

PEANUTS
continues to open
new attractions
around the world
p. 18

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team & contributors

PUBLISHER
Martin Palicki

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT
Joe Kleiman

DESIGN
Keaton Jadwin

CONTRIBUTORS
Gene Jeffers

EDITOR
Judith Rubin

NEWS EDITOR
Jordan Zauha

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE
Michael Oliver



Technology should enhance the guest experience

Joe Kleiman,
Senior Correspondent

My wife and I spent Thanksgiving weekend at the Disneyland Resort. We booked the trip, including hotel, on the Disneyland website and made extensive use of the app during our visit. Everything worked like a charm, and I must say that being able to order beignets and mint juleps while on the train to New Orleans Square, then being able to pick them up the minute we walked out of the station, was a charm.

A few weeks earlier, Princess Cruises invited me to preview “360: An Extraordinary Experience.” This fine dining meal was supplemented by a 360-degree LED wall surrounding diners, along with projection mapping on the tables and plates, all courtesy of Princess and its partner Super 78 Studios. It was a special thrill to be there in the company of celebrities, such as Top Chef contestant Shirley Chung and supermodel Tyra Banks, but the “360” experience itself was the star and consistent oohs and ahs were heard from everyone in the room.

At both the Disneyland Resort and aboard the Discovery Princess, technology was a tool used to enhance the experience. On both, all the elements worked together organically. At the parks, the app eliminated stress and helped us determine our day in the most efficient manner. On the ship, technology was integrated with a live emcee and serving staff to create a live/media-based hybrid presentation where all parts fluidly worked together.

In this issue, we look at a number of new technologies and products that help operators and designers create successful memories with their guests. This issue will also be at ISE, Europe’s largest show for AV integration, sharing stories of technologies that can be applied to the attractions market.

We look forward to seeing where new technologies help operators and designers take the guest experience.

Raised in San Diego on theme parks, zoos and IMAX films, Joe Kleiman would expand his childhood loves into more than three decades in the attractions industry. Joe has been with InPark Magazine since 2011, becoming the publication’s Senior Correspondent in 2021. Follow on Twitter @ThemesRenewed and online at www.themesrenewed.home.blog



Jordan Zauha, News Editor

Jordan is a freelance writer and narrative designer in the themed entertainment industry. He is a member of the inaugural cohort of the Theatre MFA – Themed Experience program at the University of Central Florida, a NextGen member of the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) and an associate member of the Themed Experience & Attractions Academic Society (TEAAS).

Thankful for IAAPA

Martin Palicki,
Publisher

The collective sigh of relief at the end of IAAPA Expo was one filled with joy and optimism. The week in Orlando is always fun, if not exhausting, but it felt like this year’s event held even more meaning. It was largely business as usual at the conference, with plenty of new ride and attraction announcements, countless deals being made in private conference rooms, cheers from the crowd spilling into the aisles at the TEA Thea Awards announcement, and great conversations with industry friends and colleagues.

Just because buyers and sellers are upbeat doesn’t mean there aren’t challenges facing the industry, from the pandemic, global economic conditions and political struggles. And there were losses along the way. Companies closed, people lost jobs, and others succumbed to illness. We shouldn’t minimize that. But there’s plenty to celebrate and be thankful for as our industry recovers.



I want to thank all the people at IAAPA that coordinate this mammoth event every year. I ran into IAAPA CEO Hal McEvoy on the show floor (above photo) and congratulated him on his final successful show with IAAPA; he’s retiring in a matter of weeks. Hal has been a great asset to the association. He’s complemented by a talented team of workers in the IAAPA office that help bring the industry together for IAAPA Expo. Special shout out to Caitlin Dineen for wrangling the press during the event and helping to make our job easier.

Finally, thank you to all of our loyal clients, subscribers and readers. Here’s wishing you all a safe and happy new year ahead!

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



Judith Rubin, Editor

Judith helps drive content to serve the attractions industry, fostering professional connections, business development and the meaningful exchange of information. She has been contributing to InPark since 2005 and became editor in 2010.

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Creating memorable moments

Silky Fine Mist is one of many new products from Panasonic Connect aimed at the attractions and immersive experience industry, as shown here in the Japan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai. Panasonic Connect is leveraging all areas of the corporation to provide solutions-based approaches for the benefit of the themed entertainment industry.

Panasonic Connect and partners bring technology solutions to themed entertainment with 2022 Tech Day

by Martin Palicki

The pixels and players of Panasonic Connect

Panasonic Connect North America is a B2B company that provides device hardware, software, and professional services to its customers across many industries. In particular, its Professional Imaging and Visual Systems group provides a full portfolio of AV solutions to create engaging, immersive, and inspiring experiences to a variety of markets including themed entertainment. Several industry professionals within Panasonic Connect are dedicated to the attractions market:

- **Larry Howard**, Director, Themed Entertainment & Immersive Environments
- **Joseph Conover**, Strategic Account Manager, Themed Entertainment
- **Fred Mitchell**, Senior Strategic Account Manager, Themed Entertainment

The Panasonic Connect North America team works closely with its community of partners, innovators, and integrators to provide the right technologies and solutions to address customers’ evolving needs. Connecting with customers is a top priority. “It’s not just the box. We are hardware focused, but solutions enabled,” explains Howard. “We have relationships with end users to understand their needs and then bring in our ecosystem to support that.”

Because so many projects in themed entertainment are custom built and require innovative technology, that focus on longer-term relationships and connections can make a big difference in the final experience, especially when providers like Panasonic Connect are a part of the attraction creation process right from the start.



Faisal Pandit, President, Panasonic Connect North America

Why focus on this market in the first place? Faisal Pandit, President, Panasonic Connect North America believes there are major benefits to being committed to the themed entertainment industry.

“I think theme parks are home to some of the best immersive experiences, where attractions have to appeal to a wide demographic with diverse audiences,” says Pandit. “The creative demands of theme park attractions stretch the limits and demands of technology, so it’s the best location to develop and showcase our solutions before expanding them to other markets and environments.”

Additionally, Pandit knows that while Panasonic Connect has a relationship with its customers, they also have a strong commitment to the end users: park attraction visitors. “Our ultimate commitment is to create environments that delight guests, and create memorable moments,” affirms Pandit.

Panasonic Connect has been engaged with the entertainment market for quite some time. “All of Panasonic’s regions around the world have been working with theme parks, including Disney, for decades,” says Conover, who has been with the company



Larry Howard
Director



Joseph Conover
Strategic Account
Manager



Fred Mitchell
Senior Strategic
Account Manager

since 2015. “In recent years, we have been asked more to develop solutions, not just products. In turn, our teams are innovating and creating efficiencies to help support the creative process.”

One example Conover cites is Panasonic Connect’s partnership with Illuminarium Experiences. The immersive environments of Illuminarium (covered in-depth on inparkmagazine.com) rely heavily on a suite of technologies, including dozens of Panasonic projectors. Illuminarium’s EVP of Technology and Content Brian Allen approached Panasonic Connect about displaying the visuals that cover the walls and floor of the space. “We created a new short-throw lens together and manufactured that lens in a matter of months,” says Conover. It’s now used in Illuminarium



Illuminarium’s SPACE experience. Photo courtesy of Illuminarium



Broadcast technology on display and in use at Panasonic Connect Tech Day 2022



People learn about IA Stage in their demo room at Panasonic Connect Tech Day 2022.



Illuminarium's Brian Allen gives a keynote during the Panasonic Connect Tech Day 2022.



Showcasing Panasonic projectors during Tech Day



Panasonic Connect brought demos of their latest technology to their 2022 Tech Day in Orlando.

Experiences in Las Vegas and Atlanta, with more locations in development. “Brian had the vision and we created a product to help make it a reality.”

More than meets the eye

Panasonic Connect is perhaps most widely known for its extensive lineup of projectors. Used in select attractions at Disney parks and in venues like AREA15 and Illuminarium, Panasonic projectors are silent workhorses. But other solutions from Panasonic Connect are also targeted to the attractions market.

To help get creatives thinking about the possibilities, Panasonic Connect hosts its annual Tech Day to showcase their innovation. In 2022, the event took place October 26 and 27 in Orlando. In addition to sharing the latest Panasonic Connect technology, a series of brief presentations took place throughout both days. Illuminarium’s Brian Allen provided a keynote about his experience with Panasonic Connect, as well as plans for future development.

“We support the market from both the bottom up and the top down. Our Panasonic Connect Tech Days are about supporting and bringing the technology directly to the people who can use it,” explains Mitchell. “Everyone is balancing a busy schedule of varying priorities right now, so having events locally are a huge benefit to companies in the local Orlando market. We want everyone to experience what would otherwise only be at major trade shows.”

Panasonic Connect Innovations on display included:

Silky Fine Mist – Using just compressed air and tap water, the ultra-fine particles of water are small enough that they float, evaporate easily and are an effective, chemical-free alternative to fog, haze and smoke machines.

TOUGHBOOK – Ruggedized laptop, tablet and handheld devices are ideal for back-of-house use, such as managing warehouses, maintenance and vegetation. They have also been used as POS devices at outdoor kiosks and for virtual queue management systems.

5.2K HDR Stylish VR Headset – This slim profile VR headset has steampunk aesthetics. Each headset includes camera-based head tracking and integrated audio speakers.

Moving Mirror – This combination of a Panasonic projector and a rotating mirror can project images across a 120-degree field, both vertically and horizontally, adjusting automatically for natural distortion. Moving Mirror is ideal for museums, stadiums and more. The mirror assembly is a derivative of Panasonic’s PTZ motor mechanism, providing reliability and a long life.



Let’s GLOW projection mapping in San Francisco. Photo courtesy of Panasonic Connect

PTZ Cameras and Professional Audio – Panasonic’s line of PTZ cameras and microphones are constantly being upgraded with new features. The latest versions include next-generation automation, where cameras immediately focus on whichever microphone is being used. Originally developed for conferences and meetings, the system can also be utilized for special events and local in-park broadcasts.

Automatic camera-based alignment and recalibration – The trend of automation continues with Panasonic’s solution for calibrating and aligning projectors. This camera-based system takes less than two minutes to process and can be used on flat or three-dimensional surfaces, minimizing maintenance time.

In addition, Panasonic Connect previewed concepts and advancements in the projector space that are still in development but coming to market soon.

Teamwork makes the dream work

Themed entertainment projects don’t develop in a vacuum, and Panasonic Connect recognizes that creatives and developers rely on multiple vendors to create an experience. “The Panasonic Connect ecosystem of products and solutions is enhanced by the experts at our partner companies, which helps create a better end-user experience,” says Howard.

To help facilitate that, Panasonic Connect invited Alcorn McBride, InterAmerica Stage, 4Wall Entertainment, and 7thSense to participate in the Tech Days. Each had the opportunity to present and share their own products that support and complement Panasonic’s offerings.

“We’ve worked with the Panasonic Connect team for a long time and value the connections they bring to the industry,” says Alcorn



Scott Harkless, Alcorn McBride

McBride Chief Innovation Officer Scott Harkless. Alcorn is currently working with Panasonic Connect to more seamlessly integrate their media players and controls into Panasonic's lens systems and projectors.

Harkless says one of the major benefits of having strong industry partnerships is that vendors have been able to get involved earlier in the creative process and develop solutions as a team early on, rather than rushing in at the end of the project lifecycle. "The client always drives the process, but we work well together and help the client make decisions based on good, collaborative design," says Harkless.

"Relationships are key," says 7thSense CEO Matt Barton. "We have one piece of the puzzle, but it's a big puzzle and it helps a lot to know how all the other pieces fit together." 7thSense's media servers and show controls are often integrated in projects with Panasonic technology. "By understanding the systems and products out there, we all can help the customer better."

Panasonic Connect expects teamwork and collaboration to grow as the trend towards immersive experiences expands.



Matt Barton, 7thSense

"There's been such a huge uptick in immersive spaces – not just in theme parks and attractions, but we are seeing historic sites, museums and even cities get involved in projection mapping," says Conover. "We are on the cusp now of the next wave: interactivity and participation. Can you change a narrative through a crowd? The technology and creative are available to make it work today, there just needs to be the right opportunity to develop it."

To Conover's point, that's already happening at places like Illuminarium Experiences, where guest movement impacts the projected scenery, and at the Japan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, where guests' decisions created a unique avatar that followed them around in the final pavilion scene as Silky Fine Mist filled the room.

Whatever that next experience threshold is, Panasonic Connect and its collaborators are ready to engineer solutions to help themed entertainment get there.

"Imagination, creativity and expertise are required for this business," says Pandit. "We continually bring together the best of these to help create the next generation of immersive experiences."

Be on the lookout for Panasonic Connect's 2023 Tech Day and expect more of the same technologies and partners.

For more information, visit <https://na.panasonic.com/us/panasonic-connect>. • • •

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Tech Talk with ISE

Mike Blackman, Managing Director of Integrated Systems Europe, on ISE 2023

interview by Martin Palicki

To better help attendees prepare for the upcoming ISE conference in Barcelona (January 31-February 3, 2023), we spoke with Mike Blackman, Managing Director of ISE, about the event.

What can attendees expect for ISE 2023?

We look forward to being back at Fira Barcelona Gran Via at ISE 2023. The show runs Tuesday, January 31 to Friday, February 3 and is going to be a fantastic edition, across seven Technology Zones, including the Audio Zone and Lighting & Staging Zone both in Hall 7.

We have a number of new show floor changes for 2023 including a new Content Production and Distribution focus in Hall 6 and new Audio Demo Rooms in Hall 8.0, where visitors can soak up the full experience of the latest audio innovations for all industries. Make sure you visit the thriving Congress Square area, right at the heart of the venue. It is a bustling area packed with innovations and interesting booths including the Media Gallery, Catalan Pavilion, the inspiring Discovery Zone, Influencer & Impact Lounge, as well as a dedicated networking area.

Following an enthusiastic response from the industry last year, ISE is returning with an even bigger show in 2023. Exhibitor space will be more than 52,000 sqm, which is over 30% larger than in 2022.

We're also excited to announce our opening Keynote Speaker for ISE 2023, BK Johannessen, Unreal Engine Business Director for Broadcast and Live Events at Epic Games. The keynote titled "All Paths Lead to Real-Time" takes place at 17:15 on Tuesday January 31 in the Conference Suite CC4.1. As industry after industry adopts real-time visualization technology, Johannessen will discuss how content creators are applying innovations from the games industry to their projects – from cutting-edge broadcast virtual production studios to real-time graphics for media & entertainment, live events, architecture, and more.



Mike Blackman, Managing Director of ISE. Photo courtesy of ISE

What have you learned from moving the show to Barcelona?

The large, modern facility that is the Fira Barcelona Gran Via is ideal for the ISE experience. The show floor plan is looking very good, and there are more than 700 companies signed up to take part. With wide aisles, an easy-to-navigate layout and industry-leading brands showcasing technology innovations and more, ISE 2023 will provide both the AV channel and end-users with plenty of inspiration and solutions for transforming their businesses.

Once again, we are using Technology Zones to group together exhibitors with similar technologies; this approach makes it easier for attendees to find and compare the solutions they are looking for and saves them time. While previously there were space limitations for some of these Zones, this is no longer the case at the Fira, so more companies have been able to take stands in their preferred location – and we are also welcoming many companies new to ISE this year.

This year, we'll be encouraging visitors to explore the city of Barcelona with a number of activities happening during the week and into the weekend, using the power of AV, systems integration and lighting. Llum BCN, festival of the light arts, takes place from February 4-6 and we are delighted to be headline sponsors, so explore the city and be inspired!

In what ways has ISE evolved?

Over the years, ISE has grown in both physical space and in its offerings to visitors. We've been focusing on expanding our audience to include various market sectors such as live events, venues, education, retail, and many more, to make ISE an inclusive experience.

We're delighted to offer a comprehensive four-day conference program running alongside the show, including the highly anticipated Live Events Summit. The conference will explore trends in the live events market that are driving the deployment of both existing and new technologies – stay tuned for more information coming soon.

This year conferences will take place away from the bustle of the show floor. Located in two CC Suite rooms above the show floor, the new space provides a dedicated area for absorbing high-impact panel discussions and thought-provoking keynotes.

How is ISE appealing to or reaching out to themed entertainment professionals?

The professional AV industry encompasses the solutions needed to create immersive, integrated experiences, and this is a cornerstone of the visitor attractions industry. Audio, video and

lighting play an increasingly important role in attracting and delighting visitors, helping deliver unforgettable experiences. Increasingly, venues are looking to engage with audience members via their personal devices during their visit, as well as offering content before and afterwards through apps and streaming media. At ISE professionals will find all the technology that enables these experiences.

How can InPark readers find out more?

For FREE registration to ISE visit iseurope.org and book your place with our special code: **inparkmag**.

Hotel accommodations can be booked at isehotels.bnetwork.com.

Make sure you are following ISE on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook and use the hashtag #ISE2023 for up-to-the-minute news, event highlights and exciting announcements.

Integrated Systems Europe, ISE 2023, will take place at the Fira Barcelona Gran Vía on January 31 – February 3, 2023. For more information, please visit iseurope.org

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Attendees walk the aisles at the 2022 Global Gaming Expo (G2E).

Meetings are back!

InPark makes the Vegas 2022 fall conference rounds

by Martin Palicki

Las Vegas played host to three industry conferences in October. InPark publisher Martin Palicki reports from Nevada.

WWA

Our first stop on the Vegas business circuit is for the World Waterpark Association's (WWA) annual show for professionals and vendors in the waterpark industry. Held October 4-7 at the recently opened Caesars Forum convention center behind the Strip's Harrah's resort, vendors from around the world met with leaders from waterparks large and small, from destination parks to compact municipal facilities.

One of the major issues of particular concern to the industry is the ongoing labor shortage. Finding lifeguards remains challenging for many locations, as the typical teenage or young adult worker has either opted for a different job or, in some affluent areas, chosen not to work at all.

While near-term solutions appear in short supply, many believe the labor market will return to more typical patterns in the not-too-distant future.

WWA's robust education program included a keynote speech from motivational speaker Punam Mathur. In a recent interview with InPark, Baha Bay general manager Melissa Lockwood said the WWA conference sessions provide "a great opportunity to bring valuable information back to your organization and learn what's new and upcoming in the industry."

For networking, the trade show floor hosted daily lunches for all attendees, an evening happy hour on Wednesday, and the annual reunion pool party that took place this year at Cowabunga Bay in nearby Henderson, Nevada. Vegas showgirls, an Elvis impersonator and no-money gaming table games entertained guests who gathered around the park's large wave pool.

Tours of the facility, which opened in 2014, took place throughout the evening. An impressive fireworks display over the pool capped off the evening before guests boarded shuttles back to the convention center.

WWA's 2023 event is scheduled for October 24-27 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

G2E

A few days later and just around the corner at the Venetian Expo center, the Global Gaming Expo (G2E) brought together the gambling industry for its annual conference and trade show October 10-13. The expo featured everything from the latest slot machines to bar stools and cash counters. Similar to the attractions space, some slot machines make use of Intellectual Property in their game selections, like Wheel of Fortune, Wizard of Oz and Willy Wonka. The utilization of IP seems to be diminishing, though it's not going away.

There are a couple of trends affecting the gaming market that also are impacting attractions. Cashless systems at casinos are gaining popularity. Similar to how some parks have reduced or eliminated cash transactions, casinos are moving in the direction of virtual accounts that guests can use to access funds for gambling, both at slots and at table games.

Casinos also face increasing competition from online gaming. Much like attractions continually work to attract guests away from in-home entertainment, casinos must work to keep the attention of gamblers who might find it easier to play online. Though major operators like MGM are also positioning themselves to take advantage of that market, gaming at home doesn't deliver the food, entertainment and other ancillary revenue that are a big part of a resort casino's balance sheet.

G2E returns to Las Vegas October 9-12, 2023.

SATE

After a two-year hiatus in North America, the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) SATE conference returned to the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) campus October 13-15. The event started with an evening mixer at the University's School of Hospitality building. Food stations and entertainment



TEA's NextGen GibGab and educational event during SATE 2022

were placed throughout the building, encouraging guests to circulate around and explore. Casino table games were available for lessons while a working test kitchen was home to an impressive pasta station and dining table. An expansive patio overlooked the colorful lights of the Las Vegas Strip.

The two-day conference, co-chaired by Shannon Martin and Greg Senner, covered a variety of topics, from the metaverse and evolving technologies to staffing shortages and effective storytelling. A panel celebrating the latest group of TEA Masters ended the first day of sessions.

An evening mixer at Illuminarium capped off the night. The immersive entertainment facility's leadership participated in a short panel talking about the technology and design involved in creating Illuminarium.

Network opportunities continued during scheduled conference breaks and two outdoor lunches. To help facilitate, event emcee Brett Jackson encouraged attendees to find secret "witnesses" during each break, exchange business cards and get information to help solve a campus mystery: the abduction of UNLV's campus wolf, Beaugard.

The formal SATE event ended with a presentation on the new MSG Sphere currently under construction in Las Vegas. The giant concert and special event venue will essentially be covered in giant domed LED screens inside and out when it opens, serving as a model for future MSG Spheres around the world.

On Saturday, TEA's NextGen group organized a GibGab event helping those new to the industry connect with vendors and potentially line up internships or jobs. A series of conversations with the TEA Masters and other industry leaders rounded out the day.

A location and dates have not yet been announced for SATE 2023. • • •



ProSlide's booth at the 2022 WWA trade show



Paul Kent moderates a discussion with Nicole Srock.Stanley and Fri Forjindam during the 2022 MAPIC and LeisurUp event in Cannes, France.

A buyer's market

MAPIC and LeisurUp address retail and leisure trends at annual conference in France

by Martin Palicki

There's a fundamental shift in philosophy that occurs when a retail development decides to integrate leisure, explained Nicole Srock.Stanley, CEO and Co-founder of dan Pearlman Group during an educational session at the recent MAPIC and LeisurUp conference in Cannes, France. The destination, she said, changes from a house of brands to a branded house. Instead of assembling a roster of tenants, developers are ultimately curating a space and a collection of experiences.

The panel, one of two organized by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), featured Mycotoo's Chief Development Officer Fri Forjindam alongside Srock.Stanley and moderator Paul Kent, Vice President of Global Business Development at

Mad Systems. "Education sessions bring together TEA members and retail professionals for the benefit of all as we explore emerging trends in retail and leisure integration," said Kent.

In fact, addressing challenges faced by retail and leisure partnerships was a key theme throughout the conference, which took place November 29-December 1, 2022.

An entire education and networking event on that topic was held on Wednesday, bringing together leisure vendors and retail developers at roundtables for presentation and discussion (full disclosure: I was a table moderator for this event). The challenges are formidable. Leisure margins are tighter than retail so they



Attendees gather during a special networking discussion to talk about challenges facing the leisure and retail industries during MAPIC and LeisurUp.

aren't able to pay the same rent rates. Retrofitting existing spaces can be difficult as the infrastructure to support a leisure attraction is more demanding than for a storefront. Retail developers are typically risk averse and tend to stick with proven products rather than investing in new concepts.

But the benefits are just as evident. Retail outlets, faced with competition from the internet and a generation of consumers who prefer experiences over things, turn to leisure attractions to increase traffic and, hopefully, retail sales.

The numbers are there to support that. During his keynote presentation, Michael Collins, Senior Partner at Leisure Development Partners, highlighted that typical retail catchment is within a 15-minute drive. Leisure catchment, by comparison, expands that to 60-minutes or more. Leisure also extends length of stay, noted Collins, pointing out that 2.5-3 hours of leisure time is a sweet spot that still leaves visitors time for shopping.

In addition to education and networking tracks, a trade show hall brought together various players. The upper level was home mostly to property developers, scouting for retail brands and tenants. The lower level largely featured leisure vendors, eager to bring attractions into the retail space.

The event was full of examples of how retail and leisure can work. With very few retail developers interested in operating attractions, manufacturers need to consider options for accessing this potentially lucrative market. As one solution, FlowRider (a wave surfing attraction that's part of WhiteWater) shared a booth with SurfHouse, an operator of standalone surfing venues. "The

partnership is a natural, organic fit for us," said Andrew Yathon, VP of Business Development at FlowRider. SurfHouse expands their venues, WhiteWater sells more FlowRiders and retail spaces have a new attraction that drives visitation.

As evidenced by the recent boom in branded attractions, integrating IP can also help attract visitors. Philippe Glorieux, Business Director for The Smurfs came to MAPIC in order to "help make emotional connections between The Smurfs and people through attractions and experiences." The Stranger Things pop-up traveling experience (developed by Netflix, Fever and Mycotoo) was frequently cited as a successful contemporary example of how IP-branded leisure can activate otherwise vacant spaces.

"I'm really excited by the momentum on the show floor," said Mycotoo's Forjindam. "Organizations and developers are looking to expand their portfolio – which is fantastic – but we also have to make sure we ask the questions that lead to more sustainability."

Along that front, MAPIC and LeisurUp touted the event's commitment to conservation, with recycled/reused booth equipment, local service providers and seasonal food. But it's not clear to what extent the larger industry has committed to long-term sustainable consumption, or what Forjindam refers to as "seeking out purpose and not just product."

MAPIC and LeisurUp welcomed over 5,000 participants to the 2022 event. The 2023 iteration returns to Cannes in 2023 (dates to be announced). •••



Craig Herman talks about PEANUTS licensing in the attractions space

interview by Judith Rubin

Craig Herman is a specialist in cross-marketing initiatives for brands and intellectual property (IP). Since 2013, as VP Global Brand Experiences & Publishing at Peanuts Worldwide LLC, he's been using that superpower to help create new adventures that feature Snoopy, Charlie Brown, Lucy, Woodstock, the kite-eating tree, the Great Pumpkin and the rest of the Peanuts gang.

In the attractions and LBE space, Herman's work has helped license many new Peanuts-themed collaborations around the world, bringing its characters, stories and themes to new platforms and audiences in a variety of outdoor and indoor settings. Peanuts will mark its 75th anniversary in 2025, and the brand remains globally beloved.

InPark editor Judith Rubin interviewed Herman about the special appeal of Peanuts in attractions and to get a taste of what's next. He was preparing for IAAPA Expo 2022 in Orlando, a trade show he attends regularly to meet with clients and partners.



Craig Herman

You have been building out the Peanuts IP in the attractions and LBE space for 10 years now. How do these projects and partnerships come about?

I work very closely with a core network of developers and operators to help identify quality experience and partnerships to bring Peanuts to a wide audience. We are constantly on the lookout for exciting new attractions.

Peanuts carefully evaluates each potential project to ensure that the heart of the brand is well represented, including core storytelling components, solid character representation, and quality family entertainment.

What's new on the Peanuts horizon?

This is an exciting time as we continue to build on a solid base of quality experiences to introduce new and existing fans to the world of Peanuts.

This past summer, Peanuts and Kilburn Media proudly opened The Search for Snoopy Hawaii – a 30,000 square foot, immersive experience where guests are invited to step into the iconic world of Peanuts featuring Astronaut Snoopy, Beagle Scouts, Charlie Brown's neighborhood, the Great Pumpkin patch, and much more. Fan engagement is key to a quality experience, and at Search for Snoopy guests are enlisted to help Charlie Brown find Snoopy through a series of clues cleverly "hidden" in each area throughout the experience, adding an element of surprise and delight.

And during IAAPA Expo 2022, Peanuts and acclaimed Montreal production company Monlove announced a unique, new project that is genuinely out-of-this-world: All Systems Are Go, at Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex's Universe Theater, opening Spring 2023. The 20-minute experience will feature the Peanuts gang appearing as four- to five-foot tall, articulated characters operated by puppeteers. The characters will narrate the iconic history of NASA, the Artemis missions, and future plans in an educational and imaginatively enlightening way for the whole family.

Applying the brand globally, are there particular aspects, themes or characters that resonate more than others from one region to another?

Snoopy leads the gang as the most recognizable character across Asia, resonating with kids and adults. The Asia Pacific region is a big focus for Peanuts. In Japan, we've expanded hospitality with cafes and the popular Peanuts-themed boutique hotel in Kobe.

Are there new platforms that you're targeting or considering for Snoopy and the gang?

We continue to explore opportunities in Location-Based Entertainment (LBE) that deliver quality family experiences. We keep an eye out for opportunities to complement our best-in-class consumer products program and exclusive streaming partnership with Apple TV+.

Coming soon: Peanuts and Rockefeller Productions will open a touring, mini-golf attraction in early 2023; stay tuned for more details!

In Thailand, Peanuts partnered with Index Creative on a pop-up immersive experience opened in July themed to space travel, demonstrating how the partners can use popular storylines from the strip to create exciting interactive attractions for all ages.

The immersive experience space is an exciting visual and textural medium with great potential to apply Peanuts characters to quality family experiences. As we get closer to our 75th anniversary in 2025, we are exploring immersive formats, as well as expanding into hospitality.

Why does the Peanuts IP lend itself so well to attractions?

Families are looking for quality experiences, and the universal appeal of Peanuts hits the mark across all demographics. During the pandemic, consumers turned to Peanuts for comfort and familiarity, proving the lasting appeal of beloved characters.

Tell us about Peanuts holiday and seasonal celebrations, and theme park activations.

Peanuts is the perfect fit for making the holidays bright and cheerful, on TV, on Broadway, in live experiences and in the parks.

For more than 50 years, families have enjoyed the timeless themes of the beloved family holiday TV classics, It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown, A Charlie Brown Christmas, and A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving.

"A Charlie Brown Christmas, Live," the popular touring production, will once again begin performances in more than 40 cities this November, and will include a stop in NYC on Broadway for the second year running. In addition, Marriott's Gaylord properties brought back the full-scale production of their ICE Experience (after a two-year, pandemic hiatus) featuring A Charlie Brown Christmas at their new Denver location in November 2022. In Chicago, Centennial Mall presented the "Charlie Brown Christmas/Santa's Village" experience.



The Search for Snoopy: A Peanuts Adventure.
Photo courtesy of Peanuts Worldwide

Cedar Fair continues to be our exclusive theme park partner in North America, and every year their Peanuts programming includes a host of in-park, seasonal activations – in addition to themed lands, stage shows, and character meet-and-greets. The new Peanuts retail expansion at Cedar Point which opened in June was also a resounding hit.

Snoopy and Universal Studios Japan (USJ) in Osaka have also enjoyed a longtime partnership since USJ opened in 2001.

How would you describe your role in the Peanuts project process – from the initial conversation/idea, through design and development, to opening day and beyond?

We are a small team and so I play a very central role in the sales process, straight on through to creative brainstorming, development, and on through coordinating marketing and PR strategy for opening. With a deep knowledge of story arcs from the 17,500 classic comic strips, my design and creative partners at Creative Associates (Schulz studio in Santa Rosa) work with the partner to develop a quality attraction that captures the essence of Peanuts and the beloved characters.

As the network of projects grows, how do you maintain quality control, brand authenticity, and relevance?

We carefully evaluate all aspects of the design process to ensure consistency and quality.

Charles Schulz covered a wide range of topics in the 50 years he wrote the comic strip; touching on everything from sports to space travel, all through one group of neighborhood kids and, of course, the beloved beagle Snoopy. We often go back to the strip to build out new initiatives, such as Take Care with Peanuts which, among other things, incorporates environmental consciousness that Schulz included in strips he wrote 30+ years ago. The world and cast of characters that Schulz wrote also encapsulates the full spectrum of human emotions: optimism, anxiety, unrequited love, the excitement of new opportunities, and everything in between. Those moments of humanity keep the brand just as relevant today as when the first strip was published in 1950.

Who do you like to hear from and meet with regarding potential future business licensing Peanuts?

I am open to meeting potential partners in the hospitality, FEC and attractions sector, but also developers with knowledge of future projects that would be ideal for a family brand like Peanuts. Please reach out by email to set up a meeting: craig.herman@peanuts.com. •••



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Aqua Nick RainFortress with green Nickelodeon 'slime.' All images courtesy of WhiteWater

Come for the water, stay for the play

WhiteWater leads with elements of fun

by Gene Jeffers

Play matters

Chances are that at any given time somewhere on the planet people are enjoying playing with water and gravity at a WhiteWater attraction. Teenagers and adults rocket down high velocity slides and flumes and surf indoors. Younger kids wade through interactives, sprays and waterfalls. Parents and grandparents join in the fun or watch excitedly from the sidelines. When everyone has a good time, families come for fun, stay the day and promise to return.

Make no mistake. For WhiteWater, creating aquatic amenities has always been serious business. WhiteWater applies scientific research and works



AquaFortress 1800 monopole design



AquaPlay 1750 with Life Floor, Jungle Bay Waterpark, Dubai, UAE

with child psychologists to understand how people of all ages play and to find new ways of catering to guest desires. They've identified four main types of players: challengers, adventurers, socializers, and dreamers.

Challengers are competitive and want to master a game or a sport, score points, win at something while taking some risks. The journey through the attraction is as important as the destination to the adventurers, who seek novelty and different experiences every time. Socializers enjoy shared experiences, demand quality time spent with friends and family. Dreamers want to let their imaginations soar, want to feel they are in another place or time.

"Play is important for kids, important for whole families," says Hamid Babaki, whose WhiteWater title is Senior Designer, Play Structure. "We focus on creating play opportunities for each of the four types of players, on designs and approaches that allow each guest to get the most fun out of their time while ensuring the operator's needs are met."

Created for play, built for safety

With an expert in-house design team, WhiteWater is an established leader in designing water attractions based on client expectations, safety, throughput, and sustainability. Water attractions face stiff competition in the field, as visitor expectations continue to grow every year. Success comes when an attraction can lure guests in and keep them coming back for more. "We start with the client's needs, what they wish to offer

their guests," says Zlatko Muminovic, Supervisor, Interactive Play Engineering & Theming at WhiteWater. "We then design and build to maximize engagement opportunities for each of the four types of players and that reinforce the client's brand or story. Everything is oriented around ensuring every child and every family can have fun. Appealing to all ages and abilities is key to success."

For operators looking to get their feet wet for the first time in the water attraction business, WhiteWater's cost-effective Ready-to-Play structures offer plenty of fun and play opportunities to keep entire families engaged all day. Offering three different themes – beach, tropical, or pirate – and five different sizes, this pre-designed product line has the shortest lead time and fastest commissioning, and features highly interactive elements with classic theming.

More demanding brand challenges may require entirely new, bespoke approaches. "Some requests are more special than others, seeking to put guests right in the middle of an IP. One of the most challenging requests came from the new Aqua Nick at Nickelodeon Hotels and Resorts Riviera Maya," says Kelly Williams, Manager, Product Systems, WhiteWater. "To provide some brand authenticity, they wanted geysers and everything else to mimic Nickelodeon's famous green slime." This unique collaboration was a success. "To watch guests' faces when the green 'slime' hit them, just like on the TV shows, was priceless," says Williams.

Obviously the further you move from a known and tested solution, the greater the risks and associated costs. That's where WhiteWater's solid track record helps build trust. The company has decades of success designing and testing new products and approaches, always with safety, durability and futureproofing in mind. They apply experience and science, and use motion simulation software to understand how a ride will move before it is built. Computer simulations are then constantly checked against reality by strapping accelerometers on an engineer and launching them through the ride once built. Years of real-world data has refined the system and helped to improve the accuracy of its predictions, ultimately improving the design and engineering for each of their products.

The catalog grows with AquaFortress

Launched at IAAPA Expo 2022, AquaFortress is a multi-level play structure system that appeals to all four play types by offering adventure, communal experiences, exploration, and competitive opportunities. Easily modified, upgraded or rethemed to suit owner desires, it is heavily futureproofed due to its galvanized carbon steel construction. With a minimal monopole design, AquaFortress preserves ample, open ground space ideal for circulation and ground-based interactive toys. These ground-based toys improve inclusion for those with mobility issues but also enable parents to interact with their children without getting soaked. Using some of WhiteWater's

iconic inner tube slides, AquaFortress serves as a full-featured, starter waterpark with a variety of experiences for all different types of players and all age groups from young toddlers all the way up to adults.

AquaFortress expands and complements a broad range of impressive offerings. Sized to fit any footprint, budget, and capacity requirement, the AquaPlay line delivers high play value with plenty of interactive play features, water sprays, and water slides. Clients can request custom theming or choose from a library of immersive themes.

The RainFortress line comes in three models, each bigger than the last. Scalable in design, operators can start small and expand to a larger model later. RainFortress installations feature a mix of kids' slides and more thrilling rides, plus over 100 water play features.

Taking AquaPlay multi-level water play structures to the next level, FusionFortress adds an even greater range of award-winning water slides for all levels of players. A tightly organized waterpark in a compact footprint, this line's multiple levels of fun will engage entire families for hours.

Playing in the water has, perhaps, never been so much fun. Players explore, slide and splash, take imaginative journeys and



FusionFortress 15, Chimelong Water Park, Guangzhou, China



FusionFortress 10, OCT Xiangyang, Xiangyang, China

make new friends. With no queue lines, these multi-level water play structures and splash pads feature interactive fun and stress-free adventures for guests of all ages. Each product provides a different mix of ways to play.

Building your future aquatic play

Adoption of WhiteWater's Aquatic Play is increasing around the world as venue operators realize how central the act of play is to the waterpark experience. Aquatic Play structures act as meeting and gathering points, bringing families together through play, increasing their enjoyment and extending their stay in the park. Today's product offerings are built on a foundation of experience, creativity, customer service and the love of play.

Founded in 1980, and today with more than 400 employees, WhiteWater has installed more than 5,000 innovative and entertaining aquatic attractions for partners around the world. With an "attitude is everything" approach to hiring, WhiteWater has assembled an army of "can do" teams focused on providing exceptional design and service while offering outstanding customer support to clients. The team works to always maintain its intense focus on the fundamentals of safety, durability, adaptability, creativity and futureproofing. From the most experienced veterans to the newest recruits, this cadre of dedicated people make the WhiteWater difference.

"We speak of ourselves as a family, not only because we are a family business, but because so many individuals stay at WhiteWater for years and decades," says Babaki. "We've all joined this amazing team of creators, engineers and fabricators for different reasons, but we all have one primary purpose: we are serious about the business of play."

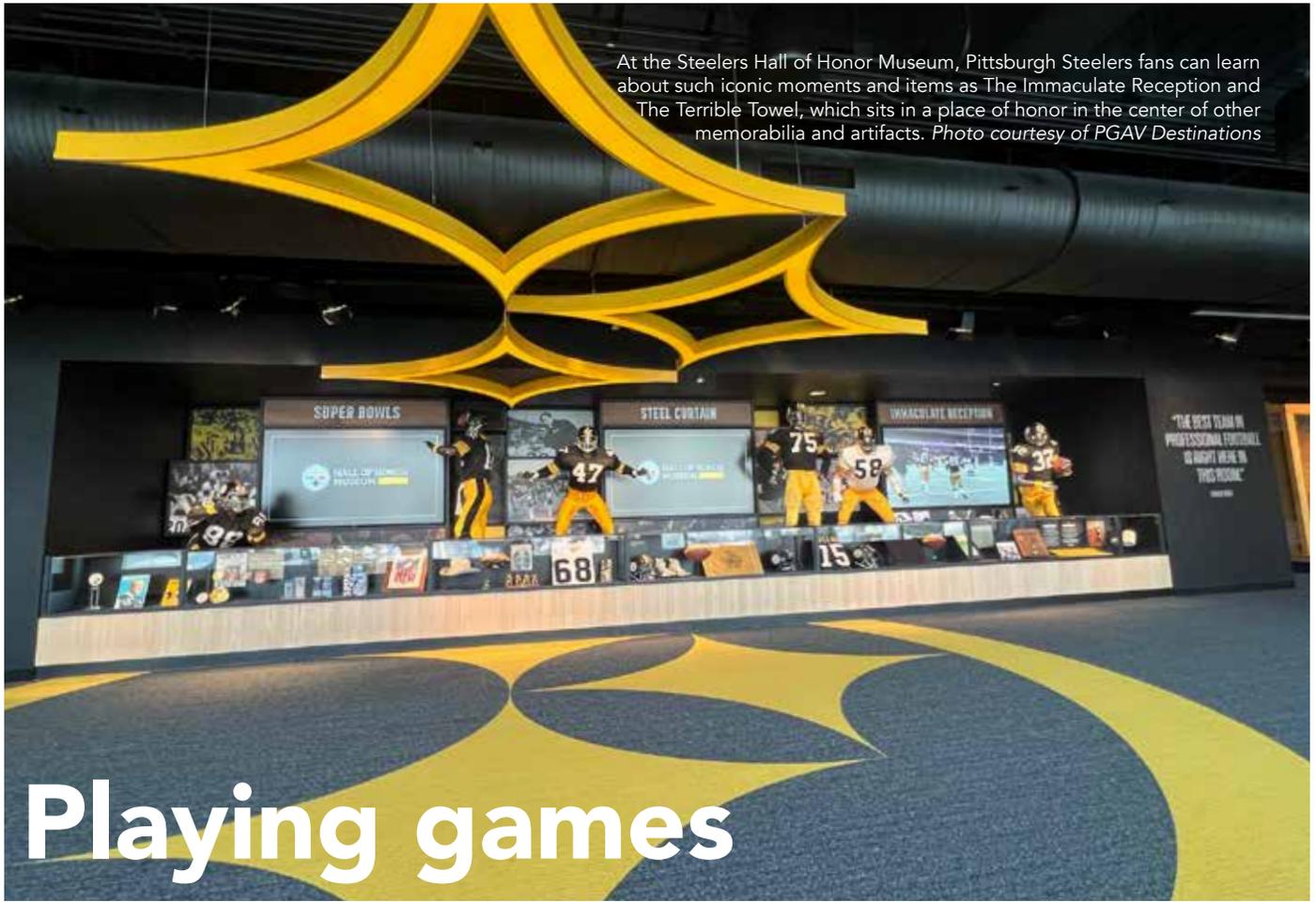
From park planning and design to manufacturing, installation and maintenance, WhiteWater provides comprehensive service solutions to transform park visions into vibrant realities. Whether designing and developing a new park, or maintaining or upgrading an existing one, the firm is dedicated to creating world-class play-inducing amusement, theme, and water park attractions.

To learn more about the benefits of Aquatic Play or get ahold of the WhiteWater team, visit www.whitewaterwest.com/chooseplay . . .



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 time with their two daughters, son-in-law and three grandchildren.



Playing games

The new generation of sports fan experiences

interviews by Joe Kleiman

Sports is a trillion-dollar, worldwide industry and fan engagement plays an ever-increasing role. It plays out through interactive zones at stadiums and arenas, modernized halls of fame and museums, new game broadcast platforms, and even branded themed lands and theme parks. This spells opportunity for themed entertainment providers, such as the two featured here, PGAV Destinations and Cosm. Headquartered in St. Louis, with additional offices in Orlando, PGAV Destinations is a design studio serving the global industry for 55 years, known for its work with theme parks, waterparks, zoos and aquariums, museums, and brand experiences. New projects include halls of fame for baseball's St. Louis Cardinals (2014) and football's Pittsburgh Steelers (2022). Under the Cosm umbrella is 50+ years' experience in visualization and media systems. The Cosm Experience Center at the company's headquarters in Salt Lake City, features its premium product, the CX Display powered by CX Engine. In addition to serving specialty cinema markets, Cosm will soon open its own branded venues in major cities, where the programming will include live-streamed sporting events. – J.K.

PGAV Destinations

Diane Porthouse Lochner, Vice President

"Every institution, team, brand, has a unique story."

Is there a template when creating a hall of fame museum?

We do not use a template when designing our experiences. Every institution, team, brand, has a unique story. Conversations with team ownership define the goals and objectives of the project. Leadership is humble about self-promotion but very focused on the players and fans. In the discovery phase, we research the history, stories, people, and artifacts that define the team. We do not just consider the design for the super fans. We also design for those who may not know as much about the sport or team.

How have media and interactives enhanced the hall of fame experience?

Clips from iconic broadcasts are a part of every team's history. Including these media moments allows fans to reconnect,

remember the moment, share where they were on that game day. There are many very recognizable plays that can reach a broader audience, such as the “immaculate reception.” [In a 1972 playoff game, Steelers quarterback Terry Bradshaw threw a pass in the final 30 seconds of the game. While it has long been debated if the ball hit the helmet of a member of the opposing team or the hands of the intended Pittsburgh receiver, Pittsburgh’s Franco Harris caught the ball inches above the ground, securing the win.] We always consider the best tools to communicate information to the visitor. Digital interactives can allow for deeper dives based on visitor interest. Physical interactives create opportunities to communicate what it takes or what it might feel like to be a player.

At the Cardinals Hall of Fame and Museum, we engage audiences by allowing them to hold bats formerly used by actual players. Visitors stand at the plate for their very own photo op in front of the stand full of fans. Museum visitors can even try on a World Series championship ring. It is a joy watching families discuss their favorite players, selecting the bat of choice and recalling great Cardinal memories.

Because space may vary, how do you control traffic flow?

Just as we want to guide the guest through the experience, creating an engaging environment, we also recognize that we do not want to create barriers or frustration for guests. We consider dwell times and capacity for the individual exhibits and the entire experience. We look at the best way to present an activity, considering what is the best-suited medium and how long a fan might engage with the exhibit.

Working within physical constraints is a challenge that spurs our creativity. For the San Francisco Giants, we created a permanent exhibit in 2018, transforming a small boiler room in a back-of-house area at Oracle Park. Called The Vault, the exhibit area presented a wonderful collection of artifacts, including one of Willy Mays’s jerseys. The first point of interaction for visitors is through the Willy Mays gate, then to a long hallway before

arriving at the Vault. We created a series of interpretive graphics using the hallways as the canvas to tell the key moments in Giants history. The timelines create preparation for the visitor, so they are ready to fully engage once arriving at the Vault. At the Cardinals Hall of Fame and Museum, we were given a tenant space within a multi-use building at Ballpark Village. Using the important and unique history of the team’s stadiums, we created a visitor flow organized around galleries highlighting the years at each stadium.

Do you work with the teams on developing stadium tours?

PGAV Destinations has been involved with creating content and drafting scripts for various tours. We also consider how additional experiences work together with the visit to the halls of fame. At Acrisure Stadium in Pittsburgh, visitors tour the FedEx Great Hall and take the stadium tour. In St. Louis, the Cardinals Hall of Fame is adjacent to the ballpark. Visitors have the opportunity to get up close to player statues, take a tour of Busch Stadium and, of course, visit the Authentics shop just below the Museum to purchase their own piece of history.

There is a museum element to the halls of fame. What museum practices are employed?

Our extensive museum work helps inform the solutions for halls of fame. The collections, artifacts, and archival material are important to care for and preserve for generations to come. We understand the environmental effects on sensitive objects and collection materials. In St. Louis, we were very involved in selecting display cases to control temperature and humidity as well as considering security for the contents of the cases. It is imperative to preserve the collections.

Branding is an important differentiator for teams. How is it integrated into a hall of fame?

Each team has a robust set of brand standards and guidelines. We take the time to understand the parameters and the reasons



At the Steelers Hall of Honor Museum, fans can compare their stats and abilities to Steelers players. Photo courtesy of PGAV Destinations



Visitors to the Cardinals Hall of Fame and Museum have the opportunity to hold a bat once used by actual players in a photo op. The interactive directly links fans with players from throughout the team's history. Photo courtesy of PGAV Destinations

for the guidelines. At times we are able to push the use of the elements a bit, but always respect the standards.

For the Steelers project, we used the iconic hypocycloid and integrated the forms into the patterning for the space. It is a prominent element throughout the exhibit space, just as it is prominent in the Steelers identity. Showing the evolution of a team's logo and uniforms is also an important part of their brand and story, and one with which fans connect.

Besides field sports, what other sports activities has PGAV Destinations designed for?

We've had a long relationship with Anheuser-Busch and have worked with AB InBev in various stadiums, creating fan amenities. At the Daytona International Speedway, we've designed branded areas based on specific AB brands. The Busch experience at Daytona is a great place to relax before the race. Its experience is connected with the brand, the cars, and its drivers. Guests enjoy food and beverages, relax in Adirondack chairs, and enjoy activities like cornhole as they wait for the event to start.

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Cosm

Devin Poolman, CTO

"Ninety-nine percent of fans never get to watch a home game. We can bring them courtside."

Cosm is presenting sports broadcasts at 8K in both VR and on LED domes. How do both formats complement each other?

VR is the existing way to deliver immersive experiences when we're talking sports experiences. It allows you to be on the field on the side of the pitch during a ballgame. Our goal, whether via VR or in an LED dome, is to deliver the same type of immersive experience as the attractions industry or a planetarium. We are bringing people together in a social setting.

On the VR headset side, there is a true feeling of presence, but it's still undergoing a technical evolution. The promise is there. VR allows different viewers to watch a sports match together on opposite sides of the world, creating connectivity in virtual space. VR is becoming more and more a replacement experience for live events. The distribution to our entertainment venues with Cosm technology, with the CX Display and CX Engine, enables us to bring sports as a full environment. Because our screens are made from LED, we're able to recreate the natural light of being on the field. This is important because it makes you feel as if you're actually on the field, and not just looking at the field. We can use the same streaming mediums for both platforms.

In VR, do you broadcast in 360, or do you use windows?

We have done 360 broadcasts, but we focus on a 180-degree viewing area, which also complements our LED domes. For



the most part, the experience is in front of you. We can put our viewers in a virtual suite that simulates a VIP box in a sports venue. In VR, we can broadcast in both stereo and monoscopic. Monoscopic is preferable, since stereo is limited at depths. We've found that a distance of 10 to 30 feet is the sweet spot that's ideal for stereo capture, so it works better with combat sports (boxing, MMA, martial arts) than field sports. Producing for VR needs a minimum 4K capture, but 8K is so important, because it feels more like 16:9 resolution. We do our production work both in-house and with partners in the industry. We've moved away from specialized equipment. We use standard high definition cameras with fisheye lenses and we often work with broadcast crews.



Photos (this page): Cosm entertainment venues are opening soon in Los Angeles and Dallas. *Courtesy of Cosm*



Fans are immersed in the action of beach volleyball during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics on the giant dome screen at the Cosm Experience Center. *Photo courtesy of Cosm*

At the Cosm entertainment venues opening soon in Los Angeles and Dallas, how will the lobbies and other public areas integrate with the programming on the domes?

At the Cosm venues, these areas will be used for secondary experiences. The chamber, with the LED dome, will show the main game. Other areas will be shown on the screens in the secondary areas. These will be more traditional broadcasts. In sports, there's always more than one great event going on at the same time.

Tell us about Cosm's relationship with Comcast and NBC Sports.

The partnership started with Sky, which is owned by Comcast, where we worked on bringing the English Premier League into VR. We put together a production playbook and trained their production team on how to capture for VR. Sky provided the production services. This could be streamed into an app we developed with them. With the Olympics coming along, Comcast was a perfect fit. We delivered 8K resolution with the Beijing Winter Games in 2022.

How have you utilized OMAF technology?

For distribution, we use Omnidirectional Media Format, or OMAF, which takes large areas of view, and then concentrates only on the area where the viewer is looking. A typical VR broadcast requires 80 mbps of bandwidth. OMAF is able to reduce this to only 20 mbps by breaking the image into rectangles. As the head turns, the system is only loading the area the viewer is seeing dynamically.

For capture, we are using fixed camera positions, which we often share with broadcasters. Nine times out of ten, there's no movement of the cameras. There are tricks where subtle motion can be used to avoid motion sickness. We've also tested using a jib camera, which allows for smooth motion. With this, we can create some otherworldly images.

Are you in discussions with individual teams, leagues or other broadcasters?

We are in deep conversations with a number of major leagues and broadcasters. We have worked with ESPN on college football. We'll also be making some big announcements soon. Our VR and LED domes add to the fan experience. Ninety-nine percent of fans never get to watch a home game. We can bring them courtside.

How important are local sports audiences and niche fan communities when determining a location for a Cosm entertainment venue?

We have a number of location factors. Sports interest is high on the list. We also look at creative communities beyond sports, and other immersive entertainment and art as well. It's important to have the right partners with our venues. Sports culture is very important. Soccer is important as a less obvious sport, but there's a fan community that will always show up for the game. Cricket is another underdog. Fans will always show up early in the morning for international games. And there's a large and loyal fanbase for combat sports as well. •••



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Making data work for you

The grass is greener with Connect&GO's next-generation technology

by InPark Editors

Dealing with legacy technology is frustrating. Disconnected systems, outdated functionality and limited data can lead to headaches, high employee turnover, guest experience issues and ultimately, lost revenue potential. Connect&GO believes that there's a better way – that attractions operators deserve a platform that is flexible, easy to deploy and easy to use. They're dedicated to helping operators drive revenue, simplify operations and maximize guest engagement with their next-generation attractions management platform, aptly named Konnect.

Connect&GO has focused on growth this year by raising over \$17 million in Series A funding as well as expanding into the U.S. attractions market with clients like WaTiki Indoor Waterpark in South Dakota and Wahooz Family Fun Zone and Roaring Springs in Idaho. Their team is expanding, doubling in size in the last year, and they have a thorough understanding of the pain points of legacy technology – because they've worked with it.

We heard from two of the company's newest additions, Ted Molter (the former CMO of San Diego Zoo) and Megan Fulbright (previously the Director of Operations at Six Flags Hurricane Harbor), who have seen the effects of outdated technology from an operator side. Ted and Megan take us through the importance of alignment, real-time data, and how a truly integrated platform can benefit both operators and guests.

Ted, you come from marketing, and Megan, you come from operations. Tell us about marketing-operations synergy in relation to the Connect&GO all-in-one management platform.

Ted Molter: I like to say that silos are for grains, not for brains. In many attractions, it's difficult for staff to access the information they need to deliver a seamless experience, which



Ted Molter, Senior Business Development Director

leads to disconnects between different departments and even in the guest experience. Our all-in-one management platform is a completely integrated system that allows parks to get in front of that issue. It gives operators instant access to guest and transactional data, all in real-time. This gets all staff to the table, where they can work together to maximize park profits and the guest experience.



Images courtesy of Connect&GO

What benefits does that provide for operators?

Megan Fulbright: Having a system that is truly integrated can help resolve a lot of pain points and frustration. For example, if your eCommerce platform doesn't speak with your point-of-sale software – there's a lot of confusion that can happen with your ticketing and reporting. A platform like Konnect is a game-changer. It's a one-stop shop for optimizing revenue, simplifying ticketing, processing refunds, managing front-gate operations, helping keep guests happy, and more. This can help you create more efficient processes for selling and transacting across your facility, which leads to less staff frustration, shorter lines, etc. Ultimately you spend less time on tedious processes, which allows you to spend more time in areas of your business that create more value. I like to say that it is "tear-free" – in other words, providing an opportunity – to the operator and to the guests – not to shed tears!



Megan Fulbright, Senior Business Development Director

Molter: There are lots of opportunities to create efficiencies using the Connect&GO platform. For example, guests can sign waivers online before their visit and they can load up their virtual wallet with cashless funds in advance. We also integrate with a lot of self-service technology like Alvarado turnstiles and Olea kiosks, which can really help ease the burden on staff.

What does this look like from the guest perspective?

Molter: With Konnect, the guest-facing component is customized for your customers. What they purchase and what they do are housed in a digital wallet. It's a very intuitive system. The fewer hassles of that kind there are, the fewer hurdles an operator will have with guests.

Fulbright: A guest will never know about Connect&GO. Their experience is that they are on that park's website. From the operator's end, you can see where guests are spending money, not just in one park, but with multiple parks as well. The

guests experience a unified purchasing experience. Konnect's eCommerce features allow guests to book everything they need for their park visit before they arrive, which cuts down on entrance lines.

Can you share a few examples of clients adopting the Connect&GO solution?

Molter: WaTiki is an indoor waterpark that sits in the middle of a complex with four hotels in South Dakota. Guests at the hotels get an RFID band with access to the park. Previously, a lot of people would just walk onto the property; now, with the bands, entrance can be controlled and monitored. That in and of itself has helped to increase revenue significantly. There's also an arcade attached to the waterpark where parents can send their kids with their wristbands to play arcade games. RFID can be read from a number of portals, including plastic and paper wristbands and smartphones.

Granby Zoo is also another great example of a client who has added enhancements to their programming through our technology. Guests can access their digital wallets and interact with kiosks, not just for purchases, but for interpretive experiences at the exhibits, which can include games and video. These activities can be changed over time to provide for repeatability. The zoo collects that data and it becomes part of the CRM.

When you say the grass is greener with a technology partner who "gets it," what does this actually mean to you?

Fulbright: Integrity and being available to our clients is very important. Understanding the guest journey, as well as the operator experience, is really important to us as we establish strong relationships with our clients. We've been committed to upholding that level of service, and it's something that will not change as we grow. We truly know our clients and where they need more help.

Molter: We have a client success team that knows how to exercise courtesy and patience. That's a good thing. They're not reactive, they're responsive.



Access control via RFID wristband at WaTiki

Fulbright: We have found that clients are weary of back-door solutions. We know that nothing's perfect, but when we're fixing a problem, we will fix the problem. We stay on top of the latest technologies. Each team treats our clients as partners, whether they are in leadership, sales, client success or product, it's something that's reflected in our company culture – we all believe in the potential of our platform to revolutionize the attractions industry and we're committed to helping our clients grow together.

Ted, you come from the nonprofit sector. How can Connect&GO help nonprofits meet their mission?

Molter: Just like a commercial operator, a nonprofit operator wants to maximize its revenue. More revenue means more money for its mission. In the case of zoos, this might mean money for conservation initiatives in the wild. When my team at San Diego Zoo rebranded what is now the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, it became something much different than a passive zoo. Your admission was your access to the park and a tram tour. We thought of other things to do that were upcharge experiences and time-based. Guests could go online to pre-purchase, bundle, and set their times. There's no having to check in at a concierge desk. We even added in grace times in case they're running late. Konnect can handle a scenario like that, and guests can add experiences on the spot through our self-serve kiosks.

Fulbright: The Konnect platform can help give operators the intelligence they need to make impactful business decisions. For example, a park could adjust where they place their staff immediately based on ticket sales and at F&B and retail outlets. And because our platform is cloud-based, it allows the operator to view guest traffic from anywhere.

How does the system deal with memberships or, in the case of nonprofits, donor benefits?

Molter: Whether a pass or a membership, the credentials will show in the digital wallet. You can include different discounts for different tiers. All data flows into the CRM in real-time, so the operator will always have first party data. Operations can set up campaigns to remind members when it's time to renew, and members can easily log into their account online and process their renewal themselves. Not every system makes that possible!

Does an operator need to use all the components of the Konnect platform?

Fulbright: It's up to the operator. You can use what you need, and not use what you don't need. Some clients even just start with eCommerce and point-of-sale and decide to add on cashless later. Others use RFID right away. That's the great thing about our platform – it's extremely flexible. Our team is there to help you understand how you can best customize the system to your needs, both now and in the future. • • •

To learn more about Connect&GO, visit www.connectngo.com.

Technology for storytelling

InPark's special showcase of top tier tech

curated by Joe Kleiman



Up to six visitors at a time can experience the Loyalty Oath interactive exhibit installed at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum. *Image courtesy of Mad Systems*

We often hear that the proof of a mature technology is its indistinguishability from magic. Entertainment technology has, in many respects, reached this magic stage. The evidence is all around us in the form of stunningly seamless, immersive experiences that continue to push the boundaries of what was thought possible. Appropriately, today's technology has an early seat at the project development table. It has matured to the point where its sophisticated capabilities influence design, influence the storyteller's approach – where more than ever, manufacturers actively seek out dialogue with designers and storytellers to ensure their products support ever more magical, creative goals and achievements.

Seamless integration of technology into the built environment allows guests to be enveloped by story while taking the delivery apparatus for granted. Pretty much every aspect of a visitor's experience may be technologically driven, starting with online ticketing prior to the visit to interpretive media and wayfinding through apps while within. New products for media design and show control enable faster production times, new forms of interactivity, and more efficient interfacing between products, without compromising the storytelling process.

For this story, we invited leading technology firms from the attractions industry to showcase some top products. Here, Mad Systems, 7thSense, AV Stumpfl, Smart Monkeys, Visual Terrain, Valtech, and Modulo Pi profile tools for interactive media and lighting, media delivery, and show control that enhance the guest experience and help propel storytelling for themed entertainment designers.

Mad Systems: Personalized media delivery

Mad Systems is an award-winning technology company specializing in designing and integrating interactive audiovisual exhibitions. They install systems worldwide, for visitor-based facilities including museums, visitor centers, traveling exhibitions, halls of fame, and more. While well-versed in traditional AV, Mad Systems expanded its capabilities and developed the AV++[®] line of solutions.

AV++[®] includes the patented Personalized Media delivery system. Secure facial recognition technology allows guests to enjoy curated experiences with content tailored to their preferences. Preferences can be set prior to entry to the exhibit



The R-Series 10, part of the 7thSense “Performer Range,” is ready for customers to run their preferred generative engines including Unreal Engine[®], Unity[®], TouchDesigner[®] and Notch[®]. Image courtesy of 7thSense

facility and the personalization follows guests at every exhibit. Customizations can include language preferences, focused content based on age or subject, and accommodate an array of ADA needs. This unique approach to storytelling changes the way guests can take in exhibitions and ensures everyone has a satisfying, personalized experience.

The other pillar of AV++[®] is QuickSilver[®], an IT-based, complete audiovisual system. QuickSilver[®] is rooted in flexibility. The system can be a wired or wireless solution, with servers being co-located within network. This allows the exhibit’s story to be the focus, not the technology. QuickSilver[®]’s flexibility eliminates the need for expensive control rooms which puts money back into the exhibit budget.

QuickSilver[®] was recently installed at venues including the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum (Independence, MO, USA). This remodeled facility features cinematic-level experiences and immersive interactives showcasing incredible historical moments. Because the facility was a federal building, using WiFi was not an option, and a wireless QuickSilver[®] solution was needed. QuickSilver[®] servers were hidden within network in the exhibits and Randomizing Audio Replay units to create non-repeating immersive environments.

Mad Systems is ready to take storytelling to new heights, creating personalized experiences for everyone. With team members based in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and China, they can provide the proper solution to bring the next great story to life.

Mad Systems is looking forward to meeting partners and distributors at ISE 2023. Visit online at www.madsystems.com.

7thSense: Introducing the “Performer Range”

Since 2004, 7thSense has been specializing in pixel generation, processing and management by providing a toolkit of advanced products for storytellers worldwide to fulfill their vision.

At ISE 2023, they’re set to launch a range of new technologies each designed to enable creative teams to tell their media-based stories with the highest standards of quality, reliability, and support. They refer to it as their ‘Performer Range,’ with each new product – R-Series 10, Actor[®], Conjurer[®], Compere[®] and Juggler[®] – being named after roles typically found in a performance environment.

Each of the 7thSense Performer Range of products – including the renowned Delta Media Server and Medialon product ranges – has been designed to work independently. But when combined together, they streamline the workflow which saves time, improves reliability and brings media-based stories to life.

The Medialon product line enables the 7thSense Performer Range of products to be connected to all other AV hardware and software systems within a show, experience, event or installation. It’s the ‘bridge’ between 7thSense and the wider technology environment and experience system – including the virtual world such as game logic in generative media. 7thSense is now compatible with it all.

All performers need somewhere to perform – the new 7thSense R (for ‘Ring’)-Series 10 provides the hardware platform for this.

Unlike previous 7thSense technologies, R-Series 10 is available to purchase from 7thSense as a standalone hardware product –

designed to meet the needs of the most demanding generative projects, virtual production applications and complex media-based attractions. R-Series 10 is ready for customers to run their preferred generative engines including Unreal Engine®, Unity®, TouchDesigner® and Notch®.

The new 7thSense Performer Range enables a workflow that grabs pixels from any external source and presents them just as the ‘storyteller’ – or the team behind the experience – intended.

7thSense will be premiering the rest of their Performer Range on January 31 at ISE 2023 in Barcelona on stand #5E250. Find 7thSense online at www.7thsense.one.

AV Stumpfl x Smart Monkeys: integrating ISAAC API into the PIXERA media server platform at ISE 2023

Since they officially announced their partnership in 2021, both AV Stumpfl and Smart Monkeys, Inc. have continued to deepen the integration of each other’s show control technologies.

The Smart Monkeys ISAAC technology provides a unified programming and front-end client interface for pro-AV installations, a modular platform that lets users monitor and manage all their AV systems from a web browser.

PIXERA control is a distributed integration and control framework that empowers users to seamlessly host new functionalities within the real-time rendering world of PIXERA and to control all aspects of an extended project environment.

Anything users create and integrate in PIXERA control can be distributed across their connected systems and shares itself. The combination of the two systems simplifies the process to realize complex installations and projects that require flexible customization and control options, scheduling solutions, media playout, logging, and user management.

“Including ISAAC and PIXERA in a system design brings a level of adaptability that greatly benefits intricate projects,” says Stephan Villet, Managing Partner at Smart Monkeys, Inc. “It also delivers a deliberate but flexible workflow for both control and content management.”

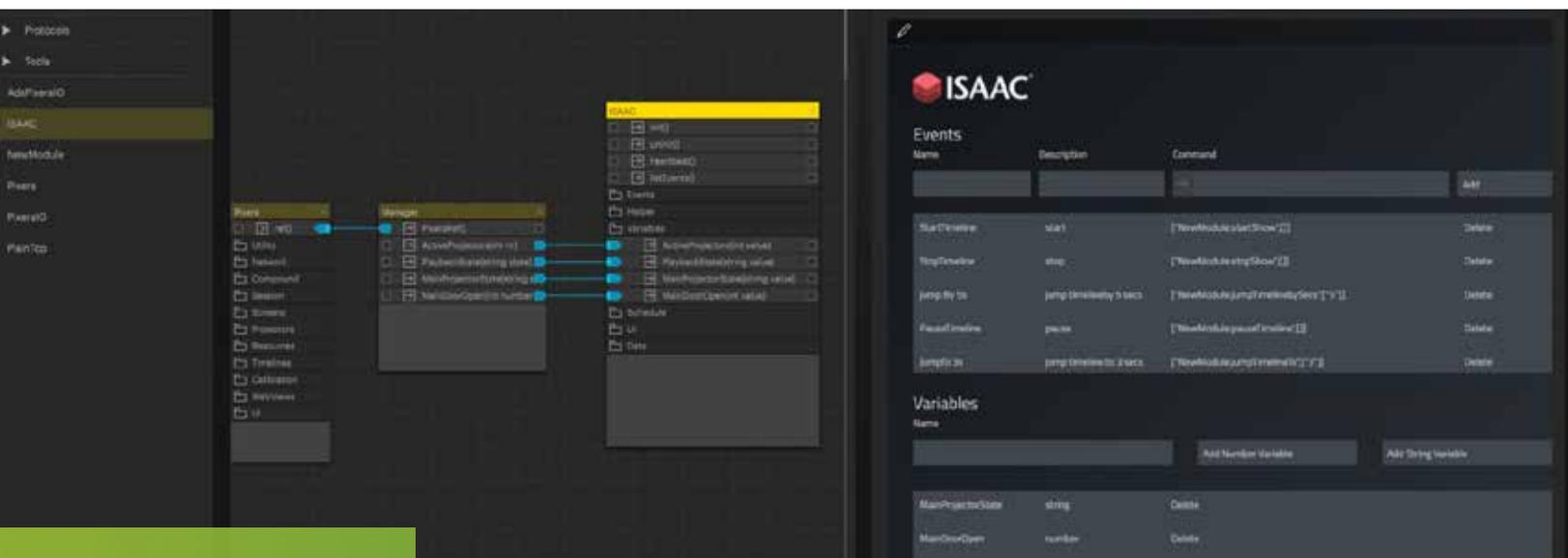
Since the early days of their technology partnership, ISAAC events could be created and synched with the ISAAC calendar directly from within the PIXERA control interface. It is also possible to pass variables to ISAAC and create a UI that can then be displayed right within ISAAC Workspace.

The PIXERA control module has the ability to connect to an ISAAC instance as a playback device. It is also possible to “pull” a schedule from ISAAC. The schedule is then further analyzed, and the content referred to is then accessed directly from the ISAAC instance or a network drive. The module plays the content at the correct point in time using multiple timelines to simulate an endless playback.

In a nutshell, ISAAC’s unmatched, high-level system health and maintenance capabilities can be coupled with fine-grained access to the PIXERA content editing and presentation platform.

The native integration makes for a fast and reliable deployment solution that is uniquely suited for fast-tracked projects.

Recently the combination of the two systems was put to great use as part of multiple installations at some of the world’s major international airports. Online, visit www.isaacplatform.com; <https://pixera.one/en>.



ISAAC’s unmatched, high-level system health and maintenance capabilities can be coupled with fine-grained access to the PIXERA content editing and presentation platform. The native integration makes for a fast and reliable deployment solution that is uniquely suited for fast-tracked projects. Image courtesy of AV Stumpfl & Smart Monkeys



LEFT: Luminous Terrain™ is based upon an interactive lighting art installation that received an IESNA Illumination Award of Merit. It can be installed as a temporary, permanent, or touring attraction, outdoors or indoors. *Concept rendering courtesy of Visual Terrain*

BELOW: Valtech Themed Entertainment Studio crafts unique worlds powered by game engines that put guests at the heart of the experience. *Image courtesy of Valtech Themed Entertainment Studio*

Visual Terrain: telling stories (and having fun) with light

Visual Terrain CEO Lisa Passamonte Green recently collaborated with Beaudry Interactive and Bandit Lites to create Luminous Terrain™, an outdoor, interactive lighting experience that allows both children and adults to experience “living light” that reacts to them, provokes them, illuminates and invites them to play.

Luminous Terrain™ is based upon the companies’ 2013 project, “Rays at River’s Edge Park,” an interactive lighting art installation that occupied a five-acre Great Lawn within an 85-acre green space in the city of Council Bluffs, Iowa with Omaha, Nebraska. Conceptualized by visual artist Dan Corson, Rays received a 2016 IESNA Illumination Award of Merit, and ran continuously from 2013, until heavy flooding damaged the site in 2019.

Working together, the companies developed Luminous Terrain™, leveraging the proven methods of Rays with updated interactive technology, lighting fixtures, and lighting design. Luminous Terrain™ can be installed as a temporary, permanent, or touring attraction. Although designed for an outdoor environment to allow for freer play, an indoor version is planned for places where conditions for outdoor play might be unfavorable.

Luminous Terrain™ empowers guests to be active participants, using their own actions and movements to determine the outcomes, playing individually or together as a group. The experience currently includes a dozen games and activities, with more on the way. In its essence, Luminous Terrain™ is about activation, discovery, empowerment, human interaction and play. Plans are in the works to incorporate interactive media elements with the lighting.

“A great feature of Luminous Terrain™ is its customizability,” says Green. “It can be a series of disconnected (but fun) games, or it can be programmed to tell a story, support STEAM learning, or fit within an existing IP. Thanks to the flexibility of Beaudry Interactive’s technology platform, we are only limited by our imaginations.” Visit <https://luminousterrain.com>.



Valtech Themed Entertainment Studio: Analytics and backends for creative design

Step into a fantastical world that feels real. Beyond the physical textures and iconic architecture, the land is alive – reacting, transforming, remembering. Guests have a role and a goal within this world, and their presence and actions alter their next encounter. It matters that they are here.

It could be a game – collecting achievements, earning points - or it could be an adventure - accepting tasks, meeting characters, and mastering quests. Either way, it is powered by a game engine.

Valtech Themed Entertainment Studio crafts these moments of magic by building custom, backend systems that use logic and rules tailored to meet the specific project’s needs. This software connects individual show control systems to create an interactive world.

Guests are the heart of the design. It’s important to consider the way guests interact and how they can be rewarded or create



At ISE 2023, Modulo Pi will launch Modulo Kinetic V5. This new version of its flagship media server will pave the way for engaging interactive experiences both in permanent installations and live events, and with no coding needed. *Image courtesy Modulo Pi*

surprises based on what they've done to build the inputs into that backend. Although the guest never sees that system, they experience the output: personalized physical effects, leaderboard displays, or mobile app moments to see how they're doing or what they can do next.

The real world changes, and fantasy worlds should too. The power of data analytics utilizes the timing and behavior we track to create tools for our designers to improve the experience after it opens to guests. Understanding the percentage of players who win, how many guests unlock new tasks, or the order that people engage with things feeds back into a better guest experience.

These systems deepen the interaction in the fantastical world. And most of the time, those fantastical worlds are under NDA, so Valtech Themed Entertainment Studio built a prototype interactive game to showcase a simple backend system and track analytics at a live event. Learn about this case study of Beat the Buzz and a more technical dive into what they do here: tes.valtech.com/InPark94

Modulo Pi: Modulo Kinetic paves the way for engaging interactive experiences

Modulo Pi's flagship media server is a fully integrated platform reliable across the complete workflow. Its real-time timelines, embedded live mixer, 3D engine and show control tools are brought within one consistent user-friendly environment. The scalable platform relies on Kinetic Designer, an intuitive user interface with dedicated workstation, connected to one or several V-Node servers.

At ISE 2023, Modulo Pi will launch Modulo Kinetic V5. The new version will pave the way for engaging interactive experiences both in permanent installations and live events, and with no coding needed. The new features

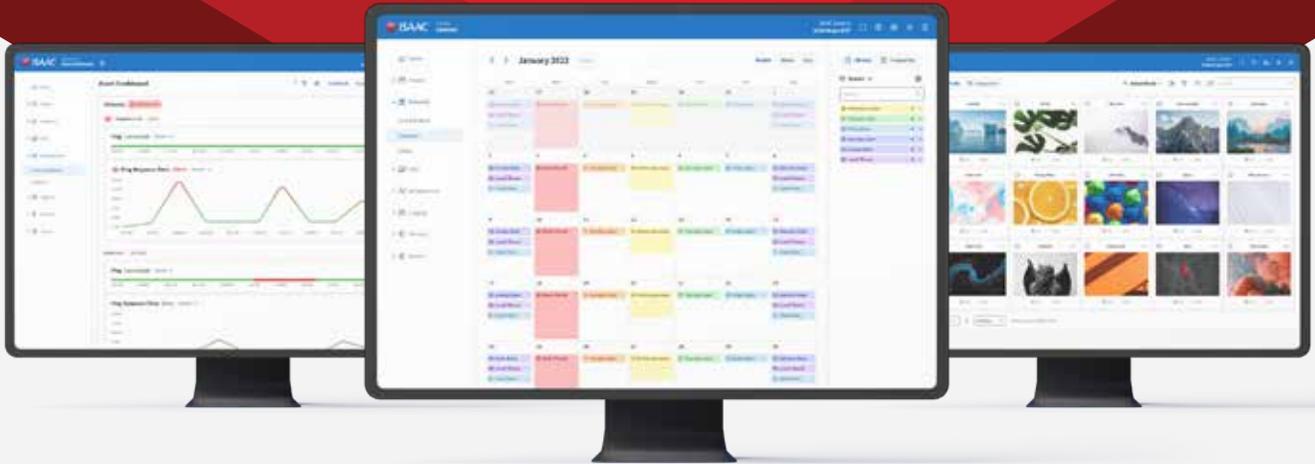
will encompass a variety of possibilities: multi-user capability, interactivity through the manipulation of physical sensors or by touchless detection and tracking, possibility to interact with video, audio, lights, generative content, machinery, etc.

To meet the needs and budget of any type of project, Modulo Kinetic V5 adds the support of varied sensors and control systems: RFID, USB sensors and controllers by Phidgets Inc., 2D LiDARs, Azure Kinect, depth cameras, Leap Motion, 3D LiDARs... Being integrated in Modulo Kinetic's internal library of devices, all sensors can be calibrated in seconds.

An internal library of effects available in the media server then serves as the foundation of the interactive experience. Using Modulo Kinetic's real-time node-based compositing tool, the effects available as blocks can be linked and chained with ease, allowing show designers to create unique outcomes. Modulo Kinetic's timelines allow to easily mix precalculated and real-time interactive content.

Planned for release at ISE 2023, a preview version of Modulo Kinetic V5 is already installed and powers interactive areas at the Fabrique des Lumières and Hall des Lumières digital art centers in Amsterdam and New York.

A glimpse at Modulo Pi's interactive demos: <https://bit.ly/MPi-KV5> •••



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UNIT9's AR-integrated installation at Goodwood Festival of Speed in the UK transformed a 50m sculpture into a digital racetrack. All images courtesy of UNIT9

Experience design, reinvented

Attractions by UNIT9 delivers magic and wonder to audiences

by Gene Jeffers

Acclaimed experts in experience design and wielders of AI, VR, AR & hybrid experiences, product design, experiential, gaming and wider digital experience, UNIT9 has been increasingly drawn into the maelstrom of location-based entertainment (LBE) and attractions. The production studio recently named Danny Burzlaff to head their new Attractions by UNIT9 division. "Attractions of all types are centered around delivering magic and wonder for their audiences," says Burzlaff. "Precisely what UNIT9 has been creating for a variety of industries over the past 25 years."

Combining strategy, innovation and premier craftsmanship with limitless creative thinking, Attractions by UNIT9 is uniquely positioned to help brands and institutions reimagine reality, unlock the future of experience and reach and retain new audiences. With the full range of UNIT9 divisions on tap, Burzlaff and his team are now partnering with theme parks, museums, cultural institutions, retail, hospitality, and global expos to implement compelling experience opportunities through

advancements in AR, VR, XR, Web3, metaverse experiences, immersive theatre, gamification, world-building, avatar creation and high-craft 3D.

The brief

Client-relations and guest experiences most often determine the success or failure of a project. "For me, there are two rewarding milestones to a project," Burzlaff says. "First, when we have created a mind-blowing concept design that totally resonates with the client." With such complex and multifaceted projects, high levels of collaboration and a pain-staking detail-oriented process are required every step of the way. "Once the concept and design are completed and the client loves it and approves the project for execution, that's always a celebratory moment," he admits. "And



Danny Burzlaff



Attractions by UNIT9

of course, there is that second moment when you experience it live through the eyes of the guests and know that your work has created a new perspective, know you have given guests a most unique experience.”

To help reach that pinnacle, Attractions by UNIT9 offers clients a unique approach that fuses innovation with creativity, merging digital possibilities with physical realities.

While it operates as a separate division within UNIT9 it can also work together with the other divisions to support the needs of each project as required, such as using specialist strategy resources, working in tangent with UNIT9’s dedicated Metaverse Advisory Department or its music and culture division, FNDM. As a group, the firm operates on a global scale and carefully curates specialist teams that are the best fit for each project.

Creating that special, magical experience for the client and their guests is always the objective. “When done right, standout experiences will increase footfall – both physically and virtually – driving a deeper sense of loyalty and connection amongst guests, and ultimately make that destination famous,” Burzlaff says. Visitors transformed into a fan base return again and again.

Hitting budget projections both in production and ROI are also critical to every project. “Ultimately, if I was to narrow it down to one key objective, it would be overall guest satisfaction. Did we achieve the goal of providing something compelling, fun, fascinating, unique and memorable for visitors? Did we succeed in pulling at their hearts, while delivering the unimaginable? If the answer is yes, then that’s a job well done.”

The tools

Artificial intelligence (AI) - AI offers incredibly important ways to elevate visitor experiences. Tech-led personalized convenience now surrounds us in our everyday lives. Netflix gives you tailored recommendations, Alexa helps with a recipe in the kitchen. “Audiences have come to expect that same level of tailored guidance and careful curation with every experience, especially so when they’re a paying guest,” Burzlaff notes. “AI can enhance the user journey with personalized content and storytelling, essentially placing the guest as the hero in their own adventure.”

AI is rapidly becoming a major data collection asset for venues, helping them to better understand their visitors and improve their experiences next time round.

Augmented reality (AR) - AR offers new ways to elevate the physical experience into something never before experienced. From helpful and fun wayfinding to location-based gaming or an engaging educational device, augmenting information or adding engagement opportunities on top of a physical feature or experience are incredibly exciting tools for visitor attractions. “UNIT9’s AR-integrated installation at Goodwood Festival of Speed in the U.K. transformed a 50m sculpture into a digital racetrack, complete with AR supercars, providing guests with an unexpected surprise as they explored the motor show,” says Burzlaff.

Haptic tech - An obvious benefit of emerging haptic technologies is the ability to stimulate alternate senses and enable guests to feel like they have truly entered a different world. “Haptic applications can create more inclusive experiences, opening up an activation to whole new audiences that are often overlooked,” says Burzlaff. “Working with Vodafone at the Mighty Hoopla music festival in London, we used haptic suits powered by machine learning to allow deaf and hard-of-hearing fans to feel every beat of their favorite performances as well as the reactions of the crowd.”

Metaverse calling - The metaverse era is just now beginning to happen, this new age of the web empowering a seamless blend of the physical and virtual worlds. Ever since Neal Stephenson coined the term “metaverse” in Snow Crash, experience designers and creators have been trying to define and develop real-world paths to this “beyond yet connected” universe. “The journeys toward the metaverse, or at least toward specific versions of a metaverse, are incredibly exciting for the LBE and themed entertainment market,” Burzlaff says. “We’re just now starting to get a tantalizing glimpse at how a metaverse future can be implemented for in-person experiences – from seamlessly augmented gamified layers over a park’s physical infrastructure, to intuitive AR wayfinding systems.”

Virtual world-building options are fueling creativity on both owned and open platforms, and creators are faced with the golden opportunity



UNIT9 worked with Vodafone at the Mighty Hoopla music festival in London to deploy haptic suits that helped deaf and hard-of-hearing fans to feel the music and reactions of the crowd.



UNIT9 Creative Director Kate Lynham has created interactive window displays at Berlin's KaDeWe store as well as a projection-mapped game of Candy Crush.

to not only inject digital elements into the physical experience, but also transport visitors to completely new and surreal locations. He emphasizes that “metaverse experiences are going to be a big feature of the visitor attractions space – from incredible, otherworldly takes on theme parks created as virtual playgrounds for visitors all around the world to explore, to creating a persistent digital layer like we did with The Beat Challenge for LaLiga x PortAventura. It sits on top of the physical park infrastructure and allows guests to tap into an alternative reality as they explore the park.” With a plethora of avenues to explore, now is the time for venues and destinations to plan their strategy and role within this exciting new landscape or risk getting left behind.

The team

For more than 35 years, Head of Attractions Burzlaff has designed, created and produced major shows, attractions, exhibits, events



The Beat Challenge for LaLiga x PortAventura

and experiences across 20 countries. As the main ambassador for the division, he represents Attractions by UNIT9 at global industry events, works closely with clients and keeps his creative finger on the pulse.

The team also features Executive Creative Producer Gigi Bee, who has worked with architect firms including Santiago Calatrava, Foster + Partners and Daniel Libeskind, directing and producing installations for a number of world expos, including Dubai and Milan.

Two UNIT9 Creative Directors will provide direct support: Kate Lynham (past projects include an AR-integrated sculpture at Goodwood Festival of Speed for Lotus Cars, interactive window displays at Berlin's KaDeWe store and a projection-mapped game of Candy Crush) and Sean Pruen (the director behind UNIT9's Cannes Grand Prix-winning experience for ASICS, a kinetic installation for John Legend x Stella Artois and an interactive live stream launch event for Xbox).

The pitch

“Inconceivable creativity x digital innovation” is the Attractions by UNIT9 motto. “That is the mantra behind our work,” says Burzlaff. “We fuse wild imagination and expert craft with trail-blazing technology to create unequalled, never before seen experiences for visitors.” The team takes the strongest points from the digital and physical worlds and creates fully immersive visitor experiences with real impact.

While Attractions at UNIT9 leverages a wide range of existing and emerging software, hardware and wearables, technology is never used just for the sake of technology. The interests and needs of guests always remain the central focus. Tech is used to enhance, assist, educate or entertain depending on the audience and the context. The client's story or purpose must always be the star of the show. “When the tech is invisible, the experience becomes magical,” Burzlaff points out. “We strip away the distractions of ‘how we did it’ to immerse visitors in the client's story. After all, shouldn't that be the point of every attraction?” •••

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