adventures and the ancillary characters. That is an incredible breadth and depth of storytelling to tap into.

The challenge to us as a Western firm is knowing how to tap into the zeitgeist of China – to know and fulfill their expectations in telling these stories. It’s not unlike the challenge Peter Jackson had with the Lord of the Rings movies:

there was an existing impression in fans’ minds of what these characters looked like based on Tolkien’s original books, and he had to get it right. Jackson went to Lord of the Rings fans, and what he learned informed his filmmaking; Thinkwell brought in a world-renowned specialist on Monkey King, and that specialist’s insight and guidance inform the design of this project.

It’s not going to be 100% Monkey King: we are also including many elements of Chinese culture, architecture and history, and melding these elements to create a new, characteristic look and feel.

JR: Will Thinkwell also be overseeing the construction phase?

CH: Yes.

JR: Who are primary members of Thinkwell’s team for this project?

CH: Paul Redding as Project Director and Dave Cobb as Creative Director under my direction as Chief Creative Officer – with the rest of the team to be announced soon.

JR: What’s the next phase?

CH: We are rapidly deploying now to begin schematic design.

JR: The movie tie-in that was announced points to an intriguing trans-media business model.

CH: We are working with a major studio in Hollywood to partner with our client to create a major international motion picture release that would creatively integrate with the development of the park. Consider early Disneyland: a lot of that park was based on already-released motion pictures that people already had an affinity for, and of which there was a high level of awareness. It’s not unlike Universal doing an attraction based on Men in Black or Harry Potter. In this case, we’re working with a classic series of stories that have been around for hundreds of years, and - in what I believe is a first - bringing in a Western movie studio to create a world class release with an instant tie-in to that intellectual property and to this new theme park.

JR: So, with that business model, you stand to bring Chinese culture to the West

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Designs for Monkey Kingdom call for fanciful, highly themed environments. Photo courtesy of Thinkwell

and to the world at large in a way that hasn't happened before.

CH: Yes.

JR: Monkey Kingdom is part of the plan for a very large and ambitious mixed-used complex with more than one conference center, more than one exhibition hall and several hotels. What is the timeline for all these other components?

CH: Phase One includes the theme park and some other components of the entertainment district, plus a hotel.

JR: Are the Chinese making the most of what US theme park industry veterans have to offer? Is this project an example of a good balance in that regard?

CH: I think the Monkey Kingdom theme park is a great example of the collaboration between East and West, bringing together our knowledge and expertise in design,

technology and implementation with their culture, their construction knowhow and their real estate expertise. In my opinion this is the only way you can create a world-class theme park project in China.

JR: Based on your experience working in this market, what should Chinese project developers and operators keep in mind as they create these attractions and complexes?

CH: Many developers in China are only considering the very first piece of the puzzle which is land use plus a concept. But - if you are planning on seeing it all the way through - you have to look to implementation: how to get it done with a quality result that fulfills the intent, and to operations. To that end, Management Resources is a key partner with us on this project and they are bringing their world-class expertise in park operations to the task. Thinkwell has worked hand in hand with Management Resources many times and we value their level of input on the planning and

implementation side of things - to make sure what we designed actually can function.

A lot of pieces have to fall into place in the making of a theme park. This client has resources and a solid track record in real estate in China. They have the land and they've brought in the appropriate expertise (and I'm not just referring to Thinkwell) to get the job done, along with an amazing intellectual property. I think all those things point to a great level of success. With an amazing vision, the right business expertise a solid company, Chairman Wang has what it takes to pull all this off.

As of press time, news outlets were reporting that Chinese government had put a halt to many theme park development programs in China in an attempt to cool off the country's real estate market. The status of Monkey Kingdom and Hello Kitty theme parks is undetermined.

speaking in tongues

the international language of entertainment

by Norman Kahn, *Utopia Entertainment, Inc.*

As many of us know, one of the biggest challenges in producing an attraction in another country is the language barrier. It used to be said that when producing an attraction for a local audience, you had to create it in the local tongue. And while in a lot of locations that is still true, it is becoming more and more necessary to create shows and attractions that communicate their key messages to a broader audience at the same time.

When I first started at Universal Studios, we would create alternative language performances for our popular attractions like WaterWorld and the Western Stunt Show. We would perform one show in English and then one in Spanish, and as such we considered that we were reaching a broader audience. As parks were developed in international locations, we would often look at how to incorporate the local language, essentially translating the entire experience for the local guest.

But as international travel has grown exponentially, counting on that local language to be the sole conduit for communicating your attractions content has become a risky proposition. It seems more common that you need to consider creating an experience that is easily understood and appreciated by all, breaking through the language barrier, and relying on the common themes and key story points to be as easily understood as possible.

Some of the side effects of this globalization have been to make the stories that these attractions are based on much more simple. In other ways, you may also be making the experience slightly shorter, in the sense that you don't have to deal with any of that tricky "exposition" of setting the back-story and explaining the characters motivations and situations in detail. This inevitable shortening of the attraction has positive benefits, as many

guests these days, in the iPod, iPad, Smart phone generation don't have the attention span to follow a 25 minute show as enjoyably as they once did.

On a recent project in Japan, we chose to embrace not only the local language of the Country, but also the original language of the show. We embarked on presenting the show half in Japanese, and half in English. We made sure to cover all of the relevant story points in both languages, but also chose to embellish key emotions and themes that we specific to each language, in that language. It was an interesting exercise in not only picking with themes to emphasize in Japanese, or English, but also an interesting experience testing it with potential guests to gauge the understanding and comprehension of the story material.

We recently did a project in Hong Kong, where we had to present the show in three different languages (English, Mandarin, and Cantonese). When we set out on the design of this attraction we were forced to decide on how much storytelling exposition we would embark upon, as doing it in three different languages would present a major difficulty in keeping the show moving along and to keep it engaging and entertaining. We decided to use the language of the show to communicate key phrases and to help punctuate the action on the attraction's large water screen, versus relying on language to tell the story. It was a bit challenging, especially keeping the different messages straight, but in the end, the use of the multiple languages helped to keep our story points very focused and concise. This in turn helped to keep the show moving, with very little pauses in the action for narration or explanation.

Here are some simple tips to consider when doing a project in the local language, or languages:

- **Keep it Simple** – The simpler the story points, dialogue and narration, the easier it will be to understand and enjoy
- **Double Check the translation** Don't just rely on one translator or one translation, but have it double-checked. This is very important, not only for the literal translation of the content, but also to get a broader view of how the words might be interpreted by a broader group of people.
- **Remember, that in many languages, words and concepts have multiple meanings**, so to avoid confusion, try to be as clear as possible as to what the intent of the translation is, so that you don't get caught up in the double entendre'
- **Remember to test the guest satisfaction and understanding of the attraction early** in its run to determine if you are getting the level of understanding and comprehension to help the guests enjoy the experience.

At first, working in another language can be daunting, but if you embrace the opportunity to rely on the Universal language of Entertainment to help communicate the excitement and drama of your attraction, you will find that working in other languages, or even multiple languages at the same time can be exciting and liberating.

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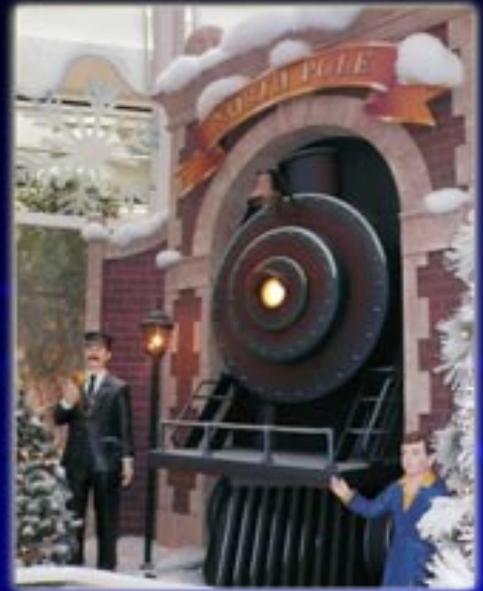


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