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Continental know-how

European experts on storytelling and technology in attractions

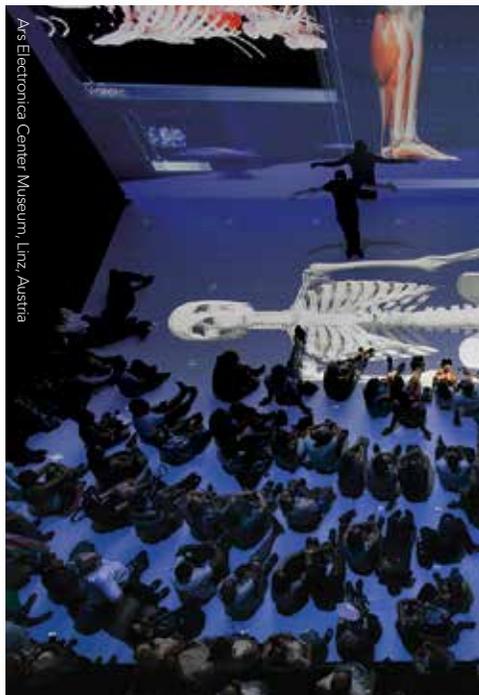
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Invest wisely

**Martin Palicki,
IPM publisher**



Experiences, things, and demographics

**Judith Rubin,
IPM editor**



I was traveling in Turkey working on this issue's cover story about Polin when the value of the Turkish lira started to drop precipitously. Although pundits fretted and politicians glowered, it was apparent to me that people kept going to work, out to dinner and to the various sights around Istanbul. In the resort town of Antalya, where Land of Legends is located, busloads of tourists arrived at the park each day, crowds filled the attraction queues and nearby resorts were bursting with guests.

Naturally, shifts in economies can quickly alter consumer behavior, but even with hiccups here and there, in many parts of the world, things are chugging along quite nicely (from a tourism and attractions perspective at least).

But that doesn't mean developers can get complacent in creating desirable destinations. As Land of Legends manager Cem Tuna impressed upon me, you have to give people a reason to want to come to you. That means incorporating elements of storytelling and technology into a development - elements that create an emotional tie and aura of enchantment. Oftentimes, leveraging IP is one piece of that puzzle. Utilizing the latest AV equipment to create a dynamic multimedia experience is another.

Inevitably, the chugging economy will sputter a bit, and people will adjust their spending habits accordingly. By creating a destination that appeals to the desire for magic and intrigue, you can set yourself up to weather down times and position your attraction for success over the long haul.

“Value experiences over things” is a mantra heard ‘round the world now and should have the attention of anyone wishing to connect with today’s demographic giants: millennials (66M strong) and Gen Z (69M strong).

The mantra echoes tenets of the Experience industry. Creating value that isn't tied to price. Memorable stories; emotional connections. Self-determination also comes into play, in these days of non-linear storytelling and role-playing. So do trust, and high expectations of quality.

It's about what gives meaning to life – an ultimate reckoning based on experiences rather than ownership. It's about choices. There is an intriguing list of industries and products threatened by the purchasing/non-purchasing patterns of the reigning younger generations. They're selective about spending, mistrustful of corporations. Millennials have substantial student debt; Gen Z grew up during the Great Recession. They are socially and politically aware. When they buy, donate, invest or participate, they exercise their values.

In entertainment experiences, the guest's high standards and values will be in play from gate to gate, door to door, portal to portal. Major companies wanting to connect with these generations need to do the work and they need to communicate it. Meaningful experiences that meet these generations on their own ground, speak to them in their own language, that are unique and memorable... these should be an IP's – or a brand's - calling cards. Our industry stands ready to partner and provide.

team & contributors

PUBLISHER
Martin Palicki

DESIGN
Martin Palicki

EDITOR
Judith Rubin

CONTRIBUTORS
Kevin Dazey
David Paul Green
Jeff Havlik

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Joe Kleiman,
News Editor
Jim Ogul,
World's Fair Editor



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.

CORRECTION: In our June issue (#73) article Tech Savvy: InfoComm 2018, Scott Arnold was accidentally misquoted. We apologize for the error. The paragraph should read:

Video servers, a key element in media-based attractions, are getting much more powerful, according to Scott Arnold, founder of TechFulcrum, a technical design specialist. “Every year you can do more in processing that you don't have to do in post-production. You can be more creative in using video as a medium, through new techniques and technologies like blending large numbers of projectors, pixel mapping, etc.”

COVER: Polin's Storm Racer slide shoots guests at a high speed into a curved uphill ramp, where they pause momentarily before gravity takes over and rafts return down to the splash-out. Aqualand Frejus (France) opened Storm Racer earlier this year.

Full story on p. 26

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Page-turning tech

How does immersive technology drive storytelling?
Ask the specialists

Edited by Judith Rubin

In the world of visitor attractions, technology is now so deeply entwined with design that it is often part and parcel of the conceptual process. We asked five companies with decades of experience serving the global theme park industry to answer the question, “How does technology drive storytelling in today’s visitor attractions?” and to supplement that with current examples.

Ifat Caspi CCO, P&P Projects BV

Based in The Netherlands, P&P Projects specializes in turnkey projects world-wide, from storytelling to design and from production to installation for the entire leisure industry, including theme parks, waterparks, FECs, museums and zoos.



Extend and enrich the world of the story

Over the past few years, we have seen a rise in virtual reality technology, video mapping and special effects. These tools are becoming more and more important in the theme park industry. Using new and innovative technology in an attraction is a hot topic. However, even at P&P Projects, we believe that a good attraction cannot rely solely on the use of such technology.

A good immersive attraction is all about the experience and making an emotional connection with the visitors. Visitors should feel like they are a part of the story and should be able to identify themselves within the experience. The story must first be engaging and immersive to the guest - then the technology comes into play, providing the chance to extend and enrich the world

of the story and the depth of the experience. Our body of work at P&P Projects includes visitor attractions that tell a story with the help of physical sets, projections and special effects, juxtaposed and integrated to create a multifaceted environment. In our opinion, this represents the best approach to experience design and immersing guests so they become part of the story.

A great example is “Ragnfrid’s Saga” which we created as a design-build for Vikingaliv (a Viking-themed museum and experience center in Stockholm, open since April 2017). In this unique project, an 11-minute-long ride where guests are taken on a journey through life in the Viking Age year 963 we combined physical elements with technology, such as projection, to give the scenes more depth, and special effects including water, wind and hot or cold air to stimulate guests’ senses.

Technology can also be used to create interaction between characters and visitors. In the new family entertainment center, Nickelodeon Adventure Murcia (Spain), open since December 2017, we applied technology to enable children to join in an adventure with their favorite Nickelodeon heroes and friends as they play, explore and learn. To create this environment, we stepped away from the standard playground equipment, instead using various interactives to engage the children in the world of Nickelodeon. In this world, you can catch Jellyfish with Patrick or go on a mission with one of the Paw Patrol Puppies.

Nickelodeon Adventure Murcia of Parques Reunidos
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Benoit Cornet
CEO & Founder, Alterface

Alterface, headquartered in Belgium, is a leading manufacturer of interactive and media-based attractions around the world



Interactive dark rides become landmark attractions

If there is a sector where technology has been THE driving force, it is interactive attractions. When first launched, the interactive theatre was such a technology driven innovation that it stands as an example of how sometimes technology shapes the needs and not the other way around, going against the accepted industry maxim.

Dark rides have existed for ages, and technology augmented their appeal, with such elements as media-based scenes, projection mapping and animated figures made interactive. As a result, dark rides today have re-emerged as landmark attractions at many parks.

Steve Jobs once said that “it is not up to the user to define their needs, but to the supplier to offer possibilities.” This is exactly what the market is looking like today. The easiest part is to create the innovation, the most complicated is packaging it in a way that it can be adopted by the market.

There used to be concerns that media-based attractions ran the risk of early technical obsolescence. In most cases, time has proved this wrong. We have media-based rides operating for more than 15 years and still appealing to the public. Because more than the technology per se, it is the capability for the visitor to “get in the dream” that is shaping the way we tell stories.

Bazyliszek (Basilisk), open since July 2017 at Legendia theme park in Silesia, Poland, is a next-generation dark ride using Alterface technologies. This turnkey project was designed to maximize the experience from all perspectives and get the most out of the budget. Strong collaboration between the creative and technical sides (Alterface partnered with designer and scenic fabricator Jora Vision) supported a well-rounded result with a good balance between technology and theming. We selected a 2D projection scheme as best suited to integrate the screens into the scenery and work on this experience. We went for vehicles from ETF capable of sophisticated movements and of aligning the players with the scenes we want them to see. The capabilities of Alterface shooting technology allowed us to place here and there some little “gems” to great effect: Some “targets” were created with projection mapping and others are moving targets powered by actuators. Details like these enhance the story and the magic.



Basilisk at Legendia Park, Poland Photo courtesy of Alterface

A non-linear dark ride such as Popcorn Revenge®, featuring Alterface’s proprietary IP and due to open next spring at Walibi Belgium park in Wavre, is a good example of building in the tech magic from the early concept design phase. The transitions from scene to scene are critical to maintaining the theming and story flow in such attractions, and the type of movement needs to support those in a definitive manner. Erratic® Ride is the first non-linear mixed-media ride ever with dynamic scene changing, whereby players can determine the sequence depending, amongst other, on their ranking and preferences. This ride offers a unique experience and can be installed in a relatively small space, yet with high throughput. The Erratic® Ride is based on and will be operated by the well-proven ETF trackless Multi Mover vehicles. Alterface is to reveal more at the upcoming fall trade shows.

A light and easily understood story, a good balance of action and contemplation, a good mix of technology and theming, a broad appeal to families, are, besides the notion of movement, key elements to a successful themed experience. There are no real “secret recipes.” Our “secret” at Alterface is simply to work to maintain a broad view of the project overall and be as unbiased as possible.

Zoe Shelmerdine
*Sales and Marketing Director,
Garmendale Engineering*

Based in the UK, Garmendale specializes in the design, manufacture, installation and maintenance of rides for theme parks and attractions around the world.



The good engineering is engineering you don’t notice

In the nearly 40 years that Garmendale has been serving the attractions industry, we have seen a huge change in the way the rides are delivered in parks. Most of this is in the stories that are being weaved around them.

Traditionally, rides delivered their thrills without the backstory. Look at the Waltzers that many of us grew up

loving – they simply dimmed the lights, spun you around and rode some hills on an enclosed, circular track. But they were great fun.

Times have changed, and the next generation of theme park consumers have different expectations. At home, they watch their favorite characters on 4K TVs, play games in the first person... and you only need to see the way that a toddler intuitively handles an iPad to realize that things have changed forever.

To consume now means you have to be immersed, so the story is top dead center - and the way that this story is delivered is absolutely critical.

For us, as engineers this presents both challenges and frustrations.

The frustrations are obvious. We create some beautiful engineering solutions and all of them are buried. No one ever sees the engineering as they are immersed in the story, so there is a real danger that the engineering behind a ride is considered as generic.

It's not.

The good engineering is the engineering you don't notice. The challenge comes in engineering the ride to NOT intrude into the immersion. When guests are in a pre-show orientation and beginning to suspend reality - leaving the real world and entering the story - the last thing we need is the clanking of a ride in the background. It's the same when they board the ride. If there's mechanical noise or

The Garmendale Motion Master 30 at Bobbejaanland Photo courtesy Garmendale



jerky movement that isn't planned, the immersion will be broken.

We met this challenge in 2015 with our first 30-seat, motion base dark ride The Forbidden Caves at Bobbejaanland in Belgium. Our brief was to deliver riders into the story in near-silent motion, throughout the ride.

In today's rides and attractions, story is everywhere, story is paramount. IP-based rides are dominating current theme park planning and, in every case, we need to deliver utter consistency of brand and enable total immersion.

We love this challenge. It has pushed us, as engineers, to raise our game even further, to find new ways to engineer immersive, storytelling experiences.

Matt Barton
CEO, 7thSense Design

7thSense Design is a supplier of high-performance media servers, headquartered in the UK.



Proceed with reasonable caution

The way we like to think of it is this: Storytelling should make use of the available technology, but the story should always be the single most important factor of the experience. Technology's role in storytelling is really to be invisible, however new developments and advances continually bring new ways of telling stories and engaging audiences. Technology can facilitate a storyteller's ability to bring concepts and ideas to life in entirely new and exciting ways.

The use of large and complex screen shapes enables storytellers to take audiences wherever they need to be. Today's world is saturated with digital displays - both in and out of the home. The shape of the screen or display surface itself can have a huge impact on how audiences are immersed in detailed scenes - add to this the use of ultra-high resolution, high frame rates and high bit-depth content and it can really make for an incredible, realistic experience.

Technology can support many forms of storytelling. We're seeing a trend in requests for interactive storytelling - so audiences have control over where they go and how they explore within the story. This is an area that is making better use of technological advances so that guests can control, touch and really feel their way through an experience.

Proceed with reasonable caution. Technology can enable magical storytelling but if used incorrectly or clumsily, or

simply for its own sake or as a gimmick, there is a risk that the story can be lost.

Some attractions and sites are choosing to use a mix of immersive display formats to tell their story - different mechanisms can play a huge part in how the story is experienced and understood. A great example of this is the brand-new Parc Spirou in Monteux, France (themed on the Belgian comic strip character, Spirou). The park had its first-phase opening in June 2018. Two major attractions, each unique in its design, from Simworx feature 7thSense Design media server technologies (Infinity Media Server - Active 3D stereo, and Nano-2) throughout: the Immersive Tunnel ride, and the Stargazer Motion Theater.

The Immersive Tunnel is designed for all ages, featuring a 30-seat vehicle based upon Simworx's exclusively produced ride film, "Dinosaur Island," and accompanied by a pre-show starring Spirou himself. Next, Spirou joins visitors seated on a jeep-styled simulator, which after a short journey along a track into the main show area, takes them on a fun-filled dinosaur adventure.

Stargazer Motion Theater, featuring Simworx's 6DOF, 8-seat vehicle, is themed around Gaston Legaffe, a character from the Spirou universe. A total of four Stargazer units will be utilized within the attraction which will see visitors involved in a madcap adventure with Gaston, an enthusiastic inventor who often ends up in trouble!

Hans Christian Stucken
Global Marketing Manager, AV Stumpfl

AV Stumpfl is an Austrian company that designs, manufactures and markets high-performance projection screens and multi-display and show control systems.



AV can turn rocks into rockstars

Today's visitor attractions can rely on a great range of digital technologies that can aid or even fundamentally inspire different storytelling approaches. It all starts with the initial idea. If an attraction is based on a clearly developed IP (intellectual property), the nature of the IP will likely tend to guide the creative team to the kind of stories that need to be told and the technologies with which to tell them.

Sometimes the IP is clearly the star, sometimes a physical site and sometimes the technology itself. In most cases, factors such as these will need to be balanced. The main way in which technology drives storytelling can be likened



The jeep-themed ride vehicle at Parc Spirou. Photo courtesy Simworx

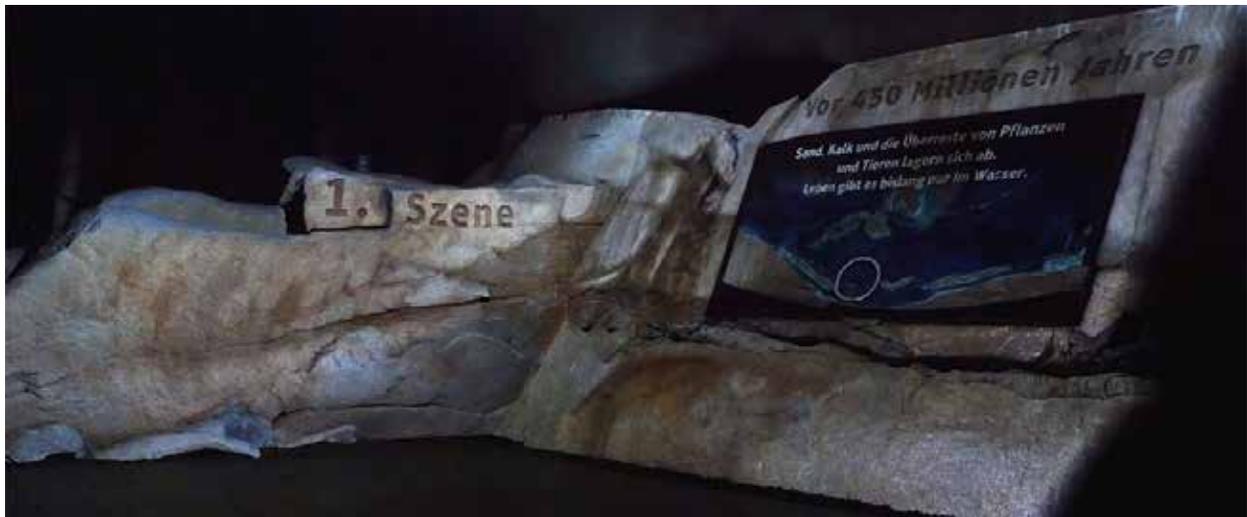
to colors on a painter's palette. The more colors, the more creative freedom.

Theme park designers today have unprecedented freedom when it comes to telling or supporting their stories through audiovisual technologies, and today's market demands it. Younger generations are already accustomed to high definition imagery and non-linear interactivity. Their general technological life experience sets a high bar for attractions.

Interconnected show control solutions that can be centrally controlled and changed in real-time enable an attraction's story to be told in seamlessly integrated ways. The increased availability of uncompressed Full HD, 4K and even 8K content, as well as sophisticated audio technology for 3D soundscapes, allows for ultra-realistic experiences that encourage suspension of disbelief. Displays can be front- or rear-projection, multiple LED displays or smaller LCD monitors.

In the case of the geology-focused Steinwelten museum ("stone worlds") in the Bavarian Granitzentrum (granite center) in Germany, the visual impact of a massive piece of excavated granite rock is enhanced with projection mapping that uses the rock as a projection surface. A rock is about as analog as it gets, but with the help of AV Stumpfl media servers, media producer Hornicolor combined the physical presence of the rock with modern digital technology to aid the geology knowledge transfer and the storytelling. The museum uses a combination of impressive exhibits, self activating HD content display terminals and even an interactive elevator ride. AV Stumpfl's AVIO show control system controls the DMX light and the KNX bus for the electrical system, with a simple touch interface.

At the popular Walibi theme park near Brussels, the brief for their special Halloween attraction, Asylum, was to



Steinwelten (stone worlds) at the Granitzentrum Bayerischer Wald Photo courtesy Christian Horn – horncolor.de

transform a ride into a haunted house while using state-of-the-art, automated AV technology to create an immersive and compelling guest experience. DW Production was engaged to build from scratch all rooms and aesthetic decoration for the attraction as well as the music and effects and animatronics, with GSF Events taking the lead on the technical aspects of the ride with the help of AV

Stumpfl's distributor AED. The Asylum story unfolded, as visitors to the attraction passed through a series of eight rooms filled with memorable scenes of ghoulish delight. The AV Stumpfl AVIO control system was used to handle the seamless automation of hundreds of interactions that were vital to the storytelling. •••

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All things DMX

The expanding DMX control universe is a technical boon for themed entertainment design

by David Paul Green

Because DMX was created to allow equipment from different manufacturers to communicate, this foundation of collaborative control has allowed it to expand beyond lighting.

This article is part of the InPark “widget masters” series, focusing on technical equipment and software, its manufacture, design, applications for themed entertainment, and the specialists making it happen.

The origins of Digital Multiplex 512

In 1986, shortly before the start of public use of the Internet, lighting designers realized they needed a standardized method to control stage lighting and effects. The US Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) helped foster such a system, with the catchy name, “Digital Multiplex 512,” abbreviated DMX512. The technology got its name because it allows the user to squeeze or multiplex up to 512 control signals down one wire, controlling them digitally, via equipment such as a lighting control board. Each set of 512 control channels (or more correctly, data slots) is called a “universe.”

Now an ANSI (American National Standards Institute) standard, known widely today simply as “DMX,” the protocol has grown beyond stage lighting and effects, to handle other aspects of show control. This is good news for the designers of today’s media-rich, technology-rich visitor attractions that often incorporate interactivity and strive to be ever more immersive.

Because DMX was created to allow equipment from different manufacturers to communicate, this foundation of collaborative control has allowed it to expand beyond lighting. DMX’s standardization, robustness, and relative ease of implementation have made it nearly ubiquitous, not just in stage environments, but in themed entertainment and architecture as well.

Bringing harmony to chaos

Eric Cantrell, Sales Manager for A/V Control Experience and Show Control at Barco, says, “As new tech such

as moving lights was invented, each manufacturer had its own protocol. It was a big mess. DMX came out to harmonize and increase interoperability with consoles, and moving lights, as well as dimmers.”

Eventually, Cantrell says, DMX controllers could “control other things that are maybe lighting-adjacent, such as video.” DMX grew in popularity, he adds, because, “It was a standard protocol that lighting techs already knew how to use,” which meant additional technical personnel weren’t needed for projects that already had lighting programming expertise on site.

Scott Arnold, CEO of AV and technical design company TechFulcrum, says, “Certainly, designing a theater is completely different than it used to be. Round one of DMX was putting shielded cable suitable for carrying a serial signal from your booth to your dimmer room, and that was it.” Now, he says, “the ability to push this over inexpensive Category 5e or 6 cable - whether through replicating DMX over Ethernet, or converting it, using devices - now you can set up a big Ethernet network through your theater, using off-the-shelf network components that are much less [expensive] than lighting-specific components.”

Arnold adds, “From an infrastructure standpoint, that evolution has been exceptionally useful. Also, there is the wireless standpoint. Being able to go wireless opens up possibilities for parade floats, costumes, or trusses that can be loaded in and struck very quickly.”

From lighting to coffee pots, to...

“As far as what people are using it for,” Arnold adds, “there are obvious things beside lighting, like pixel-mapping... Doug Fleenor has got a coffee pot!”

Indeed, Milton Davis, Engineer at Doug Fleenor Design, lists several other “gag” products the company has created over the years, as fun ways to showcase DMX’s flexibility: they include a DMX-controlled glockenspiel, Etch-A-Sketch, shock collar, ice bucket challenge, and beer keg.

“They are always things that are technically possible, but functionally questionable,” Davis jokes; however, “they all have grown out of some real-world application of one sort or another.”

Which sort of begs the question: Why? (And how?)

“We make DMX controlled relays,” Davis says. “It isn’t odd to think of a relay as a DMX-controlled widget. Well, what happens if you put the relay in a coffee pot? Now you’ve got a DMX coffee pot. Anything you can plug into a relay becomes a unique and interesting DMX application.”

On a more practical basis, Davis says, real projects the company has worked on include DMX-controlled “hazers, foggers, gobo rotators, fiberoptic illuminators, window shutters, projection screens, LCD walls that can go opaque or clear, video switches, video projectors, DVD machines; elevators where, when you ... push a button, certain lighting effects take place as you move up and down.” They’ve also developed small stage lifts for non-human loads, and a system for monitoring theme park rides, “sort of a heartbeat indicator,” Davis says.

Other projects, Davis says, include, “In New York, the Times Square ball - we have distribution inside the video ball they are using for that. Electroluminescent lighting on costumes, under DMX control. We’ve been involved with Blue Man Group doing DMX-controlled, highly synchronized strobe lights.”

Indeed, as the technology has evolved, the imagined uses for it continually exceed its inventors’ intentions. “It’s a far call from controlling 24 dimmers in a closet,” Arnold says, “to pixel-mapping trees across a lake.”

DMX in the Networking Era

Bryan Palmer, Architectural Market Manager at ETC, a leading manufacturer of lighting and lighting control products, concurs. When the standard was developed, he says, it supported, “512 control addresses on a single wire, and in 1990 that was a lot. In a system today, we’re talking about thousands, tens of thousands, and sometimes hundreds of thousands of control addresses.”

Because DMX was not designed to handle that many addresses, new, compatible protocols have been developed to provide needed functionality, such as enabling the transmission of DMX data over an Ethernet network.

The “Universe of Light” show at Nickelodeon Universe at Mall of America. The lighting systems are all controlled and scheduled by a Medialon show control system (Barco). Photo Credit: Jayson Raitt / Quantum Creative Studios.



DMX Tech Talk

Each set of 512 data slots in a DMX network is called a “universe.” Each universe connects to a master controller, which can control up to 512 slots. A simple lighting dimmer may use just one slot. An RGB LED fixture might use three slots. Other types of devices may use even more. If you need to accommodate more than 512 data slots, then you need to add an additional universe.

Why is DMX512, 512? Milton Davis, of Doug Fleenor Design, says, “When it was created, 512 items was so big, you would NEVER have anything that big. Never. Of course things change. It all actually still makes sense. 90% of the real-world applications out there - schools, churches, etc. - still fit within one universe of DMX.”

Modern DMX controllers can control multiple universes from a single device. A standard DMX connector is a five-pin connector, with female connectors used on transmitting (OUT) ports, and male connectors used on receiving (IN) ports.

To connect DMX devices, you need to use a specialized 5-pin cable to go from the controller, to the first device’s IN port. Then that same device’s OUT port is cabled to the next device’s IN port, and so on. This method of connecting devices is referred to as a “daisy chain,” after the garlands of flowers made by children in bygone times. Because DMX is a specialized system, the various cables and connectors can be relatively expensive - especially when large distances are concerned - as compared to less-specialized networks, such as Ethernet.

“There are Ethernet-based versions of DMX,” Palmer says, “which include Streaming ACN and Art-Net as the two primary versions, that work just like DMX does, but you can do millions of control addresses over a single Ethernet cable.”

Cantrell adds, “Now, we have devices that have an Ethernet jack on them, that are being programmed via DMX.”

“Two gentlemen involved in the creation of the DMX protocol were Steve Terry and Adam Bennett,” Palmer notes, “and they both work with us [ETC] now.” That expertise, he says, allows ETC to excel in the manufacture of products for DMX applications.

Palmer adds, “As the technology we’re using is advancing more and more, we are going to see a shift to the Ethernet versions of DMX. People want systems that can be interconnected. The simplest way to do that is get them all on the same network.”

Robert Bell, Director of Product Innovation at Pathway Connectivity, a leading manufacturer of DMX data controls, interfaces and distribution for entertainment networks, notes that despite the ability to connect DMX devices via Ethernet, “The final mile is going to be DMX for a long time.

“By routing it over Ethernet,” he continues, “you break the 512 boundary. [However] the final jump is going to be that DMX512 layer. That’s just because it’s so useful to daisy chain a controller out to multiple devices. The processing power to receive DMX is just a tiny micro. You don’t have to have an Ethernet stack behind it.”

Bell sees a lot of fountains being controlled by DMX. “We have a number of interface cards,” he says. “One that is quite popular is a relay card. People use it to control small motors, and valves. A lot of fountain design companies are now using DMX control systems. They are just treating them like luminaires. You don’t need to have high-powered processors in the end devices, and it is very robust for spread-out areas.”



Eric Cantrell, Barco



Milton Davis, Doug Fleenor Design



Bryan Palmer, ETC



Graham Whipple, Green Hippo



Robert Bell, Pathway Connectivity



Scott Arnold, TechFulcrum



Imagine Dragons: The Evolve World Tour photo courtesy of Green Hippo; credit: Todd Moffses

Another unexpected area where Bell sees DMX being used is in architectural installations, controlling 0-to-10 volt lighting. “One of our most popular interfaces is our DMX512 to 0-10V interface card,” Bell says, confessing, “Which is just crazy, you have a digital light source and you’re using an analog control signal.”

DMX and media

Graham Whipple, product specialist for Green Hippo, says the company creates products that allow DMX to integrate with media control. “The way I see DMX as the most helpful in media, is it allows a bridge for people with a lighting background to move into video,” Whipple says. “You don’t have to know how to use a video switcher to be able to switch inputs on a media server, if you have a background in lighting. You can control that from the lighting desk.

“With Hippotizer Media Servers, we allow you to control anything through DMX,” Whipple continues. “It’s really broad and a little bit difficult to discuss exactly how it works, because it’s so flexible. One way is to cue things up

on the media server - you can even create a timeline of several different cues - and give ‘go’ or ‘stop’ commands via DMX.

“The other way you can do it is to give a lighting console control of every parameter,” Whipple continues, “and program your entire media show as if your server was one big moving light.”

This is particularly useful when it comes to huge implementations of LEDs, or LED screens. “If you have an installation with something like 85,000 RGB LEDs, that’s going to be 500 universes,” Whipple says. “It becomes a nightmare to try to program that. So a shortcut is using the video content to play across that. The lighting console is controlling a media server as a way to output DMX to control all of these lights, without having to program them individually, which would be nearly impossible. That’s probably one of the bigger advantages in a purely lighting installation, to use a media server.”

Whipple concludes, “With a forest of LEDs, or a floor of LEDs, programming them individually just isn’t feasible.



Analog-to-DMX (converts 24 analog 0-10VDC sources or 24 dry contact closures into a DMX512 signal) Photo courtesy Pathway Connectivity Solutions

“You’re going to get a better artistic product by figuring out what you want to do as a whole, and using media to accomplish that.”

Bad DMX Ideas

We see that DMX has potential benefits in many applications. However, life-safety systems are not one of them.

“I do have an issue with trying to use DMX - especially one-way DMX - for things that are safety related,” says Scott Arnold. “Show action equipment, flame, CO2 releases. If there is no feedback, you run the risk of having an unintended consequence. The only way I would consider having it in the safety chain is to have E-stops, dead-man switches.”

Eric Cantrell agrees no one should be “running chain motors and things off of DMX. When you have heavy things moving around, I don’t like seeing the possibility of hitting a blackout button and everything crashing to the ground.”

Continued on page 18



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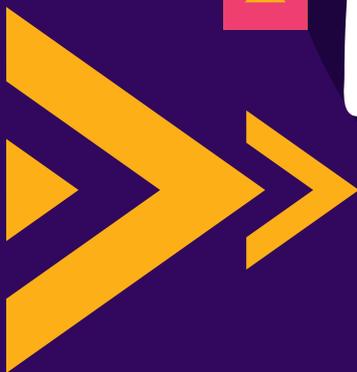
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Bryan Palmer also concurs. “Anytime you are moving things, or interacting with equipment that could physically harm somebody, DMX is a less-appropriate choice, because it allows for control from a remote location, and that’s not a good safety situation.”

Milton Davis adds, “DMX is not for pyrotechnics or safety-related things, ever. There’s no error checking whatsoever. Basically, you blow a lot of data out, and hope to God it gets there.”

That lack of error checking is why Robert Bell calls DMX a “barking protocol,” adding, “I just stop short of telling people to use DMX for rigging control.”

Palmer sees the issue as a larger one, tied to the Internet of Things that is being adapted into our daily lives: “As we move into this world of IoT mindset where everybody wants everything interconnected, I think this is going to be

a topic where people are going to start having a lot of conversations. I think we’re going to see some regulatory and safety standards get written about how it needs to work with local safety switches to resolve those kinds of concerns. It is definitely a topic that warrants some thought and consideration.”

Palmer adds that “the flip side to that is when we start talking about lighting specifically, like emergency lighting situations, there are still applications where DMX is an appropriate choice and you don’t have a lot of other options. If I want to have a color-changing fixture, and that fixture needs to be a part of the emergency system, my real only choice is to send it DMX, and there are products that are built specifically for those applications, in that when an emergency situation happens, it goes into white light, and does exactly what it’s supposed to do to keep people safe and allow for egress from the building.”

What’s Next?

If by now you’re thinking that DMX can do just about anything, you might be right.

Milton Davis says, “Our role is to take something that we’ve got, and start applying that to a different world. DMX has expanded and just gotten a lot bigger over the years.” •••



David Paul Green is president and COO of Los Angeles-based lighting design firm Visual Terrain, as well as a writer and photographer. After starting off in themed entertainment at WED Enterprises (now WDI), working on EPCOT, Disneyland, and Tokyo Disneyland, David went on to work with other divisions of The Walt Disney Company. As principal at consulting firm Monteverdi Creative, David holds eight U.S. Patents for innovations in digital TV user interface design. In 2010, David joined his wife, Lisa Passamonte Green, at Visual Terrain. He is the co-author of “Building a Better Mouse” with Steve Alcorn, and has written for InPark, Lighting&Sound America, and others. His photography is in the permanent collection of the California African American Museum, and is featured in the catalog for the exhibit, “Allensworth: A Place. A People. A Story.”



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Hollywood Live

Mousetrappe's animated "living scenery" is key to unique "Disney Beauty and the Beast" experience at the Hollywood Bowl

by Judith Rubin

On May 25th and 26th (2018) at the iconic Hollywood Bowl amphitheater in Los Angeles, thousands of rapt fans enjoyed a novel twist on the classic Disney animated movie, "Beauty and the Beast." This was not a straight-up screening, but a unique, immersive experience with many extras. Live accompaniment was provided by a full orchestra; an all-star cast performed the songs, and the film itself, playing on a huge central screen, was set into a framework of what was billed as "living scenery." The "living scenery" was some 90 minutes worth of original, new animated content, custom-created by Mousetrappe and projection-mapped across the entire proscenium to extend the visual canvas and complement the film, the live performance and the Bowl's Art Deco architecture.

A family favorite and one of the most beloved animated films in the Disney canon, "Beauty and the Beast" has earned multiple awards, including two Oscars, and is the only animated film ever to be nominated for a best picture Academy Award. The customized special production, "Disney Beauty and the Beast - in Concert Live-to-Film" (DBATB) at the Hollywood Bowl packed the 17,500-seat venue for its two-night run over Memorial Day weekend.

The live performers included Zooey Deschanel, Kelsey Grammer, Taye Diggs, Rebel Wilson, Jane Krakowski, and Anthony Evans.

Concept, stakeholders, team

As director of DBATB, Richard Kraft, of Kraft-Engel Management, envisioned the concept of augmenting the film with live music and performances, and the extended canvas of new, animated content. To help create this unique spectacular, Kraft brought in Mousetrappe, a Burbank-based creative agency and production studio with many awards to its credit, headed by Daren Ulmer and specializing in creating immersive, cinematic experiences. Mousetrappe has a diverse portfolio including many prestigious theme park and museum projects. The company boasts an international client list including Disney parks, Universal Studios, the National World War II Museum, Kennedy Space Center and Ferrari World. This adds up, as Ulmer points out: "Millions of visitors are experiencing some aspect of Mousetrappe's work at any given time, around the world."

"Mousetrappe has done a lot of work with Disney at their various properties so it was a natural fit for them to come on board," said Eric Herz of Live Nation Los Angeles and Live Nation Andrew Hewitt Bill Silva Presents. Live Nation was the event promoter, and put together the package with Disney Concerts, Columbia Artists, and Kraft-Engel. "Richard Kraft at Kraft-Engel and Alison Williams at Columbia Artists helped set the stage with Mousetrappe early on," said Herz. He was

openly enthusiastic about the results: “Richard poured his heart and soul out to work with the brilliant team at Mousetrappe to deliver the most creative and stunning projection mappings that the Hollywood Bowl has ever been a part of.”

Prior to DBATB, Kraft directed and produced ‘La La Land in Concert: A Live-to-Film Celebration at the Hollywood Bowl’ and ‘A Whole New World of Alan Menken,’ which debuted at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts and appeared at the D23 Expo in 2017.

“LN-HS Concerts (Live Nation-Hewitt/Silva) has been working with Columbia Artists and Kraft-Engel Management on live film projects for a number of years,” said Herz. “It started in 2015 with ‘Nightmare before Christmas,’ and grew to include ‘The Little Mermaid,’ ‘La La Land,’ ‘Willy Wonka,’ and ‘Beauty and the Beast’ this past spring. LN-HS acts as the promoter and produces the events with the executive producers at Columbia Artists, Kraft-Engel and the studios behind the films (in this case Disney).”

Eight-time Oscar-winning composer Alan Menken, well known for his Disney animated film scores, executive produced the event.

Scenic design, unshackled

“There’s nothing gimmicky here,” said Ulmer. “We’ve covered new ground, and ‘living scenery’ is an apt term.

You’re creating scenery – alive and dynamic – that transforms digitally rather than physically, using the illusion to add depth and interest. We picked and chose our moments: when to back off, when to get bigger than life, when to be active and playful. It’s very similar to traditional scenic design. We considered what would extend the environment, convey a sense of place, surprise the audience from time to time – that led to fun little animated moments that counterpoint the film itself. The difference to traditional scenics is that we unshackle. We can do things that are magical, that move faster; things that can’t be physically accomplished.”

“Richard really wanted to push the envelope and that’s something we as a company could get excited about,” said Eric Hungerford, Mousetrappe’s producer on the project. “We created an environment. The people at the Bowl were in that environment, with animations spilling out of the screen and surrounding them.”

“‘Beauty and the Beast’ is one of those films where it’s hard to remember a time when it didn’t exist,” said Ryan Kravetz, Art Director for Mousetrappe. “The songs are so influential and it’s a cornerstone of cinematic and animation history. We had a responsibility to utterly respect the legacy of the animated feature and the love the audience has for it, while bringing them a new, special way of experiencing it, and that goal needed to be maintained all the way down to working with the painters and animators and all the people on our team.”

Mousetrappe’s team on the Hollywood Bowl project: Ryan Kravetz, Lindsey Sprague, Michaela Karis, Daren Ulmer, Michael Schwalm, Eric Hungerford. OPPOSITE: The electric Hollywood Bowl stage during “Beauty and the Beast.” Photos courtesy Mousetrappe



“Mousetrappe was in an excellent position from a technical and artistic standpoint in terms of knowing what works and what doesn’t work with this particular IP holder and these types of IPs,” said Ulmer, who noted that in addition to Disney, the company has produced shows and spectacles featuring Marvel, Pixar, Harry Potter, and other IPs. “We were also fortunate to be able to draw upon the invaluable knowledge and experience of Disney and in particular Eric Goldberg, to understand the original intent of the filmmaker.” (Supervising animator/director, Walt Disney Animation Studios, Eric Goldberg is an acclaimed animator whose credits include ‘Hercules,’ ‘Pocahontas’ and ‘Fantasia 2000.’) The approval process was extremely smooth and collaborative.”

A smooth process was essential given the project’s eight-week timeline, which Hungerford described as a “sprint.” The job kicked off in mid-March and was delivered in mid-May. He continued, “Our team’s extensive experience with high-end projection mapping design and content creation, combined with our unique understanding of how to work with IPs, made us especially suited to tackle this project with such an aggressive schedule.”

In addition to Ulmer, Hungerford, and Kravetz, Mousetrappe’s team included Michael Schwalm, Senior Concept Designer; Michaela Karis, Production Coordinator; and Lindsey Sprague, Technical Supervisor. The production team included the following artists: Chloe Booher, Luis Vega, Jacques Dupuy, Mike Gizienski, and Sheena Klimoski; and interns: Lin Huang and Ella Khan. Other creatives on the project included Volt Productions (Harrison Lipman, lighting design), John Kinser (Live Nation, producer), and Vaughn Hannon (D3 programmer/operator). Fred Vogler was the orchestra’s acoustician. “This truly was a team effort by some outstanding and creative minds,” said Herz.

Moving parts

“There were a lot of moving parts in the way the show was sequenced, which took a high level of coordination,” said Hungerford. “There is a very specific style of classic, 2D animation in ‘Beauty and the Beast.’ We utilized a handful of existing assets but mostly created original matte paintings and painted elements. Eric Goldberg was very helpful.”



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Reviews: DBATB

LA Times music reviewer and confirmed Disneyphile Todd Martens attended the show. His review reads in part, “The unsung hero... of all the Bowl’s takes on Disney films remains the newly created animation, projected around the venue’s shell to add a tinge of theme-park immersion to the proceedings.

The newly created scenes... gave viewers a deeper look at Belle’s home, the town tavern adorned with tributes to Gaston and the stonework of Beast’s castle, among others. They also provided some light screwball action during scenes of commotion. Fans of old-school Disney animation would be forgiven for never taking their eyes off the projections.”

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/music/la-et-ms-beauty-beast-hollywood-bowl-20180527-story.html>

In Variety, Chris Willman wrote, “... winning touches included... semi-animated projections onto the entire proscenium that smartly but unobtrusively made the screening feel like more of a widescreen experience.”

<https://variety.com/2018/music/news/beauty-and-the-beast-hollywood-bowl-review-1202823389/>

In Billboard, Keith Caulfield wrote, “Throughout the entire show, gorgeous scene-enhancing imagery – inspired by and sometimes lifted directly from the film – was projected onto the bowl’s façade. Hopefully future Disney shows at the Bowl — not to mention performances at the venue in general — will employ this kind of digital wizardry.”

<https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/8458026/beauty-and-the-beast-concert-hollywood-bowl-recap>



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Mousetrappe's team needed intimate knowledge of the projection array to ensure a seamless presentation. This was a rental package tailored to the occasion, consisting of five Christie 30K projectors (four to cover the proscenium, and one to show the film) and a D3 media server.

Testing and reviewing the material called for specific conditions. "We couldn't review in a bubble," said Hungerford, who has a rich background in media production and themed entertainment. "We had to watch it with the film and imagine what it would be like in the actual venue. We would not have a lot of time to iterate once the projectors were in. We composited original animations onto a photo of the Hollywood Bowl, synchronized with the film so we were watching two or three things at once, to make sure to cut exactly at the same point to be as seamless as possible. We wrote a few scripts to speed up rendering time, but basically used standard animation tools."

"You didn't see the seams between what was happening onstage all the way to the periphery. It filled your view with content and spectacle," said Kravetz, who brought to the project extensive experience in animation as well as stage and set design. "We were painting with light and color. Animation is a very powerful tool, and the audience is thirsty for it. Execution is at the stage where it is invisible, transparent. The rings of the Hollywood Bowl were fully lit, the animators were able to work off the established palette."

A big question was how to keep the film and live elements in sync. "A lot of credit goes to the conductor and to how we worked together to break up segments, and get the orchestra and cast to be in the right place at the right time," said Kravetz. "Our stuff was locked in time, and we used a click track that was the same as the conductor's.

The segments allowed flexibility and time for audience response and applause. We went back and forth during production to set the timing. The lighting team played nicely off what we were doing."

Eric Herz said, "Volt Productions and Mousetrappe both went above and beyond the call of duty and delivered a completely top-of-the-line show. Harrison Lippman and his team at Volt worked tirelessly to create a unique look where the colors complimented the film and projections that Mousetrappe did. Moreover, the synchronization of the colors/effects were calibrated perfectly throughout the entire event. For his part, Fred Vogler oversaw the live sound and he did an amazing job."

Takeaways for themed entertainment

Besides the obvious connection with the world's top theme park operator, the success of DBATB offers lessons for themed entertainment and experience design. Its creation depended on many of the same creative and technical tools as today's visitor attractions. And as family-oriented, out-of-home entertainment, the goals were similar to those of a visitor attraction or theme park: thrill guests with something they can't experience at home, in a group setting; provide a new way to interact with an IP; encourage guests to want more.

"As a general takeaway, I like to say that people have a basic human need for certainty, but also for uncertainty," said Ulmer. "This is a film people have watched 20 times, and when you watch a film 20 times, you don't remember the individual viewings anymore. But at the Bowl, the guests had a new experience. When you deliver a property like this to its own fan base, and yet enhance it, provide so much more than the original, you deliver a truly new experience. We added something to the IP, and the guests will remember it specifically. That's also what we do in the theme park business with attractions and shows."



Thousands are captivated by the music, lighting and projection magic at the Hollywood Bowl. Photo courtesy Mousetrappe

“Richard charged us to frame the show so that it wasn’t just something you could pop into a player; to present the material in a fresh, unexpected way that made the audience feel part of something, integrated, involved,” said Kravetz.

The ability to scale an experience to connect with large audiences is also relevant to themed entertainment. “Being able to take that film and make it fill the entire proscenium, increasing the view, pulled the whole audience into the experience, including those in the second half of the Bowl’s 17,500 seat amphitheater,” said Ulmer.

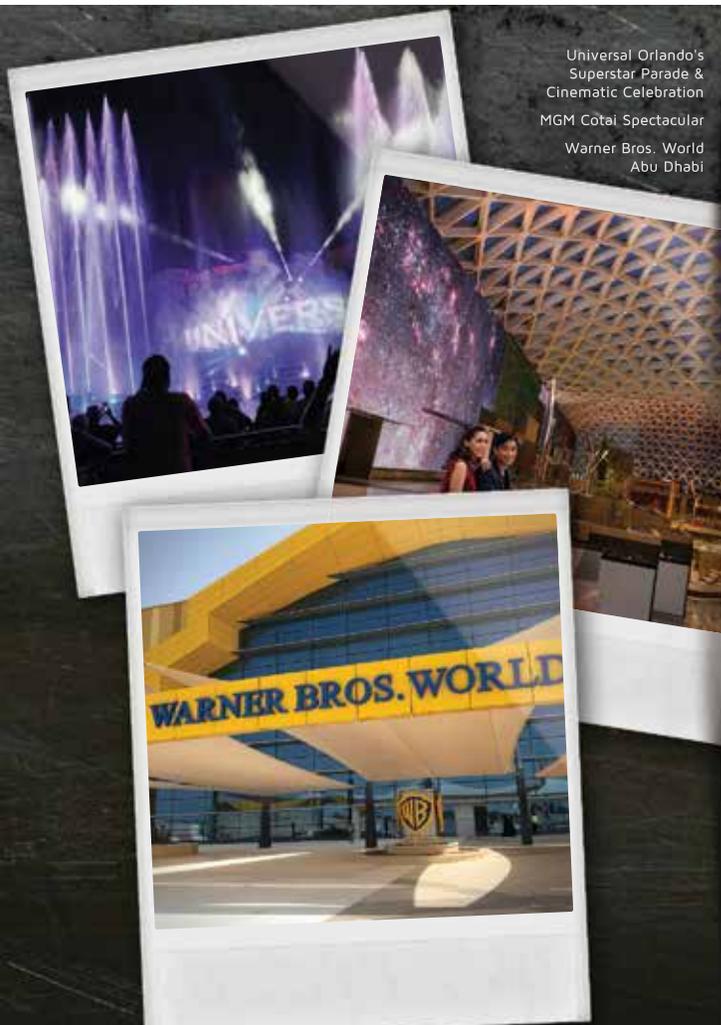
“You no longer need a 16 x 9 canvas to tell a film story,” said Hungerford. “The ‘living scenery’ was a framing device that came alive, enough to immerse you, even peripherally, into the world of the film. It’s an evolution in projection mapping and a new way to view a film. There will be some very interesting new ways to explore this further, down the line.”

Herz said, “It was without doubt the best live film event the team has ever done. What we spent on production was worth every penny as we gave the fans the best possible experience. It certainly left an indelible impression on them. The bar was raised so high that we need to do our

best to make sure our future events are at the same caliber as ‘Beauty and the Beast.’”

“It has been my dream to bring the magic of a Disney quality theme park experience to a concert stage to create something that transcends just being a concert, a theatrical experience or a film screening,” said Richard Kraft. “Mousetrappe’s living scenery proved to be that breathtaking link that mesmerized audiences for our ‘Beauty and the Beast’ show. Their 90 minutes of original animated content brought audible gasps from our audience and played an amazing role in celebrating Disney’s classic animated film. This was particularly important in a vast venue like The Hollywood Bowl. By projecting onto the proscenium every member of the audience was immersed in the show. Collaborating with the enthusiastic and creative minds at Mousetrappe has been a career highlight.”

In fall 2018, the Kraft-Engel and Mousetrappe teams will join forces again to create new projection mapped scenes to accompany the classic Halloween film, ‘The Nightmare Before Christmas,’ that will also be accompanied by a live orchestra and an all-star cast. The new show is scheduled to open at the Hollywood Bowl in October. •••



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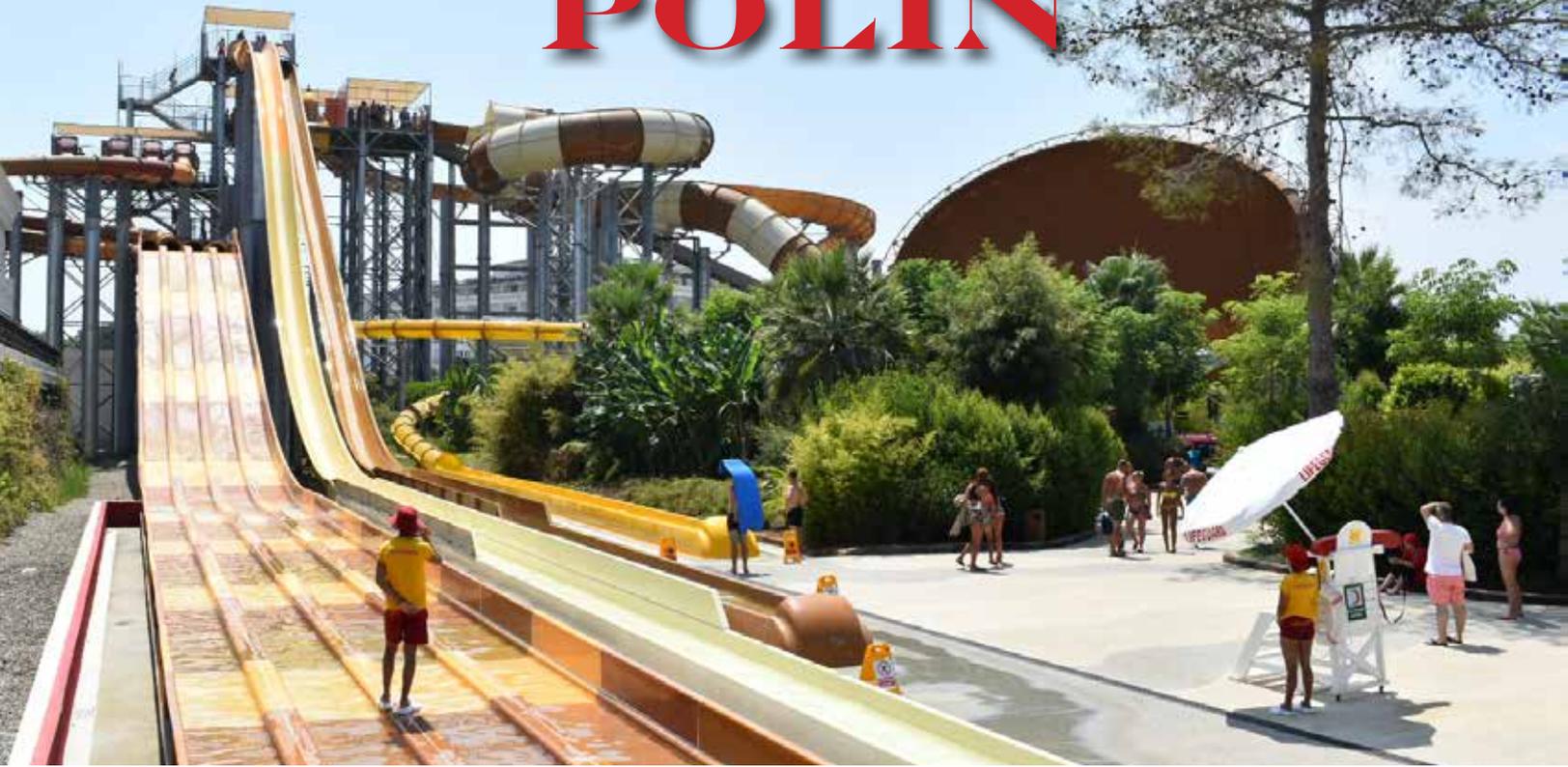
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DEFINING POLIN



Polin redefines the waterpark supplier model

A Polin slide tower at Land of Legends in Antalya, Turkey.

by *Martin Palicki*

The year 2018 was momentous for Polin Waterparks. Nearly 250 projects opened across dozens of countries. The company reorganized and positioned itself for a new chapter in its history. And Director of Marketing & Communications Sohret Pakis celebrated her 15th year with the company.

Anyone who has been in the industry knows Sohret. She's the perpetually smiling centerpiece at the heart of nearly every Polin trade show booth. Any visitor to the Polin booth knows they will be offered Turkish coffee and Turkish Delight, while Sohret greets them with a warm hug or handshake. "We want people to feel as though they are our guests," explains Pakis. "It doesn't matter if it is in our booth or our home office – hospitality is a key component of our business."

Her statement is sincere. On a recent visit to their offices in Turkey while researching this piece, I saw firsthand how important it was to Polin to transform visitors and clients into guests. This kind of hospitality is also extended to their employees. An office cafeteria serves free, fresh meals daily, and employees can take advantage of

complimentary shuttles to and from work, scheduled just slightly off of normal business hours to avoid the worst of Istanbul's traffic (which, believe me, is epic in scale).

During the visit I also got to see Polin's efficient office and work teams, their sprawling factory and their automated systems that turn waterslide designs into reality.

(And by the way, the company name is pronounced Poh-LEEN.)

The New Polin Group

Founded in 1976, Polin has been a leading manufacturer of waterslides in the Balkan region since the open economy policy took effect in Turkey and other countries in the region, in the mid 1980s. At that time, Polin's founder, architect Enver Pakis, went to various hotels in Turkey's coastal resort areas to explain the value of having pools and waterslides at their properties. At first, hoteliers were dubious of investing in waterplay when the Mediterranean or Aegean Sea were so close by. But eventually the idea took hold, and soon nearly every resort had some sort of Polin waterpark equipment.

Since then, the family-owned company has grown to over 1,500 employees around the world, boasts a network of 65 partners and distributors, and has successfully completed over 3,000 projects in 105 countries. In 2014 they moved into their current headquarters located on the outskirts of Istanbul in Kocaeli, Turkey. The building includes a 35,000 square meter factory and is home to about a third of their staff.

Earlier this year, Polin announced a reorganization of the company. Polin Group was formed as a holding company to manage the different business units the organization has developed through the years. Each unit sits under one of four main corporate umbrellas:

- **Amusement Attractions**, which includes Polin Waterparks, Attractions, Game Technologies, Polin Aquariums, Safari Parks and Theming
- **Composites Manufacturing**, which includes Composites, Fipol (fiberglass pools) and Futuraform (the company's fabrication arm that works with fiberglass and other composites to create themed and structural elements for a wide range of markets)
- **Park Development**, which includes Design Studio, Park Services (providing maintenance and service packages), Project Development, and Investment Planning and Management
- **Funtastic Parks**, a staffing/operations company that includes Funtastic Aquariums, Funtastic Waterparks and Funtastic Amusement Parks.

According to Sohret, Polin is strategically positioning itself to be a one-stop shop for the entire amusement industry. "We realized that in order to really grow our business we needed to be able to do more than just waterslides," she explained. "We are now capable of creating and managing an entire waterpark development." With the line between theme parks and waterparks continuing to blur, Polin understood they needed to be able to address client needs in areas not traditionally considered for a waterpark.

Sohret wants to be clear that they are not setting up to compete with roller coaster and hard ride manufacturers; Polin is leveraging its strengths and will continue to work with established and new partners to complement their current products. "We

have always had a great relationship with our partners, and they have been key to our growth model," she said. "Cooperation often leads to better results than if we were to acquire the businesses that complement us."

Two ideal examples are American Wave Machines, a provider of surfing attractions, and Lagotronics, a gaming system provider with which Polin partnered to create the SplashCabin product. "Our strategic partnerships help us all grow together," said Sohret.

Polin's Greatest Hits

According to Pakis, Polin prides itself on two very important strengths. First, Polin invests heavily in its manufacturing process. As a pioneer of the RTM (Resin Transfer Molding) process, Polin helped set standards of manufacturing that ultimately allowed them to develop visually appealing and structurally advanced slides that also can have theming and designs "baked" into the finish.



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Polin recently was named an official Research & Development center, a designation earned from the Turkish government that sets standards for quality and safety. Fifty-four engineers are on staff working to develop even better composites that increase durability and decrease costs (see sidebar).

This, coupled with their 42 years of experience in fiberglass, gives Polin's customers the understanding that quality and safety remain the company's primary goals.

Following their manufacturing skills, Polin is proud of their strength in design. "We are constantly doing market research studies to find out what our clients and, ultimately, their customers are looking for," said Sohret. "Waterpark guests mostly want exciting slides that get their hearts pumping a bit, interactive experiences to share with one another, and fun themed attractions that make their ride more interesting." Operators want all of this too, along with high-capacity to minimize wait times and keep people happy.

Pakis points to their history of signature rides such as King Cobra and Storm Racer (pictured on the cover of this issue) as examples of how innovative their design teams are. And the concepts are proven. In 2018 alone,



A Polin slide tower rises majestically above the wave pool at Land of Legends in Antalya, Turkey.

Polin has already opened customized versions of King Cobra in two venues, including the six-story Raja™ at Noah's Ark in the United States and an armadillo themed-King Cobra at Texas Water World in China.

Storm Racer, which Polin created in 2016, opened at Aqualand Frejus (France) this season. "Aqualand is a great example," explained Sohret, "because they are an established park and are expanding every few years with our signature slides, including King Cobra, our Racer slides and now Storm Racer."

Revisiting the Land of Legends

Arguably the best showcase of Polin's abilities to date is the Land of Legends resort in Antalya, Turkey [see InPark issue #64, "Turkish Splash"]. Opened in 2016, Land of Legends is a multi-phased development near the resort coast of southern Turkey. The initial park consisted of an extensive waterpark, with equipment provided by Polin and its partners. The ride list is virtually a catalogue of Polin products. Within this successful resort, the park stands as a living showroom of Polin's wide-ranging products and its standards of quality.

In 2016 a shopping promenade and kids themed hotel debuted. In 2018, a Mack Rides roller coaster opened, along with a host of other smaller rides and attractions in a new theme park area.

The initially planned three phases of Land of Legends are now up and operating, and the park is clearly a hit. "If we start getting any higher peak attendance days, we are going

Polin's R&D focus

Polin is proud of their accomplished R&D division, and their recent designation as an official R&D center. That enables them to work with local universities and professors to enhance the research end of the equation and ultimately deliver new products and experiences.

Ali Cansun heads up Polin's R&D team, which consists of four subdivisions:

- 1) Design – Industrial product design, includes sculpting and specialty work.
- 2) Mechanical – Designing aquatic towers and play structures, in addition to analyzing structural wear and fatigue.
- 3) Engineering – Comprising mechanical, steel, civil engineering and analysis engineering. This team also addresses hydro-mechanical issues.
- 4) Composites – New materials and process technologies, including composite testing, mechanical testing and heat testing.

A conversation with Cem Tuna

The back story of Land of Legends comes from Franco Dragone, who was a creative consultant for the park, and produced some of the park's entertainment offerings. According to the story, a golden meteor fell to the ground and an assortment of different cultures (legends) emerged. The Dragone Gate, located at the pathway between the Kingdom hotel and the theme park, opens and allows visitors to explore the new worlds within.

Bringing that story to life requires not only the lavishly created themed environment, but also a competent team of staff. Cem Tuna heads up the Land of Legends aqua and dry parks. "First on my list was focusing on risk management," he explained. "I ensured we were following industry best practices for health and safety, and initiated a new three day orientation training, followed by two weeks of on-the-job training to ensure everyone fully understands their job requirements."

Tuna says he saw the opportunity to get in on the ground floor of what he considers a "mini-Orlando." The climate is similar, and Antalya already has a reputation as a tourism town, particularly among Turks and Russians. "There is real potential here to grow this market with additional parks and resorts."

Tuna then turned his attention to creating a customer service program for staff. "We are always training for service. I want my front line staff to be able to resolve situations on their own, if possible." Staff are rewarded with stars for positive feedback, which can lead to prizes and other benefits. "Everyone understands we all have the same three jobs: trash collector, safety inspector and customer relations expert."

Tuna's experience in theme parks required a little bit of adjustment when dealing with the waterpark as well. The visitation pattern is different than to a typical theme park resort. Most Land of Legends guests begin their day early at the waterpark and then transition to the dry park in mid-afternoon, relax again in the waterpark and return to the dry park in the evening when the waterpark closes. Tuna



implemented queue management strategies and an upcharge fast track system to deal with some of the people flow issues.

Looking to the future, Tuna sees more interactive rides on the horizon and possibly even some Intellectual Property (IP) theming in the park's future. "You have to make people want to come. You can't just open the doors and expect people to show up," he said. So far, the park has seen a marked uptick in approval ratings. In-park surveys show guest satisfaction rose from 66% to 94% this past year.

Finally, Tuna has four pieces of advice for developers looking to create a water or theme park:

- 1) Location really is the key.** Study where your development will be located and who will be attending. Tourist visitors are different than local visitors and understanding who your market is helps tremendously.
- 2) Good investment in rides is critical.** It's also important to neither underinvest (guests will be disappointed) nor overinvest (operating costs will sink you) but be sure to leave room for future growth.
- 3) Safety has to be first in your mind.** If you focus on providing a safe environment, families will start to feel safe, and then they will stay longer (and spend more money).
- 4) Hire an experienced manager to oversee your operations.** Someone who knows the business will be able to create systems and processes that will set up your park for success. •

to have to start looking at different ways to manage the crowds,” says Cem Tuna, who arrived at Land of Legends to manage the expanding water and theme park in October of 2017. After four years as Operations Manager at Dreamworld in Australia, Tuna spent nearly five years managing Isfanbul Theme Park in Istanbul before he came to Land of Legends. Tuna’s operational expertise is a great balance to the premium rides the park has amassed.

It can be likened to a hardware / software relationship. The park’s developers, Rixos and Emaar, created a structural foundation with a wide assortment of Polin attractions, and additional quality rides on the dry side of the park. Tuna is then providing his understanding of safety, operations planning and teambuilding to ensure the workers provide the type of experience worthy of the park’s mix of attractions. (See sidebar for more on Tuna and Land of Legends)



Storm Racer at Aqualand Frejus (France) Photo courtesy Polin

Cruise ships

As cruise lines have added entertainment and recreation options aboard their ships, they have also adopted and adapted waterpark offerings. While once a pool and hot tub might suffice, now waterslides, surfing machines and play areas are becoming the norm. According to Polin, these projects really highlight the company’s design and engineering skills, and customization options, as the dynamics of the moving ship impact the ride profiles.

Polin has an extensive cruise line client roster, including:

- Carnival Cruise Lines
- MSC Cruise Line
- Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines
- P&O Cruise Lines



Select 2018/2019 Polin projects

Polin opened over 200 projects in 2018, and more are planned for the coming year. Here are some highlighted installs from the last few months and several that will be opening in the near future:

- Aeon Mall (Cambodia)
- Aquatic Center (Perth, Australia)
- LetoLeto indoor waterpark (Russia) 2018
- Philadelphia Zoo – Otter Waterslide – (USA) 2018
- Splash World Theme Park – large hotel resort development with a massive waterpark on the thirteenth floor, including a double level lazy river (Malaysia) 2019
- Texas Water World (China) 2018
- Tatrallandia – two family slides (Slovakia)

The park has further expansions planned, though neither Tuna nor Sohret is letting on exactly what those plans might be, or when they will break ground.

Integrated Everything

Polin's history and strategic corporate realignment are positioning the company to take advantage of a hot marketplace eager for new ideas and products. "I see waterparks as an ideal investment opportunity," said Sohret. "They take a lower investment to build [than theme parks] and the ROI is better." But the typical waterpark is changing, as other entertainment elements are added to the mix. Land of Legends, for example, includes a wet park, a dry park, an aquarium, shopping and more. "There will continue to be an integration of various ideas and concepts across amusement facilities," said Sohret.

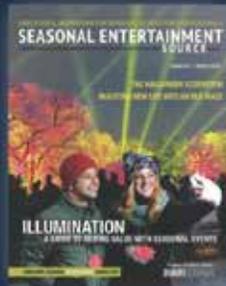
"That's why we have built a flexible organization that can respond to the needs of the industry, and of our clients," she explained. "We constantly strive to put our clients in the center of everything we do, because without them we wouldn't be where we are today." •••



InPark's Martin Palicki visits Sohret Pakis at Polin's showroom outside of Istanbul, Turkey. Photo courtesy Polin

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Overarching media

Aperture Films produces media for re-imagined Gateway Arch Museum

by Judith Rubin

Not long before the grand re-opening of the museum at the Gateway Arch, Joshua Colover, CEO Aperture Films Ltd., treated us to a preview of the extensive media production work his company did on the project. Working closely with exhibit designer Haley Sharpe Design, integrator BBI and others on the team responsible for creating the re-imagined museum exhibits, Aperture produced all the media found throughout the guest experience - amounting to some 100 pieces.

InPark has been covering aspects of the St. Louis Gateway Arch refurbishment over the past few years, with the July 3, 2018 grand reopening of the museum as a major milestone. See Interview with Haley Sharpe Design, July 2013 (<https://bit.ly/2LafXZw>) and Journey to the Top: Gateway Arch tram gets an engineering facelift, by Kevin Dazey (InPark issue 66, February 2017, <https://bit.ly/2NrjxXK>).

The Arch museum media adventure begins with the arrival experience as visitors descend through the new, light-filled entrance and view multiple large-screens that invite them to feel part of historic westward journeys. Visitors continue within the six exhibit galleries of the museum proper, then in the queuing and pre-show areas of the “Journey to the Top” tram ride, and in the spacious lobby.

With Colover as creative director, Aperture’s team pulled out pretty much everything in their toolbox as the job demanded. Their scope included live action, on-location filming around the United States with hundreds of period extras, and scripting (and editing and post production) for the series of large, standup blade screens encountered on the way in. As mentioned above, these initial screens show touchpoints and human drama of the historic journey westward. By playing with the visitor’s sense of scale, they foster a gradual immersion into the experience.

Moving into the new exhibit galleries, Aperture’s work included high-resolution photography for sweeping large-scale panoramas, a library of documentary films running in pocket theaters and within displays, and immersive map animations going deeper into journeys west. The Aperture team also furnished content for some 13 interactive kiosks that educate and entertain.

As visitors queue up and proceed to board cars for the “Journey to the Top” tram ride, which will take them inside the Arch structure to disembark in the observation area at the very top, and bring them down again afterward, they see a series of projections and animations evoking the culture and history of the 1960s when the Arch was first built and opened to the public. These were also custom produced by Aperture.

PHOTO: A statue of Thomas Jefferson presides among murals, models and interactive displays in one of the museum’s six galleries. All photos courtesy of Gateway Arch Museum

In the lobby area, the primary media feature is the 100-foot wide, 10K resolution videowall that runs 100 separate media files helping depict the story of the journey West and the significance of the Arch as gateway point, along with the story of the Arch itself.

Screen sizes, projection platforms and media delivery cover a wide range of options according to what best suited the application and the location.

Aperture Films was founded by Colover two decades ago and is based in Irvine, California. The company is quite active in the museum sector, especially projects with a high public and tourism profile. Aperture's work can be seen at such venues as the D-Day Museum in Normandy, Custer State Park and the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. Prior to founding Aperture, the British-American Colover worked several years with MacGillivray Freeman Films. He is an alumnus of NYU's Tisch School of Arts.

The Gateway Arch in downtown St. Louis is a national icon designed by the late, pioneering architect Eero

Saarinen. The \$380 million renovation of the Arch grounds and its surrounding areas was sparked by the approach of the icon's 50th anniversary, which took place in 2015. The project has been a historic partnership between the private sector and federal, state, and local government agencies. Core partners include the National Park Service, Missouri Department of Transportation, Great Rivers Greenway, Bi-State Development, Gateway Arch Park Foundation and Jefferson National Parks Association. The Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates team won the CityArchRiver International Design Competition with their comprehensive plan for transforming the Saint Louis Riverfront and Arch grounds.

Founded by the National Park Service in 1935 to commemorate Thomas Jefferson's vision of a transcontinental United States, the Gateway Arch National Park (formerly known as the "Jefferson National Expansion Memorial") stretches from the Old Courthouse to the steps overlooking the Mississippi River. •••

Clockwise from top left: A series of standup, blade screens helps draw visitors into the experience as they enter the museum through its new, light-filled entrance / Aperture's work included high-resolution photography for sweeping, large-scale panoramas / The Gateway Arch (photo by Judith Rubin) / The lobby area features a 100-foot wide 10K resolution videowall.





Mission: Find the themed entertainment providers

InfoComm 2018 Las Vegas report

By Judith Rubin

InPark visits InfoComm to connect with and learn from companies and people actively working in themed entertainment and to obtain useful information to share with our business community. According to InfoComm's official, 2018 post-show report, some 43,000 registered attendees (including InPark) were navigating the brightly lit aisles of the annual, audiovisual trade show in Las Vegas June 6-8.

In the realm of great guest experiences, technology becomes ever more powerful, transparent, immersive and all-pervasive. The successful companies are highly innovative and creative, and always ready for the next challenge. In the words of Jason McGraw, CTS®, CAE, Senior Vice President of Expositions, AVIXA (producers of InfoComm, the TIDE conference and co-owner of Integrated Systems Europe), "It was another fantastic week for a show and an industry that never stops innovating. We continue to develop new offerings that celebrate and explore in-depth the many facets of technology experiences."

In the out-of-home entertainment sector that InPark serves, there's no room for complacency. In themed entertainment, creative and tech work hand in hand from the earliest stages of design; as a result, the technologists

are connected to the heart of a project, collaborating closely with the design team. Moreover, the relationship between provider and end user is closer than ever, with manufacturers and other providers setting up verticals within their companies to address the lucrative attractions sector.

We found corroboration for all this in the conversation and case studies of the TIDE conference (Technology, Innovation, Design, Experience). McGraw said, "... our many subject-matter experts and thought leaders contributed to a program that gave all attendees the opportunity to think differently about the role audiovisual technology plays in people's lives." (See InPark's report on TIDE 2018 at <https://bit.ly/2MSJqTn>.)

InfoComm 2019 will take place in Orlando, June 12-14.

InPark goes to InfoComm 2018

Panasonic products on display at InfoComm 2018 included a new, modular transparent screen that adheres to plexiglass and can add a level of content and interaction to an experience. A new fisheye lens that fills a 180-degree dome screen with a single, 3-chip laser projector such as the Panasonic PT-RQ22K with 20,000 lumens and 4K resolution (shipping in August) was also being

PHOTO: The Panasonic booth at InfoComm 2018 Courtesy of Panasonic

demonstrated. According to Fred Mitchell, Territorial Account Manager, Panasonic Media Entertainment Company and Betsy Boesel Sagges, Public Relations Manager, Panasonic USA Corporation of North America, this configuration was created with theme parks, museums and planetariums in mind. It has been shipping since January. Another demonstration showed how the Panasonic PT-RQ32K projector with laser diode technology can project seamlessly onto a range of surfaces. These were just a few of the many riches to be explored in the Panasonic booth. The company's theme park clients include Disney, Universal and SeaWorld.

Digital Projection is rolling out a new 8K version of its INSIGHT Laser projector (already available in 4K) and expects the new product to be favorably received in the attractions industry. We were treated to an impressive demo of the INSIGHT 8K, presented by Mike Levi, President, who reported that an early broadcast customer will use it for presentation of the 2020 Olympics (Tokyo). "I challenge you to see a pixel structure on this projection," said Levi, inviting viewers to walk right up to the screen as he talked about the 33 million pixel display and recommended it for broadcast, video walls, theater, simulation and visualization, planetariums and visitor attractions. It was scheduled to begin shipping in August with a MRSP of \$299,995. Digital Projection is an established and specialized large screen display manufacturer and its planetarium installations include facilities in Atlanta, Alamogordo (NM) and St. Paul (MN), according to Phil Laney, Director of Simulation and Visualization/Product Manager. VP of Sales is Chuck Collins.

Barco ran a large exhibition stand full of activity. Eric Cantrell, sales manager, A/V control experience & show

control, was demonstrating Medialon Showmaster Pro and named several outstanding attributes responsible for the continued popularity of this show control software, such as "being designed for entertainment technicians, and not coders." Cantrell also pointed out the drag-and-drop interface; timeline-based editing; handling all the protocols; and, when overlaid with Overture, letting the user navigate around the building and tie in the building systems, create an audit trail and more. "An experience center where you have a story to tell is where Medialon excels," he said. Cantrell joined Barco with its acquisition of Medialon in April 2016 and has been on the front lines of many high-profile projects.

"Immersiveness is driving our business," said Peter Pauwels, director strategic marketing. He described Barco as a manufacturer striving, internationally, to support integrators with superior products maximizing immersion and interactivity. Pauwels reported that last year, the Belgium-based company shipped more than 200 projectors to China, and talked up Barco's new XDL projector featuring RGB laser and up to 75,000 lumen capability.

Recent installations include "Windows of the World, Shenzhen – Flight over America," where the existing four projectors were replaced with a single Barco Flagship Laser (DP4K-60L), simplifying the installation and almost doubling the brightness in this stereo 3D attraction. Pauwels also mentioned Culturespaces' "Les Carrieres de Lumieres" project, which received a Thea Award, and features some 170 Barco projectors. Barco also became the official projection partner for the Tut exhibition now in Los Angeles. "Projection is important to this exhibition since it's critical to telling the story of these ancient artifacts, and will have to be robust enough to tour ten



Christie launched six new HS Series laser projectors at InfoComm 2018 Courtesy of Christie

cities globally,” said Pauwels, summarizing, “You’ll find Barco projectors in traveling and permanent exhibitions, concerts, and arena productions, anywhere projected images help to tell a story.”

Barco is active in the Themed Entertainment Association and participated recently in the TEA SATE conference held at Europa-Park in Rust, Germany. Barco will be the Storytelling segment sponsor of the TEA SATE conference at SeaWorld Orlando in October 2018.

Christie’s Larry Paul (senior director technology and custom solutions global professional services) and Virginia Dwyer (marketing programs manager, entertainment) hosted our tour of the Christie booth at InfoComm. The theme was “powerful tools for powerful experiences.” Demonstrations of Guardian, a new feature that will automatically correct projector alignment even when content is playing, were eliciting great positive feedback, according to Dwyer and Paul. Guardian can be bundled with Christie Mystique™ Install, a proprietary software that configures, aligns, warps and blends complex multi-projector arrays. It works exclusively with the Christie Boxer Series and the new Crimson Series of 3DLP® laser phosphor projectors.

Users of Christie Mystique Install - Large Scale Experience (LSE) Edition now have access to tools such as markerless calibration “so that it is no longer necessary to touch the building’s surface for projection mapping,” says Dwyer.

Also being demonstrated were a range of laser projectors from 1-chip to 3-chip, and 10,000 lumens to 25,000. The 1-chip is touted as good for themed entertainment installs, simple displays, projection mapping and museum exhibits. (There are 28 Christie G-series 1-chip projectors installed at One World Observatory in New York City.) We also saw a demo of Widget Designer, a content generating tool available with Pandoras Box server version 6.1.

LED tiles were on active display in a range of pixel pitches, in addition to a video wall powered by Christie® Terra; in fact, everything in the Christie booth was being run by Terra, a new AV solution based on SDVoE technology (Software Defined Video Over Ethernet) enabling transport, processing and control of content over 10G Ethernet networks. “It simplifies the system and reduces cost, and there’s no latency,” said Paul, noting that Christie is a leader in spearheading the SDVoE platform.

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Christie is very active and visible in visitor attractions, with a strong presence in the Themed Entertainment Association and partnerships with major operators.

At the Electrosonic booth, from Pamela Manlulu, Event Marketing Strategist, Maurizio Capuzzo, VP Marketing, and Bryan Hinckley, president, we learned that some major personnel related announcements were pending; not long after came the news that Jon Hancock had become the company's new CEO.

In addition to having a booth on the InfoComm floor, Electrosonic sponsored a mixer in downtown Las Vegas, organized by the Themed Entertainment Association Western North America Division – a good intersection of interests as Electrosonic is a leader in AV system design for themed entertainment, with many acclaimed and awarded projects to its credit including the National Museum of African American History and Culture, One World Observatory and a distinguished client list including top operators such as Universal Studios. TEA colleagues who attended included John Huntington of the NYC College of Technology and author of Show Networks and Control Systems, Tricia Rodriguez (TEA Western Division president) and Maris Ensing of Mad Systems, Tina Ratterman of Big&Digital, Stephan Villet of Smart Monkeys, Loren Barrows of Alcorn McBride, Melissa Ruminot of The Nassal Company (and president of the TEA Eastern North America Division), Dale Sprague of Canyon Creative (and chair of the TEA Marketing Committee), and Shannon Martin of Color Reflections Las Vegas as well as Alexis Cruz, Sean McChesney and others from Electrosonic.

Alcorn McBride Inc.'s Loren Barrows (chief operating officer) and Justin Ruka (sales engineer) talked about the company's InfoComm displays and demos. There was a range of products created with themed attractions and rides in mind such as RidePlayer, RideAmp, V-Page, A/V Binloop Uncompressed and the new V16X controller.

The V16X is a recent upgrade of the company's flagship show control product, new for InfoComm 2018. It will begin shipping in the fall, and was developed to work with Alcorn's RidePlayer, with the V16X installed in the equipment rack, and RidePlayer installed on the vehicle playing the content. According to Ruka, customers will embrace the V16X in today's media-rich, effects-rich attraction environments because it "simplifies integration between onboard and offboard, with fuller communication and smoother synchronization of the system." RidePlayer, introduced last November at the IAAPA Attractions Expo, is a show controller with 16 channels of polyphonic audio playback included.



Alcorn McBride celebrated during InfoComm 2018 Courtesy of Judith Rubin

Also new for InfoComm 2018 was Alcorn's RideAmp, a high-powered audio amplifier that is purpose-built for on-board applications such as dark rides, roller coasters, trams, and parades. It has four high-powered 350 watts per channel and is hardy against weather and vibration.

The VPage product, for intercom and paging stations, was also on display and boasting a hardware upgrade and new AES67 network protocol capability, as well as compatibility with QSC and Dante.

Sunbrite TV was displaying its Pro Series and Signature series, weather-resistant, high resolution monitors manufactured in California, and specially designed to look good and hold up in sunny, outdoor locations and able to withstand high and low temperatures, and rainy and snowy conditions. "We created the outdoor TV category," said national product trainer Fred Sharp. Sunbrite TV does international business and has been around since 2004. Sharp reports that the company has hundreds of monitors installed in queuing and concessions areas of Cedar Fair parks, plus installations at Georgia Aquarium and the Toronto Zoo, in addition to numerous sports stadiums, universities and restaurants.

Adder Technology was showcasing its KVM (keyboard, video, mouse) hardware solutions, based on a transmitter and control switch operating over an IP network, that enables one user to control multiple computers from a single workstation. This consolidated control typically runs on a gigabit network. A new, more compact model was recently rolled out. Applications include broadcast,



Digital Projection rolled out a new 8K version of its INSIGHT Laser projector Courtesy of Digital Projection

command centers and call centers around the world as well as themed entertainment, according to Adder VP Tim Conway. He reports that integrators have adopted the product into control systems for installations at SeaWorld Orlando and the Museum of Science London, among others.

Powersoft, founded in 1995 and based in Italy - where all its products are manufactured - serves the professional audio market with state-of-the-art amplifiers and amplifier modules. Its markets include stadiums, sporting arenas, theme parks and airports. Zoos are also a market; recently, 150 of the company's Deva unit were installed, in weather-hardy casing, on 75 acres at the Cincinnati Zoo, just in time to support its Festival of Lights for the December 2017 holidays, according to Laurence Turner, Deva Regional Area Manager – North America. Deva is a media system that delivers background music, announcements, promotions and paging over a Linux-based server. In addition to working over a network, the units are designed so they can operate independently, each equipped with its own computer, SD card, battery power, solar capability, LED light and camera.

Lightform CEO Brett Jones, whose background is with Walt Disney Imagineering and Microsoft Research, showed us the new, San Francisco-based company's core, flagship product for which orders are now being accepted. The Lightform unit attaches to a 1080p projector with an HDMI cable. It effectively turns the projector into a 3D scanner and special effects/AR device. The scan data is the basis for creating customized content quickly, using basic photo editing tools, to project back onto objects and surfaces. The device carries a content library and can be controlled in real time with sliders and controlled from a smartphone. Jones sees the product as a needed innovation that will be embraced in retail, signage and

themed entertainment, bringing digital messaging and art into real-world settings and creatively transforming spaces without the appearance of screens or signs. The starter kit is packaged with an Epson projector.

J+P (Just Add Power) is a supplier of little black boxes – controller/distributor units - that attach to monitors and screens to make content work across a wide range of monitors, using AV over IP. CEO and Founder Taft Stricklin is proud of a device that brings an assortment of units together under one control and helps operators get the full life from their monitors: "If it still works, we can make your content work on it," he said. The Largo, Florida-based company has been in business since 2008 and serves commercial, retail and entertainment markets. Museum installations include the Permian Basin Petroleum Museum in Midland, Texas and the Romero Britto Fine Art Gallery in Miami.

LynTec is a supplier of motorized circuit breaker panels that turn things on and off and speak all the various entertainment and theatrical protocol languages. Mark Bishop, President, reports that LynTec was recently awarded a patent on the ability to have multiple protocols controlling multiple zones through a central interface. "No one else does that," he said, "the system is not just for lighting or audio, but anything needing control at the circuit level." LynTec products are integrated into many museum and performing arts projects, primarily as fixed installations. A past museum project was "You the Experience," an exhibit at MSI Chicago that received a Thea Award. There are LynTec equipment installations in Las Vegas at the Fremont Street Experience, the Mirage volcano and the Smith Center; and in theme parks including Disney properties, SeaWorld parks, and Dollywood.

Epson's Ramzi Shakra, product manager for large venue projectors, pointed out several products the company promotes to the rental and staging, higher education, theme park and museum markets. These included two new laser phosphor projectors; a 4K native 12,000 lumen projector and a WUXGA 20,000 lumen projector that was being demonstrated with the ELPX02 an ultra short throw lens with zero offset. Also highlighted were the LightScene accent lighting laser projector for digital art, commercial signage and décor applications, and the Moverio BT 350 augmented reality glasses, being deployed in various applications including educational attractions.

Barix AG is an audio distribution and control specialist with a customer base across many industries and vertical markets, and according to Reto Brader, VP sales and business development, the company is active in the theme



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park sector. The company provides flexible technology solutions, and Barix devices can be connected locally via standard networks or via the Internet. Representing the company at InfoComm were Johannes Rietschel, CTO and Founder, William Schmidt, VP of Sales, and Brader. Recent projects include the tram system for Dubai Parks and Resorts, where according to Brader, Barix supplied an intercom and audio control solution to trigger pre-recorded messages via external sources. Barix products include Audio Point 3.0, which facilitates a free app that lets users tune into an audio signal on their wifi devices, with minimal delay.

Renewed Vision creates presentation software for unique live events, fixed installations, sporting events, hospitality and more. At the Mall of America in Minneapolis, Renewed Vision's ProVideoPlayer2, running on an off-the-shelf Mac Mini system, is powering playback for the pre-show video experience of the flying attraction, FlyOver America. The client was Soaring Attractions. A pair of Renewed Vision ProVideoPlayer2 servers are also installed at what's said to be the world's first permanent

architectural projection onto a swimming pool, a nightly show at the Sheraton Waikiki Beach. The system is streaming nearly 22 million pixels using seven Barco projectors and a pair of MacPro®s. At InfoComm, we met Brad Weston (partner). The company is based in Alpharetta, GA.

ENCO Systems, Inc. provides playout and automation solutions to the broadcast industry and other sectors. Their products and content management systems usually find their destiny via integrator specification, and some land in museums and theme parks, where they help drive auto captioning, speech-to-text or vice versa, video walls, interactives, fountain controls and more. At InfoComm, we met Ken Frommert (president) and Gilbert Felix (broadcast sales, Latin America). The company is based in the Detroit, MI area.

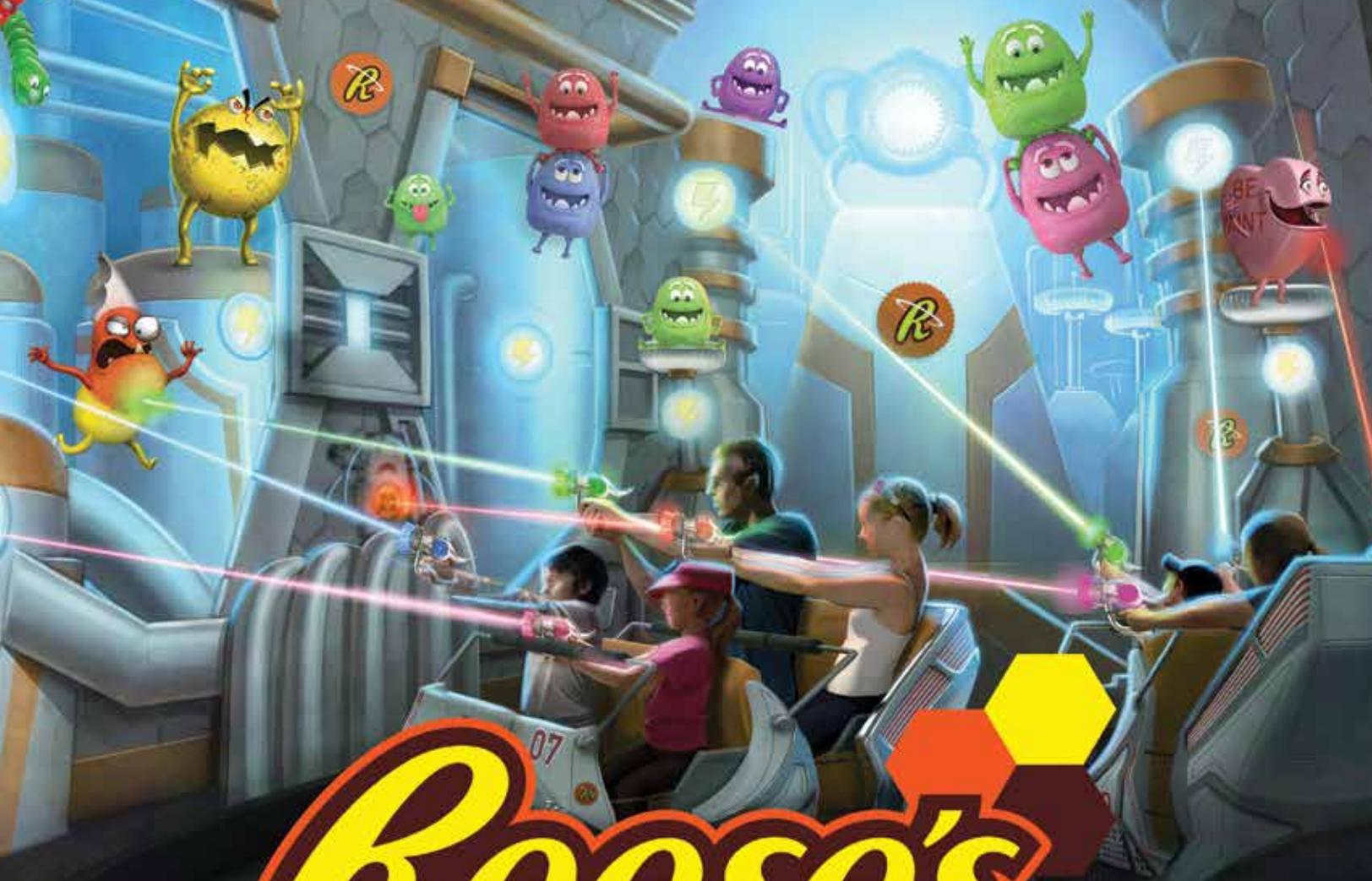
Elo Touch Solutions is a well-established pioneer of the touchscreen, and the company continues to innovate. According to Luke Wilwerding, Director, North America Sales, Elo has, since the 1970s, amassed some 550 patents. The company's markets include museums, water parks and theme parks, for which they develop apps and other products to enhance the guest experience and collect customer data.

A display of particular interest at the Elo booth during InfoComm was PanoScape™, a patent-pending, multi-functional interactive video wall, designed by Chicago-based DesignCentrix for Tulane University's A.B. Freeman School of Business and utilizing Elo's line of business grade touchscreens. It effectively combined the experience of a video wall with that of an interactive touchscreen. Jeremiah Fitzgerald and Matthew Mascheri of DesignCentrix explained that they "essentially hacked the traditional video wall, creating a dynamic multi-user interactive experience." PanoScape™ incorporates a cloud-based CMS along with a proprietary software suite allowing it to play back up to 20K x 2K video files, and with a touch applied to any of the screens instantly switch into interactive mode, where multiple people can interact with unique content on each screen.

Other Elo products found in the attractions and leisure industry include Appetize, a point-of-sale app that is deployed at Coney Island water park and other venues, and Nanonation kiosks in use by Nebraska tourism. The company is based in Milpitas, CA. •••



Christie showcased their Mystique product at InfoComm with projection mapping on a three-dimensional animal head Courtesy of Christie



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Changing the conversation about hospitality and family leisure options

By Judith Rubin

In the face of stiff competition from homestays, company consolidation and online booking aggregators, traditional hotel operators have turned to the untraditional to capture and re-capture market share. The industry is developing differentiated products and marketing, and unique, themed hospitality options are changing the conversation.

Because in a world where one frequently hears the mantra, “experiences are more important than things,” it’s just wrong to choose a hotel solely on price.

Values vs “value”

The “experiences over things” mantra itself is a clear signal that “value” does not necessarily equate to cost. Changing the conversation to address this means empowering customers to base their choices on other, emotionally resonant factors that align with their core values and the kind of experience they want to have - factors such as authenticity, adventure and local flavor.

Theming and IP can provide that vital point of differentiation that turns a hotel stay into a unique experience. When it comes to serving families in that

regard, Hasbro is a major IP owner, active in global leisure markets, that recognizes the hospitality platform as having significant opportunities for its many beloved, family friendly brands. Through the company’s LBE vertical, Hasbro is teaming with hotel and resort operators to build on those opportunities – and reaching out to create more such opportunities.

Several unique properties utilizing Hasbro IP are already coming online, including two soon-to-open hotels in China and Southeast Asia. The first TRANSFORMERS AND MY LITTLE PONY themed hotel by AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION will open to the public in 2018 in Shanghai through a joint endeavor of Zhongyou, Marriott and Hasbro. And the world’s first Monopoly hotel, Monopoly Mansion by Sirocco, will open in 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, a boutique 5-star hotel housed at M101 Bukit Bintang.

Hasbro is actively reaching out to the hospitality sector as part of its active involvement in location based entertainment markets. The company is well represented with offices and branding centers around the world, and visible at major industry gatherings including the IAAPA

PHOTO: Life-sized Monopoly transforms a public space. All photos courtesy of Hasbro

Euro Attractions show in Amsterdam (23-27 September), and the IAAPA Attractions Expo in Orlando (November 12-16).

Families and Hasbro IP

Matthew Proulx, Sr. Director, Global Branded Experiences, Hasbro sees it as helping families to enjoy more time together, and the Hasbro family of brands as a wealth of IP perfectly suited to the hospitality platform. “There are macro trends from the family perspective; a lot of outside factors that distract from operating as a family unit,” explains Proulx. “Time is consolidated. In the quest to find ways for a family to have memorable experiences together, to bond parent-child, strong brands and IPs create points of connection that allow people to escape everyday life and share memories. Hasbro has those strong brands to create those memorable experiences.”

The strength of Hasbro brands, according to Proulx, resides in three key attributes: relatability, shareability and repeatability. Relatability: “Everyone understands or has a general sense of the brand. People have grown up with these brands and have experienced them over time.” Shareability: “People share these brands with others and create experiences around them.” Repeatability: “There’s continuous opportunity to re-engage and keep the feeling alive; a happiness point of connection between family members and in the social media space, and a motivation to repeat the experience in the future.”

The hotel is not just a place to sleep and eat anymore. It’s now where the vacationing family might be greeted on arrival by Optimus Prime or Bumblebee, enjoy a character breakfast with Pinkie Pie and other favorite “My Little Pony” characters, spend the afternoon playing Dungeons and Dragons, Monopoly, Nerf and other Hasbro games, or pile into a Transformers themed ride. This kind of themed hotel experience provides an IP immersion that goes well beyond the surface, well beyond the décor.

The themed hotel and Hasbro IP

In her Oct 2017 article, “Not Just Rooms, Hotels Offer One-of-a-Kind Experiences,” New York Times columnist Elizabeth Olson discusses themed hospitality offerings that make a property into a destination in its own right, and how established operators such as Hyatt and Marriott are mobilizing their resources, loyalty programs and partnerships to help succeed in the game.

The phrase “themed hotel” is readily found on travel sites and in the media nowadays. The range of themes is quite wide, from animals to historical periods, to cuisine, or tied to a specific leisure activity or sport, mode of travel, luxury or entertainment. One can, if desired, browse for

hotels accordingly. The Marriott website, for instance, allows a user to begin with the type of theme or activity and drill down from there.

Will it bring the desired results and return on investment? The best-known manifestation of Hasbro IP is the Transformers rides at Universal Studios parks, but the reality and the company’s goals for the LBE and hospitality space go far beyond that. Hasbro has done a great deal of homework to bring its brands into position for these opportunities. The company has invested considerable research and resources around the world to fulfill those ambitions, know its markets and reach out to them.

“We have taken pains to understand operators’ needs, goals and objectives, whether small- medium- or large-

“My Little Pony’ Storytelling Comes Alive” was a free family event at Sentosa (Singapore) with a variety of activities and participation from local artists.



sized, and we come to the table with a variety of options,” says Proulx. “That’s how Hasbro works and operates - with multiple solutions that range in size and scope, whether it’s a character meet-and-greet, a small interactive show, a family game night, a single ride, a complete themed land, an indoor waterpark or a greenfield project; whether it’s a standalone hotel or part of an integrated resort. If they want an immersive vacation, Hasbro can deliver that; if they want a getaway, we can provide that as well.”

In the case of integrated resorts, this model has become a standard approach to themed entertainment development, with obvious advantages for both operator and guest. Customers who stay on property spend more time and money on property. The operator has more opportunities to connect with the customer, ensure a good experience and build loyalty for repeat business. For the guest, the themed hotel maximizes their exposure to the leisure experience and activities that were the primary reason for their visit.

Research and investment

“We have a lot of brands, and our teams are dedicated to understanding the marketplace and how Hasbro brands relate to those markets,” says Proulx.

Proulx and his team have engaged the process to the extent of having built a portfolio of viable creative concepts (some of which are shown here) based on experience, research and expertise. One concept on the Hasbro drawing board is what Proulx calls a “Creativity and Imagination Center that allows children and families to engage in free play. We feel that kids and parents need opportunities to be fully engaged in edutainment play, combining freeform play but reinforcing educational elements, science and technology, engineering and creative problem solving. We don’t see our brands just beginning and ending with thrill rides.”

They’ve also engaged consultants with long knowledge of the industry and extensive connections, such as George Wade (Bay Laurel Advisors) and Dave Schmitt (MR ProFun). The global organization includes offices in 65 countries, with an EMEA team, North America team, Latin America team and APAC team. The strong EMEA presence includes a European headquarters near London. “We do this to meet needs of those regions, as each has specific cultural needs,” says Proulx.

Hasbro is a global player and has been for some time. “We have global brands but also have to execute at the local level, to ensure we are engaging consumers’ tastes and cultural sensitivities, and meeting their needs from

Global resources, brands and contacts

Hasbro has evolved from a traditional toy and game company to a global play and entertainment leader, with a suite of globally relevant and iconic brands. These beloved brands have enabled Hasbro to become a global market leader in location based entertainment and promotions, with the ability to cater to the consumers and needs of each market. The company has dedicated resources to help LBE customers find the perfect fit among Hasbro’s extensive stable of brands such as TRANSFORMERS, MY LITTLE PONY and gaming properties such as MONOPOLY.

Hasbro has teams in place to address the needs of each region and culture, to determine how the brands relate to the relevant market and what would make the best experience or attraction. These teams are led by:

- Simon Price, Director of Location Based Entertainment and Promotions, Europe, Middle East and Africa (simon.price@hasbro.co.uk)
- Mike Fletcher, Director of Location Based Entertainment and Promotions, North America (mike.fletcher@hasbro.com)
- Natalie Chan, Director of Location Based Entertainment and Promotions, APAC (natalie.chan@ap.hasbro.com)
- Amaranta Gomez the Sr. Manager, Location Based Entertainment and Promotions, Latin America (amaranta.gomez@hasbro.com).

a product standpoint,” says Proulx. We understand the essence of each brand; we do research around the world, with established research centers to ensure that we understand what Hasbro brands mean to children and families of all demographics. These insights feed into our internal Brand Blueprint, bringing the full voice of our brands to all opportunities, including LBE.”

Freshness

Although the company is active on all media platforms, including TV and movies, when talking about Hasbro’s rich portfolio of brands Proulx elaborates on the distinctions between it and other “studio brands.” One of



"My Little Pony" has an international following and a live stage show creates a welcome entertainment break and something to plan around during a family outing.

Proulx's differentiators is freshness. "Freshness involves how much flexibility a brand has to adapt within the marketplace, to move forward in a variety of ways," he says. He describes studio brands as having a somewhat inevitable ebb and flow of high visibility when a new feature is released, followed by a dip in awareness and popularity. In contrast, since they are not necessarily tied to a film or television release schedule, Hasbro brands are "perennial, 365-day-a-year brands, vibrant brands with multiple years behind them; truly evergreen."

The Hasbro portfolio consists mostly of toy and game products, is therefore founded on play. "The consumer is immediately going to associate a Hasbro-branded experience with play, creativity and imagination - and family," says Proulx, rattling off numerous brands including Nerf, Easy-Bake, Mr. Potato Head, Play-doh, Connect 4 and My Little Pony.

It is unique for the IP holder to become creatively involved to the extent that Hasbro has done, in developing

well-fleshed-out concepts for out-of-home entertainment platforms. Proulx believes that this level of investment makes Hasbro a better partner, with the potential to significantly streamline the process and budget, eliminate certain difficulties or obstacles and give better chances of success. In addition to bringing fresh IP, the company is bringing a fresh approach to multi-platforming that IP.

"At the end of the day, the key to success in life, work and business is truly understanding what you do not know," says Proulx. "Don't pretend: Surround yourself with people and organizations that have what you don't know. We can deliver pretty pictures, but they must be based in reality. Working with our extended team, we can create and design experiences that can be built and deliver a proper return to our partners. We can combine the power and popularity of our brands with concept and operational plans that can achieve the goals of our partners. We can really and truly understand the needs of our partners. Draw a line around that: Hasbro can provide the experience and the ROI they are looking for." •••

WWA returns to Vegas

The World Waterpark Association's annual symposium and trade show brings industry leaders and experts to Nevada

By Martin Palicki

October 23-26, 2018, the World Waterpark Association (WWA) returns to Las Vegas, NV for its annual symposium and trade show. The fall event moves around various cities in the United States and was last in Las Vegas in 2014.

"WWA is all about connections. It is an important gathering of key industry professionals, owners, and operators, and is a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends, and make new ones," said John Collins, Marketing Creative Director at ProSlide.

"WWA Vegas is a magical space," said Jim Deberry, Senior Manager – North America for Arihant. "It's a great space to showcase our fun and wild rides, and also enjoy the city and all it has to offer."

The event encompasses a two-day trade show, a robust educational track, and countless social and networking opportunities.

"Thanks to attendee feedback, we've really focused on creating education sessions that are thought-provoking and address current concerns in the industry," said Aleatha Ezra, WWA's Director of Park Member Development. Sessions run the gamut from addressing lifeguard shortages to creating VIP customer programs and dealing with unexpected crises.

Two keynote sessions will complement the education tracks. In "Customer experience is the new competitive advantage – what works, what doesn't and why it matters more than ever," marketing expert David Avrin, CSP, will discuss shifts in purchasing behavior and customer expectation, along with increasing visitor engagement.

In "Nice bike: making connections that move people" Emmy award-winning speaker, Mark Scharenbroich, CSP, CPAE will teach attendees how to be effective at making meaningful connections in both their professional and personal life.

"The educational stream means that we see many more hands on 'operations' personnel here and it is always great to hear their experiences and plans, and it is exciting to see the next generation of Park Managers developing," said Una deBoer, Marketing Director at WhiteWater.

WWA's 2017 event welcomed more than 1,400 owners, operators, developers, suppliers and designers to West Palm Beach, FL. Registration for the 2018 event is ongoing and can be accessed online at wwashow.org.

InPark reached out to leading industry suppliers to learn what they will be bringing to the trade show in Vegas.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG)

ADG will showcase some new versions of their Water Rides series, including a second ADVENTURE LAGOON™ water ride that opened at Zoombezi Bay with a new design and play elements (the first one opened last year at H2OBX [See InPark issue #69 "The outer limits of fun"]). They also premiered the first ever TIDAL RIVER™ attraction at Canobie Lake in Salem NH.

Other recent projects include a Six Flags Maryland River Renovation/Expansion, a Purgatory Inferno Mountain Coaster at Purgatory Resort Durango, CO and multiple wave system installations in wave pools and rivers around the globe.

Arihant

Arihant will promote their ride line for Juniors (ages 4-10), the family ride product line (4-6 person raft/tube rides) and Water Activity Play Structures, (also known as WAPS) which has a new line of theming.

Arihant also will roll out their new dealer/installer incentive program for 2019; which includes an internal certification program allowing dealers and installers to grow their market base into new regions and countries.

Polin

Polin will be showcasing new design options for their line of waterslides. A new three-dimensional Triangulated pattern joins other flat, smooth designs: Mosaic, Chameleon, and Granite. The finishes expand the theming options for each slide.

Polin Waterparks will also launch a surprise new signature waterslide. It's their first waterslide with a built-in story, fully themed.

For more information on the projects Polin will be talking about at WWA, see their feature story on page 26.

ProSlide® Technology Inc.

ProSlide will be highlighting some of their recent product debuts, including RallyRACER™, FlyingSAUCER™ 45, Dueling PIPEline™ and Double TornadoWAVE™.

They also plan to feature several exciting openings from this year: Aquaventure Water Park at Atlantis Sanya, Hersheypark (two world's first rides: RallyRACER and HYDROMAGNETIC® ROCKET®/FlyingSAUCER 40), Siam Park (adding a new MAMMOTH®/FlyingSAUCER 45), Jeju Shinhwa World in Korea (Asia's first Double TornadoWAVE and more), Ocean World in Korea (Asia's first FlyingSAUCER 45 and more), and Great Wolf Lodges in Gurnee, Ill and LaGrange, GA (two world's first rides put in Georgia, the Dueling PIPEline and FlyingSAUCER 45).

SR Instruments, Inc.

In addition to presenting the different color scales now available in their product line, SR Instruments will also be promoting the new 24 x 84 in scale specifically designed for four-person in-line water coasters. Their scales help operators ensure weight limits are not exceeded without embarrassing guests. With over 160 scales in nearly a dozen countries SR Instruments will also be talking about several unique new installations.

Vortex

Last year, Vortex launched their award-winning PrecisionRide™ series. They will also show conceptual designs of Vortex Aquatic Park as well as highlight some recent project openings: Aquatic Area of James Island in Charleston (custom Elevations Structure), Winston Water Works in Winston-Salem (waterslide, Elevations and Water Journey), and Eagles Lakes Aquatic Center (waterslides and Poolplay structure).

WhiteWater

WhiteWater plans to showcase three new products during WWA: FusionFortress 17, AquaForms, and Life Floor. Visitors can also expect to see some new fusion slides that include new combinations and twists as well as updates to existing elements.

Highlighted projects include Epic Waters, [See InPark issue #72 "Of epic proportions"], SeaWorld Aquatica's new Ray Rush attraction, and Rigby's - a new project consisting of an essential waterpark 'start up kit' from WhiteWater in the shape of the FusionFortress 17. With the addition of a lazy river or wave pool phase one of any new waterpark development could be ready to go. •••

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Wicker Man

A ride is Beornen

By Kevin Dazey - exclusive to InPark

Good things come to those who wait - at the Alton Towers Theme Park and Resort. Wicker Man opened March of 2018 as the park's first wooden roller coaster, 10th coaster overall, and is also ranked the distinction of being the first wooden coaster to be built in the UK in two decades.

Wicker Man also joins a growing list of hard rides distinguished by a rich back story and elaborate theming. Roller coasters with a plot offer an extended experience beyond the basics of height, speed and inversions. An engaging queue, pre- and/or post-shows, and on-ride theatrics can turn good to great, and unique.

Alton Towers' parent company Merlin Entertainments found design partners in Holovis and Scruffy Dog Global Creative Services who would work alongside the in-house team of Merlin Magic Making (MMM). "We first got involved with the project a year and a half before opening," says Peter Cliff, Creative Director at Holovis. "From the onset the vision was always for this to become the UK's most immersive coaster, combining technology and storytelling in new and unique ways." Holovis, experts in immersive and mixed reality, would provide all multisensory aspects of the attraction, produce media, and deliver AV throughout.

Theming and experience company Scruffy Dog were commissioned during the creative and schematic phases. "Scruffy Dog has had a strong relationship with Merlin Entertainments over the last few years," says Chantal Kelders, Scruffy Dog Business Development & Marketing Manager. "On this particular project we were brought in at the initial concept stage and developed this all the way through with the client and the creative leads at MMM."

Also vital to bringing Wicker Man to life were music producer IMAScore and wooden roller coaster manufacturer Great Coasters International, Inc (GCII). Continuing collaborations were plentiful on this project which paired GCII and Holovis for a second time while Wicker Man became IMAScore's fourth ride soundtrack for Alton Towers.

We are Beornen

Residing on the site of a former log flume ride, the world of Wicker Man lures guests in to learn of the Beornen, a



Wicker Man at Alton Towers park Photo courtesy Holovis

fictional people who – as the story goes - are living in the woods surrounding Alton Towers. Having a somewhat dark theme at the outset, this ride's story does not quite follow the "something goes terribly, terribly wrong" template. Rather, in this case the something wrong is apparent up front as eager riders choose to become part of a make-believe ceremony. Historical references were the basis for a burning effigy, but otherwise the story is distinctly original to Alton Towers.

The entry plaza offers a partial view of the ride layout along with a massive focal point, a 57.5-ft (17.5m) Wicker Man figure displaying a human face and ram's head on opposing sides that also allows trains to pass through multiple times during the 2,028-ft (618m) course. Laura Gerrard, Head of Brand Marketing for Alton Towers Resort, explains why the off-ride appeal was important. "When planning the ride, we considered how to maximize the impact of the Wicker Man from every vantage point – throughout the queue and the plaza. It really helps to build anticipation as guests can see other people racing through the flaming Wicker Man from wherever they stand. And of course, everyone loves a selfie - so we wanted to ensure we created the best setting for guests to capture that vital image!"

As Gerrard indicates, a combination of real flames and fire effects are visible to on-board passengers as well

as non-riders. LED screens embedded within the main body of the structure display content to simulate fire glow, while actual flames project from the upper exterior. “These elements aren’t difficult to source on their own, but the clever combinations and immaculate timing that synchronizes the effects makes them look spectacular, especially at night,” says Cliff.

The detailed queue, which quickly places riders near supports and track, allows the story to evolve through typical visual cues along with audio that enhances the overall experience. “Along with visual storytelling we created a dynamic soundscape that was specially designed to evolve at the pace of the queue flow,” says Cliff. “This told the story through subtle audio changes, narrative voiceover and key messaging, so no matter how long or short the queue time we are communicating that narrative with our guests.”

Xaver Willebrand, Managing Director and a co-founder of IMAscore, also talks of the audio progression based on guest location within the attraction. “We produced more than 60 minutes of music for the ride including a zone concept. This includes areas that play the music in sync so the guests are able to go from one zone to another, with the intensity and mood of the music slightly changing, but in a subtle and not obvious way.”

Essential to complete the story buildup prior to boarding is the one-minute, Holovis produced preshow. It is here, in this darkened room, where riders’ fate fully becomes known; they will become a “gift” or among “the chosen few.” This unsettling bit of multimedia and story immersion combines projection mapping synchronized with other sensory elements such as vibration from subwoofers and DMX-controlled scent effects.

Once that element of story has been communicated, the “chosen” board one of two customized GCII Millennium Flyer trains. Statistics may seem modest with regard to height and speed, but this is where GCII has excelled for the last two decades. Exhibiting a fairly compact layover of crossovers and direction changes, this is a good example of how to best use a limited ride footprint. “Wicker Man uses the park’s dynamic terrain to have an exciting triple dip first drop into a sweeping curve,” says James Swinden, GCII Design Engineer. “The interaction between the show elements and the ride help make it breathtaking to view on and off the ride.” A keen eye will notice a lift hill subject to a unique design limitation, as Swinden describes. “Alton Towers has a unique restriction where their rides may not be taller than the tree line. The two angles were to achieve the lift hill below the tree line, but in the confined space of the site.”

Attraction Creation

Holovis’ ability to preview all aspects of Wicker Man using a proprietary program called RideView, allowed Alton Towers and MMM to pre-visualize the final experience. After important dimensional data had been gathered a 1:1 scale visualization could be created. It’s here where project teams could explore the site in real time via projection mapping. Per Cliff, modelling the entire experience proved invaluable and gave the opportunity to adjust early on. “By using RideView, we discovered that the capacity in the pre-show room with the design being proposed wouldn’t hold the desired amount of people, so we were able to amend that to make sure we met the theoretical throughput.” At the Holovis Demonstration Campus, a full mock-up of the preshow room was constructed that also gave opportunities to refine effects and key features, and identify potential problems early.

Decisions made about the back story, transitional characters involved, and guest involvement would dictate the tools and technology used. For instance, one path discussed for the preshow room would have employed the use of a live actor, according to Cliff, who explains, “As the creative phase continued and the character had been defined, it was decided that this approach wouldn’t be operationally viable or impactful enough. The Wicker Man needed to have an air of dark magic around it, so we wanted something that was mystical and almost not human. We chose projection mapping as the digital medium to create that.”

Attractions and IMAscore

IMAscore was founded in 2009. One thing led to another, and the leisure industry grew into one of the company’s major markets after delivering its first ride soundtrack in 2011. Today, IMAscore can proudly claim its work as an integral part of dozens of theme park attractions or park lands. Given that audio is such a large part of conveying an attraction’s mood or feel there is no doubt Wicker Man required a precise touch. “Thrill rides do not necessarily need to have the most dramatic soundtrack,” says Willebrand. “Wicker Man is a good example of a soundtrack that leads the guests to the right uncomfortable mood without being in the foreground all the time, similar to the case at The Smiler (Alton Towers) for example. It’s subtle and highly connected to the ride’s inner spirit, story, and theming. It works best when all aspects come together and all of this creates the total picture in the end.”

Alton Towers and guest reaction

Wicker Man followed the marketing direction of Alton Towers’ previous major attractions and was teased to the public as Secret Weapon 8 (SW8) before the official

unveiling. Laura Gerrard says the Secret Weapon program was originally for internal designation only, but later became a marketing tool. “Guests understand that if a new attraction is a ‘Secret Weapon’ it means it’s a really significant investment for the park and that’s all good for building excitement and ensures a successful launch.” Prior Secret Weapons over the last 25 years also possess original back stories proving a formula for success at Alton Towers that offers advantages. Owning a ride’s story gives the park control of development and how the reveal should happen. “These back stories are certainly more detailed over time as guests want more detail and information, and more opportunities to engage with the story through games and other brand extensions,” says Gerrard. Those paying close attention would have noticed the Wicker Man mythology actually premiered the previous season during the park’s annual Scarefest, in the form of a maze titled “The Welcoming: Be Chosen.”

Several months after the debut positive reactions and surprise have been the word coming from guests all along the age range. It appears that GCII and Merlin have crafted a thrilling, yet approachable ride for a broad audience, giving Alton Towers a new category of ride to fill out its lineup. “For the general public the overwhelming comment has been that Wicker Man is much faster and much more exciting than they’d expected it to be,” says Gerrard. “Guests love the ride from start to finish – they’re wowed by the pre-show and theming throughout, and can see it’s also a really great roller coaster.”

Modern wooden roller coasters have come a long way since the early days over a century ago, but can still be counted on to provide a unique feel that steel can’t duplicate and is still popular with riders today. Swinden states it best with regard to past meeting future: “Typically, wooden roller coasters are considered classic rides and using thematic elements helps bring them into the modern theme park experience.”

The business model

Not every roller coaster opening in 2018 can claim Wicker Man’s level of detail, but several examples do incorporate a basic narrative and theming elements providing guests more to explore. These highly themed thrill rides are making the case that a park can benefit from them in ways that justify the investment. Additional marketing opportunities and stronger public interest and media buzz that lead to higher counts at the gates would be a few reasons.

Scruffy Dog’s Chantal Kelders shares thoughts on this model and how it pertained to Wicker Man. “By

combining the explicit storytelling in the queue and ride, and the implicit storytelling in the pre-show, we created the perfect experience for guests to be immersed and add an extra dimension to their excitement. Furthermore, adding a story to a thrill ride can generate repeat visitors due to those that want to find new details in the story which can only be found when entering the ride.”

Gerrard suggests that layering a full arsenal of stimuli (in addition to the physical motion of the ride) into attractions such as Wicker Man is the most thrilling, immersive and effective way to go, once the story has been set up. “Where the story comes in is to ignite the imagination, so that all of those senses are heightened before you even embark. This is certainly the case with Wicker Man as guests have already traveled through the themed queue and 3D pre-show before even entering the station, so their bodies and minds are ready to take on the thrilling adventure.”

Holovis gained valuable insight from their involvement in related roller coaster projects, 2017’s Mystic Timbers for Kings Island [see InPark issue #69, “The mysteries of Mystic Timbers”] and a second 2018 ride at another Merlin Entertainment property. Based around the hit TV show, “The Walking Dead: The Ride” debuted at Thorpe Park and was a complete re-theme of an existing attraction originally opened in 1996. Holovis used their capabilities to bring traffic back to an older ride now based around an IP.

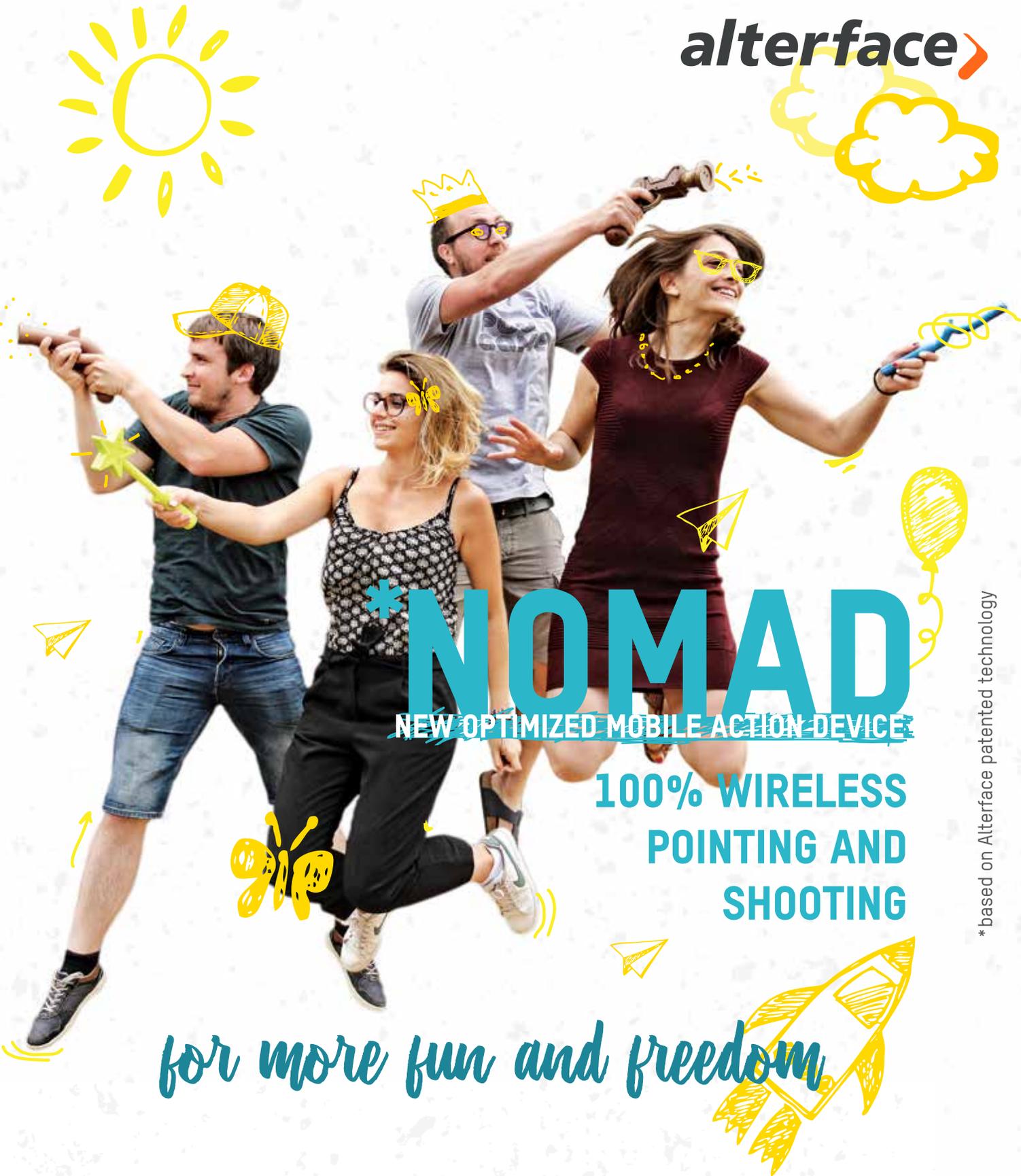
The story should never get too complicated, while enabling those who want deeper immersion to be able to find it, indicates Cliff, who has this to say about Wicker Man and future rides going this direction: “For this next generation of coasters that are driven by story, the key is about ensuring there is enough simplicity in the narrative for guests who have a lower level of engagement to still get have an understanding of what’s going on. At the same time, all of our attractions feature deep and rich narrative offshoots for those who want to delve a little further.” •••



Kevin Dazey has a mechanical engineering background and works in R&D at a manufacturing company in St. Louis. He writes about ride engineering, roller coasters and related topics for InPark. dazey200x@yahoo.com



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Sliding numbers

Waterpark attendance declining? It doesn't have to be that way.

By Jeff Havlik, Vice President, PGAV Destinations



Some of the numbers for waterparks shared in this Year's Voice of the Visitor: Outlook on the Attractions Industry - a report researched and published annually by PGAV Destinations - could chill a blue raspberry slushie even on the hottest summer day. According to the report, 2017 celebrated a three-year high for waterpark guest satisfaction and how often visitors recommended a waterpark to friends and family (a.k.a. "Net Promoter Score"). However, American waterparks experienced the third straight year of falling attendance and a three-year low on an intent for repeat visitation.

Those findings are corroborated by data in the latest edition of the TEA/AECOM Theme Index, a widely cited, annual global attendance study from the Themed Entertainment Association and AECOM. The Theme Index showed that in 2017, attendance at waterparks around the world rose 1.6%, yet North American attendance dropped 2.9% (half a million guests) at the top 20 waterparks. Among other causes, the Theme Index cited a general lack of reinvestment in new attractions to bring guests coming back, as well as several severe storms - such as Hurricane Harvey - that caused parks to close for extended periods of time during peak season for safety and repairs.

In a time of declining attendance, it's prime time to review the global trends of strategies being implemented and innovate our business approach and guest offerings to keep filling those wave pools, lazy rivers, and yes - slushies!

Mergers and risk mitigation

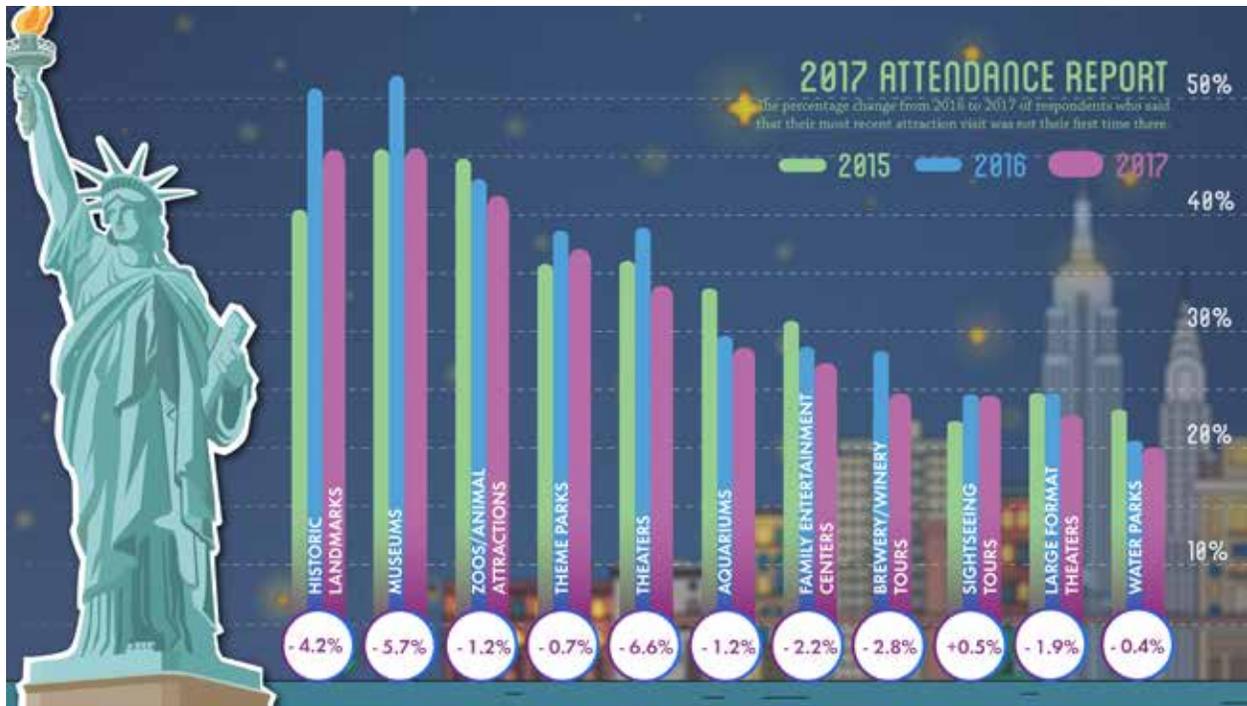
On the macro scale, the first trend we're seeing is an acceleration in the merging and acquisition of parks, wherein large operators purchase flourishing or growth-potential parks and bring them under their umbrella.

Parques Reunidos, the largest waterpark operator in the world, recently acquired the second most popular waterpark in Australia, Sydney's Wet'n'Wild. Ancol in North Jakarta recently reopened its Seaworld Aquarium, opened the Faunaland Zoo, and is developing Dufan Ocean; while in East Java, Jatim Parks recently opened its Jatim Park III, bringing its total number of attractions in the small city of Batu to 10.

This kind of portfolio expansion helps to mitigate risk. First and foremost, if the parks are spread across a diverse geographic and seasonal portfolio, either by region,



Aquatica San Antonio's Stingray Falls Photo courtesy of PGAV



Changes in attendance figures for various types of attractions from 2015-2017 from PGAV's Voice of the Visitor report. Image from PGAV

country or continent, this has the potential to extend an operator's "season" to year-round, keeping cash flow strong 12 months of the year and mitigating bad weather in one region affecting the entire company's performance. A diversified portfolio also spreads the business and financial risk; the concerns of a single park suffering are buoyed by the strength of its peers. And finally, it offers more opportunities for guests to visit other parks; if, for instance a guest enjoyed the operator's waterpark in Buenos Aires, they may visit the same-branded park when visiting Milan.

Beyond creating a multi-national waterpark chain, many companies are developing complimentary attractions next to existing entertainment centers to extend day visits into weekend stays – a trend that is noted in the TEA/AECOM Theme Index. SeaWorld has been leveraging this powerful model for decades, developing its Aquatica waterparks and more resort-centric Discovery Cove and Discovery Point near its existing theme and animal parks in Orlando, San Antonio, and San Diego.

With its name emblazoned across the pitch of the World Cup, Wanda Group just completed its Qingdao Oriental Studio Indoor Waterpark, adjacent to their existing movie studio – doubling its offerings to guests. As Voice of the Visitor notes, the three most common attractions waterpark guests are likely to visit are zoo and animal

attractions, theme parks, and Family Entertainment Centers; so operators may want to consider partnering with these local institutions or developing their own.

Extending the season and the stay

Zooming in from the macro scale of destination conglomerates to the individual destination, another strategy for success is extending the season or length of stay. Many waterparks around the world are developing massive indoor components to their properties. Indoor waterparks provide numerous advantages: they get rid of the seasonality of the park by being open year-round and are virtually immune to weather extremes that take a toll on outdoor attraction visitation, such as record-setting hot days, cold, rain, or snow.

One example, as mentioned above, is Wanda's new Qingdao Oriental Studio Indoor Waterpark. Another is Kaifeng Yinji Waterpark, which has made its first appearance on the Theme Index charts this year, having netted a significant attendance increase with the recent opening of their new indoor facility.

In colder regions such as Northern Europe, where the climate is often less than ideal for splashing around, waterparks are developing more indoor opportunities, often in the form of relaxing, water-focused spas, such

as Germany's Therme Erding. This approach works in hot climates too. Epic Waters indoor waterpark, billed as a "cruise ship on land," just opened in spring 2018 in Grand Prairie, TX, features an 80,000-square-foot glass enclosure which is part of a much larger entertainment complex (a strategy noted above). Chimelong Water Park (Guangzhou, China) has implemented the strategy of simply extending operating hours, and has enlivened those extra minutes with a thrilling nighttime experience that leverages theatrical lighting and live concerts in their wave pool, ideal for Generation Z attendees.

Storytelling and comfort

Beyond just making the waterpark available more often is making it more engaging; going beyond the pools and slides to entertain, and adding immersive storytelling. An intriguing story pulls guests throughout the waterpark, encouraging them to learn and discover more, and stay longer. Just as a great TV series makes us want to spend the weekend binge-watching, an immersive waterpark story makes us want to binge-splash all weekend long. Now under construction and designed by PGAV, Chishui Dinosaur Park in China will be an immense, richly-themed waterpark that will immerse visitors in a lost world where residents cultivate dinosaur eggs and live in harmony with the thundering giants. Opening next year, Europa-Park's new "Rulantica" waterpark takes guests on a Nordic-themed adventure through forgotten lands and myths – even its promotional video is dripping with mysterious and intriguing storytelling!

Part of this strategy of pulling guests further through the park is the increasing trend of intertwining attractions to pique curiosity. This is a tried-and-true strategy, long-successful in retail and grocery: there's an intentional reason you have to walk through six aisles to reach the milk you came for in the back of the store. Waterpark guests may only be visiting to experience one or two attractions; but by tying those attractions to glimpses of additional entertainment, their intrigue deepens, they're drawn past more points of purchase, and extend their stay.

Atlantis Sanya on Hainan Island recently opened 15 new slides, but these 15 slides actually encompass 35 different experiences, combining major elements into single slide paths. Universal's Volcano Bay's 19 rides and attractions achieve an impressive level of intertwining attraction experiences and views to encourage exploration, while Discovery Cove recently added an Animal Trek to empower guests to interact with their resident animals in new and fun ways. In the same way, Chimelong Ocean Kingdom (Zhuhai, China) and the SeaWorld Aquatica parks have leveraged the creative strength of interweaving

rides, animal attractions, and other thrills; examples include Aquatica Orlando's Dolphin Plunge, the lazy river through Roa's Aviary in Aquatica San Antonio, or Aquatica Orlando's Loggerhead Lane, a lazy river through a stunning aquarium.

The last strengthening trend we're seeing is a refocus on guest comfort. A happy, comfortable guest stays longer, spends more, comes back – and brings friends and family with them. One of the most formidable challenges to guest comfort, especially on a hot day, is waiting in line. Volcano Bay introduced the innovation of the TapuTapu™ Virtual Line™ system, where guests can reserve a ride time on any attraction with the tap of their wristband. Zoombezi Bay general manager John Gannon noted that a central goal of their recent expansion with "Otter Banks" was to offer more activities to reduce "people standing in long lines." Aside from lines, Discovery Cove just added a significant day spa this summer, overlooking peaceful waters with a variety of relaxing packages.

Reversing the downward trend

At PGAV, we believe that the downward attendance trends for some waterparks noted at the beginning of this article can be successfully reversed by analyzing the situation and implementing one or more of the above strategies.

A special feature of our Voice of the Visitor study is the outlook on future visitation for the coming year. We build this forecast using insights gained directly from the point of view of the visitors themselves about why they choose to visit attractions – or not to visit. For year 2018, our report forecasts a 2% attendance increase at waterparks. By monitoring and adapting these successful trends to their parks, operators can successfully achieve the forecast. Simply choose your favorite length-of-stay path. •••



Everland Caribbean Bay's Mega Storm Photo courtesy of ProSlide

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IAAPA in Hong Kong

Highlights from the Asian Attractions Expo in June

By Martin Palicki

Hosted by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), Asian Attractions Expo 2018 took place 5-8 June 2018, at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Hong Kong, China. Estimates indicate the Expo attracted more than 9,000 participants, including 6,500 qualified buyers and 393 exhibiting companies. Increases in participants, buyers and exhibiting companies from 2017's event in Singapore reflect the strength and the energy of the global attractions industry. The event featured a full trade show floor at 10,224 net square meters.

The total number of buyers in attendance from all facets of the attractions and leisure industry represents a 27% increase from Asian Attractions Expo 2017 in Singapore, and a 7% increase from 2015 when the Expo was last held in Hong Kong.

“We were excited to bring Asian Attractions Expo 2018 back to Hong Kong. This is the only show IAAPA hosts in Asia and the international representation from exhibiting companies and attendees demonstrated the appeal of the destination, and the strength of the global attractions industry,” said Hal McEvoy, interim president and CEO, IAAPA. “It’s been a great Expo and we’ve enjoyed celebrating IAAPA’s 100th anniversary with our members and colleagues from around the world.”

EYES ON ASIA

InPark joined other industry journalists in a roundtable with IAAPA leadership during the Asian Attractions Expo. Responding to questions were Hal McEvoy, Interim CEO of IAAPA; Andreas Andersen, IAAPA Chairman of the Board as well as CEO and President of Liseberg park; and June Ko, VP of Asia Pacific Operations for IAAPA.

What impact do you think recent changes in China’s approach to land use will have on the market?

Hal McEvoy: We continue to see great growth in the region. We recently opened an office in Shanghai that will be supporting June and the Hong Kong team. Our Global Outlook report shows that in 2016 for the Asia Pacific Region, spending went up over 8%, attendance increased over 6%, and per capita spending increased over 1% as well. China accounts for about 77% of that increase. So guests are visiting parks in China and our feeling is that China will continue to see good growth.



Andreas Andersen, Hal McEvoy and June Ko

Andreas Andersen: Although we are optimistic and see growth, we have to understand that the markets are always cyclical. We will see ups and downs. We’ve seen tremendous growth in the Asia Pacific region, and will continue to see growth, but we also plan for these cycles and movements in the marketplace.

In particular, what about the focus on Hainan Island?

June Ko: As we know, the Chinese government is very supportive of Hainan Island and we do know there will be continued regulations that might support growth there, and that’s why many investors are looking at Hainan Island as a destination to invest in. We are happy to see our members already there. Since the government is very supportive of that region we can see very quick growth within the next two years. Because there are already international investors and brands there, I don’t think it’s a great surprise to anyone to see additional growth there.

There is still discussion on what is to be opened in different areas of Hainan Island that have not yet been developed. Most of the attractions are in the Northern and Southern areas; there is still land to be discovered. The infrastructure is in place (trains, airports) so we are looking forward to that expansion. It is definitely moving in the right direction. Hainan Island will be a very hot destination.

Additionally, I have heard there is the potential to open up Hainan Island to be visa free for more countries, which would be an added benefit.

How is the strength of the Asia Pacific region impacting IAAPA's search for a new CEO?

Hal McEvoy: The IAAPA board is conducting a worldwide search. Our expectation is that it will probably extend for a couple more months to complete this process, and when the board feels they have the right candidate, you can expect an announcement.

Andreas Andersen: IAAPA is truly a global association and the show in Hong Kong is a testament to that fact. International experience is important for the CEO role and will be considered in the hiring process.

How are the impending changes to global trade policies impacting our industry?

June Ko: Trade policies in general are constantly changing. As an association, we support the industry and the needs of our members. We are here to ensure sustainability and support systems for our members. We have the IAAPA News Flash and other mechanisms where we communicate changes in the marketplace to our members. IAAPA is the voice and backbone of the industry and not just one region. Our core expertise is to be that voice in not one country or one region but the whole world.

Andreas Andersen: In addition to that, you can see in places such as Latin America, there are conditions that

ease taxes levied on amusement rides. While in some areas you may see the opposite, in other areas of the world we will see that it will be easier to gain access to attractions and supplies.

Hal McEvoy: We are here to educate leaders in the world and working with our members to try to make sure that tariffs are fair. We are looking for some positive changes in the next few years, but it takes time for these processes to go into place. Our role is to try to move things forward in the industry that will support our members.

How are you celebrating the 100th anniversary of IAAPA?

Hal McEvoy: We are really excited about our 100th anniversary and building the future is really the direction we are looking at as we move toward our Expo in Orlando. What we've done all year is to create a series of celebrations for our members. For example this week at Ocean Park we will have a celebration of our 100th anniversary with our members. In November at Orlando we will have the big wrap up, a big celebration that ends with a bang. Organizationally, we are setting the foundation for the next 100 years: celebrating the past and building the future. The future of our industry looks bright and we are very excited about the happiness and memories our industry gives to people around the world. •

GROWTH PROJECTED

Hot on the heels of the 2017 TEA/AECOM Theme Index report, which was released just in time for AAE and available there in a Chinese-language, hard-copy version,

An extensive education program was available to all attendees of AAE, like this well-attended session organized by the Themed Entertainment Association.



AECOM's Chris Yoshii spoke to a crowd gathered at the IAAPA Asian Attractions Expo in Hong Kong about the latest trends in the Asia Pacific marketplace.

Future Trends

- International IP interest: A wide range of international media brands are considering theme parks in the region, beyond the typical players we've already seen enter the marketplace.
- Third tier cities and resorts: A diverse geographic spread of projects continues to provide more opportunities for development in smaller locales.
- Themed entertainment complex: Developments often focus on clusters that include a theme park, hotels, retail, dining and entertainment.
- Growing domestic IP: The market has seen a greater use of locally created IP.
- Reduced real estate emphasis: Governments are placing less emphasis and incentives on real estate driven projects. Although this may seem bad, in the longer term it is a better situation for the industry, providing more sustainable developments.
- Increased government control: Along with more oversight of project approvals and financing, governments are becoming more realistic about project performance.

Key takeaways

- Asia is now the fastest growing market for theme parks. Another ten years of growth are expected, but that also means that competition is increasing.

- Recently announced projects indicate that a ten-year outlook is realistic.
- New methods of project delivery are needed; innovation must continue. •

ON THE SHOW FLOOR

Industry trends could also be identified by visiting the extensive expo hall. InPark caught up with leading vendors for their latest product news and ideas for the marketplace.

Splash and Flash

InPark met with Una de Boer, WhiteWater's director of global marketing & strategy, for a mid-year update on the company's activities.

On the personnel front, WhiteWater hired Gavin Smith as vice president of park attractions for southeast Asia and China. Although he is new to this industry, he brings with him extensive experience working in this region.

Jesse Crawford, who has worked for WhiteWater as an engineer, is the company's new attractions sales manager. His role is to help parks that purchase WhiteWater equipment plan for operational needs and regular maintenance. This is a new position for the company and it is designed to solely focus on educating the client, in order that they properly understand the technical aspects and requirements of their new attractions.

Showcasing the company's Attractions line of products, WhiteWater highlighted their new Raft Battle attraction. The ride reimagines the typical theme park rafting ride. The circular raft places guests in the center with a hand crank pump guests can operate to splash nearby rafts and guests. "The ride puts control in the guest's hands," said de Boer, allowing for a more interactive experience.

The base model can be highly themed. On hand at the expo was a firetruck-themed raft, but Amikoo park in the Riviera Maya is expected to open a jungle themed version next year. The first Raft Battle will be opening at the end of this summer at Gui'an Park in China.

De Boer highlighted how the company is seeing synergies across its different wet and dry play products. For example, WhiteWater now offers a Spinning Rapids Fusion attraction. Traditionally, the Spinning Rapids Ride combines a waterslide trough with a large inflatable raft designed to keep guests inside (mostly) dry. This new fusion attraction adds the Manta element to the waterslide path, providing a zero gravity moment for riders. "This product is a blend of ideas between our wet and dry ride teams," explained de Boer.

AECOM's Chris Yoshii





WhiteWater's first Raft Battle installation is in China

Finally, WhiteWater was busy talking about their lineup of project openings. They are looking forward to a highly-themed version of its No Boundaries attraction opening soon at Warner Bros' World in Abu Dhabi, a new large park in Dubai, Wet'n'Wild in China and more exciting launches coming throughout the year. •

New flying theater concepts

Holovis and Brogent independently announced two different flying theater ride systems.

Holovis' Li-Fly and Brogent's m-Ride take two very different approaches to the flying theater concept.

Holovis unveils Li-Fly

Holovis hosts an in-booth happy hour to celebrate the launch of Li-Fly

Taking a new approach to the flying theater concept, Holovis unveiled Li-Fly, placing riders in a prone position looking forward and down into a projected curved screen. Holovis will develop concept and media production. The ride will be delivered turn-key to operators.

"We looked at how we could take the flying theater experience, which guests love, and enhance it with the latest in technology and simulation," said Holovis CEO Stuart Hetherington. "In a traditional theater experience you are sitting on the edge of the theater, but Li-Fly puts you right into the middle of the film. It's a very active experience and thrilling."

The ride system will function similarly to a B&M flying coaster, where guests sit in a chair that is then ratcheted back up, placing them in a prone "Superman" position. Hetherington acknowledged that the more intimidating style will limit some riders from participating, but explained that the goal was to inject some thrill and excitement into the attraction. He expects the first one to be completed within a year.

Brogent reveals m-Ride

Brogent's popular flying theater system, i-Ride, has seen installations around the world, including the growing FlyOver attractions. In order to bring a similar experience to venues with smaller budgets, Brogent developed m-Ride.

The ride is offered in 20-, 60- and 78-seat models and is different from i-Ride in two ways. First, instead of pushing the vehicles forward into the theater for the experience, the m-Ride rotates each gondola around into the theater. The m-Ride also does not include a roll movement, but it does include pitch, yaw, heave and surge.

"We kept the core elements of i-Ride and developed a more affordable version that is easy to maintain," said Brogent's Stefan Rothaug. The first m-Ride will open in 2019. •

The year of togetherness

ProSlide was touting the recent opening of 15 of their slides at the Atlantis Sanya resort in nearby Hainan Island.

The 15 slides encompass 35 experiences, many of them in hybrid slides, combining major elements into one slide path. The project includes some world firsts for Asia, including China's first RocketBLAST® and the first fusion of a 40-foot BehemothBOWL™ leading into a 60-foot TORNADO® funnel.

The rides for the park, according to John Collins, ProSlide's marketing creative director, reflect some major trends in the waterpark business.

"Families in Asia tend to want to experience attractions together," said Collins. "North American families tend to split up more while at the park, though that trend too

is changing as parks everywhere are demanding larger, higher-capacity attractions."

Waterparks in Asia tend to be set up more for resort travel, rather than just day trips. There is less pressure to cram a lot into a short period, but also a need for having a broad range of experiences available.

"We've seen a demand for a family thrill ride category," explains Collins. A standard family attraction may be not exciting enough for teenagers, but ProSlide feels there is a sweet spot where you can get enough thrill for parents and older kids, while still keeping everyone safe and together. ProSlide introduced several new products this year and expect to develop more in the near future. •••

The graphic features the TechFulcrum logo at the top left, with the tagline "Technology Balanced" below it. To the right of the logo, a vertical line is followed by the text "Design, Engineering, Consulting, & Technical Direction for Theme Parks, Museums and Attractions." The background is a collage of three images: a DJ booth with a laptop and mixer, a large crowd of people at a concert or event, and a server room with rows of computer racks. The text "AUDIO", "VIDEO", and "SHOW CONTROL" is overlaid on these images in large, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom right, the website address "www.TechFulcrum.com" is displayed.



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Designing Rulantica

Mack Solutions' Chris Lange on creating Europa-Park's unique, immersive new indoor waterpark

Interview by Martin Palicki



At this writing, Europa-Park is in the middle of constructing Europe's newest waterpark, Rulantica. With a unique theme and detailed storytelling, the park is one of the most eagerly anticipated openings for 2019. InPark spoke with Chris Lange, Creative Director for Mack Solutions (Europa-Park's sister creative company) about his design aesthetic and plans for the new waterpark.

First, tell us how you got involved in theme park design and ended up at Europa-Park.

Throughout my life I have been interested in the elements of amusement parks. As a child, I took up all the space under the Christmas tree for building my Christmas market. Each year I would add to the market with new rides, lights and more. I also enjoyed the elements of theater as a kid, and would experiment with lighting, costumes, and special effects.

I grew up in East Germany, and we didn't have a Disneyland park to go to. But we did have a small park in Berlin and I enjoyed visiting each summer. When I was 13 my parents took me on a typical California vacation and we got to visit Universal Studios and Disneyland -- I fell in love with theme parks.

In school I continued to study theatrical skills and eventually started working at movie studios and then a set decoration company. I figured that I could learn from them and then start my own attraction design & production business. My first project was The Dungeon (Merlin Entertainments) in Hamburg, Germany.

From there, I started working with Merlin as a Creative Director and subsequently did design for AdLabs, Chimelong Group and Genting Group. After all the wonderful traveling and experience I gained around the world, I decided I wanted to come home to Germany and accepted an offer from Europa-Park to head up the Mack Solutions division in 2015.

You are in the midst of creating the Rulantica waterpark. Tell us a bit about the origin of the project, its name, etc...

When I started at Europa-Park, the name Rulantica already existed and there was a general layout for the

waterpark and hotel. We had an overall masterplan from PGAV to work with, but I massaged some of the ideas in order to help create the story of Rulantica. 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, to name only one of the areas. 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.

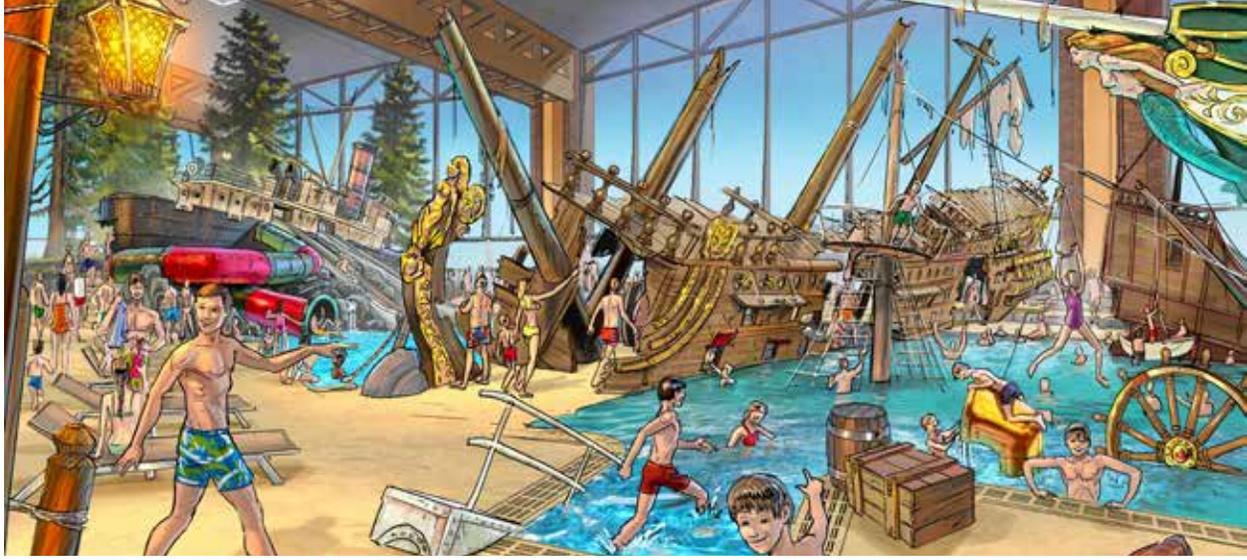
The new hotel next to the waterpark is themed as a Nordic natural history museum. In our story, the museum is very popular and people come to view all the different exhibits (and spend the night!) The museum's curators held an expedition to Rulantica and were able to bring back all kinds of artifacts and information. They decided to create a special exhibition hall for Rulantica, and now guests are able to experience this magical island. Visitors will walk into a market hall building reminiscent of the early 1900s. The main hall leads to the eight different lands of Rulantica, which are presented as different and unique galleries within the museum. In this way we don't have to ask guests to pretend they are on an island. It is OK for them to see the roof and structure of the building, because they are actually in a museum.

Can you give us an update on the progress of Rulantica?

We are on track for opening this new waterpark near the end of 2019. We have a great team immersed in the very complicated, detailed building process. At present, we are starting on the roof soon as well as the intricate rockwork.

What will make Rulantica stand out from other waterparks?

Many of our competitors have a lot of slides. However, in Germany it is difficult to get permits for fiberglass slides -- it takes two years. So many other operators don't want to go through that process, which is why you see so many steel slides in this part of the world. We wanted to bring in the unique experiences and slide components that fiberglass offers so we took the time to go through that process. In Rulantica you will see a lot of slides not often found in European waterparks. We will have family raft



Designs for Rulantica include a shipwreck area and a glacier temple. The park is themed to fit into its Nordic-inspired surroundings. All images courtesy Europa-Park

slides, hybrid slides and more. ProSlide and Aquarena are helping us create some amazing slide experiences for our guests.

I think another major difference for Rulantica is in how we tried to put the spirit and heart of Europa-Park into the waterpark. It will feel natural and as though you are in an authentic environment. You will find the small, winding pathways that you can find now in Europa-Park. Each of the park's eight galleries will be entirely immersive.

It was important to me to not see brightly colored fiberglass everywhere and obvious support structures. So we decided that some of our interior slides would be designed to look like ice, which could naturally fit into the Rulantica theme. It also made sense: ice is slippery, just like a waterslide.

Europa-Park suffered a devastating fire earlier this season. Can you share any update on how the park is planning on redesigning that area?

Everyone wants to know if we will rebuild the Pirates of Batavia attraction. Right now, we are planning on rebuilding the attraction as people remember it. Our fans really love that ride. We got thousands of letters from people saying they loved Pirates of Batavia and hoped that it would be rebuilt quickly.

We will also be rebuilding the Holland and Scandinavia lands. In the process we will improve some of the buildings and facades to create more immersive environments, as well as update some of the infrastructure. I am confident that guests will love it even more than before. We expect that rebuild to happen soon.

How would you define the Chris Lange design style?

Since I am such a theme park fan, I tend to be drawn to what I would like. But I also am aware that not all of our guests view things the same way. There are operational things, like shadows or lighting structures, that bother me but which I'm sure a five-year-old doesn't care about - they just see a magical place. So sometimes I check with my godson to see how he responds to things. But I also listen to the guests here. That's the great thing working in an operating theme park – you get instant feedback!

I learned when I had my own company that the client's wishes come first. Here, the guests are our clients, so I want to see what they like. We are not trying to build the tallest or longest attractions. We ask ourselves, "who do we want to entertain with this attraction?" and then design to answer that question. In the end, it's about whether or not the guests like it and spend money to experience it. •••

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Weber Group: Meet the partners

Jim Doiron, Adam McIntyre, Paul Ohlin and Max Weber lead the next generation of The Weber Group

by Martin Palicki

In November 2017, design-build firm The Weber Group announced a new branding campaign and reorganization of the company. Initial founders Tom Weber, who passed away in 2016, and his brother Donny Weber had built the company into a respected design and fabrication leader (Donny remains a part-owner of the company). Many of their most high-profile projects came from the waterpark and zoo/aquarium sectors, but the company is lauded for their skill designing residential and commercial developments as well. Recent success stories include the Astronaut Training Experience (ATX) at Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex (Cape Canaveral, FL), the Crayola Experience (Orlando FL and Plano TX), the National Aviary (Pittsburgh) and the newly opened Two Bit Circus (Los Angeles).

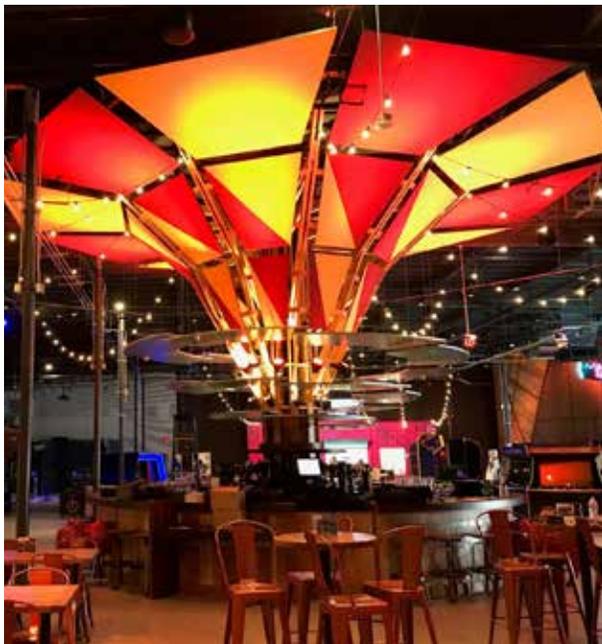
The new Weber Group is managed by four partners, all of whom were actively involved in the business prior to the reorganization:

- **Jim Doiron:** Jim oversees the fabrication team for Weber Group. Jim has decades of experience in construction management. He has been with Weber since 2010.

- **Adam McIntyre:** Adam joined Weber Group in 1999. A licensed architect, he oversees the creative design work done by the company.
- **Paul Ohlin:** Paul serves as Weber Group's current COO and CFO. He's been with Weber since 2015.
- **Max Weber:** The son of the late Tom Weber, Max has worked with Weber Group since 2002. In addition to being a project manager, he now heads up business development for the company.

How did the Weber Group get to be where it is today?

Max Weber: We have always been a family business, and we owe our success today to our dedicated staff and excellent client base. We have been very fortunate to find and be able to grow alongside our many great clients. For us it is important to have a symbiotic relationship with our clients as well as our staff. I like to think that we have grown in concert with our clients to become the company we are today.



Two Bit Circus (L) and Crayola Experience (R) are two prominent projects Weber Group has worked on recently Photo courtesy Weber Group



Jim Doiron



Adam McIntyre



Paul Ohlin



Max Weber

How did the business change with this transition?

Paul Ohlin: Previously the company was an S Corp. with Tom and Donny being 50/50 owners. The new company is an LLC with the four new partners and Weber Group, Inc. as the owners.

Jim Doiron: The partner team selection was strategic. The group that was chosen came from a variety of departments that produced a nicely rounded group.

Max Weber: It is exciting to have a new generation of management taking on leadership positions. Everyone in our new partnership not only shares the responsibility in managing our company, but we still maintain our original responsibilities. For example, I am a partner in the company, but I also am still a project manager, which helps us keep a finger on the pulse of Weber Group.

Tell us about your rebranding.

Adam McIntyre: Rebranding is a difficult undertaking... especially if you've become comfortable with an identity for many years. Tom and Donny started the effort to coincide with the new ownership team. The intent was to move forward with an evolution of where we've been, something that the new ownership team could galvanize around.

Jim Doiron: The rebranding was in response to people knowing the name and the company but not really knowing what we did both as a theming contractor and as a general contractor (GC) that built commercial construction. The rebrand was done in hopes to help fix that and give the company a fresh new look to go with the transition to the new generation of owners.

What other changes are happening at the company?

Jim Doiron: We recently established a new technology division alongside the rebrand with a project coming to completion at Kennedy Space Center. We are seeing more and more tech integration with projects and realized we needed to stay ahead of that. The addition of water

play and signage divisions was a direct result of the new partners' roles and came about through both new and established relationships we have cultivated.

Adam McIntyre: We've added onto our facility due to the growth. It coincided with the transition and is allowing us to grow our skill sets and provide our clients with more in-house services than we had only a year ago.

Paul Ohlin: We have also focused on a lot of internal promotions and creating much better career paths for our employees and creating more opportunities for everyone.

What markets are you most active in right now and where do you see the greatest potential for growth?

Max Weber: Currently, we have experienced great growth in affordable housing as well as the entertainment industry. The next generation utilizing our client's services is much less concerned with having material possessions and more concerned with having great relationships and experiences. We are excited to meet the demands of our growing client base as we mature as a company.

Jim Doiron: It's true that the multifamily housing business has been going strong and we don't see any sign of that slowing down. In our unique position as a theming contractor and a GC we are seeing a bit of growth in traditional construction done for "theming" clients like zoos and waterparks, which is something we have done historically but got away from with changes in approach from clients and divisions on projects. We welcome that line of work back and feel we are uniquely qualified to provide those kids of turn-key services to our customers.

Any plans to change your offerings?

Paul Ohlin: As Jim mentioned, we've recently added a Technology department as we realize the ever growing need to integrate more tech into our projects. We also acquired Design2Play, to be even more able to offer turn-key solutions to interactive play. And we now have a sign division that can handle any kind of signage that our projects may require.

Max Weber: We are working more and more with interactive audio, visual and light effects to heighten guest experience on our projects. As Jim touched on, we did all the design development and installation of the AV, VR and AR experiences for the new ATX education center at Kennedy Space Center. Billy Boyd is our new technical project manager. He designed, specified and installed most of the interactive technology components for the education center. Billy will work with our project managers to be the liaison between the client and Weber Group for all technical components for our upcoming projects.

In what ways is the design/build field evolving?

Adam McIntyre: Design-build had always been and will always be built on TRUST...I don't see that changing at all, but we do see an increased desire for documentation and clarity that describes the intent to a client. Technology is helping that quite a bit, and we are always looking to stay ahead of emerging tools to help the entire team manage expectations.

How do you make your Midwest home work for you?

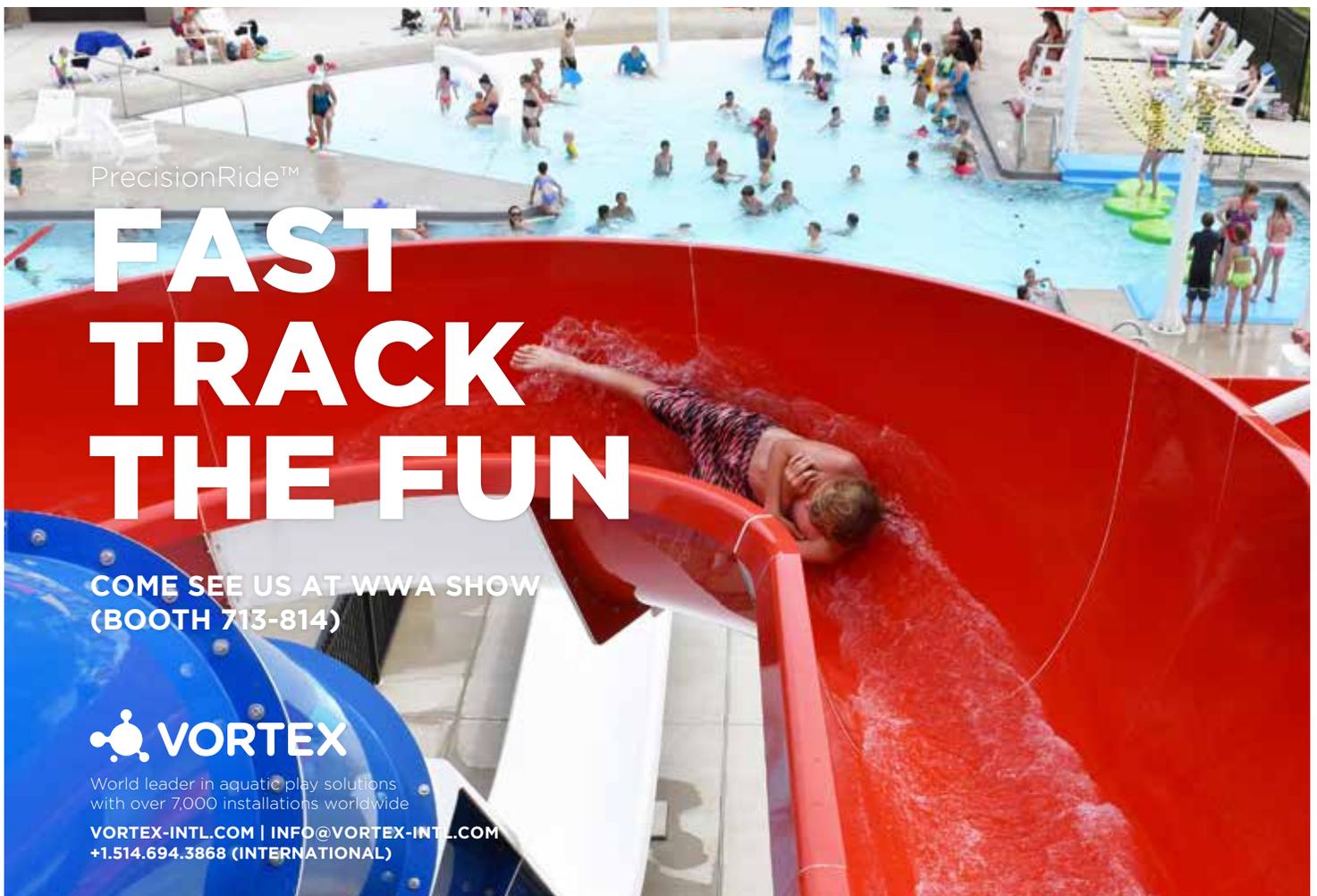
Adam McIntyre: Being in southern Indiana has its challenges, but it has its advantages too. We like to think

we are centrally located and only within a few hours' drive from a number of cities and states. We have access to a large skilled workforce and costs are a bit more reasonable than on the coasts. We do work ALL over the country and have found that producing our work in southern Indiana and shipping it is still competitive. We've learned how to do that efficiently over the years.

Jim Doiron: I think the other thing to remember is there is a huge market in the Midwest that counters the California/Florida mindset. Companies like Cedar Fair and Herschend Family Entertainment are huge players in this region and are at their heart Midwest based. We are proud to have those two as customers.

Are you feeling positive about all the changes the company has gone through?

Max Weber: I actually have never been more confident than I am now in Weber Group. I can't wait to see what new and exciting ventures we get into as a company. I am one of the lucky few that enjoys coming into work every day. I truly believe we make a positive impact on people's lives. It is rewarding to see the tangible product at the end of the project. •••



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Faces and places

InPark speaks with industry leaders taking on new challenges

Interviews by Martin Palicki

Jakob Wahl

Mr. IAAPA Europe

In July 2017, Jakob Wahl returned to IAAPA's EMEA division in the role of Vice President, after more than five years with Europa-Park, where his most recent title had been Director of Communications/ Executive Manager Special Projects. He had previously been IAAPA Europe Program Manager for more than four years. At IAAPA EMEA he has taken over for Karen Staley, who transferred across the pond to head up the IAAPA North American division (Staley left IAAPA earlier this year).



How has your first year been as head of the EMEA division of IAAPA?

Intense! I have considered it a transitional year to come up to speed and continue the great development of IAAPA EMEA. We had some very well-attended events such as our winter and spring forums, which received great reviews from participants. Membership has developed nicely and the Euro Attractions Show 2018 will be by far the largest EAS show IAAPA has ever had. So it looks like we are on the right track.

The next step is to have additional staff join the office and then further develop our work and membership offering. We are working on some very nice projects in terms of events and member services that I look forward to over the next year.

What is your outlook on the future of the industry in your region?

If I look among members in the EMEA region, I see very impressive confidence in the market. These are just a few examples to highlight the positive dynamics in the industry:

- Abu Dhabi just opened the very impressive Warner Bros. World
- Disney announced a 2 billion EUR investment to their Paris property
- Large park groups are expanding their offerings

- Many family-owned amusement parks (such as Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Toverland or Europa-Park) have launched or started construction of the single-largest investments in their history
- Smaller parks are innovating and investing in very smart additions to their portfolios

Personally, I also think the growth of EAS is actually a good indicator for the optimism of the whole market.

IAAPA is an evolving organization. What changes are you seeing in your division?

I think change is vital to stay relevant. On a global level, the association is changing very fast with the move to Orlando and the new headquarters building. Here at IAAPA EMEA, we currently are looking into opening up a new office in the Middle East next year to better service our members in the region, all while providing a more hands-on approach and striving for transparency in our work.

What can people expect at this year's EAS show in Amsterdam?

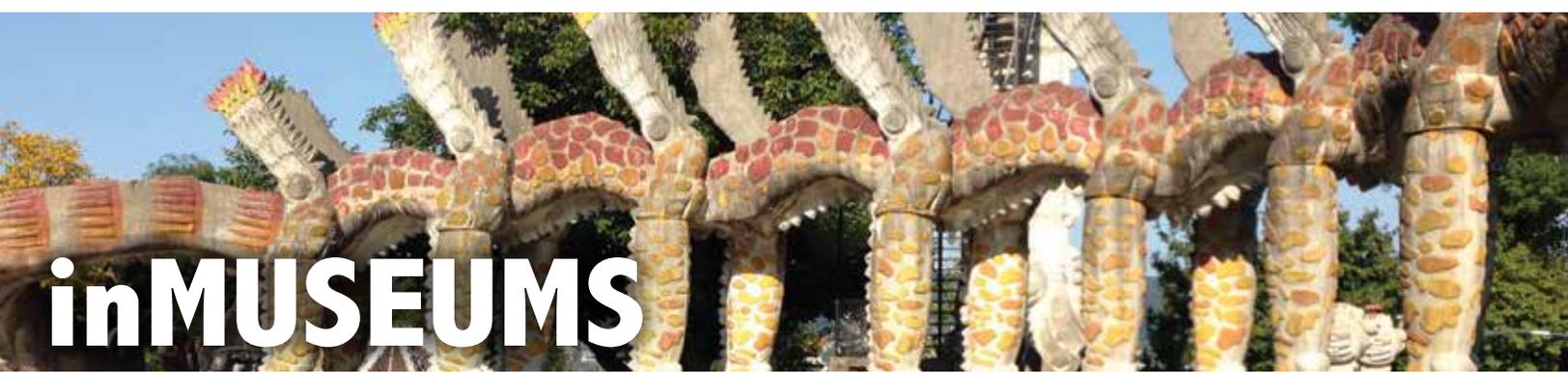
First, they will experience the largest show floor ever at EAS (following last year's record show in Berlin). Exhibitor space grew by more than 10%, which is a great sign for business and innovation in this industry. We also further developed the conference program, which will offer more than 100 hours of educational events.



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For the first time we are combining a tour with a dedicated session and will visit Walibi Holland to experience their Halloween event behind the scenes and learn more on this subject in several presentations. The IAAPA EMEA education sub-committee has really put together a very strong program and I highly recommend everyone to attend the various sessions.

What two or three things should people be sure not to miss during EAS?

The opening ceremony on the opening day of EAS will be a very special one this year and is a great start to the week. The same evening, the opening reception will be the major networking event of the week with more than 1,200 attendees enjoying the wonderful atmosphere of

the beach club right next to the trade show halls. To finish the week we will have an intense, one-day trip on Friday, September 28th to experience the new areas of two Dutch star attractions: Toverland and Efteling. This will be a long day, but it gives participants the great chance to see these two wonderful but very different facilities and experience some of their most recent additions.

How else can folks get involved in IAAPA?

We like our members to be active: I always encourage members (and non-members) to tell us what they like, what they don't and what they are missing. IAAPA is a member-driven association and feedback will only make us better. So I'm always happy to hear from them to further develop this wonderful association and industry together. •

Josh Adcock

Creative design

With a rich work history at SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, Falcon's Creative Group, VOA and more, Josh Adcock recently became Executive Director of BRPH Creative. Historically known as an architecture and engineering (A/E) firm, by adding Josh to the team BRPH signals a commitment to providing complete design solutions.

What led you to make this transition in your career?

I have always been entrepreneurial in my approach to projects, clients and critical problem-solving. BRPH leadership has the same philosophy and encourages every team member to perform this way. I have been very fortunate in my career to find myself working with people and companies that have also valued this trait. The differentiator for me to choose to join BRPH was twofold: (1) Executive leadership is fully committed to elevating the company's presence in the creative arena and, (2) I find pure excitement in curating an expanding team, infecting an established company culture with curiosity and innovation that will ultimately bring BRPH to the front line of creative offerings – but with 54 years of architectural and engineering prowess behind it.

Tell us about your new role at BRPH.

My role as Executive Director of BRPH Creative is very simple: to bring BRPH to the forefront of creative offerings by truly aligning with and anticipating clients' needs. We will do this by leveraging our existing A/E



resources to help execute creatively driven design solutions better than any other singular Creative or A/E firm in the marketplace. Today, my role is to lay the groundwork and define new processes across all market sectors. I am joined on this journey by Jessica Roddenberry, Director of Design. We are exposing the power of design thinking and collaborative culture, which has already shown successful results across entertainment, aerospace and manufacturing markets. We will build off of each success, enhancing our client relationships and offerings through a new era of critical thinking, creativity and disruption.

I'm also responsible for making French Press coffee and terrible puns (so they say).

What do you hope to bring to BRPH?

First, I want to introduce a new way of looking at problem solving and be the example of how fun work should be performed – by having FUN. Second, I will encourage cross collaboration and break down perceived barriers between creative and A/E teams. BRPH is a very successful A/E firm, and has a well-established

history. However, creative teams have very different methodologies, so the tools and processes are unique. I am eager to bring my personal experience and introduce more world-class creative resources to our teams and show the world what we can do. Maybe we can change it from A/E firm to A/C/E firm!

Landscape architecture is your specialty - in what ways can parks and attractions make better use of their landscapes?

The beautiful thing about the creative and entertainment industries is that people arrive there from very unique paths and backgrounds. Mine happens to be landscape architecture, which, for me, has had nothing to do with traditional landscape or plants. It's a deceiving name for an area of study. It is broad and allows designers to sculpt environments and directly affect a person's psychology inside or outside of a space. Manipulating environments and shifting psychologies is paramount to building parks and attractions. It could be argued that is the sole purpose, and this is why my landscape architecture background has a powerful alignment with parks and attractions all over the world. Owners of parks and attractions will always be more successful taking a step back and looking at the guest

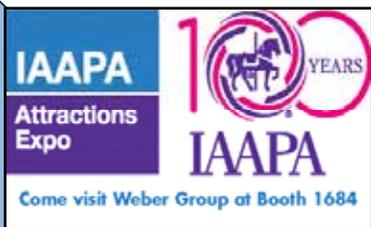
experience holistically, debating how the project fits into the larger picture or long-range master plan.

You came to BRPH directly from SeaWorld Parks; how did working directly for an operator change your design?

Having been part of the owner team of SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment simply gives me more knowledge and insight into how to more successfully align with future clients' needs. Having overseen attraction development for 12 parks across North America helps me understand various operating methods and building challenges in different environments. Most importantly, it helps me anticipate the needs of executive owner teams and sets BRPH up to become a better overall partner.

What designer(s) have most inspired you?

My primary inspiration has come from more writers and musicians, than designers, as a matter of fact. One of my favorite inspirations is Oscar Wilde. If I had to pick a designer, it would be Lebbeus Woods. I can't explain it, you gotta look it up. It's unarchitecture. It's alive and dead at the same time. It's fantastic. •



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Paul Noland

Ticket to success

In February of this year, IAAPA announced Paul Noland's resignation from the association's CEO role. Days later, Noland was named as the new CEO of accesso, a leader in queuing and ticketing technology solutions. He replaced Steve Brown, who is remaining on in an advisory capacity during the transition. Prior to his position with IAAPA, Noland worked for many years at Walt Disney Parks & Resorts and Marriott International.

What are you most proud of with your IAAPA role?

I think I'm most proud of the association's ability to expand globally. In particular, the growth of the IAAPA expos in Asia, Europe and North America really enabled everything else the association does. It allowed us to expand our services around the globe. Of course, it wasn't just me – the whole team deserves great credit.



Why was now the right time to change direction?

My role at IAAPA was my dream job. I really enjoyed it and was perfectly happy. But I have some real background in this area, like ticketing, revenue management and queuing. It's something I've had a great passion for. In regards to accesso, Steve Brown and I have known each other for years. We worked together at Disney doing ticketing for Walt Disney World. I knew if ever there was a company that would be a natural fit, it was here. When

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Tom Burnet, chairman of accesso, approached me in the fall, I felt like it was the right move.

You have much experience as an operator, and you led an association representing operators, why move to the supplier side?

To me there is not a great division between the two. It is really one industry and had this not come along, I would have stayed with IAAPA indefinitely. accesso is really a company that is doing great work and the products and lines of business they are in are areas I've had over 20 years of passion and experience in, so it was really the right opportunity.

What can you bring to the accesso team?

First, I think I have a pretty good appreciation of the industry from a global level and I've had relationships for many years with key players in the industry. Second, I have a lot of strategic planning and business development in my background and accesso has changed so much over the last five years, including five major acquisitions. Now it's time to put together the long-term strategy for how we make those products work better together, and armed with that information, figure out what markets we should pursue. We have a limitless set of markets to pursue, so my first year I expect to start prioritizing where we should be.

What are your thoughts on the state of the industry?

Overall, can you believe it is still this strong? It's been a long run and things are still extremely strong. But I'm old

enough and experienced enough to know the tree doesn't grow to the sky – but it is really healthy right now. There are some socioeconomic phenomena that are spurring us on, independent of the health of the economy. The fact that people value experiences much more than things, an emerging middle class in Asia and other regions, and a general growth in leisure are fueling it and will continue to fuel it.

It seems like parks and attractions would be even more embracing of tech than they have been, and I think we are starting to really see that. Historically, if you own a park, capital is a huge thing and you always want to put it into guest-facing projects. We don't always think of ticketing as guest-facing, but rather as infrastructure. Now that is changing. People are losing tolerance for waiting in lines, so to have technology that gets a ticket in your hand before you show up, or can manage queues during the day really is guest-focused and adds to the guest experience and, frankly, adds to the revenues of the park.

It's driven as much by the consumer as it is by the operator.

Absolutely. People don't have tolerance for lines, because once some lines get removed from your life, the next line you hit makes you incrementally madder. Now you don't have to wait in line at airports, you can buy things instantly online, etc. Now that line you do encounter makes you much more upset than it would have three years ago. That puts the onus on everyone in business to find ways to break down those lines and barriers. It's a real opportunity for parks to improve the guest experience. •••



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