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

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Postmaster: Send address changes to InPark Magazine 2349 E Ohio Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53207, USA. Subscriptions are available annually for \$45 per year (\$70 international). Opinions expressed in editorial matter are not necessarily those of InPark Magazine or its publishers, Martin Chronicles Publishing, LLC.

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The future is now



Martin Palicki,
InPark Magazine publisher

Attractions are reopening. Now (at least in the United States and parts of Europe) we are at the point where we can start to see how the pandemic has changed our industry. It's clear that the guest experience has evolved. Mobile devices are now more fully integrated into attractions. The dynamics of the pandemic (pandynamics?) ushered in changes and technology upgrades quickly. But how will the institutions of our industry be changed?

As I reflect on how InPark might answer that question, I think of how proud I am of our team and our efforts to rally around both IPM and the well-being of the industry. We did not miss publishing a single issue, and even continued printing and mailing copies of the magazine throughout the pandemic.

In addition to adding a new set of hands (Jordan Zauha) to keep a steady stream of news stories published on our website, we expanded original reporting beyond our scheduled issues. We launched a new monthly digital report that highlights all the exclusive content InPark generates on our website and through our social media channels, edited by our own Judith Rubin. And Joe Kleiman, our longtime news editor and now senior correspondent, is focusing even more attention on taking deep dives into stories that impact our industry.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce that we will soon launch a new podcast series. InPark Tracks will build upon the stories we tell in the magazine with expanded storytelling and audio versions of select stories. Short episodes designed for busy industry professionals will be available this fall.

In sum, I believe IPM is an even more well-rounded media organization than it was prior to COVID. Our core focus on technology, narrative experiences, IP and branding continues, and is further enhanced by our added media outlets and streams.

As always, thank you for continuing to read, comment on and share our stories. We look forward to continuing to invent the future together with you and the rest of our amazing themed experience community.

Publisher Martin Palicki founded InPark Magazine in 2004, combining his years of experience working in themed entertainment with his passion for writing and design.

COVER: Digital immersion can be found in venues around the world (and maybe eventually the galaxy?) When Illuminarium's SPACEWALK opens (anticipated January, 2022) guests will be able to virtually walk through the cosmos.

Photo courtesy of Illuminarium Experiences

Industry associations keep us going



Judith Rubin,
InPark Magazine editor

A piece of advice I always give to anyone looking for opportunity is to get involved with an association. This is something to do at any stage of your career. You don't have to go it alone - there's an organization for every industry, and likely more than one. And in the attractions sector, which is well served by a number of associations, you absolutely should not go it alone, because it's an industry built on team culture and your relationships will get you to your next project. In addition, you simply can't know everything, and things evolve quickly.

Some of the most vital education you will acquire will come through dialogue with your peers at industry gatherings. Our associations facilitate these gatherings. They deserve our thanks and support for the work they do to bring us together, help us network, share information and develop professionally.

And for what they did in the course of the pandemic, they deserve ten times the appreciation. At a time when resources were shrinking, uncertainty was growing and business was at a standstill, our associations regrouped. The learning curve was sometimes steep but the tools were available, and they found ways to deliver the services, community and continuity their members needed - including full conferences and trade shows, awards programs and publications. (I experienced this first-hand during my time as a senior staff member at the Themed Entertainment Association.)

We're still in a hybrid situation now in regard to events. Some in-person gatherings have resumed, but for logistical reasons, a number of events are being brought to us virtually a second time around. Let's pause now to acknowledge and appreciate those industry organizations that continue to do so much for our enrichment and the growth and betterment of our industry. They should not be taken for granted. Join, participate, sponsor, volunteer: support them as they support you.

InPark editor Judith Rubin helps drive content to serve the attractions industry, fostering professional connections, business development and the meaningful exchange of information.



Raised in San Diego on theme parks, zoos, and IMAX films, Joe Kleiman would expand his childhood loves into two decades as a projectionist and theater director within the giant screen industry. In addition to his work in commercial and museum operations, Joe has volunteered his time to animal husbandry at leading facilities in California and Texas and has played a leading management role for a number of performing arts companies. Joe has been news editor at InPark Magazine since 2011, becoming the publication's senior correspondent in 2021. His blog, ThemedReality.com takes an unconventional look at the attractions industry. Follow on twitter @themedreality.



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The Castle of Chaos attraction (Alterface's Interactive Spinning Theater), found at Hollywood Wax Museum Entertainment Centers in both Branson, Missouri and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee (USA). All photos courtesy of Alterface.

Taking guests to the other side of the story

Alterface blends design and technology to develop innovative attractions

by Gene Jeffers

A few kilometers southeast of Brussels lies the prosperous town of Wavre. Every five years, the people of the community come together to remake *Le Jeu de Jean et Alice* - a medieval dialog of spoken word, song and dance involving more than 500 local inhabitants, that celebrates the granting of the city's charter of liberties in 1222. At city hall, a permanent statue of an impish boy scaling a wall to get to the other side can be found. The piece speaks to the same 800-year-old tale. While much of *Le Maca*, as the locals call the statue, is covered with years of rich grey-green patina, the boy's derriere has been turned to brightly polished bronze by many hands.

In this city of stories, you will also find the headquarters of Alterface, creators of world-class, narrative-based interactive dark rides.

"When the company formed 20 years ago, we wanted the name to have meaning," says Creative Director Laurence Beckers, who has been with the firm since its inception. It breaks down like this: alter, as in "the other" or "alternate," and face, from the French word meaning "side." Alterface – Other Side.

For Alterface, the concept applies to an active or interactive guest experience, as opposed to passive. "We wanted to create attractions where guests could reach the 'other side' of a story, not just be part of an audience - to offer a different and new reality in which they become participants in creating their own tale of adventure, not simply an audience viewing someone else's," says Beckers.

"Alterface attractions are more than just shooting at targets," adds Stéphane Battaille, CEO. "We provide immersion in and engagement with the client's story. We build in the capacity for

the guests to affect the story they are living in, a story that is new and changes every time they return to the attraction. And they do return. Often.”

Story-based immersion and discovery

“If a park owner wants a story-based attraction integrated within their park’s theming, they should come to us,” says Etienne Sainton, Head of Software Engineering and Product Manager. “For smaller projects, we can handle all of the theming and technical needs. For larger projects we team up with equally capable partners to deliver what is needed when it is needed.”

It is no secret that park visitors today swim in a highly competitive sea of in-home and out-of-home “distractions,” so park and facility owners must continually offer something new for guests, while at the same time preserving the integrity and authenticity of their brand.

“It takes more than one skillset to deliver successful attractions today. We provide a unique mix of advanced technology and creative energy. That synergy between the two areas, between the science and the art, helps us to deliver new and unique experiences,” Beckers says. “Alterface brings both to your project.”

The company’s Erratic Ride approach, featured in the celebrated Popcorn Revenge attraction at Walibi Belgium, for example, combines the team’s love for storytelling, group experience, dark

rides, and state-of-the-art interactive theater with an unexpected twist: the experience changes and evolves with every ride with random, added secret targets to collect. Vehicles follow different paths through the attraction’s rooms before reuniting in a ballet in the center of the attraction. Visitors cannot predict the next journey’s path no matter how many times they ride. Popcorn Revenge opened in 2019 and was honored with a TEA Thea Award. [See “Kernels of Truth,” InPark issue #79, www.inparkmagazine.com/alterface-kernels-of-truth/]

“We want to surprise and amaze guests, to give them not what was expected but rather what they will remember and treasure,” says Sainton. “We want that same feeling of discovery to happen every time they come. We want them to have ownership of the story and experience, to believe they are creating a new story with each visit.”

And as creators of such ever-changing adventure generators, the Alterface team feels most rewarded when the guests themselves approve. “I like to be at the grand opening to watch as the guests exit - and see the smiles on their faces, their excitement in talking with each other about what they just did together,” says Bataille. “I really felt their excitement at Maus Au Chocolat - I had such a warm feeling as whole families came out exclaiming, waving arms, smiling, laughing and then—quick, quick—racing back to the entrance queue for more.” Maus Au Chocolat opened in 2011 at Phantasialand in Brühl, Germany, and its enduring popularity is a testament to Alterface’s capabilities and vision. “It



ABOVE: A conceptual drawing of Alterface’s Erratic Ride, Popcorn Revenge.
RIGHT (top to bottom): Laurence Beckers, Etienne Sainton, and Stéphane Bataille

was our first major project,” says Bataille. “Maus Au Chocolat pushed our creativity to the limit but also made us grow up as an organization, focus on structure, business development and all the other disciplines that make for a successful and sustainable operation.”

Collaborative nature

That ability to create excitement and family joy takes more than cutting edge technologies; it requires an understanding of what can have an emotional impact on the guest. Not all new technologies create the same depth or flavor of experience.

“We explored AR and VR goggles and glasses, but research has shown they can interfere with family or group experiences,” explains Beckers. “While the level of immersion in goggles can be dramatic, there can be downsides to how they isolate people

from one other. We believe parents want to see their children’s smiles, friends want to laugh together, to see each other’s faces. We like to say that our projects create joint experiences, offer a richness that other approaches cannot match, so we emphasize the collaborative nature of our adventures.”

While not a large company, Alterface has the capacity to work as either a turnkey provider or in collaboration with a team. Their portfolio reveals the range of their output and the variety of roles the company can play in creating interactive attractions, from a single location with a small footprint to a larger venue or a chain of parks, around the world. Alterface has worked with The Hettema Group, Merlin Entertainments, Jora Vision, Sally Dark Rides, Thinkwell Group, Oceaneering, ETF, and Pico Global, among others. Through these partnerships Alterface technology has been reliably delivered throughout a world of well-known



Stéphane Bataille (right) answers reporters’ questions during Popcorn Revenge’s media preview



Laurence Beckers tries out a VR system as part of Alterface’s research & development processes.



Etienne Sinton works on programming at one of the JUSTICE LEAGUE: Battle for Metropolis attractions.

attractions, such as Six Flags' multiple JUSTICE LEAGUE dark rides (the Six Flags Magic Mountain iteration of this ride was honored with a Thea Award in 2019), and Qingdao's Oriental Movie Metropolis' Investiture of the Gods high speed indoor rollercoaster. "Our technology and team are able to work with any design firm or vehicle manufacturer," points out Beckers. "We really have no limitations when it comes to partnerships."

Risks worth taking

From the recently opened Popcorn Revenge back to Alterface's earlier accomplishments, such as the Castle of Chaos spinning interactive theaters and the Desperados 3D, full-media interactive theater now in 51 locations worldwide, Alterface's body of work attests to the team's ability to deliver, its willingness to take risks and the willingness of clients and partners to take those risks along with them.

"Popcorn Revenge was a complete Alterface project that introduced a new way of doing dark rides," explains Battaille. "We came up with the Erratic Ride idea and recruited ETF, a great ride manufacturer, to work with us. We did everything from concept, story, IP, and realization. Walibi trusted us to create something quite new, and we did. A great partnership."

"Turnkey projects allow us to try really new concepts that we have imagined here at Alterface. They can be risky but it's something of an advantage when we only have to convince one partner, the client," says Sainton. "When we're part of a team, then everyone has to get on board with the risks: the designer, the ride company and the customer, for example. But those collaborations are also immensely enjoyable."

"We work very hard with our partners to create attractions that are authentic for our clients and their guests," Beckers notes. "For the unique dark ride Bazyliszek (Basilisk; another Thea Award recipient in 2019) created for Park Legendia in Chorzow, Poland, it was important to create the creature of that country's legends, not the one featured in the Harry Potter film. The joy on the face of the client as the designs were revealed and on the faces of the visitors as they recognized their basilisk, was overwhelming." "Partnerships allow us to deliver technologies faster, to try new things within larger projects," says Sainton. "We always find new ways to amaze guests, to adapt technologies to different tasks, to work together with ride designers and the customer."

Creative audacity

Alterface has been delivering leading-edge interactive attractions since 2001. Those 20 years have seen many changes to the industry, to the technologies at hand and under development, and while the staff has been remarkably stable, there have been some changes to the company's culture.

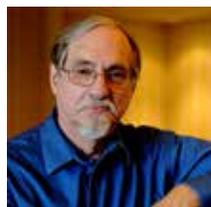
"When the company first opened, we were in startup mode - a band of extremely passionate people willing to take risks today but not so worried about tomorrow," admits Battaille. And now, in addition to our European headquarters, we have offices in Singapore and Miami to support our growing client list."



The Le Maca statue in Wavre, Belgium - a city of stories, and also home to Alterface.

Alterface had to make the transition from a startup culture to a more solid and robust demeanor very quickly - but without losing the fiery, creative core: the passion, the risk taking, the push to find something new, the audacity. "We had to channel our creativity and ensure everyone was heading in the same direction," says Battaille. "And so we have completed more and more projects, we have improved our professionalism and discipline while still keeping the creative fires on full blast. L'audace, toujours l'audace... but now with discipline and science and accountability."

And so, park owners and operators, and creative partners seeking a new interactive attraction that will put smiles on the faces of guests, often find their way to Wavre. Legend has it that a little pat on the polished bronze derriere of Le Maca will bring good luck. But success often requires more than luck - it may also require a chat with the team at Alterface, who stand ready to take dark rides and attractions to the next level of interactive storytelling, helping guests explore, adventure and discover the other side of the story. •••



Gene Jeffers, former (2001-2013) TEA Executive Director, is currently serving as a Board member for the Greater San Gabriel Pomona Valleys American Red Cross and serves on the Board of the Historical Novel Society. He continues to write in a variety of genres. Based in Pasadena, Gene and his wife Carol (also a writer) are looking forward to traveling again and spending more post-COVID time with their two daughters, son-in-law and three grandchildren.

Technology transitions

interviews by Martin Palicki

Brandy Alvarado-Miranda

Early in 2021, Brandy Alvarado-Miranda launched BAM! Marketing & PR Agency. Brandy has an extensive marketing background, working for several companies since 2001. In 2014 she began working in the technology sector and hasn't looked back. She has been a board member for Women In Digital Signage since 2018 and has chaired the AVIXA Women's Council since 2019. Most recently, she was Director of Sales & Marketing for Mad Systems. With a specialty in technology and AV marketing, BAM! has already achieved a level of notoriety in the industry with clients including NanoLumens, Hall Technologies, cavlo tech and others.



Tell us why AV and attractions holds special appeal for you.

In 2014 I started working for an AV manufacturer and engineering firm that specializes in all types of verticals. I always loved working on large entertainment venue projects. I think that's why I gravitated towards working for companies specializing in theme parks and museums. Those projects are gratifying and so much fun to work on.

What led you to launch your own marketing company?

Like many, I lost my job during COVID due to the downturn in the industry. I immediately updated my LinkedIn profile to "open to work," and the same day I had colleagues asking if I was interested in ghost writing, or working on their website, or writing a white paper. I began freelancing – writing, creating content, and working on various marketing campaigns - and it evolved into full-time work. Within a month, I knew I needed to start my own marketing and PR firm.

Your specialty is technology. How do you market technology successfully?

I LOVE technology and my clients tell me that they appreciate that I "speak nerd" fluently. Working with BAM! means they don't have to explain their technology to me for hours. I understand tech so there's no learning gap for my clients to navigate me through.

I believe marketing technology drills down to a few things – who needs and uses this technology? Finding the answer to that and targeting that audience is key. Most tech manufacturers use a mix of print ads, product press releases, thought leadership articles, social media, and email coupled with website landing pages, and trade show events to reach their clients.

How do you advise companies to handle their marketing during slow periods, such as the pandemic?

My advice is to take advantage of slower periods to analyze, plan, and create strategic, measurable marketing goals that align with your sales team. Additionally, it's smart to take stock of your brand, identify your strengths and weaknesses, and plan accordingly. During COVID, some of the first people to get furloughed were in marketing, and that is unfortunate. Keeping in front of your customers is more critical than ever and identifying how to best reach them is key.

What is your industry outlook for the near future?

My clients are saying that projects that had been delayed during the past year are going full speed ahead now, and new ones are in their pipeline as well. The challenge right now is with the supply chain. Getting the right equipment to facilitate a project has been difficult and will continue for some time. It's an exciting time of growth and learning. Companies and their tech managers have had to become proficient and agile to accommodate the supply chain issues. They've relied on education and product knowledge vital to keeping their projects on track.

What are your plans for growing your company?

I'm nearly at my bandwidth already and may need to hire another marketer soon. Taking care of my clients and making sure we meet their marketing goals is most important to me so any hires will have to match my level of commitment to my customers and love tech as much as I do. •

Sean Reish

Sean Reish recently became TAIT's VP business development, theme parks & attractions. The move comes after some two decades working on the technical side of the themed entertainment industry. With an MFA from UNCSA in Technical Production & Automation, Sean has worked for major operators like Universal Orlando as well as key suppliers, most recently Wärtsilä North America. Initially known for their shipbuilding and marine capabilities, Sean helped coordinate Wärtsilä's division devoted to themed entertainment and attraction projects. I've known Sean for years, catching up with him at events around the world and the many times he graciously invited me to join his table at an IAAPA Expo GM/Owner's breakfast. I'm excited to see how he brings his global knowledge of the attractions industry to TAIT, which is highly regarded for their theatrical technologies and automation solutions. -M.P.



What led you to this opportunity at TAIT?

I have always had a passion for the live entertainment industry and an affinity for automation and motion control of those never-been-done-before extraordinary moments. Throughout my career, I've been a part of creating these moments, which led me to TAIT™ and this opportunity. I'm thrilled to be part of the impressive culture at TAIT, one that delivers cutting-edge solutions to the themed entertainment market.

Can you tell us more about TAIT's capabilities, even beyond attractions?

TAIT's global capabilities and products literally make shows happen. Above and in support of all the specific technology, TAIT provides turnkey solutions. TAIT's engineered and manufactured patented technology includes hoists, lifts, elevators, animatronics, performer flying, scenery and staging. The Navigator Automation Platform™ is a powerful entertainment automation and show control platform that maximizes the creative potential for live themed experiences. This is the technology that makes all automated systems work together seamlessly.

TAIT has now received two technology Thea awards. What technology should we be keeping an eye on next?

TAIT Navigator's™ award-winning automation platform continues to evolve. Its hardware and software products are intuitive and user-friendly, making the user experience more cohesive. TAIT offers programmers, commissioners, and

operators learning opportunities to train directly on the software and hardware products via online or in-person classes.

How are you hoping to grow TAIT's presence in themed entertainment?

My personal goal is to champion TAIT's global capabilities and deliver high-quality equipment that is safe, cost-effective and reliable for the primary, secondary, and alternative themed entertainment submarkets.

In what areas do you think there are opportunities for TAIT to impact attraction experiences?

TAIT is well known for delivering spectacular performer flying, show control systems and show action machinery. The guest and fan expectations are only becoming more demanding, and TAIT's design-build approach offers a holistically designed production, great flexibility, cost savings and confidence in the quality of the attraction that will delight even the most discerning superfan.

How is the company doing during these (hopefully) waning days of the pandemic?

The world can't open back up soon enough! While TAIT continued to have a lot in production during the pandemic, the entire group came together as one global team in a way that they never had before. The time was used to bolster up operationally, preparing an optimized foundation to handle the much-awaited comeback across all entertainment markets and throughout the industry. •••



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The Encounters gallery in Stories of Cinema at The Academy Museum. ©Academy Museum Foundation/Image by WHY Architecture

The ISAAC ecosystem

Driving today's massive AV and LED installs with ISAAC and partners

by Judith Rubin

The ecosystem of the ISAAC management platform from Smart Monkeys Inc. continues to grow and diversify to support AV installations in new ways, keeping up with industry trends and evolving operator needs. Current trends include: Big videowalls and digital signage. Immersive and interactive environments and digital art displays. Spaces featuring multiple displays with multiple feeds. Remote support. In-house content management. The shift to AV over IP. And, in general, ever more sophisticated systems distributing ever larger quantities of data that conversely need ever greater simplicity, flexibility and redundancy when it comes to operations, management and troubleshooting.

The backdrop to these trends is the increasing prevalence of IT-style infrastructure and the data center model. Some business sectors embraced it sooner than others, and the attractions sector was not an early adopter. But in today's emerging entertainment markets, IT network culture has become the rule, as seen with new theme parks in the Middle East and Asia. It is also the

natural choice for venues where large amounts of data are fielded in addition to the entertainment component, or where an IT department is already embedded, such as casinos, resorts, airports and corporate attractions.

Smart Monkeys Inc. is headquartered in Miami and has a global clientele. The company was established in 2008 and the co-owner and face of the company is Stephan Villet. In 2019 Smart Monkeys added an office in Orlando to expand its support to the attractions industry. Recent and upcoming high-profile themed entertainment projects that utilize the ISAAC platform include the MGM Cotai resort in Macau; the FlyOver attractions in Iceland, Vancouver and Las Vegas; Orlando airport, the Illuminarium themed, immersive experiences opening in multiple cities; The Shed entertainment complex at Hudson Yards and another big project TBA in NYC; the soon-to-open Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Superblue experiential art centers (the first of which recently opened in Miami), and Warner Bros. World™ Abu Dhabi.

Get ready for ISAAC 2.0

Smart Monkeys is preparing to release ISAAC 2.0 and will be exhibiting and demonstrating the platform at two major industry events in Orlando in 2021: InfoComm in October, and the IAAPA Attractions Expo in November.

ISAAC is an acronym for Integrated Scheduling and Automation Control. The technology received global attention and acclaim for the integrated environmental media system at the Tom Bradley Terminal (LAX). The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) honored the project in 2016 with a TEA Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement, praising it for “an unprecedented passenger experience and a new source of non-aeronautical revenues for the facility” and noting that “the IEMS is supported by an intelligent show control system that enables mapping content onto unique, very large-scale, multi-dimensional media surfaces...content floating throughout this massive canvas.”

The ability to deliver myriad media content streams from myriad sources to myriad displays in service of a great guest experience is the front-facing part of ISAAC. On the back end, ISAAC is able to dramatically downsize the equipment footprint - to consolidate and link multiple PCs, black boxes, control and management systems through virtualization and integration. As mentioned above, ISAAC speaks the language of IT. And the platform also accommodates content management as well as distribution and control.

ISAAC has become popular with a number of leading suppliers and manufacturers, with providers of control software and systems, and with integrators and technical designers. Medialon, Q-SYS, BrightSign and RealMotion have all collaborated with Smart Monkeys to build enhanced compatibility between ISAAC and their respective products. Two new alliances, recently announced, are with Megapixel VR (their OMNIS ® AV Monitoring Platform for monitoring and troubleshooting systems is now fully embedded within ISAAC) and ZeeVee (their ZyPer Management Platform for streaming AV over IP has been optimized for ISAAC). These enhancements help make the ISAAC platform more versatile, the integration process more streamlined and straightforward and create a model of new best practices that lay a path for new industry standards.

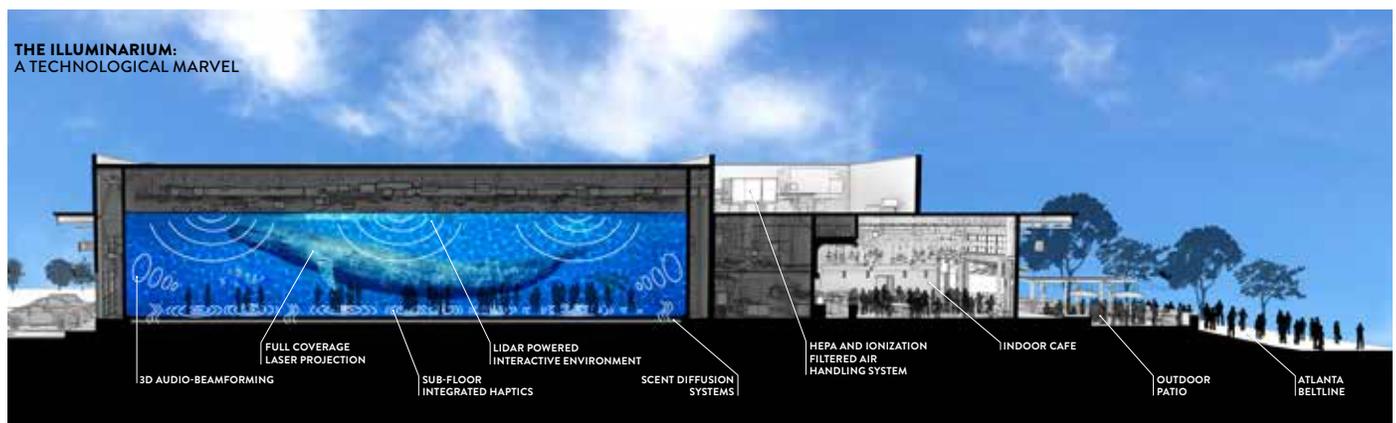
A well-known integrator partner is Electrosonic, which has specified ISAAC for a wide range of projects, including the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, opening in Los Angeles in September 2021, and Warner Bros. World™ Abu Dhabi, honored in 2020 with a TEA Thea Award, as well as the Superblue art center mentioned above.

OMNIS: new benchmark for system support

Earlier in 2021, Smart Monkeys, Inc. and Megapixel announced a new strategic partnership that added Megapixel’s OMNIS AV Monitoring to the ISAAC platform. Megapixel is a leader in large-scale LED display systems and monitoring; in 2019, the company debuted the HELIOS ® LED Processing Platform, capable of driving over 32 million pixels with an end-to-end, 8K workflow from a single, modular rack unit. Now the company’s OMNIS platform is being offered as a software package within existing ISAAC ecosystems, in the form of a virtual appliance that can be activated on demand. Both companies are enthusiastic about the product offering.

“OMNIS is a must-have tool for LED installations as it provides aggregated, real time health monitoring and diagnostic feedback to users 24/7,” says John Youngson, Megapixel’s VP of Sales. “It enables owners to maximize uptime - to track, identify and locate problems and fix them quickly based on actionable data.” Per Youngson, the wide range of installations that can be served by OMNIS includes “large-scale video displays from a variety of manufacturers as well as projectors and power and distribution systems for power/video/data.” A single OMNIS can monitor hundreds of LED processors on-premises or in the cloud with a single health map view. OMNIS can combine display data from multi-location large display networks, such as theme parks and museums, as well as large LED shows and performance venues. “We combined the software expertise of Megapixel and Smart Monkeys to develop a virtual software suite to exist directly within ISAAC. No physical unit is required - and users gain all the redundancy advantages that come with a virtual appliance,” says Youngson.

According to Villet, this boon for integrators and their clients has not previously been an option. “In the past, monitoring of this kind - a critical feature for systems running AV-centric



This technical diagram of The Illuminarium shows some of the technologies planned for the multiple facilities under development. Photo courtesy of The Illuminarium.



Stephan Villet
Smart Monkeys



Josh Cottrell
Electrosonic



John Youngson
Megapixel



Joseph Chordas
ZeeVee



Jeremy Hochman
Megapixel

spaces - has required custom programming. Now, when you activate OMNIS inside ISAAC, it becomes an off-the-shelf, fully functional monitoring system.”

MGM Cotai is an example of a media-rich project that benefited from this new technology. The custom LED display design and all processing provided by Megapixel are under the command and control of an ISAAC system. According to Jeremy Hochman, Founder of Megapixel, “there are a quarter of a billion pixels under one roof, with screens spread throughout the resort’s vast atrium, dynamic theater, and outdoor marquees, all controlled by ISAAC.”

“It’s a huge vote of confidence from Megapixel to have OMNIS living on ISAAC,” says Villet. “On a major install, the cost of the LED wall can take up much of the budget. And the more complicated the system, the more data you need to be able to monitor it fully. For the integrator and the LED manufacturer, to have ISAAC and OMNIS as part of the package means that the monitoring system is automatically on board from the start. It is simple to manage while delivering a level of detail and specificity that gives the operator the ability to be proactive in maintaining the system.” A webinar spotlighting the ISAAC / OMNIS partnership and project is available at <http://isaacplatform.com/learn-and-support/webinars/>.

ZeeVee - AV over IP power

As discussed above, today’s media environments are likely to rely heavily on LED displays. They’re also likely to use AV over IP (AVoIP) infrastructure. These large-scale installations can be driven by ISAAC in combination with the ZyPer Management Platform from ZeeVee Inc. Earlier this year, Smart Monkeys and ZeeVee announced a partnership. ZeeVee is a global pioneer and leader in the development and deployment of AV distribution systems for industrial, commercial and residential applications. The partnership with Smart Monkeys extends the benefits of AVoIP to specialist integrators, by which the ZeeVee ZyPer platform now natively supports the ISAAC API, enabling users to customize, control, schedule, log and manage complex media presentations via a unified programming and front-end management workspace. “That big LED display can run using both OMNIS and ZyPer, with everything fully packaged into a single ISAAC box, and interface or user management also a part of it. You don’t need any other computer,” says Villet.

Just as the alliance with Megapixel VR creates a turnkey monitoring solution within ISAAC using OMNIS, the partnership with ZeeVee creates a turnkey AV distribution solution with ISAAC using ZyPer - again, applicable to a wide range of AV installations for such venues as theme parks, airports, casinos, corporate lobbies, visitor centers, museums, showrooms and more. And again, it means a streamlined installation and system, replacing black boxes with virtual appliances, all coexisting and communicating on ISAAC. “We developed the ISAAC platform to address the market need for aggregator control software that can manage the multiple interfaces of diverse AV components,” Villet explains. “We chose ZeeVee as our partner for AV distribution as it has the deepest experience and success with the SDVoE AVoIP platform, representing the future with significant performance, flexibility and cost-saving benefits over the traditional matrix switch.”

“Together, Smart Monkeys and ZeeVee are well positioned to provide solutions to specialized markets where there is a growing call for the ability to create larger and more immersive visual statements,” says ZeeVee’s Joseph Chordas, VP Marketing and North American Sales. ZeeVee is one of the founding members of the SDVoE Alliance, a nonprofit consortium of technology providers collaborating to standardize the adoption of Ethernet to transport AV signals in professional AV environments, and to create an ecosystem around SDVoE technology allowing software to define AV applications.

According to Chordas, it comes down to simplicity, flexibility and specialized programming. “AVoIP is the mechanism for the delivery of the zeros and ones that are video and audio that goes to the displays being installed as organizations put in new rooms, build new facilities and do upgrades,” he says. “They are going to be choosing AV over IP, which delivers video over a standard network switch rather than an AV matrix. As long as there is an available port on that switch, you can use it, and the management platform automatically recognizes it across the network. When you fill up the ports, you team it with another network switch.”

“AVoIP is just transporting video over Ethernet, as has been done with audio for many years with such products as Dante,” says Villet. “It doesn’t matter what type of video you have - it will maximize the quality. These solutions are providing all the tools for an integrator to respond appropriately to client needs.”

Media management for the museum that's all about movies

Opening in September 2021 in Los Angeles, the Academy of Motion Pictures Museum promises to be “the world’s premier institution dedicated to the art and science of movies” with immersive, dynamic exhibitions and programs. As might be expected, it will depend heavily on a wide range of media and AV delivery vehicles to tell its stories in a variety of theaters and presentation spaces.

Electrosonic provided AV design, install and programming for the space, and specified ISAAC as the master show controller and content management system (CMS), interfacing with 7thSense servers and BrightSign digital signage devices in addition to other media playback devices and audio delivery methods. The system relies on an “automatic failover” server configuration that ensures full redundancy. There are five equipment rooms: the main EER in the basement plus two smaller EERs on each of the two floors.

“We suggested the ISAAC platform to the Academy because of the complexity of the space,” says Josh Cottrell CTS, Senior Account Manager, Electrosonic. “The Museum has nearly 100 different displays, including projectors, LCD panels and LED screens. It is content heavy and immersive, and highly focused on all the amazing artifacts the Academy has gathered. It does a great job of showing how those artifacts were used in the movies through all the different digital displays. Electrosonic is pleased and proud to have been a key team member on this project.”

Cottrell added, “Working with the Academy team, led by Shraddha Aryal (VP, Exhibition Design and Projection) has been fantastic through this multiyear process. She has provided the leadership and guidance that has kept us on track, as have Christopher Richmond (Senior Manager for Exhibition A/V) and Ken Viste (Manager, Exhibition Project).” The Electrosonic project team included Project Manager Scott Decker, Design Manager Andy Batwinas, Design Consultant Jeff Folschinsky and Project Engineer Peter Alexander.

Smart Monkeys created the custom CMS software, and this new capacity makes ISAAC more versatile and convenient by enabling the means of distribution as well as content management to reside together on the platform. “Smart Monkeys continues to be a great partner on the project,” says Cottrell. “They have been highly collaborative during the entire process, and they continue to provide great support as we push through the final stretch approaching grand opening.”

Cottrell affirms that “Everything is converging into the IT space, being controlled via IT. The great thing about ISAAC is that it is robust, fault-tolerant and fully redundant. We use it for amusement parks because it’s a virtual machine-based control system. At Electrosonic we have a number of large projects on the horizon where we intend to utilize the ISAAC system as we have for this and other complex projects. Smart Monkeys has been a key partner.” •••

Visit smart-monkeys.com.



Smart Monkeys’ ISAAC technology is part of the massive digital media array, Spectacle, at MGM COTAI, a US \$3.4 billion resort that opened in Macau in early 2018. *Photo courtesy of MGM Resorts International*



Riders on The Twilight Saga: Midnight Ride at Lionsgate Entertainment World don VR goggles and sit on motion-control motorbikes for a realistic ride experience. Photo courtesy of Lionsgate Entertainment World

Meeting at “Midnight”

Sister companies CAVU Designwerks and DreamCraft collaborate on celebrated VR motion-simulation attraction, The Twilight Saga: Midnight Ride

interview by Martin Palicki

Taking guests on an interactive, multisensory VR motorbike journey, The Twilight Saga: Midnight Ride, located in the world’s first Lionsgate Entertainment World in Zhuhai, China, is an impressive blend of motion simulation and virtual reality (VR). The attraction was recently named for a Thea Award by the Themed Entertainment Association, noting the various technology elements that combine to make “a truly cohesive, compelling and exceptional experience.” The Twilight Saga: Midnight Ride was created in partnership with Lionsgate, the Thinkwell Group, CAVU Designwerks, DreamCraft and Framestore and is operated by Australia’s Village Roadshow Theme Parks.

Guests wear lightweight VR goggles while seated on real motorbikes (each on its own multi-axis platform). Able to see other riders in the VR simulation and in control of their direction and speed, each rider takes a virtual journey through the forest to fight vampires.

This blending of a ride simulation system with VR and real-time feedback was made possible through the combined efforts of sister companies CAVU Designwerks and DreamCraft. Terry Sanderson, producer at DreamCraft, applied his gaming background in developing the VR ride system. Mark Stepanian, chief experience officer at CAVU, drew on years of experience developing ride systems to create the ride vehicles. InPark spoke with both on the development of the attraction and other ways their companies are responding to evolving market conditions.

You both came to the industry from very different, but complementary paths. Tell us what led you to CAVU and DreamCraft.

Terry Sanderson: I have a background working in video games for major companies like Capcom and Electronic Arts. A colleague of mine was the COO of DreamCraft at the time and told me to check out the VR ride system they were developing.

I saw the amazing potential of this technology and decided I wanted to be a part of it. My experience developing interactive content for video games has been a great match for combining VR, gaming and ride system components into one seamless experience.

Mark Stepanian: I knew I wanted to be in this industry ever since I was 12. Growing up in Pittsburgh, I started working mornings at Kennywood Park, in the maintenance department. Afterwards, I would go chat with operations people or work at a food stand to get the experience of the park from different perspectives. I loved learning about how the rides worked and were built, but I also wanted to see how people actually experienced the park first-hand. Now, as an experience engineer, I use that experience to try and perfect our designs as much as possible. Working at a theme park may not always be glamorous, but it gives industry professionals amazing insight on how the general public interacts with what we create.

After college I worked for Premier Rides for several years and was drawn to the combination of advanced technology and ride systems that CAVU was working on.

Even though CAVU and DreamCraft work together, they are separate entities. Help us understand how they complement one another.

TS: DreamCraft is an advanced technology company pioneering leading edge and immersive guest experiences. We are taking current, state-of-the-art immersion technology and applying that to experiences in the guest attraction space.

MS: CAVU is about experience engineering. We start with the guest experience and work with the client to understand what emotions and visceral feelings they want to create for their guests. From there, we figure out how to engineer those experiences with new or existing technology. It doesn't start with "Let's build

a flying theater." It may end up there, but we start at the desired emotional result and work back, creating an innovative ride system that delivers that emotional result.

TS: We have a common goal: technical innovation and theme park attractions...but we bring two sets of expertise to that goal. DreamCraft specializes in software and systems development.

MS: CAVU is in the entertainment and experiential design space. We take the software and systems technology that Dreamcraft develops and incorporate it into the guest experience. In a sense, DreamCraft is more of a R&D company, so we think it's better to separate the two. It works for us to have these different but synergistic companies.

TS: This way the two teams can focus on what they do best, and we meet in the middle for design and execution. Midnight Ride was a perfect case of how this worked effectively.

Tell us more about what made Midnight Ride a successful attraction.

MS: We were intent on remaining true to the story and experience from the start. For example, when designing the attraction vehicle, we said we wanted a motorbike that the guests (many of them Chinese visitors who ride a motorbike every day) would feel was authentic. So we bought 24 real bikes and structurally modified them for the attraction.

Lionsgate and Thinkwell, the companies responsible for the creative design, both shared that drive for authenticity. We worked for two years to replicate what it would feel like to ride a motorbike. We talked about how much roll, how many actuators, and what components would help create a realistic experience. We spent a lot of time configuring the motion base so when you lean, the bike leans with you, and when you go over a small jump, you feel a shock when you land. We added in layers of wind,



Terry Sanderson, producer at DreamCraft
Image courtesy DreamCraft



Mark Stepanian, chief experience officer at CAVU
Image courtesy CAVU Designwerks

scent, force feedback on the handlebars and so much more. And all of that is before adding in the VR elements.

TS: Midnight Ride incorporated a groundbreaking use of VR. The technology installed there is far beyond the average FEC or retail VR experience. We layered as much tech on that bike as possible, so when guests go into the VR headsets, they feel like they are immersed into the world and story.

The ride is an example of a story-based, user-controlled experience, which seems to be increasingly popular with guests. What other trends are you noticing in the marketplace and how are you addressing those changes?

MS: From my perspective, I see a lot of parks creating special events that help drive attendance and create incentives to return multiple times in one season. That might take the form of a themed weekend, a holiday festival or a pop-up experience that lasts a month. People go to the parks for the rides of course, but they also go for many other reasons, and to satisfy a wide range of emotions and feelings. Special event experiences are becoming quite popular and help fulfill that need.

We look at all sorts of experiences: live shows, museums, themed dining, sporting venues, pop-up events, escape rooms and more. By looking across the broad spectrum of experiences we can see what is working and then blend elements into the next generation of immersive experience.

TS: We are quickly moving towards attractions being more personalized. We are getting better at understanding what guests want and having attractions that respond to them in real time. Media technology, motion tracking, AI [Artificial Intelligence], data analysis and more are being applied, to create a really positive impact on the guest experience.

We constantly pay attention to multiple technology paths to see how they can be integrated into theme park spaces. We look outside our industry for elements of tech that we can bring into our space. On Midnight Ride, for example, we worked with

a local company that makes magnetic actuators not intended for entertainment. We were able to use them for the steering feedback mechanism.

What other technologies and experiences are you looking forward to incorporating into future attractions?

TS: User-controlled or -influenced experiences of any kind are in vogue. We are making great advances in the refinement of body- and gesture-tracking to interact with media. Augmented reality [AR] is getting better and better, with new headset technology that is just around the corner.

MS: I agree with Terry. Real-time, gaming-engine technology is improving to allow for incredibly customizable experiences. The further development and implementation of 5G technology will also help to advance this trend of personalized experiences.

On a larger scale, I think that Disney's Rise of the Resistance attraction marks the start of a new genre that combines multiple experiences and emotions into one major attraction. For larger operators this will become standard, and over time the technology will become available to make this kind of experience more accessible to regional parks as well.

Given all of this to look forward to, how will CAVU and DreamCraft continue to support the needs of the industry?

MS: We are thinking about experiences differently and how we approach creating them. We continually ask ourselves, "How can we meet the needs of guests and clients from all different sectors of our industry?" To find solutions, we look at many different entities to develop experiences that meet those needs.

TS: Looking at our track record, everything we have collaborated on has been award-winning and we see no reason why that won't continue. Our attractions have lots of complicated moving parts and offer guests a cutting-edge experience that requires tight teamwork and attraction innovation to get it right. •••



Photo courtesy of Lionsgate Entertainment World

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Dubai Expo countdown

“We are ready to welcome the world!”

by Jim Ogul

Expo 2020 Dubai, a world expo (aka world’s fair or international exposition) sanctioned by the Bureau international des Expositions (BIE) was originally scheduled to open in October 2020, but the worldwide pandemic forced a one-year delay. While retaining its original “2020” title, the six-month event is now set to run October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022. It is the first world expo ever hosted in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA) region. The expo theme is “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future,” with the sub-themes, “Opportunity,” “Mobility” and “Sustainability.”

Meanwhile, the expo organizers and participants - including 192 countries, as well as a variety of multilateral organizations, businesses and educational institutions - have been continuing to complete their pavilions and exhibitions. Much of the onsite construction work is done, and some of the theme areas have been functioning and receiving visitors. In keeping with the sustainability sub-theme, according to organizers 80% of Expo-built buildings and structures will be repurposed as a mixed-use community called District 2020. The intent of this legacy post-use plan is described as “a connected global center for the next generation of innovators, original thinkers and pioneers for generations to come.”

The 4.38 sq km site is located in the Dubai South district, about a 40-minute drive from downtown Dubai. It is served by its own metro station and is close to Al Maktoum International Airport and also within reach of Dubai International Airport, Abu Dhabi International Airport and Dubai and Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminals.

Already “open”

While the Expo proper has yet to officially commence, the event organizers have found ways to bring Expo 2020 Dubai to life in

the public mind and eye for years and months ahead of opening day.

Rolled out in early 2017, “Expo Live” has so far funded 140 global innovators with grants to accelerate and promote creative projects aimed at improving lives while preserving the planet. The innovators were selected from over 11,000 proposals submitted by individual entrepreneurs, SMEs [small and midsize enterprises] not-for-profit organizations, and government-related entities. Grants ranged up to \$100,000 and selected projects will be showcased in the Expo Live Pavilion onsite. Expo Live has also made awards to 46 grantees involving 19 universities to foster creative thinking and collaboration between university students to solve problems relevant to the UAE and the region.

Over the past months, the expo has already welcomed thousands of people onsite for free bus tours to see the work in progress via the “World’s Greatest Show in the Making Tour.”

The centerpiece of the site, Al Wasl dome, is complete and has already provided visual spectacle to the region. Its state-of-the-art projection system, provided by Christie, the official projection partner of the expo, enables the dome to graphically transform. Recently it was illuminated in red to celebrate the UAE’s Hope Probe reaching Mars orbit in February 2021.

Already attaining the status of an iconic building for Expo 2020 Dubai is “Terra,” the Sustainability Pavilion designed by Grimshaw, which boasts more than 1,000 photovoltaic panels on its roof canopy. Terra was open to the public between January and April as part of the Pavilions Premiere event. The building will be converted into a museum after the expo. The premiere attracted over 100,000 visitors and was a successful rehearsal for the safety measures accompanying the full exhibition.



An overview of the Expo 2020 Dubai site
Image courtesy Expo 2020 Dubai



Visitors recently had a chance to preview the Terra pavilion.
Image courtesy Expo 2020 Dubai

Pavilion construction

As for the international participants, numerous pavilions have been announcing construction completion as opening day nears. A large-scale international expo of this kind is always something of an architectural showcase, with many of the participants creating individual, custom-designed pavilions to house their exhibits.

On October 11, 2020, Norway was the first nation to be issued a BCC (Building Completion Certificate). Norway's pavilion is the work of a consortium including Rintala Eggertsson Architects, Expomobilia and Five Currents.

Saudi Arabia announced completion November 29, 2020. At 13,069 square meters, this vast pavilion, designed by Spanish architecture and design firm Boris Micka Associates, is the second largest international pavilion after the UAE host presence. It is located within the expo's Opportunity District.

The Monaco pavilion is complete. The pavilion creation team includes Monaco Inter Expo Limited Company, facts and fiction GmbH, Agence Olivier Deverini Architecture, and OOS Studio & AODA.

Groundbreaking for the 4,562 square meter Russian Pavilion took place in January 2021 and completion is expected in July. The 27 meter-high pavilion, designed by Tchoban Speech and Simpatoca Entertainment Group, is located in the Mobility sector of the Expo.

The United States has completed exterior construction work on its prefab building. Exhibit design is being provided by Thinkwell. A feature of the US Pavilion is a replica of the booster stage of a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

The German Pavilion construction is almost finished. Its workforce has reportedly averaged 166 construction workers on the site every day since August 2019, clocking around 472,000 hours. Overseeing the pavilion is Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, which commissioned Koelnmesse GmbH, Cologne's trade fair operator, to organize and operate. A creative consortium handling concept design, planning and implementation includes facts and fiction GmbH and NUSSLI Adunic AG, NUSSLI Adunic and LAVA – Laboratory for Visionary Architecture.

India's \$68 million national pavilion is designed by CP Kukreja Architects and set for turnover by the end of July.

The Philippines pavilion, designed by Budji+Royal Architecture and located in the Sustainability District of the expo, was on the point of completion at this writing.

Work on Pakistan's \$21 million pavilion has completed. Located in the Opportunity District of the expo, its theme is 'Pakistan: The Hidden Treasure.' Architect of record is Khatib & Alami.

Overcoming challenges

On May 4, 2021, the sixth and final International Participants' Meeting (IPM) meeting for Expo 2020 Dubai Organizers, International Participants and the BIE took place to review preparations for the event. Delegates from 173 countries and 24 international organizations met at Dubai Exhibition Centre on the expo grounds. A number of country representatives participated virtually. This marked the first in-person gathering of international participants since August 2019 and was also the first event to take place in the Dubai Exhibition Centre, a 45,000 square meter facility that will host the Expo's largest events.

In opening remarks, BIE Secretary General Dimitri S. Kerentzes declared, "World Expos provide us with a global platform for modern multilateralism, bringing together countries, international organizations, businesses, NGOs, researchers and citizens, so that everyone can play a role in creating solutions and overcoming challenges.

"For tens of millions of people, here in the UAE, in the Middle East and across the world, Expo 2020 Dubai will be the occasion, to reconnect with the whole world, to truly engage with questions of universal importance and to develop innovative solutions to our global problems. In Dubai, by connecting minds, we will create a better future."

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman of the Expo 2020 Dubai Higher Committee, said: "Today, the world has come to Expo 2020 Dubai, traveling from every corner of the planet to join us here, to share our excitement and to see first-hand our advanced state of readiness. As we approach the climax of our journey to deliver an Expo that inspires, enlightens and astonishes, our message is clear: We are ready to welcome the world."

The United Arab Emirates has invested over \$7 billion in the expo and the 192 participating countries many millions more. Organizers forecast 25 million visits to this mega-event. That figure assumes that 70% of that total will come from international visitors arriving almost entirely by air. Even under normal conditions, for an expo to receive such a large proportion of visitors from abroad is extraordinary and unprecedented, but tourism and attraction development in this region has often challenged traditional expectations. At this writing, a few short months before opening day, air travel has not fully recovered from the effects of the pandemic, but things are changing rapidly and the expo will have a full six months to host the world. •••



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

Lighting the way

Germicidal lighting fights pandemics and pathogens

by David Paul Green

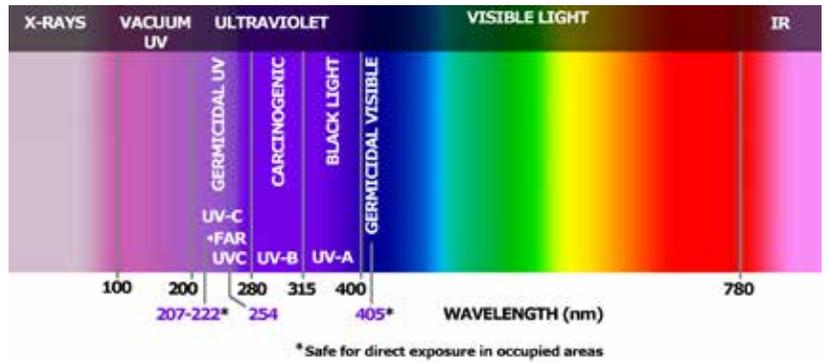
As the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic appears to be winding down, the industry is working to transition back to something like normal operations. Certainly, owners and operators of themed entertainment venues welcome the return of guests.

However, there is uncertainty: Will Covid-19 ever fully vanish? Will it become seasonal, like the flu? Will we require annual vaccinations to fight new variants? And what if the next vaccine for the next pathogen can't be developed quickly?

As scientists seek answers, one option being studied to manage future pandemics is germicidal ultraviolet lighting, aka germicidal UV or GUV lighting.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Lisa Passamonte Green, Founder and CEO of lighting design firm Visual Terrain, Inc., had a thought about an existing technology that could be applied: "We had already seen GUV lighting used in various healthcare environments. I wondered why it wasn't used in theme parks, museums, casinos, offices, banks, live events, and retail? As our entire industry shut down, I knew we needed a way to reopen sooner, and germicidal lighting seemed a viable solution." Green assembled an advisory panel of trusted colleagues, each member representing a different area of expertise required to implement germicidal lighting systems (see photos below).

"Outbreak prevention and recovery requires at least three components," says Christine Marez, vice president of Cumming. "First: Bio-risk prevention through cleaning and safety protocols, and building-safety technology upgrades, like germicidal lighting,



for improved air quality. Second: Sustainability planning. Improvements to increase ventilation may cause an increase in energy usage. We have to find alternative solutions to reduce energy usage, and still meet our carbon emission goals. Third: Communicating and messaging safety measures and technical improvements made in the entertainment environment to enhance the guest experience and build their trust."

Brian Buholtz, president of Buholtz Professional Engineering, addresses the increased energy consumption that may result from trying to increase ventilation. "The CDC's previous recommendations of six to 12 air changes per hour were not feasible in many applications. Here is an example: If you have a 1,000 sq. ft. office with 10-foot ceilings here in Florida, it normally requires about three tons of air conditioner. At six air changes per hour, that increases to nine tons!

"Current recommendations from CDC are more about increasing the ventilation, with more outside air," he says, "but within the limitations of the existing equipment: Opening windows, maybe adding fans on a nice day, adding HEPA filters. The CDC also includes discussions about directional air flow - forcing air in a direction that would reduce direct person-to-person transmissions - and they also talk about GUV lighting. All other technologies, they consider to be emerging."

What is germicidal lighting?

Although germicidal lighting may be new to many people, it was first discovered in 1877. By 1903, UV light was in use to treat tuberculosis, and in 1910, it was first installed in a water treatment plant. A 1937 study in Pennsylvania showed it was



Lisa Passamonte Green
Founder and CEO of lighting design firm Visual Terrain, Inc.



Brian Buholtz
President of Buholtz Professional Engineering, a mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) engineering firm (air flow and HVAC)



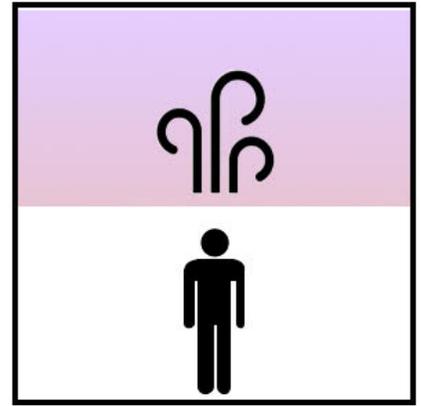
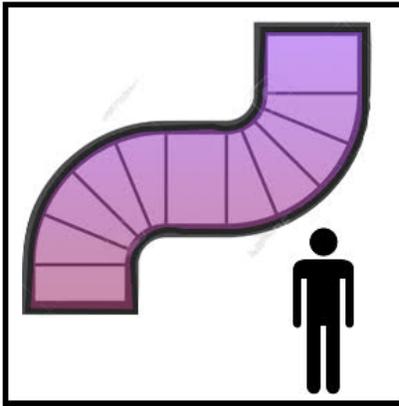
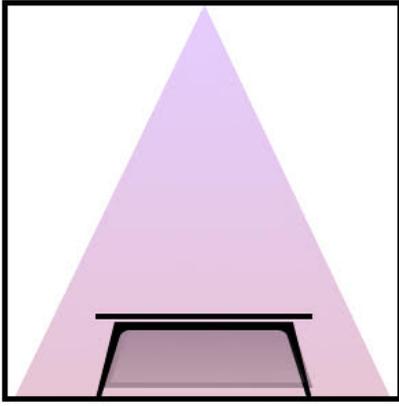
Steve Birket
Vice President of Birket Engineering (life-safety systems)



Christine Marez
Vice President of Cumming (WELL buildings, energy and sustainability)



Mark Fergus
Regional Vice President of Cumming (cost and project management services)



Graphic representation of the three primary methods of UV disinfection: Surface, Ventilation and Upper-air. OPPOSITE: The light spectrum
 Above images created by Visual Terrain's Principal Designer Kate Furst. Opposite image created by Visual Terrain COO David Paul Green.

effective at preventing the spread of some childhood diseases in public schools: first, mumps and later measles. For a time, it seemed germicidal UV might become widespread; then in the 1940s and 1950s, antibiotics and vaccines came into use. The global availability of treatments - for measles, tuberculosis, polio, and others - effectively displaced germicidal UV as a means of disinfection, although it continued to be used in infectious disease clinics, hospitals, and other high-risk medical environments.

There are three primary methodologies of UV disinfection:

- Surface disinfection, where UV light is directed to visible surfaces (walls, floors, tabletops, counters, etc.) to kill pathogens on those surfaces.
- Ventilation disinfection, where UV systems are installed into HVAC units or ducts, to disinfect air as it passes through the system, and/or disinfect the coils.
- Upper-air disinfection, where UV sources are directed above occupants' heads, to clean the air near the ceiling of a room, and inactivate pathogens as they are circulating.

Upper-air disinfection is most promising against airborne pathogens, such as SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), but it is not as effective against pathogens that are spread primarily through surface contamination. Pathogens that easily spread from room to room may be better handled through ventilation disinfection. Hospitals may use all three methods: surface disinfection in the operating room, upper air disinfection in a waiting room or ER, and ventilation disinfection throughout.

There are three wavelength spectra of UV light: UV-A, UV-B, and UV-C, defined in nanometers (nm) ranging from approximately 200nm (Far UV-C) to 315nm (UV-A).

UV-C is the wavelength that offers the most promise for germicidal lighting, as it can be both safe and effective when properly implemented. (UV-A is ineffective, while UV-B is carcinogenic.) Although some wavelengths of UV-C may cause temporary skin and eye irritation, it does not cause permanent

damage, and is not considered carcinogenic. "Far-UV-C" light, between 207nm and 222nm, appears to be entirely safe for eyes and skin.

254nm UV-C light has been safely used for over 90 years, and continues to be studied for its potential to deactivate pathogens. Some manufacturers of lighting products are now turning their attention to 222nm Far UV-C light, as a possible tool to disinfect surfaces, and even the air in a room. Manufacturers of existing UV-C fixtures that had previously only been sold to medical facilities, are pitching their products to other venues.

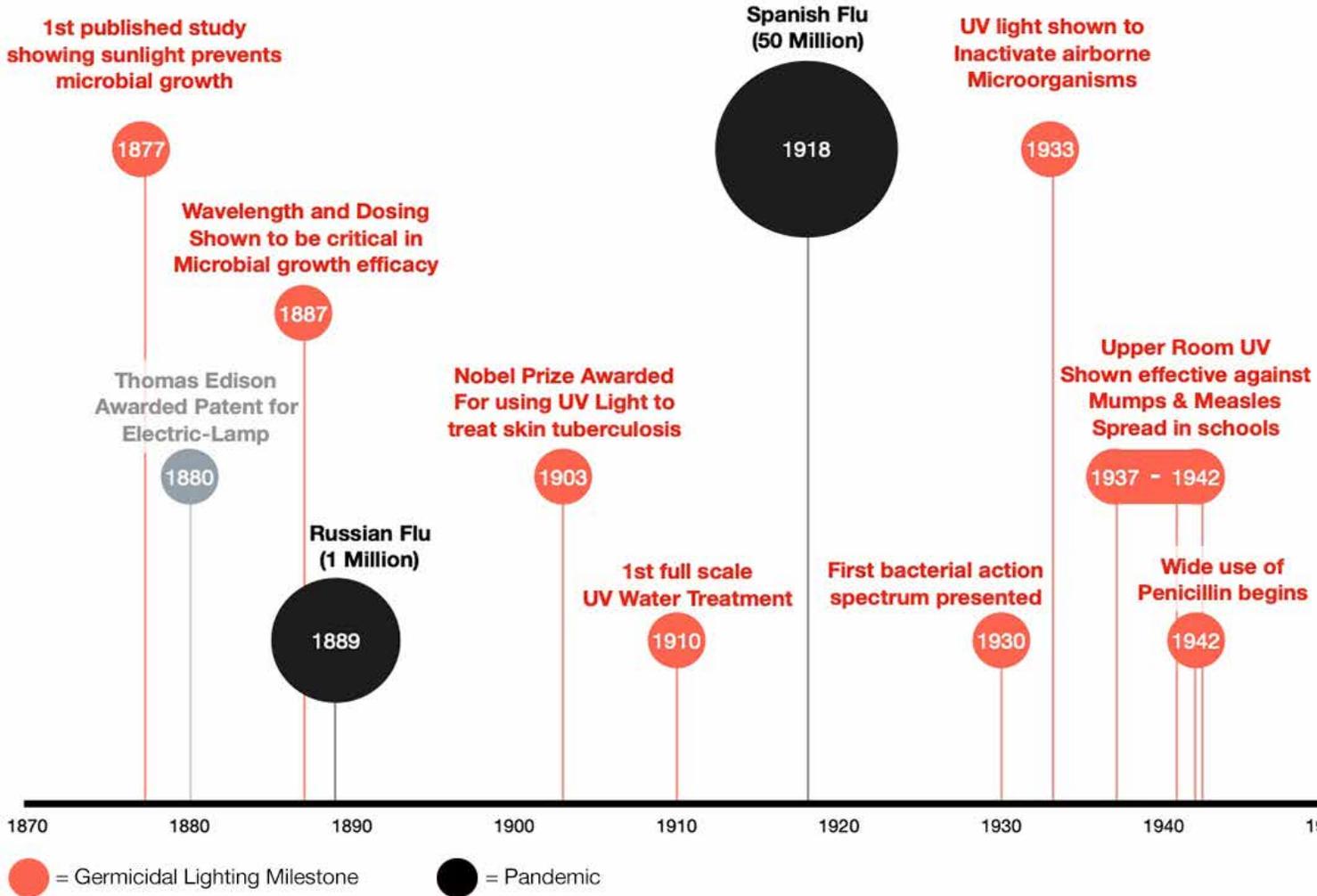
"UV-C light disrupts DNA," says Steve Birket, vice president of Birket Engineering. "That's why it renders viruses to be unable to reproduce. In people and animals, it can damage the skin and the eyes. The analogy here is that of a fire: When managed, it gives you warmth and light, and it's desirable. Like a fire, exposure to UV-C lighting is about intensity, proximity and time. On the skin, overexposure to UV-C light presents like a sunburn. With eyes, aversion to bright light is the natural response, but that doesn't work with invisible UV-C, so people can't feel the negative impact right away. Overexposure to UV-C lighting to the eyes presents as pain, redness, light sensitivity. Safety considerations with UV-C lighting are about containment of the light, and when it's not about containment, it's about occupancy. Containment is a situation where the virus is exposed, but the people are not: The light is not available to your skin or eyes, such as in an in-duct HVAC system, or an upper-air system. Where the light is not contained, a combination of occupancy sensing, interlocks, site procedures, and user behaviors provide safety."

"Over the past year, several manufacturers have developed some great products," says Green. "But there are also products to be wary of. I'm worried that owners and operators are going to invest in harmful and ineffective products, and it will slow the adoption of a technology that could be extremely helpful if it's done correctly."

What are the GUV adoption challenges?

While companies are developing long-life lamp solutions, the current technological standard - 254nm UV-C tubes - must be replaced as often as quarterly. While the tubes are not expensive,

KEY MOMENTS IN PANDEMIC AND GERMICIDAL LIGHTING HISTORY



ensuring they are “fresh” can be a recurring labor expense that venue operators may find burdensome.

Some believe the risk of possible eye and skin damage is simply too much of a legal liability. However, when UV-C systems are properly designed, applied and implemented, these risks are easily mitigated and managed. Green says, “The financial risk of doing nothing to prepare for the next pandemic is far greater than applying this technology now.”

Another downside is that municipalities are not yet ready to treat a venue with germicidal technology installed any differently than one without it: If there is another surge, everything still gets shut down. This may change, but as of now, venue owners must lobby government to acknowledge the effectiveness of germicidal technology and allow businesses that implement it to remain open.

Acquisition cost is another challenge to implementation. Costs range from a few hundred dollars for a simple upper-air fixture, to hundreds of thousands of dollars for high-tech, disinfecting robots. To determine the cost for a facility without an in-depth feasibility study is difficult, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Not being able to assign a cost-per-square-foot or dollars-per-

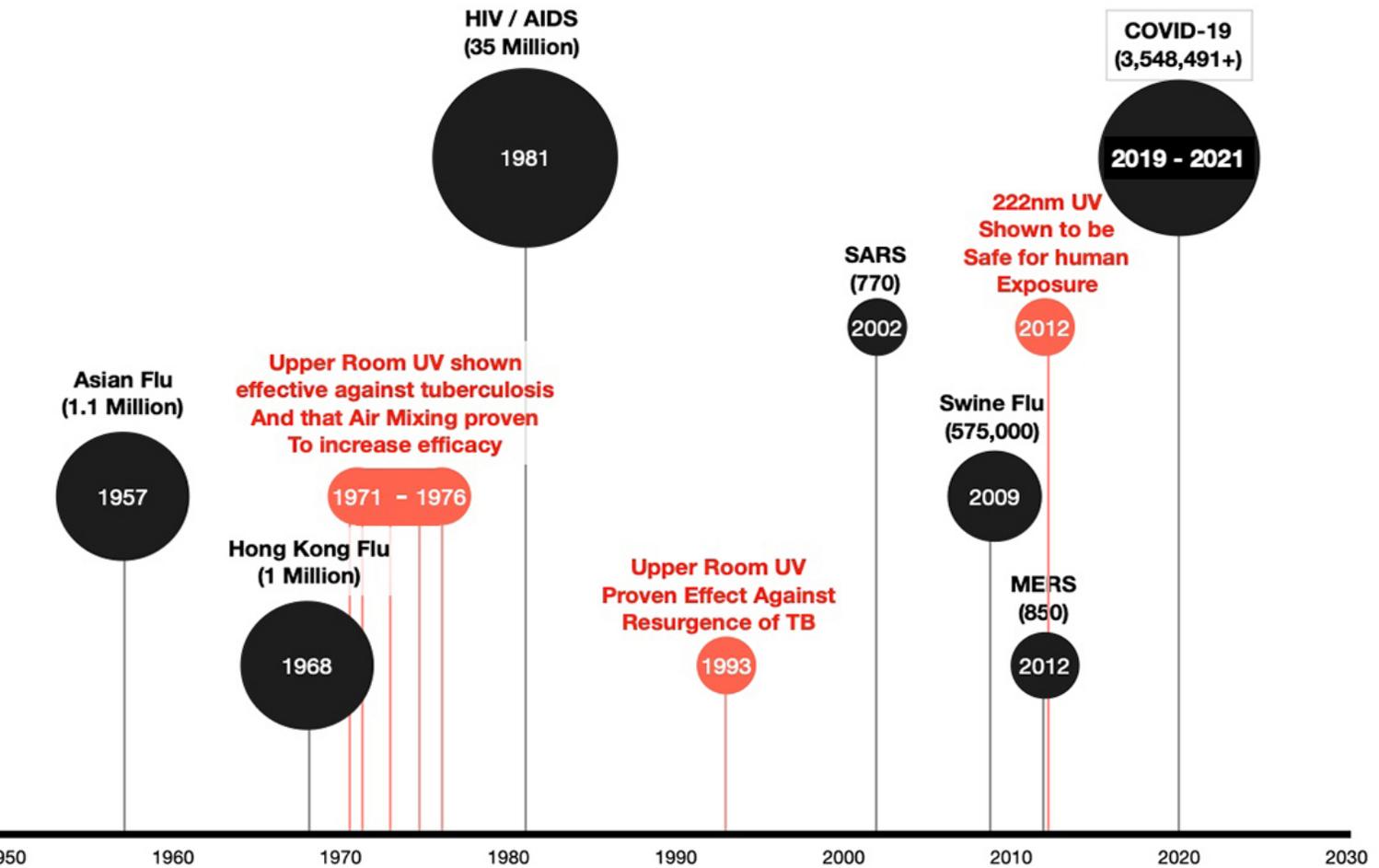
room number to an installation prior to a study makes owners rightfully wary.

On the positive side, manufacturers are working to develop systems with built-in safety and monitoring features. Many respected and trustworthy companies, such as Christie, Acuity, Cooper Lighting, and Philips, are developing germicidal lighting products for environments beyond healthcare. Companies such as Synexis are taking the technology in new directions, using UV light to generate dry hydrogen peroxide that can inactivate pathogens in an occupied room, with no risk of UV exposure at all.

What's Next?

Venue owners are advised to do the following things when considering germicidal technology:

- 1) Ask to see third-party product or use studies that were not paid for by the manufacturer.
- 2) Contact government leaders and ask them to make installing germicidal lighting a factor in shutdown guidelines.



Infographic by Jonathan Lebovic

3) Research! The technology is advancing rapidly. Some is ill-conceived or inefficient. There is no silver bullet. Get comparisons: Don't just buy from the first salesperson who comes along. Determine the right application of this technology for your specific environmental health and safety needs. When chosen properly, guests and employees will be confident that visiting your venue is safe.

Finally, Green concludes, "Our industry is filled with compelling places and experiences where people gather, and germicidal lighting is a technology that will allow that to continue for years to come. You just have to look at how you can implement it, how it can be done safely, how it can make a difference, and what happens when the next pandemic rolls around." •••

Birket notes, "The themed entertainment industry is good at taking a constraint and turning it into a special effect. There are always possibilities. There's a lot of ingenuity out there."



David Green is COO and President of lighting firm Visual Terrain, Inc. He has over 35 years of experience in managing and delivering large and small development projects, including user experience design, creative and technical writing, theme parks, film, website producing, television and animation support, software development, information architecture, project management, public relations and photography. David holds nine U.S. patents for user interface design and is a regular contributor to InPark.

Mark Fergus, regional vice president at Cumming, adds, "It's about early adoption. Theme parks are known as somewhere to go and have fun, but also to have fun safely. So we're reinventing ourselves and caring for our staff and our consumers."

Marez adds, "It's time to be proactive and not reactive, and really consider getting a wellness or healthy building certification for your theme park or venue, so that when your guests arrive, they feel comfortable in knowing that you took the care and went above and beyond to make sure they were safe."



The first launch of the SpaceX Falcon Heavy Rocket on January 6, 2018.
Photo by Daniel Oberhaus, courtesy of Creative Commons 4.0 International License

From mission control to show control

Building a company culture that supports innovation

by Scott Harkless, Alcorn McBride

It was a beautiful afternoon on Omelek Island in the South Pacific. The date was August 3, 2008 and the SpaceX Falcon 1 rocket was perched on the launchpad, fueled and ready to go. Elon Musk huddled in a trailer parked in the back of the SpaceX factory in Hawthorne, California with a small group of his senior staff members.

One can only imagine what must have been going through his head as Musk monitored images and telemetry from across the Pacific Ocean. This was the third attempt to launch the Falcon 1. He had invested his personal finances in SpaceX, and announced to the world that it was only enough to fund three launch attempts. If this launch failed, he and his entire team faced defeat.

At 3:34 p.m, the rocket cleared the launchpad and soared gracefully on its way to low-Earth orbit. A flawless flight...for the first two minutes and 49 seconds. As the first stage shut down and began to separate from the second stage, the Merlin-1C

engine sputtered one last 'kick' of thrust, causing the two stages to collide. As for what happened next, let's just say that there's a reason we don't design bumper cars with large, pressurized tanks of liquid oxygen and highly refined kerosene on board.

You probably thought my inspirational intro was leading up to a successful launch, followed by cheers, high-fives, and hugs. But what followed was even better - and something that I believe all companies should aspire to achieve.

Every member of the SpaceX team who witnessed that catastrophic flight knew what was at stake. Perhaps they expected Musk to say something fatalistic. Instead, he took a moment to reflect on how difficult their mission was...how many other organizations and nations had failed to make it as far as they had. Then he told everyone to regroup - because they had a lot of work to do. He made it clear that he will never give up...never.... and if they stick with him, they will succeed.

The team rallied. Within hours, they had combed through the data, proposed solutions, and shared this information openly to earn the trust of investors. Within weeks, they secured financing and built a completely new Falcon 1 rocket. Then on September 28, 2008, a mere 56 days after the “Rapid Unplanned Disassembly” that nearly tanked the company, the fourth flight of Falcon 1 made history: The first privately built launch vehicle had achieved Earth orbit.

Though we may not build rockets in our profession (not REAL ones anyway!) there are many things we can learn from a company like SpaceX that shatters preconceptions with bold innovation. How do they do it? Although there are many forces at play here, I believe it all starts with what I would consider the foundation of any organization, the company mission.

Ever since its inception, the mission of SpaceX has been “to revolutionize space transportation with the ultimate goal of making life multi-planetary.” This mission statement was echoed throughout the company and broadcast to the world to attract the talent they needed to achieve this goal. The staff were inspired and emotionally invested in this company mission, and they wanted to work alongside leaders and colleagues who felt the same way.

That is the power of cultivating a company culture that is mission-driven. When united in a common purpose, the team will come together and bring their diverse backgrounds, skills, ideas, and personalities to work in the interests of the team and advance the mission. They feel safe speaking up and trust those around them to do what is best for the team. They will always rally to overcome challenges and will also share in the joy of success. In my experience, this is the best way to foster a collaborative and innovative team: Unite them with a common cause.

Whether your organization has been in business for 50 years or is just starting out, it’s never too late (or too early) to craft a statement that captures your mission. It’s not easy! But if you get to the heart of the matter, you will have a mission and goals that your people connect with.

To define a mission that really resonates with people and inspires them to be emotionally invested, you’ve got to dig deep into your gooey insides for the real answer. Think about what your company is really all about. What makes it special and unique? What problems is it trying to solve? What ideals motivate your best staff members to put in that something extra and see a project to a successful finish? If you founded the company, what inspired you to put in the long hours and dedication necessary to get the place off the ground? I can’t tell you what your inspirational message will be, but when you finally have it and you say it out loud, it should ignite a fire in your belly.

At Alcorn McBride, “we create innovative tools that empower attraction designers to bring memorable experiences to life.” That mission absolutely fires me up every day. Our team is

driven by the mutual desire to meet tough problems with creative technology solutions. The real reward is being closely connected to the designers we work with, so that we can celebrate building amazing attractions together.

Once you’ve figured out why your company really exists, take the time to make sure that this inspirational message becomes woven into the fabric of your organization. It should be spoken out loud whenever important decisions are being discussed, broadcast in your recruiting efforts, and at the forefront of your company’s marketing campaign. If you do this right, everyone who hears your company’s name should know exactly what the organization and its people stand for. This will attract employees who are inspired by your message, and it will also attract clients whose passions align with your long-term goals.

On the flip side, you may find that your message doesn’t resonate well with some employees and clients. If so, that’s ok. The mission helps you stay on your true path, but that path may not be for everyone. Some employees might not be fulfilled working at your organization, or by their role on the team. A client that doesn’t align well with your company values might lead you and your team in an unfulfilling and unproductive direction. Both situations have the potential to hurt morale and stifle even the strongest of companies. Knowing what your company stands for is the best way to figure out who you can and cannot make happy. It ensures that you cultivate the right team, client base, and project workload so that everyone involved is engaged and inspired by the work they are doing.

I wish I could say that the hard work stops there, but defining a clear mission is just the beginning of building a strong foundation for your company culture. Like designing a successful rocket, building a successful company culture is an ongoing effort that requires purpose and dedication.

He probably wasn’t thinking about rockets or coaster lifts when he spoke, but I appreciate the wisdom of the late author and business coach Zig Ziglar, who said, “Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.” If a team of fewer than 400 people running on rocket fumes can take a company from ashes to industry icon in 56 days, just imagine what any of us can achieve. • • •



As Chief Innovation Officer at Alcorn McBride, Scott Harkless works closely with clients to determine their biggest areas of need and leads a talented team of problem solvers to create the products used in many of the world’s most popular attractions.

He draws upon his experience in product development, system commissioning, client training, marketing, and sales to ensure that the products stamped with the Alcorn McBride logo exceed client expectations and offer value to the entire industry.

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Branding man

Branding/design specialist Dale Sprague receives TEA distinguished service honors

interview by Shannon Martin, with assistance from Ann Sprague

Always the humble guy, Dale Sprague, President of Las Vegas-based Canyon Creative, was stunned and honored to be chosen by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) to receive the 2021 TEA Peter Chernack Distinguished Service Award. The accolade honors exceptional service to the organization, above and beyond the norm. The news came during the 27th annual TEA Thea Awards announcements which showcase the best in the industry. The award is named in remembrance of the late Peter Chernack, a TEA founding member and past president.

Dale Sprague's long-time friend and colleague, Shannon Martin of Color Reflections, asked Dale about memorable moments in the industry, rebranding the TEA, Las Vegas behind-the-scenes and more. Shannon is currently a TEA International Board Vice President.

Shannon: Let's talk about your decades of volunteer work with the TEA. Your company, Canyon Creative, is a corporate sponsor year after year. You were on the International Board for six years; interfaced with TEA Headquarters, TEA Divisions, Committees and the membership. You participated in Strategic Planning Meetings, the Thea Awards Gala and were in attendance for many IAAPA Expos in Orlando. You chaired the TEA Marketing & Communications Committee for many years. You are an amazing creative and strategic resource for the association.

Dale: We've worked on many projects, too. Rebranding the TEA, the creation of a system of digital and print assets, logos, corporate identity, marketing and advertising, meeting and trade show graphics, project management for the website,



Dale Sprague

awards programs, signage, email campaigns, social media, a style guide and Google Analytics. But I couldn't do it without my team. Canyon Creative is a brand strategy and design company populated by people who have been together for years. We're like a well-oiled machine.

Shannon: You and Canyon Creative are responsible for strengthening the TEA brand around the world and helping the organization to gain momentum on a global scale. How did the TEA rebranding come about?

Dale: Monty Lunde [TEA founder] and Peter Chernack approached me and asked if I wanted to take on the project. Within a week, I had a vision of what I thought it should be. Our team sketched out ideas, devised color palettes and a brand hierarchy, and came up with rationale for the entire branding design and system. The idea was to develop a consistent brand that we could use universally, one that could easily be adapted around the world, and provide a nod to what had come before. One of my favorite memories is of presenting the concepts at the TEA Strategic Planning Meeting in Savannah, GA.

Shannon: I remember that! The room lit up. You got unanimous approval.

Dale: Yeah. That was pretty amazing.



Shannon Martin, Dale Sprague, Dave Martin. Photo courtesy of Shannon Martin

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Shannon: I always attribute joining the Themed Entertainment Association to you. You would say, “There’s this great organization…” Finally, I listened. Four or five months later, I was appointed to the Western Division Board. Now, after 10+ years, I’m on the International Board.

Dale: I admire your passion and how you go about everything you do with such zeal. As they say, you’re a “people person.” I knew there were tremendous opportunities for you personally and professionally. I was right.

Shannon: What are some of your favorite memories of the themed entertainment industry?

Dale: Anytime and anywhere we all gather. I love the energy. Seeing what’s new, discovering what people are doing. It’s inspiring to see new ideas and technologies. One memory that sticks out is getting a tour of the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco from Diane Disney Miller and her husband Ron Miller. Icons of the industry, yet so down-to-earth. Another, embarrassing and funny memory took place during the Thea Awards Gala a few years ago. My wife/business partner and I had great seats at the round tables spread out throughout the vast ballroom in the Disneyland Hotel. We had a bird’s-eye-view of all the movers and shakers. Next to us was a sweet, elderly couple. They were very engaging. We shared first names (Jack and Isabelle) and chatted away like old friends. The lights dimmed and the program began. Sometime during the festivities, it was announced that the first president of Disneyland was going to speak. Up from the table popped JACK Lindquist.

Shannon: Let’s talk Vegas, baby! The entertainment capital of the world.

Dale: Home, sweet home. Las Vegas has such a diversity of built locations within the city boundaries. COVID hit us hard, but we are a resilient bunch. Some of the new and notable projects are Allegiant Stadium, Circa Resort & Casino at the Fremont Street Experience, Resorts World on the Strip, Elon Musk’s futuristic people mover, Area15 with an immersive playground of art/commerce/food/nightlife combined with an interactive art installation from Meow Wolf, and the transformation of the Hard Rock into Virgin Resort. Also in the works, by the same company that runs Madison Square Garden, is a 500-foot-wide by 360-foot-high concert sphere.

Shannon: That gives me so many ideas for behind-the-scenes tours and events we can plan when we hold the TEA SATE



Dale presents at the 2016 TEA International Board Strategic Planning Meeting. Photo courtesy of TEA

(Story + Architecture + Technology = Experience) Conference in Las Vegas at the University of Nevada (UNLV). We’re in the planning stages now.

Dale: It’s always great to go behind the scenes with creatives and colleagues, see things from an industry viewpoint, and the TEA community helps create more of those opportunities. I visited the LINQ High Roller - the world’s highest observation wheel - with attraction designer Phil Hetteema of The Hetteema Group and writer/editor Judith Rubin [a chronicler of the industry who has also been honored for her TEA service]. It was also fascinating to go backstage with Cirque de Soleil’s KÀ and the watery wonderland that was Wynn Las Vegas’ Le Rêve – The Dream (now permanently closed). The uber-hip Hakkasan Nightclub at MGM blew me away by its sheer size and what it takes to run smoothly.

Shannon: What does receiving the TEA Peter Chernack Distinguished Service Award mean to you?

Dale: Peter was a true friend. He was the kind of person who always asked how and what you were doing. It was never about him. Peter listened intently, was always encouraging and had a great sense of humor. I miss him. Getting this award truly means the world to me, especially because it’s in honor of this great man and icon in the themed entertainment industry. •••

For more information, contact
Dale Sprague, President, Canyon Creative.

702-262-9901

www.canyoncreative.com

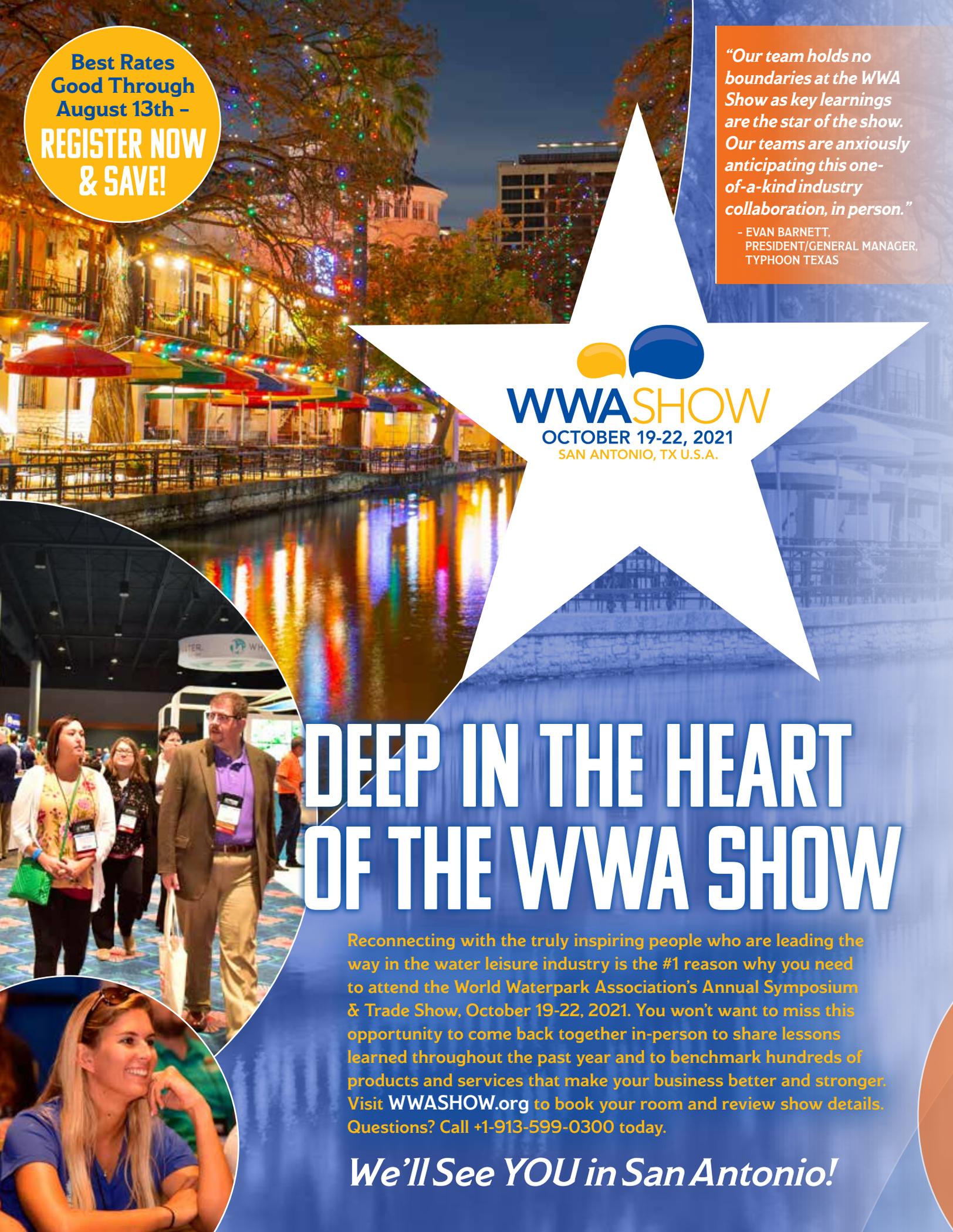


Shannon Martin is Director of Business Development for Color Reflections Las Vegas, a large format digital printing company, as well as Vice President of the International Board for the Themed Entertainment Association.

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The new MS in Themed Experience at UCF

An interview with Peter Weishar

by Judith Rubin

Peter Weishar spoke to InPark editor Judith Rubin about the new Master of Science in Themed Experience program at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando, first announced in February 2021. The 33-credit program is designed to be completed in four semesters.

Tell us about the structure of the program and what makes it unique.

At the core is a sequence of studio classes: Themed Experience Seminar, Small Project Studio, Immersive Experience Studio, and Collaborative Project Studio. A primary goal is to help candidates develop a specific portfolio in order to pursue a creative career. We don't just focus on the aesthetics: we teach context, research and encourage exploration into new applications of themed experience that range from religious spaces, to retail, museums, libraries, schools, education, and of course, theme parks.

What has the response been like?

There has been a great deal of enthusiasm, and far more applicants than expected. Admissions are capped at 15 to keep class size small and ensure individual attention, but next academic year, we will double the size of our program, and if all goes according to plan, we will grow by about one-third the following year. In addition to student interest, dozens of industry leaders have contacted us to ask how they can get involved.

What is the pool of applicants like?

About half of the applicants are working professionals. Most have a background in the visual arts, some are writers, and a number have engineering backgrounds. I think ours is one of the few programs for individuals to bridge that gap where an engineer can express their creativity.

How are these programs enriched by the Orlando location, and collaboration with the industry?

We are collaborating with Christie on a projection mapping practicum class. The connection was facilitated by Larry Howard, Christie's Senior Director of Entertainment Sales, Global Entertainment Development, who is based in Orlando. Christie is lending UCF four projectors as well as licenses for Christie Pandoras Box software. Their in-house trainer/artist will be



working with students developing original content that will be showcased on the main campus the following semester.

We are also working with Cecil Magpuri, founder and Chief Creative Officer of Falcon's Creative. Next semester, he and I will co-teach a class that allows students to experiment and develop content for some of the groundbreaking work done in Falcon's X-lab. We are going to be able to work with the team at Falcon's on their site, which is located near the main campus.

In addition, we have some distinguished adjuncts who are accomplished, active industry professionals. They include EXP Principal, Director of Lighting Design Aram Ebben, IALD, CLD, LEED AP; show writer Allison Moran; and Mike Wallace, Chief Creative Officer, Harves Entertainment. We try to pull all adjunct instructors teaching studio classes from the field, to get the right balance of practitioners to full-time academics. As the program grows, we will need more experienced professionals in front of the classroom.

There's excitement and energy on all sides regarding these collaborations, which give students the opportunity to form in-depth working relationships with successful industry veterans. Aram has summed it up by saying, "I believe that those of us who have been in the business for some time owe it to the next generation to share our knowledge with them."

How does this program complement other educational tracks at UCF?

A program like this is only possible at a major research University such as ours. Themed experience development requires collaboration between multiple disciplines in a professional environment, and students can emulate that kind of collaboration across UCF. In both the MFA and the MS in Themed Experience, students are required to take classes at the

UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, with whom we are working closely to develop a wider range of graduate level courses in themed entertainment management and operations. The MS also requires a class in Engineering, and Themed Experience students have already been part of some successful collaborations with the renowned UCF Engineering program [See “Taking UCF students to the cutting edge of VR,” *InPark* issue #85, 2020]. We also work closely with UCF School of Performing Arts, UCF School of Visual Art and Design, and half a dozen other disciplines.

What are some other ways this program stands out?

I feel that UCF offers the ideal combination of academics, studio courses and location. I moved to Orlando and accepted a position at UCF because it is the perfect place to study themed experience and entertainment. Our degrees are offered on the main campus of what is a major research university and one of the largest universities in the country. Students can take electives in almost every discipline imaginable and have access to tremendous resources.

This top-quality program is also very affordable. The tuition at similar private school programs is literally over seven times in-state tuition at UCF. The low tuition at UCF takes a lot of pressure off our students. And our faculty are just incredible.

Of course, not every program is right for everyone. Today there are numerous options for students who wish to pursue careers in themed experience and entertainment. This is a wonderful thing and was not the case just a few years ago.

Would it benefit those who are already working, even established, to enroll for this degree?

Our new MS degree was developed with industry professionals in mind.

Many of our students are already working in the field. They are looking to make the leap from producer or assistant designer to art director or creative director. The graduate degree helps them hone their skillsets and develop a tailored portfolio that will showcase their talents.

Almost all the classes are taught one evening per week to accommodate full-time workers. We also deliberately created classes and assignments that are directly applicable to the kind of work needed in the field. This is a big help in an industry where NDAs prevent applicants from showing their current work in their portfolio. There are no NDAs preventing a person from showing their own student work.



Students relax before studying at the University of Central Florida campus. Photo ©University of Central Florida



Allison Moran

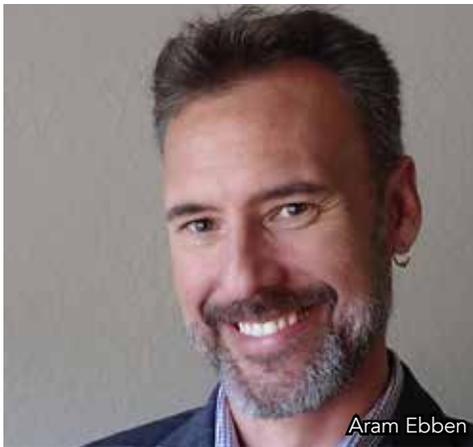
You're a pioneer in the creation of themed experience curricula at the university level. What background and inspiration did you bring to this?

My father was a scenic designer, and I designed environments for video games before becoming a professor. So, narrative environments had always fascinated me. I was inspired to act after watching the 2007 "Last Lecture" by Randy Pausch, Professor and Director of the Entertainment Technology Center (ETC) at Carnegie Mellon. This heartbreaking and inspirational lecture, given by an asymptomatic yet terminally ill professor taking stock of his life and achievements, is a must-see that will change your perspective on life. Pausch spoke about collaborating with WDI and later forming the ETC with Don Marinelli. So, I thought if Randy Pausch could develop this at CMU, I could make it happen at my institution, which at the time was Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). ETC has a broader focus - also covering gaming, digital media, etc. I developed the first program to focus exclusively on themed experience and entertainment, but CMU was the first to make it part of an academic degree.



Patrick Brennan

I was lucky to have the support of Patrick Brennan at WDI in Orlando to develop the first themed entertainment class at SCAD. Patrick is a 32-year veteran creative executive of Walt Disney Imagineering. He and I began by setting up an off-campus class where students spent a full week backstage at Walt Disney World and worked and learned from some 40 Imagineers, with Gary Landrum as our guide. Gary gave brilliant lectures and I credit him with many of the core ideas I teach today. We are fortunate to now have Patrick Brennan as an adjunct professor at UCF.



Aram Ebben

After years of persistence on my part, SCAD ultimately approved a new degree in Themed Entertainment Design. I give credit to Paula Wallace, President and Founder of SCAD, for her foresight in green-lighting a new academic discipline.

Joining UCF in August 2018, the process was a more straightforward process. I was brought on board by Jeff Moore, Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, to start the themed experience graduate programs. We were able to get the MFA up and running within six months of my arrival on campus. The new degree, however - the MS in Themed Experience that we're discussing here - is a separate degree program and a unique academic unit. The MS approval was a multi-year process with a proposal of 300+ pages that went all the way up to the Florida Board of Governors. Associate Dean Lynn Hepner and Special Assistant to the Dean, Paul Lartonoix were two people instrumental in the effort.

What have you learned in the course of things?

Good question. Academics are paid to always keep learning. That is one of the things that makes the job so terrific. The more I learn about themed experience, the more I realize there is to know. I can look back over a decade later and say, "Yeah, I was right, themed experience should be its own academic discipline," but I did not realize the incredible potential and seemingly endless depth of the field. •••



Mike Wallace



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Bob Weis, collaborative creative pioneer - part two

Now WDI president, Weis has emphasized a virtuoso team culture on all his projects

by Joe Kleiman

Bob Weis is President of Walt Disney Imagineering. He is best known for his Disney projects - most recently his leadership roles on the Disney California Adventure and Shanghai Disneyland parks. However, he also has a significant body of influential work in the museum and attractions fields and even military training simulation - pioneering projects that established new models, blurring the line between attraction and exhibit.

Weis was named by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) to receive its prestigious Buzz Price Thea Award – Honoring a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements as part of the 27th annual TEA Thea Awards. He and the other Thea Award recipients in 2021 will be celebrated in a series of Thea Virtual Case Studies sessions later this year, and in the official Thea Awards Program (TEA expects to resume hosting its in-person Thea Awards Gala in 2022).

To understand more about Bob Weis as a themed entertainment professional, InPark editor Joe Kleiman explored a series of projects completed between 2002 and 2009, interviewing a

This is Part Two of a two-part article, profiling a total of six projects. Part Two covers Battle Stations 21; The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History; and CSI: The Experience. Part One (published in the previous issue, InPark #86) explored “In Their Footsteps: Lewis and Clark”; ACTION! An Adventure in Movie Making; and Top of the Rock. You can access the full article (both parts) at <http://www.inparkmagazine.com/bobweis/>.

number of creative collaborators. We took a tribute approach to this story, interviewing Bob Weis’s creative collaborators to learn and share their experiences of working with him. Heartfelt thanks to all of them, and to Walt Disney Imagineering, for their cooperation.

Battle Stations 21 (2007)

Battle Stations 21 was the Navy’s attempt to upgrade training. Bob loved it because it was related to America. This was an opportunity for him – for all of us – to help our country.

– Chick Russell

Battle Stations 21 was one of the first major applications of themed entertainment design to training simulation, leading the



Weis at sea on a destroyer filming for Battle Stations 21. Photo courtesy of Tim Steinoer.

way for other companies to provide similar training services for first responders, the military, and municipal infrastructure. For Bob Weis, it was an opportunity to utilize his skills as an attraction and exhibit designer in a new field.

Battle Stations 21 was a realistic, virtual training experience for the US Navy Training Center near Chicago. As a connoisseur of American history, Weis had worked on several military-themed projects. Disney's America, as planned, would have had lands themed to the Civil War and World War II. Even Lewis and Clark's expedition - which would have been the theme of a raft ride at the unbuilt park, and did become the subject of his film "In Their Footsteps" - was a US Army operation.

"Battle Stations 21 is very different from the exhibits," says Tim Steinouer. "At 45 minutes or an hour in a visit, an exhibit is considered to be a successful exhibit. This took 400 sailors and officers twelve hours, with no breaks, to complete a series of goals and exercises."

The team would take the skills honed in their design of attractions and exhibits and apply them to a challenging environment they had worked with before. "I had to write a twelve-hour script," shares Chick Russell, "It was a twelve-hour script, but twelve different scenarios happen every hour, and all at the same time. There could be firefighting at one spot, flooding or watch or navigation in another. It was a wonderful way to use theme park storytelling, technology, and immersive design in a completely different way. The project made sailors feel like they were at sea for twelve hours. We made the whole soundstage look like a dock. Then they would board a missile destroyer. It doesn't take much with sound effects and announcements to make it feel like you're under attack. There were a number of videos produced to make it look like live TV. The training staff would act like they were really at sea in these different situations. Battle Stations 21 was the final test to see if Naval recruits could stand up to rigors and real conditions at sea."

We were at sea on a destroyer to film for a week - Bob, myself, and six crew members," continues Steinouer. "We never broke the fourth wall in Battle Stations 21. This is probably the only themed entertainment project that is 100% immersive. Everything around you is in a ship. There are no variables. We had to come up with over twelve hours of audio and six hours of video. Bob had to have massive oversight of the art direction, media, coordinating. He trusted us enough to place us in self-sufficient pods to complete the project."

Fort Worth Museum of Science and History (2008) and CSI: The Experience (2007)

Bob Weis is very wise, a good friend, and very helpful. He's very fluid. It's always a brainstorming session, a discussion of ideas. When I was with Bob, he was always searching with me, 'How do we approach this idyllic structure?' When in Washington, I told the team to wear ties to a meeting and Bob just laughed. He's about ideas, never stopping, and always moving forward. There was always an exchange of ideas. Not just Bob's ideas, because

he's very respectful of others and their concepts. Bob loved to take people to different venues – restaurants, the beach, his house. He kept changing the environment, and this brought out people's ideas that we otherwise might have missed. He's very casual, but he's very focused and strategic on the end goal.

-- Van Romans

At Disney, Van Romans had assembled the various national galleries at EPCOT and, because of his hard work, had created a bridge between the museum world and the Disney organization. "I had designed galleries for the various countries, like Mexico and China, using a country's national treasures. Eventually, we added a small gallery at The American Adventure. Disney had purchased the Tishman collection of African art, one of the largest private collections in the world. We had planned on exhibiting it in an Africa pavilion. We ended up using pieces from the Tishman collection in this new gallery, showcasing them with contemporary pieces by young African American artists. When the exhibit ended its run, I encouraged Disney to donate the entire collection to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art."

Interviewed for this story:

Rick Rothschild, Chief Creative at FAR Out! Creative Direction, former Disney Imagineer

Chick Russell, Executive Producer and Creative Director at Chick Russell & Company, former Disney Imagineer

Van Romans, President of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, former Executive Director, Cultural Affairs, Walt Disney Imagineering

Tim Steinouer, Creative Producer at Steinouer Creative, former partner at Design Island

Nancy Seruto, Owner of Seruto LLC, former Disney Imagineer

John Beckman, Director, Exhibit Design and Production at Adler Planetarium, former Director of Exhibit Design and Development at MSI, Chicago

Jen Bressler, Principal, Hunt Design

Kurt Haunfelner, Senior Vice President for Exhibitions at California Science Center, formerly Vice President of Exhibits and Collections at MSI, Chicago

Romans had continued his relationship with the Smithsonian, working with them and Weis on the development of Disney's America and creating an exhibit at EPCOT celebrating the Smithsonian's 150th Anniversary. In 2005, he was named President of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. Two years later, the entire museum building, with the exception of the museum's IMAX theater, was razed to be replaced by a new multi-million dollar building with new exhibits.

"We decided to rebuild the museum from the ground up," Romans recalled. "We hired Ricardo Legarreta, a famous architect from Mexico, who was in his 70s at the time. He was absolutely wonderful. I needed an 'A+' exhibit designer who understands how to work with architects. Bob came on and, sure enough, he was the right guy. He totally respected Ricardo and it helps that Bob came out of architecture [Weis received a Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona in 1980]. They worked beautifully together. Bob put together a great team, and they spent a whole week in blue sky. Bob was very responsible for not getting in the way of this famous architect, but actually working with him."

Many of Weis's collaborators joined him again in creating exhibits for the Fort Worth museum - Nancy Seruto, Tim Steinouer, Jen Bressler, and Chick Russell among them. "We had a great team!" shares Romans.

"I ended up writing and being a producer on every exhibit in the museum," says Russell. "There was a portion on cattle raising and a part on the oil and gas business. Bob likes industrial things. And there was a big part about dinosaurs. We held focus groups with locals and talked with both stakeholders and experts as part of the creative process."

In the 1990s, the museum had produced a traveling exhibit called "Whodunit? The Science of Solving Crime." The exhibit took guests through the processes of forensic science, examining clues both at a crime scene and in a lab. Throughout the experience, actual forensic investigators appeared on screen.

Now, the museum wanted to resurrect Whodunit?, but with a twist. "When Bob came down to Fort Worth, we were in the middle of working on this forensics exhibit," says Romans. Romans and his team at the museum were interested in integrating characters from a leading TV show into the new exhibit. He called Weis to see who he knew.

"CSI happened when Bob and I were in a cab from La Guardia Airport to Top of the Rock. We started talking about CSI - could the CSI cast host the exhibit? It turns out that one of the studio liaisons on ACTION! knew the show's executive producer, Jerry Bruckheimer. A day or two later, we were told to make a pitch. Bob is incredible at pitching ideas. He's comfortable to listen to. It doesn't sound like a sales pitch. He's very engaging, and that makes you want to engage with him."

For Seruto, her projects with Weis often evoked personal experience and personal history. At Top of the Rock, she would stand on the observation decks, staring at Ellis Island, recalling her father, an immigrant from Sicily. "I felt like my Dad was with me and this project ended up being a way to honor my father," she said.

Working on the CSI exhibit evoked another family connection for Seruto. "My good fortune is my sister is a forensic toxicologist and was running the Baltimore Police Department lab," she said, "I was able to reach out to her and ask her to help me navigate the subject matter and make sure we were interpreting



The Energy Blast exhibit at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. Courtesy Chick Russell and Company



CSI: The Experience. Photo courtesy of Fort Worth Museum of Science and History

reputation early on and Marty Sklar [former President of Walt Disney Imagineering] clearly noticed this. Bob was not just taking advantage of having you on his team. He cared about his people; people responded with devotion to him and the project as a result. He stood up for what he thought was right. He was adroit working with management, instead of bowing to it.

-- Rick Rothschild

Kurt Haunfelner had this to say: "I've known Bob as a friend and respected colleague for many years. I have close friends who have worked with Bob and they all say something similar - 'a class act, a pleasure to work for, a humble leader who mentors and empowers his team, someone who takes risks...a visionary guy!' I've never heard a negative word about Bob. There's an

expression in sports, 'he's a players' coach.' In the experience design world, the same could be said about Bob. He puts team first, self second."

"Today, as President of Walt Disney Imagineering," Seruto says, "Bob brings three key traits that will help the company grow into the future: Vision for where the company can go, of its total potential and with clear insight on how it can and should adapt to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world; a deep love for Imagineering and tremendous respect for the people who built it, but also such enthusiasm for the new and future talent that inhabit those hallowed halls; and again – his humanity, his empathy and love of people and the work we do." •••

it correctly. That was another great family connection because to work alongside your sister who for your whole life is in such a completely different field than you, and learn about each other's work, was bonding and great and a really wonderful way to get to know her."

Weis returns to Disney

There's a familiarity with being relaxed, having faith in your team, giving leeway. With Bob, you can change things and do things slightly differently. You would come up with something unique, and then be encouraged to do more.

-- Chick Russell

Russell recalls that "about the time the whole Fort Worth concept was done, I got a call from Bob. He had decided to return to Disney." Back at Imagineering, Weis would oversee a number of high-profile projects, including the revamping of Disney California Adventure and the design of the new Shanghai Disney Resort. In 2016, he was appointed to the ultimate team leadership position - President of Walt Disney Imagineering.

"When working with him at Imagineering in the 90s," says Russell, "I thought Bob would be great to run Imagineering. We learned so much at WDI. We learned to put ourselves in the shoes of the guests. We learned that story is the most important part of what we do at Imagineering. There were so many great people that I worked with, including Bob. Bob had a talent for pulling the best people on to his team. He knew how to cast people - people who would collaborate and work together."

Bob is very adroit at looking at how things are developing, motivating and exciting the team. He empowers the team; he doesn't micromanage them – that comes with respect, it comes with a certain ability to understand personality types in the process and how to motivate. He truly gained his leadership



Bob Weis (standing, third from left) and the Battle Stations 21 team, researching and filming the project. Courtesy Chick Russell.

The “radically creative” lens of Blue Telescope

How Trent Oliver and her team keep the visitor experience in full view

by *Nicolle Andrea Figueroa Rosado*

Trent Oliver wanted to be Evel Knievel when she grew up. While her eventual choice of career may not involve death-defying feats, Oliver and her award-winning interactive media company, Blue Telescope, share Knievel’s desire to push the boundaries of human experience. And as the incoming Eastern Board President of the Themed Entertainment Association, Oliver got the chance to reconnect with this childhood dream when she presented a Thea Award to the Evel Knievel Museum in 2019.

Restless spirit

“Interactive media entrepreneur” did not immediately follow “motorcycle daredevil” on Oliver’s career bucket list, but it turned out to be the natural extension of her early life and career. As an “Air Force brat,” she attended 13 elementary and high schools. As a young adult she continued to move around, attending multiple colleges. It wasn’t until she moved to New York City in the late 1980s that she finally found a place to call home, that satisfied her restless curiosity and independent spirit.

After a successful early career as a media and live entertainment producer, Oliver felt it was time for a new challenge and founded her own company, Blue Telescope, in 2001. As her own boss, she could “extend the limits of possibility.” She was drawn to interactive media because within it she found the convergence of live theater, interactive theater and film but also an added opportunity to create personalized experiences. “I had this idea that owning my own company wasn’t any harder than freelancing,” says Oliver. “That’s insane - it’s like apples and kumquats! Luckily, I thrive in chaos, and change doesn’t bother



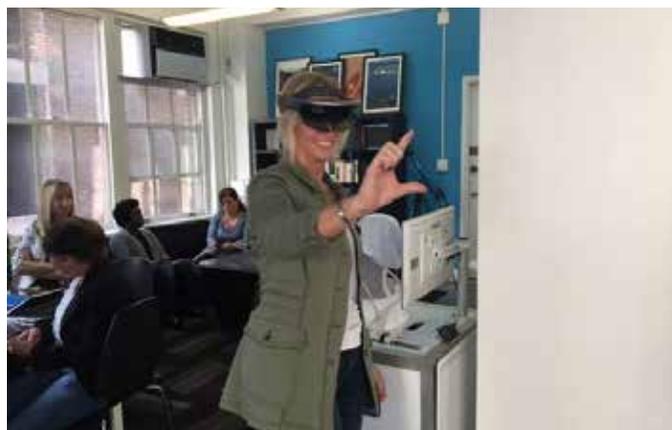
Trent Oliver at American Dream

me. Working in this business and traveling way too much fits, and owning a company fits because I’m so used to going my own way. I just listen to myself, which gets you into good and bad situations.”

Blue Telescope has been innovative and successful over the past two decades. The company has received over 100 awards for developing media interactives that tell powerful stories and



Intrepid Air & Space Museum
Photo courtesy of Blue Telescope



Exploring interactivity in the Blue Telescope offices
Photo courtesy of Blue Telescope

are built with a wide variety of interaction models, technology platforms, and user-interface approaches. These approaches include custom content management, AR and VR interaction, RFID and sensor programming, traditional and non-traditional projection, narrative audio and video, motion graphics, web and mobile app development, and custom hardware fabrication. Based in Manhattan, the company expanded to Orlando in 2018, though the team - a close-knit group of full-time staff and long-time specialty collaborators - has worked almost exclusively remotely during the pandemic.

The art and science of creating radically

Blue Telescope prides itself on being “radically creative and fiscally intelligent.” As Oliver explains, “we always ask ourselves, ‘how can we push the boundaries more within what the client can spend?’ We challenge clients to think about their attractions long-term, which won’t always lead to the least inexpensive solution (though usually not the most expensive either). What it will lead to is the most durable solution and the one that best captivates the guest. Blue Telescope’s first and foremost concern is creating a full human experience. AR, VR, or gesture based technology are simply vehicles for delivering that human experience. It’s all about you participating in the story, not the story being pushed at you.”

This visitor-focused philosophy has garnered Blue Telescope a variety of high-profile museum, corporate, and entertainment clients, such as Holland America Line, the National Museum of Mathematics, the USS Intrepid, Liberty Science Center, the New



Rightfully Hers Interactive, National Archives
Photo courtesy of Blue Telescope

York Hall of Science, NPR, and Pfizer. Blue Telescope’s latest project, “Driven to Win: The History of Racing in America,” at The Henry Ford, was recently named “one of the most enticing exhibits across the US” by USA TODAY and the company looks forward to two more exhibit openings later in 2021.

One Blue Telescope project particularly dear to Oliver’s heart involved developing an interactive game for “Rightfully Hers: American Women and The Vote,” a National Archives exhibit commemorating the ratification of the 19th Amendment. “Thirty years ago, as part of my research for a project on Ellis Island, I got to peruse the National Archives, white gloves and all. That was a more exciting moment for me than all the celebrities I had met as a producer. To be able to work with the National Archives a few decades later on a women’s suffrage exhibit was a dream



Rendering of Racing in America: Driven to Win entry
Image courtesy of The Henry Ford Museum

Tangled Up In Blue: Trent Oliver's Thoughts on Projects, Processes, and People

- “All experiences need to speak to different people. It’s not just gender, race, physical abilities, but also education level. Whatever you’re creating, don’t just have PhDs in the room - you’ve got to have everybody.”
- “If you want to learn something, find out who is the best at it. Because they are not worried about you taking their job, and they’re honored that you value their opinion.”
- “A great project has a good tension between excellent project management and super strong creative. Creative needs to fly and be aspirational and not worry about making sure everybody else gets their work done and be cared for. Creativity is something to nurture.”
- “You have to always ask why are you doing this. Why is this project important? It can’t just be money. It needs to be something in it that makes your heart soar. And how could we do it a little bit better? If you were doing it just for yourself what would you add to it?”
- “I’m really good at leading creative teams, because I hire the right people and give them the vision.”



Mentoring students from the Fashion Institute of Technology
Photo courtesy of Blue Telescope

come true. I hired fantastic female illustrators, and it just made me very proud.”

Calling Trent Oliver!

Supporting other women has been a long-standing mission for Oliver, who has faced her own set of challenges as a female business owner. “There are times when I feel like I should go into central casting. Find a tall, handsome, 30-something, cisgender, straight white guy with dark hair. Name him Trent Oliver, and see if he would get more work.” Because of what she calls her “androgynous” first name, clients are often surprised when she walks through the door. “In the early days, I got jobs because they saw my name on paper and thought I was male. Since I was already in the door, I just put my head down and kept working. Before long, they would see what I could do.”

That same spirit of determination has helped guide Oliver and Blue Telescope through two decades of industry fluctuations, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the 2008 economic shutdown, and now the COVID-19 pandemic. Oliver credits the company’s small size, scrappy attitude, and passion for innovation for keeping the company afloat over the last 21 years. “Same ‘ol same ‘ol is boring, and so is following the leader. So instead, we are constantly reading and reinventing. We are constantly looking at interesting media, at all kinds of art. We challenge ourselves: what is an artful way to show something, to be impacted by a performance or creation? You know you’re feeling an emotion, but you’re not quite sure how or why. Getting to the reason behind that feeling in yourself is an important step in creating emotional experiences for others.”



Mentoring Experience Design students from the Fashion Institute of Technology. *Photo courtesy of Blue Telescope*

A Time of Convergence

Creating unique emotional experiences that resonate has become increasingly challenging in an industry where the lines between verticals are quickly blurring. “I believe we’re in an amazing time of convergence,” says Oliver. “Themed entertainment experiences, retail, museums - we’re all talking to the same audiences, and audiences’ standards are higher than ever before. I truly believe that visitors want emotional and intellectual depth akin to what they would get from museums, fun and play like they would get at a theme park, and the same kind of unique retail opportunities they would get from a brand attraction - all in one experience. This convergence will challenge all of our industry sectors to step up their game moving forward.”

Moving forward to Blue Telescope’s next 21 years, Oliver believes the company will continue to challenge the limits of possibility. “Twenty years from now, I want the company I founded to be far bigger than me. I want people to say, ‘oh my God, we get to work with Blue Telescope!’ I want to be known for doing epic, gorgeous, mind-blowing work. That is larger than any one human.”

... even Evel Knievel. •••

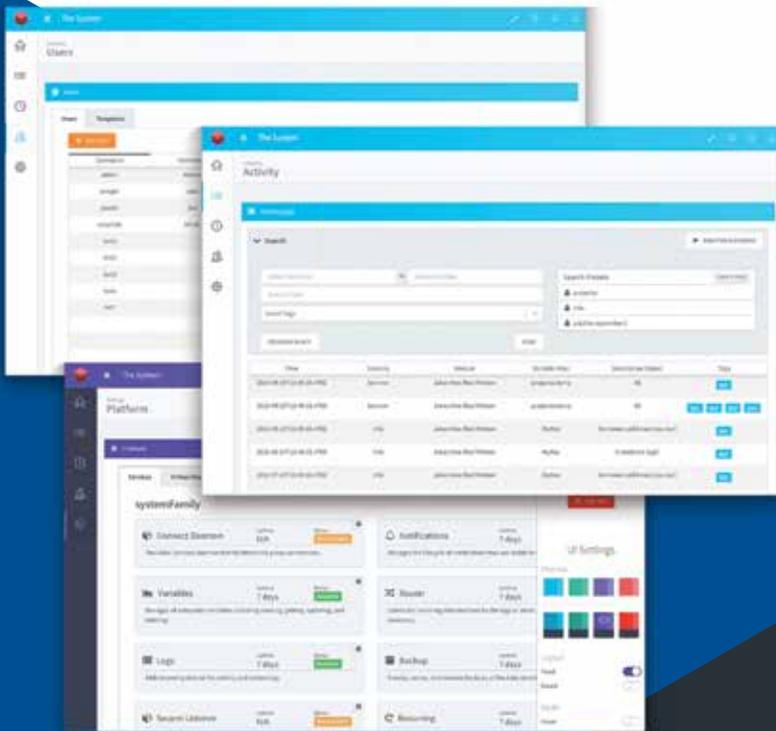
For more information on Blue Telescope’s projects, process and people, visit www.blutelescope.com.



Tesselation Table, Beyond Rubik’s Cube exhibit at Liberty Science Center. Photo courtesy Blue Telescope



Nicolle Figueroa Rosado is a project manager, producer, and educational content creator with a passion for stories. She has worked in museums as well as theme parks, producing visitor experiences that straddle the line between education and entertainment. Now, her work helps organizations across both industries create experiences that are inclusive, accessible, and equitable to all guests.



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