



inpark
MAGAZINE

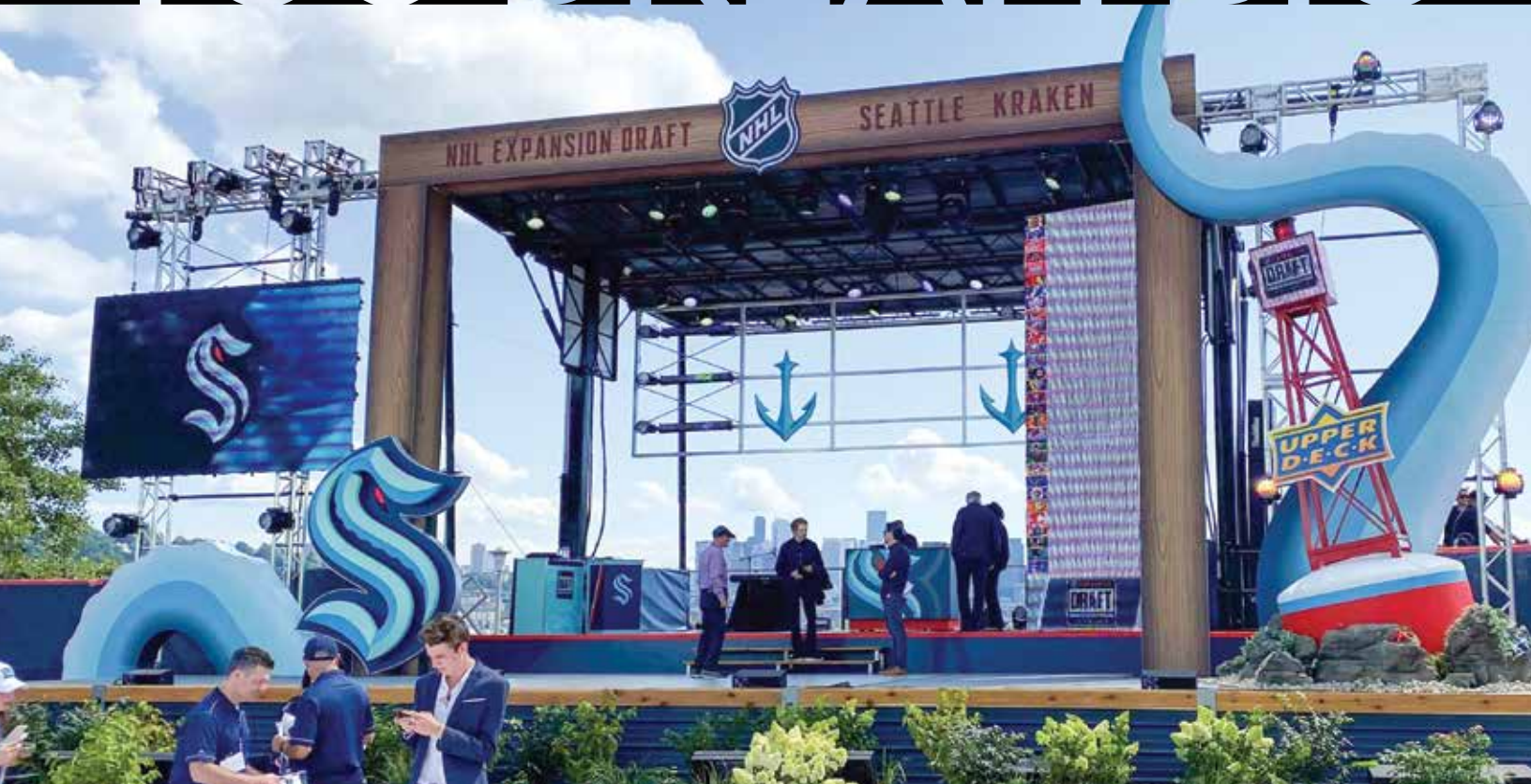
**ISSUE
100!**

issue 100, spring 2024
inparkmagazine.com



**Care Bears™ : Ready to
Spread Cheer and Draw
Fans With New Adventures**

YOU DREAM BIG



WE'LL
TAKE
CARE
OF THE
REST



EXPERIENTIAL / MUSEUM GRAPHICS » SCENIC BACKDROPS » SPECIAL EVENT GRAPHICS

CUSTOM GRAPHIC FABRICATION » DYE SUBLIMATION / TRADE SHOW GRAPHICS

DIMENSIONAL LETTERS / SHAPES » PRINT DIRECT TO SUBSTRATES

ADA SIGNAGE » NATIONWIDE INSTALLATION





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

Contents © 2024 InPark Magazine. All rights reserved. Nothing in the magazine may be reproduced or used in any manner without the prior written permission of the magazine. InPark Magazine is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or illustrations. Such material must be accompanied by a self-addressed and stamped envelope to be returned.

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

ON THE COVER

Care Bears™ are bringing their magical brand to LBE experiences around the world

Page 18

- 7 **The show must go on** *by Martin Palicki*
Theme parks rely on Mark Brymer's Wow Entertainment for Broadway-caliber entertainment productions
- 12 **Extending the World Ocean** *interviews by Joe Kleiman*
Christie projection expands the horizon at SeaWorld Abu Dhabi
- 18 **What the world needs now** *by Wendy Grant*
Cloudco Entertainment brings Care Bears™ to Location-Based Entertainment
- 24 **Uncovering the past at Deutschlandmuseum** *interview by Martin Palicki*
Chris Lange explains how Creative Studio Berlin tucked 2,000 years of German history into a one-hour immersive museum experience
- 31 **Climb every mountain** *by Martin Palicki*
Anakeesta continues its aggressive growth plan with new rides and attractions
- 35 **The newest game in town** *by Martin Palicki*
Vegas goes all-in on experience destinations
- 38 **Get ready to be INSPIRED** *interview by Judith Rubin*
Chloe Hausfeld talks TEA in advance of the Thea Awards Gala and INSPIRE week
- 43 **The UCF/Universal Creative Lab** *by Peter Weishar*
Industry and academia collaborate to empower Themed Experience students
- 46 **Bermuda Storm** *by Gene Jeffers*
An accomplished team helps create a Thea-recognized attraction for Chimelong
- 55 **Remembering Dick Nunis and Marty Krofft** *curated by Joe Kleiman*
Colleagues pay tribute to two industry leaders

team & contributors

PUBLISHER Martin Palicki	SENIOR CORRESPONDENT Joe Kleiman	CONTRIBUTORS Wendy M. Grant Gene Jeffers Peter Weishar	DESIGN Keaton Jadwin
EDITOR Judith Rubin	NEWS EDITOR Joe Kleiman		EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE Tammie Richards



100 issues and counting

**Martin Palicki,
Publisher**

This is InPark Magazine's 100th issue. Normally we'd sound the trumpets and make a fuss about the number, but since our 20th anniversary is just around the corner in November (#104) we're saving the retrospective and celebrations for that issue.

I'll let you in on a little secret: we actually have already published 100 issues. We had a special issue 79.5 that we added a few years ago, and a one-off AV guide that year too. But this is our *official* issue 100, an accomplishment I'm thankful our team has been able to achieve.

I'm proud of the legacy InPark and other print publications provide for the industry, which will continue to live on in libraries and archives as references of this magical time in themed entertainment's history for future generations.

I'm biased, of course. I love print and I've crafted a business around it. I even love opening up a fresh box of magazines and taking a big whiff of the paper and ink smell that floats out. But I also know that between InPark issue #1 and issue #100 there's been a massive shift in the media space towards digital content. And we've evolved in that direction too. The trackable benefits of online content are certainly valuable. But I also still know there is space for - and even demand for - print. Frequently I speak with professionals from all corners of the industry and we casually joke about getting caught up on our magazine reading during business travel. But it's real. People hold on to a magazine. It's very easy to delete an email, but a lot harder to toss away a magazine without at least paging through to see what catches your eye. Sometimes at trade shows if I have a few minutes I'll sit across from the publication bins and observe. People constantly come up, browse and grab copies - presumably to read on that flight home. Speaking of... if you haven't already, subscribe online at inparkmagazine.com/ subscribe to get your own copy of the magazine to read on your next flight!

Of course, creating these 100 issues of InPark doesn't happen in a vacuum. It's most certainly a team effort and one that has involved dozens of friends, colleagues and supporters throughout the years. I am continually thankful for everyone who has helped us achieve this notable milestone, including all you amazing readers who get just as excited as I do to open up the latest copy of InPark Magazine.

Cheers and here's to the next 100!

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



The power of the Thea awards

**Judith Rubin,
Editor**

Another year, another TEA Thea Awards cycle! The Theas transformed the way the world sees the attractions industry, the way operators and suppliers interact, and the way the industry sees itself. Capping a thorough selection process with a formal Gala was the crowning touch.

TEA has from the start been about fostering dialogue and appreciation. There was some pushback at first. "Sit down next to my competitors and talk openly about business?" But the founders of the organization rallied on common cause and the power of a collective voice.

The Thea Awards, founded in 1994, were built on a vision of enhanced dialogue and appreciation, and helped strengthen that collective voice. The transparency required from award recipients was something that hadn't happened before, but it introduced and normalized the publication of official credits for themed entertainment projects. This formal acknowledgment, this handshake improves relationships between project owners and suppliers, celebrating everyone's role while clarifying those roles and shedding light on the complex team efforts at the heart of these accomplishments.

The awe-inspiring projects spotlighted by the Thea Awards are and will always be complex, deeply creative team efforts. By necessity, the work of themed entertainment is ever-evolving. It must remain competitive with all other forms of leisure. It must be keenly responsive to audience expectations. It must retain the timelessness of great storytelling. Difficult, challenging, rewarding, unique. Take a bow, industry - and then get back to work!

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.



Joe Kleiman, Senior Correspondent

Raised in San Diego on theme parks, zoos, and IMAX films, Joe Kleiman would expand his childhood loves into two decades as a projectionist and theater director within the giant screen industry. In addition to his work in commercial and museum operations, Joe

has volunteered his time to animal husbandry at leading facilities in California and Texas and has played a leading management role for a number of performing arts companies. Joe has been news editor at InPark Magazine since 2011, becoming the publication's senior correspondent in 2021. His blog, ThemedReality.com takes an unconventional look at the attractions industry. Follow on Instagram @JalekAvant

ANGRY BIRDS™

FUN, IMMERSIVE & VERSATILE



BRAND TO TAKE
YOUR EXPERIENCE
TO THE NEXT LEVEL

REACH OUT FOR MORE INFORMATION
<https://imglicensing.com/clients/angry-birds>





Providing innovative, seamless
SOLUTIONS AND SERVICES
to top attractions around the world.



**ON-LINE TRAVEL
AGENCY BOOKINGS**

**WEB STORE & DIGITAL
TICKET DELIVERY**

ON-SITE TICKETING

ACCESS CONTROL

**FOOD & BEVERAGE
AND RETAIL POS**

**MEMBERSHIP / PASS &
ONLINE SELF-SERVICE**

CRM AND REPORTING

ACCESSIBILITY

Electro incorporated LED costumes with a giant LED backdrop wall.



The show must go on

Theme parks rely on Mark Brymer's Wow Entertainment for Broadway-caliber entertainment productions

by Martin Palicki

As the lights dim and the music crescendos, a circular, striped tent moves onto the stage. A head pops out, singing a welcome to the audience. The tent flaps open and zombie dancers stream out. Moments later, across the stage, a man emerges from a coffin-like box.

It's the opening number of Six Flags Over Texas' latest Fright Fest show, *Dr. H.H. Holmes' Freakshow*, and the brainchild of CEO/founder of Wow Entertainment, Mark Brymer. The show is big on spectacle, acrobatics and magic and embodies Brymer's vision of the next generation of live entertainment in theme parks. He should know. Brymer is celebrating 50 years of music and theatrical production in the theme park industry, with a client roster that includes Six Flags, Dolly Parton's Stampede, Disney, Warner Bros. and more.

Freakshow is one of nine new shows created by Wow Entertainment for Six Flags Over Texas in 2023, an impressive investment by the park that raises the bar for live entertainment. The new shows [see sidebars] reflect Brymer's vision for the evolving entertainment scene at regional

theme parks. "We are competing for the attention of savvy and sophisticated audiences," explains Brymer. "In order to meet that demand, we have incorporated the latest in technology, introduced new talent and styles of entertainment, and assembled a team of Broadway-caliber producers and artists."



Mark Brymer, CEO and Founder of Wow Entertainment

It all started in a saloon

By the time he founded Wow Entertainment in 1995, Brymer already had decades of experience in the field, having started his theme park career at the age of 16 working in the shows department at Six Flags St. Louis. He began as a tech but was soon playing the piano in the park's saloon theater, continuing

on as the park's audition pianist during the off-season. In 1979 Six Flags Over Texas hired Brymer as music director. He wrote two shows for the park that year and knew instantly he had found his passion.

He continued with Six Flags until 1995. When the company transitioned to an outsourcing model for nearly all of its show production, Brymer formed Wow Entertainment. He didn't miss a beat; Wow continued to serve Six Flags as a contractor, in the initial transition year working with Six Flags Over Texas and by the following year producing shows in four different Six Flags parks. "Many of the shows I wrote in those early years are still being licensed and used at parks around the country," says Brymer.

Brymer's career path has run on parallel tracks. In addition to theme park work, Brymer is a successful arranger for Hal Leonard, a leading music publisher that licenses and distributes sheet music for everything from school talent shows to professional theatrical productions. His passion for both show production and music publishing have earned him and Wow Entertainment a reputation for cutting-edge and exciting entertainment.

Reliable, expansive and time-tested

Six Flags and other regional parks have consistently turned to Wow Entertainment to provide show production services. Frequently, Wow provides turnkey shows, encompassing everything from concept development to production and operation. But they also can work with smaller scopes and

provide targeted support to entertainment departments. Some parks even prefer to have Wow keep performers and techs on their own payroll. "With the current staffing challenges, parks seem eager to have us take on that responsibility," says Brymer.

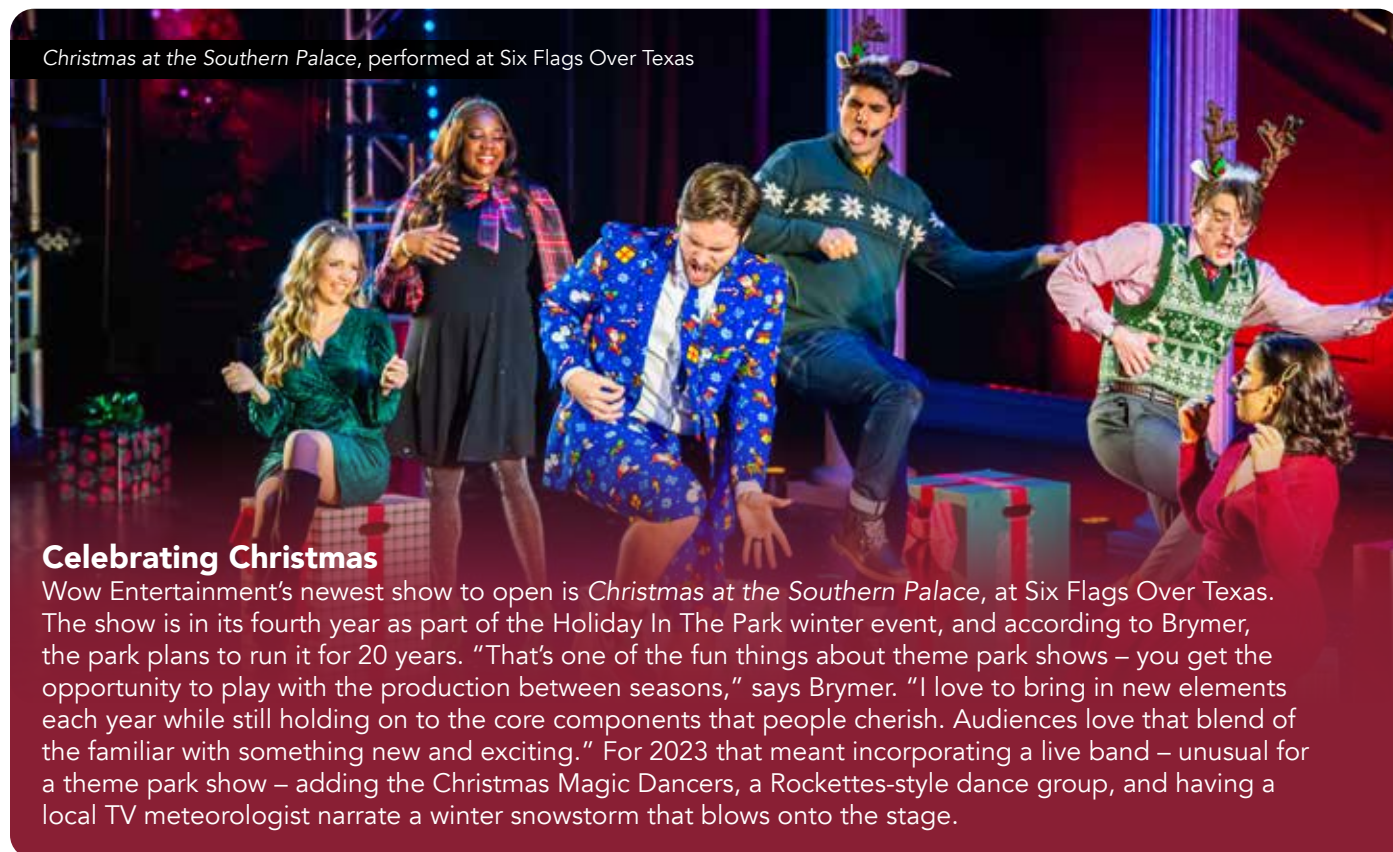
One key benefit Wow provides comes in the form of Brymer's extensive music library, grown and perfected throughout his decades in the industry. "We can create new shows from content that we have already custom arranged for the theme park market, cutting down on production times and costs," explains Brymer.

Broadway caliber

Key to Wow Entertainment's success is the quality and experience of its team. Though Brymer's passion in theme park entertainment originated with his music, his decades in entertainment have given him knowledge on all aspects of writing, arranging, designing, casting, installing, producing and operating a world-class show.

Brymer functions as executive producer on projects and assembles a team of Broadway-caliber professionals to bring together the artistic talent necessary to mount a successful production. In many cases, that means actually reaching out to his contacts working on Broadway.

"So many extremely talented people I've worked with were looking for opportunities during the pandemic," he explains. "We were able to get people working during that challenging time, and they have really fit in well with Wow Entertainment."



Christmas at the Southern Palace, performed at Six Flags Over Texas

Celebrating Christmas

Wow Entertainment's newest show to open is *Christmas at the Southern Palace*, at Six Flags Over Texas. The show is in its fourth year as part of the Holiday In The Park winter event, and according to Brymer, the park plans to run it for 20 years. "That's one of the fun things about theme park shows – you get the opportunity to play with the production between seasons," says Brymer. "I love to bring in new elements each year while still holding on to the core components that people cherish. Audiences love that blend of the familiar with something new and exciting." For 2023 that meant incorporating a live band – unusual for a theme park show – adding the Christmas Magic Dancers, a Rockettes-style dance group, and having a local TV meteorologist narrate a winter snowstorm that blows onto the stage.

Wow Entertainment's 2023 Six Flags Over Texas Shows

Wow Entertainment produced an astounding nine new shows for Six Flags Over Texas' 2023 season:

VIVA LA FIESTA – Front Gate Show (Cinco De Mayo): VIVA LA FIESTA is a vibrant, bilingual musical journey celebrating the pulsating rhythms of Latin music, showcasing chart-topping hits from powerhouse artists such as Camila Cabello, Bad Bunny, Pitbull, and Gloria Estefan.

ELECTRO – Southern Palace Theater (Summer): ELECTRO is a visually stunning sci-fi spectacle set to the beats of "Sky Full of Stars," "When Love Takes Over," and "Battlefield." Featuring a full cast wearing state-of-the-art LED costumes synchronized with ever changing video backdrops that illuminate the epic tale of good versus evil.

SUMMER NIGHTS – Front Gate Show (Summer): SUMMER NIGHTS is a sizzling musical experience that captures the essence of the season with sun-soaked hits like "In the Summer Time," "California Gurls," "Miami," and "2 Be Loved," delivering the vibrant vibes of unforgettable summer nights.

YODEL-AIRES – Oktoberfest Stage (Fall): YODEL-AIRES is a joyous musical journey with Helga, Heidi, and Holly, enchanting audiences with a delightful blend of traditional German tunes and surprising yodel-infused renditions of pop hits from the 2000s to today.

DJ DOOM'S BOOGIEMAN BASH – Front Gate Show (FrightFest): DJ DOOM'S BOOGIEMAN BASH is an end-of-the-night musical extravaganza, featuring singing/dancing Ghouls, explosive special effects, an LED hoop specialty act and Ghostly sky dancers.

THRILLER FLASHMOB – In Park (FrightFest): THRILLER FLASHMOB captivates unsuspecting crowds in various locations within the park

by transforming ordinary spaces into dance-filled spectacles, and performing the iconic moves of Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

DR. H.H. HOLMES' FREAKSHOW – Southern Palace Theater (FrightFest): DR. H.H. HOLMES' FREAKSHOW is a chilling production recounting the dark tale of America's first serial killer, Dr. H.H. Holmes, narrated by his first victim, Julia. Featuring a combination of storytelling, song, dance, and mesmerizing specialty acts including a strap act, grinder girls, and the wheel of death.

NORTH POLE-A-PALOOZA – Gotham Stage (Holiday In The Park): NORTH POLE-A-PALOOZA is a yuletide, rockabilly big band spectacle where six spirited elves are celebrating their one night off of the year. As they eagerly await Santa's return, they joyfully sing and dance to Christmas hits amidst a winter wonderland, and culminating in a surprise visit from the merry man in red himself.

CHRISTMAS AT THE SOUTHERN PALACE – (Holiday In The Park): CHRISTMAS AT THE SOUTHERN PALACE unfolds in a winter wonderland of enchantment, as the 'Christmas Magic Dancers' conjure a snowstorm, setting the stage for three couples to navigate through a humorous twist of fate, amidst holiday favorites like "Let It Snow," "You're A Mean One Mr. Grinch," and "River," culminating in a heartwarming conclusion with the timeless celebration of "Joy To The World."

A JOLLY HOLIDAY – Front Gate Show (Holiday In The Park): A JOLLY HOLIDAY is a remounting of a timeless hit production that brings the magic of the season to life, starring five Victorian couples, Bugs, Daffy, Taz, Sylvester, all nine reindeer, and the iconic duo Santa and Mrs. Claus, as they joyfully sing and dance through a medley of festive holiday songs.



Dr. H.H. Holmes' Freakshow at Six Flags Over Texas

The next generation of live entertainment

“Theme park shows are changing,” says Brymer, “in large part because audiences are expecting more thrilling acts and more sophisticated entertainment.” He credits television shows like *America’s Got Talent* for highlighting new generations of artists and the constant drive to raise the bar of performance. Even TikTok has played a role with its unending stream of quick bite-sized entertainment. Brymer’s solution is to take cues from what people love on their personal screens to touch audiences with the same kind of experiences in his live productions.

That includes utilizing technology to extend the stage. For *Electro* at Six Flags over Texas, Wow created LED-embedded costumes that interact with a giant LED wall during choreographed numbers. “We are pushing the envelope in the type of video production we are doing,” says Brymer. “Our shows are a constantly moving visual palette.”

It also means directly incorporating Vegas- and Broadway-quality performances into shows. For *Dr. H.H. Holmes’ Freakshow* Brymer introduced specialty acts like aerialists, stunt performers and acrobatics into the show. He also made sure to create a compelling storyline that keeps audiences engaged. “People come to hear the music and see the performance, but they also want to be told a good story,” Brymer says.

In the case of *Freakshow* Brymer turned to the tale of H. H. Holmes, the noted 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition serial killer from Chicago whose story was fictionalized in the novel *Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson. “I knew the Victorian style would mesh well with a Halloween steampunk aesthetic, and it lent itself to the type of death-defying specialty acts I had in mind to raise the performance bar.”

Six Flags has noticed the difference. “Mark’s connections, bringing in Broadway choreographers, costumers, and lighting designers, have exceeded our expectations and upped the game for what we’ve been able to offer at Six Flags Over Texas,” says Jill Deramus, Entertainment & Events Manager at SFOT.

Often the unsung hero of regional theme parks, live shows are key to a park’s offerings. Theaters offer high capacity, appeal to a wide demographic, provide respite from the weather, easily adapt to allow seasonal entertainment, and (unlike many rides in the park) allow families to experience an attraction together at the same time. But they require an artistic mix of spectacle, music, dance and special effects for them to work. Brymer has perfected that formula, keeping both audiences and park entertainment managers coming back for more. “Wow Entertainment is about crafting that custom, engaging entertainment experience,” says Brymer. “We are here to help make the operator’s day easier and the guest’s day more fun.” •



Dr. H.H. Holmes’ Freakshow at Six Flags Over Texas



Electro incorporated LED costumes on its performers



Christmas at the Southern Palace, performed at Six Flags Over Texas

Get thrilled with Barco projection



Treat your visitors with thrilling experiences all year long. Put a smile on your guests face from start to finish. Give tourists that memorable trip they won't stop talking about. With Barco's visualization and processing solutions you create the most magical experiences – ride after ride, day after day.



Leading technology designed for immersive experiences



Bringing peace of mind for any application



Consistently delivered by our global team of experts



Join the ride at www.barco.com/theme-park

BARCO



The Armillary is a digital dome that acts as the gateway to the polar realms. *Credit: Miral Experiences*

Extending the World Ocean

Christie projection expands the horizon for Holovis at SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi

interviews by Joe Kleiman

SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, one of this year’s (2024) recipients of a TEA Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement, accomplishes its goal of taking guests on a journey through the world ocean with a combination of physical sets, live animals, and cutting-edge media. The mostly indoor theme park, developed by Miral Group in conjunction with SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment (now United Parks & Resorts), is multi-level and designed with multiple corners and turns to convey a sense of discovery. As laid out by PGAV Destinations, which designed the park and animal habitats, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi is built upon the concept of a single world ocean, or “One Ocean,” with each of the park’s realms showcasing a different facet of its shores and the animals that live upon them.

Holovis, an experiential design company specializing in media-based attractions, was one of the many design firms involved with the development of the park. Holovis collaborated with Thinkwell Group, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi’s Executive Producer for entertainment, on the production of a number of projects within the park, including the centerpiece “One Ocean” show, which features one of the world’s largest LED displays.

For three other notable projects at the park, Holovis employed projectors from Christie, a leader in visual technologies. They are:

- The Armillary, located just off the One Ocean central hub, is a digital dome that acts as the gateway to the polar realms - Arctic and Antarctica, and showcases historic voyages to the poles as well as ambient presentations of the auroras above both Northern and Southern landscapes, projected by eleven Christie D4K40-RGB pure laser projectors, at a combined brightness of up to 495,000 lumens.
- Endless Ocean is one of the world’s largest multi-species aquariums, housing approximately 5.5-million gallons of water in a 43-meter tall structure. Its vista is extended beyond the physical realm through the addition of underwater projection with content featuring sea animals, such as whales, swimming past the underwater sea base, projected by sixteen Christie Crimson WU31 laser projectors.
- Two Christie D4K40-RGB pure laser projectors illuminate the Southern Lights, the Aurora Australis, within the Antarctica penguin habitat.



Joe Graziano, Director of Sales, Entertainment, EMEA, Christie



James Lodder, Global Head of Products, Holovis



Mirko Totoni, Project and Construction Manager, EllisDon

To learn more, InPark’s Joe Kleiman spoke with **Joe Graziano**, Director of Sales, Entertainment, EMEA, Christie; **James Lodder**, Global Head of Products, Holovis; and **Mirko Totoni**, Project and Construction Manager, EllisDon, a global construction service firm based in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, which served as project manager on the park for Miral. Totoni and his team worked closely with Holovis and other show and attraction producers to determine the best equipment for each portion of the project and the best methods for mounting equipment, including lighting and projectors.

Why were Christie projectors selected to meet the creative vision of Miral and Holovis for the three projects?

Totoni: Our choices were made mainly based on the installation location and trying to satisfy the creative intent. The selection is based on an attentive evaluation of the projection study against the most cost-effective solutions.

Lodder: Holovis has excellent relationships with all of the world’s high-quality projector manufacturers. We select which manufacturer and which model of projector we will use according to the specific needs of each client project. That means balancing the raw lumens outputs with the quality of color reproduction, the availability of lenses in the throws and focal lengths we need, the projector resolutions and form factor, and of course pricing. We are very familiar with Christie hardware and we trust the company and their products. For SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, we found that the Crimson WU31 and D4K40-RGB projectors in the Christie range ticked all of our boxes.



Christie projectors illuminate the Aurora Australis in the penguin habitat
Credit: Miral Experiences

Graziano: The D4K40-RGB projectors were chosen for the Armillary and Southern Lights, Aurora Australis because they offered the power needed, the light output (45,000 lumens), and state-of-the-art RGB pure laser technology [see “Screens to fill, markets to disrupt,” InPark Magazine Issue #77].

Reliability and longevity were also considerations. The maintenance requirements of the D4K40-RGB pure laser projectors and the Crimson WU31 laser projectors in Endless Ocean are minimal. The projectors need to run for long periods of time without interruptions for maintenance due to the high number of visitors in these popular attractions.

The park is not just an indoor theme park, it’s an indoor marine life park with lots of water, both freshwater and saltwater, and a variety of temperatures. Was this a factor in working with the client to determine the best projectors for each venue?

Lodder: The vast saltwater aquariums mean that the air in the park is highly corrosive, reaching C5 rating [very high risk of corrosion on the International Organization for Standardization’s (ISO) corrosivity scale] in various places. Under the leadership of our Senior Technical Director, Dave Reynolds, the Holovis engineering team commissioned and installed custom air-conditioned enclosures in these areas to protect the projectors from corrosion and humidity, and to keep them cool.

Graziano: For comparison, the installation at Al Wasl Plaza dome at Expo City Dubai features 252 Christie RGB pure laser projectors, which are installed in 42 projector ‘pods’ around the inside perimeter of the dome. Because of the heat, sand and dust in Dubai, the pods – which are large enough to hold a compact car – are air conditioned. The pods maintain a consistent operating environment for the projectors.

At SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, which is indoors, there’s still some sand to contend with, but much less to worry about than Al Wasl Plaza. Humidity is an important consideration – it’s as close to being ‘outdoors while indoors’ as you could probably get – so the projectors are in air-conditioned environments.



Arctic foxes appear on the Armillary above the entrance to the Arctic realm. Projector housings are just beneath the dome screen.
Credit: Holovis



A live shark swims in front of projected whale in Endless Ocean aquarium. Credit: Michael Giskin (themeparX)

How were the projectors mounted for the Armillary, considering it's a walk-through dome-theater with entrances and exits to the polar lands, the hub, retail, and dining? How was ambient light controlled?

Totoni: Armillary is a projection dome that starts at 6-meters from the ground floor. It is a hub in which guests can circulate and pass from one environment to another. The projectors are installed along the horizon of the dome in a separate room surrounding the screen. The lighting system is very minimal and guarantees only a very low level of diffused ambient light.

Lodder: Holovis designed and supplied custom optical mounting rigs to support the Armillary projectors and to allow precise fine-tuning of pitch and roll angles, while hiding the bulk of the projectors behind the theming to give the guests a clean uninterrupted view of the curved blended dome screen. Right at the beginning of the project we raised the important issue of ambient light, and the need to select and control show lighting fixtures carefully to minimize spill on to the screen, and to choose the correct dome screen gain to optimize image contrast. We were delighted to find that EllisDon had considerable knowledge and experience in projection, which made it very easy to coordinate the best solution.

How does Christie technology support blended projection projects like this?

Graziano: For the SeaWorld Abu Dhabi project, it came down to the quality of the projectors' electronics platform, their 360°

orientation capability, and the lensing options so that we were able to place the projectors where they're needed to create an image that can be overlapped at the appropriate blend zone.

In general, the nice thing with Christie 3DLP projectors is that Twist, our warping and blending software, is built in. Twist allows pixels to be mapped more easily onto any projection surface, maintaining proper geometry and accurate pixel-to-pixel alignment so that we can create those blends without seeing where the overlap is.

With Endless Ocean's projected images being seen through water and glass, how did you overcome the challenge of image refraction?

Lodder: Our secret weapon here was our Holovis Pix-Control camera-based projection auto-alignment system, which is able to calculate and compensate for the complex lightpath deviations due to the refraction of light as it passes through the high-pressure acrylic porthole windows, and the further refraction as it passes through 2.7-meters of saltwater to light the underwater screen, to create the perfect warp and blend solution that allows 16 projectors to combine to form a single, seamless image.

Our Holovis senior projection specialist Dr Luan Le Ngoc and his team successfully installed the Pix-Control system at all projection scenes, giving the client operations team a simple, fast and reliable way to automatically re-calibrate the blended projection screens each morning.



The Aurora Australis shines above the penguin habitat in the Antarctica realm. Credit: Miral Experiences

Graziano: In the underwater area, Endless Ocean, the Christie Crimson WU31 3DLP projectors produce sufficient brightness (31,500 lumens) to create an impact from a distance and help mitigate the tremendous amount of glass in front of the viewing area.

As the name of the attraction suggests, when you look at it, you feel you are looking into an endless ocean. The way that the content has been created gives the impression of looking into the depths of the ocean through the eyes of a diver. To that end, the nice thing about 3DLP (three-chip DLP) projection is the depth of field it offers.

Were there any unique mounting or rigging issues with the projectors due to the design of the park?

Lodder: Yes, every one of the projectors in the park is custom rigged or mounted to ensure that they are easily serviceable after installation. At the Endless Ocean, the projectors are mounted on a 20-meter tall steel gantry with an integral hoist system to lower them to the ground for service. In Antarctica, the area housing the projectors is protected by custom enclosures mounted 20 m above the floor on a custom steel structure.

Totoni: In addition to having to use some enclosures to protect the projectors from corrosion due to the humid conditions, the installation of the platform was sometimes challenging because it was also designed to guarantee future access for maintenance.

Any final thoughts?

Graziano: We're extremely proud of our efforts and collaborations at SeaWorld Abu Dhabi and we applaud Holovis for their attraction design and systems integration expertise. It's exciting to see that the themed entertainment industry at large applauds the quality of the venue and the project by recognizing this unique indoor marine park with a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement.

We are thrilled to have a strong partnership with Holovis. Our collaborations have produced several world-class attractions. And the projects that we've worked on in the region, including Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi and Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, have resulted in a very positive relationship with Miral. We'll be honored to continue to support both Holovis and Miral in their future endeavors. •

In addition to SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, both Holovis and Christie have previously contributed to Thea Award honored projects. Most recently, both companies contributed to Universal Beijing. In 2019, Christie received the Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement in Technical Innovation for the Christie Eclipse 4K RGB pure laser projector.

SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi will be honored at the 30th Annual Thea Awards on March 16, 2024 in Hollywood, and also speak on the project at the TEA INSPIRE conference March 14-15.



DREAM DESIGN BUILT BEYOND

Freedom Theater • New Orleans, Louisiana

Photo Courtesy of The National WWII Museum



THEME PARKS

MUSEUMS & EXHIBITS

BRANDED ATTRACTIONS

IMMERSIVE RETAIL & DINING

CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

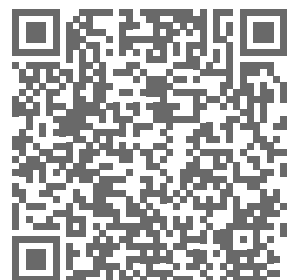
HOSPITALITY AND RESORTS

LOCATION BASED EXPERIENCES

ICONIC LANDMARKS

 Studio@thgcreative.com

 626 683 9876





What the world needs now

Cloudco Entertainment Brings Care Bears™ to Location-Based Entertainment

by Wendy Grant

In today's often tumultuous world, wouldn't it be nice to escape to a world of caring and kindness? That's exactly what the colorful, joyful Care Bears™ provide to their fans of all ages. Today, Cloudco Entertainment is bringing the Care Bears to fans through Location-Based Experiences (LBEs) that embody the bears' mission of spreading cheer and kindness.

"In every country, city, or neighborhood where there's a story of care to be told, we see an opportunity for the Care Bears to make a meaningful impact," says Robert Prinzo, Head of Global Licensing at Cloudco.

The beloved, fictional Care Bears characters originated as greeting card illustrations in the early 1980s and quickly were adapted into toys, animated television shows, movies, books, and other popular merchandise. Over the course of four decades, the Care Bears brand has not only retained its nostalgia-steeped fans, it has also introduced new characters and stories multiple times to reach enthusiastic audiences of both kids and adults.

The brand's strength was demonstrated recently in License Global's "The Leading Licensees" 2023 report, where industry insiders voted Care Bears the number-three top new license signed last year.

After a successful LBE launch in South Korea, Care Bears LBEs recently debuted in Hong Kong and Thailand and immediately drew passionate fans eager to connect with their favorite characters in high-energy, eye-popping, candy-colored environments. Care Bears experiences have the potential to evoke warmth and nostalgia while also creating picture-perfect social media moments and driving retail sales.



Robert Prinzo

Prinzo notes that plans for new projects are in the pipeline, adding, "We're looking to expand the Care Bears' LBE presence with new experiences that promise even more interaction, more color, and of course, more caring, in markets such as Brazil and the UK."

Ice cream, Christmas, and the Care Bears Café

Cloudco's initial forays into LBEs have been resounding successes. First, there was a Care Bears-branded Baskin-Robbins ice cream store that launched in 2021 in Seoul, South Korea. Before the Care Bears arrived, the store performed in the top 30% of the country's locations. After incorporating Care Bears décor, merchandise, and themed



Care Bears-themed exclusive merchandise, holiday décor, and winter fashion items drew visitors and drove sales at the Langham Place Mall in Hong Kong during the 2023 holiday season

food items ranging from sundaes to cakes to beverages, it is now considered the number-one location of the 1,800 Baskin-Robbins stores in South Korea.

Next, in November 2023, a Care Bears-themed holiday experience launched at the Langham Place Mall in Hong Kong. The Care Bears Express Christmas included a 15-foot-tall, heart-shaped Christmas tree; a six-foot-tall Grumpy Bear, a walk-in train full of plush bears, and a variety of interactive games, with high scorers winning toys and gifts. KK Plus, a retailer of toys and collectibles, curated an accompanying Care Bears pop-up shop with exclusive merchandise, holiday décor, and winter fashion items. Photo opportunities drove social media engagement, and costumed character appearances with Grumpy Bear and Cheer Bear drew long lines, with the store averaging 2,000 visitors per day, and even higher numbers on the weekends. The location quickly surpassed its revenue goal. Prinzo reported that the venture, which concluded January 1, 2024, exceeded all expectations.

Most recently, the Care Bears Café opened in late December 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand. The colorful café features drinks and treats themed in a variety of bright hues, as well as Care Bears merchandise for sale. The location has reported lines out the door and is continuously refreshing the menu to encourage repeat visits and sustained interest.

Prinzo says, “These successes indicate the profound impact and popularity of the Care Bears brand. They have also highlighted the universal need for the kind of uplifting content that the Care Bears provide.”

Calling Care Bears partners ... and possibilities

Merchandise and food items are natural fits for the Care Bears, but they’re only the beginning of the possibilities for this versatile IP. As Prinzo points out, “Whether it’s creating new, bespoke bears for specific activations or weaving original narratives to meet unique needs, the Care Bears are a dynamic brand, and Cloudco’s strengths lie in our ability to adapt and innovate.” He says that their primary focus is not on developing specific marketplaces. Instead, Cloudco seeks to bring the Care Bears to life in a variety of locales - wherever this is an opportunity to spread their signature care.

“We’re seeking partners who are dedicated to innovation,” says Prinzo. “We’re looking for entities that understand the global language of the Care Bears and are eager to translate it into experiences that will captivate and enchant.” Whether partners seek a plug-and-play solution that’s adaptable to a variety of venues or a bespoke experience designed from the ground up, Cloudco wants to work together with partners to develop experiences that create lasting memories.



Merchandise is served up at the Care Bears Café, along with tasty treats

Prior to coming to Cloudco, Prinzo was Licensing Director at Hasbro, which gave him a deep understanding of the power of LBEs. “I witnessed firsthand the transformative power of LBEs in growing and evolving a brand’s licensing program,” says Prinzo. “LBEs don’t just extend a brand’s reach; they deepen the emotional connection fans have with it.”

Prinzo believes the Care Bears are an exemplary model of this opportunity. “The Care Bears are a globally recognized and cherished brand that strikes a perfect balance — beloved and familiar, yet not oversaturated in the market,” he says. “Their rich legacy coupled with universal themes of kindness, empathy, and care make them ideally suited for fresh, engaging, interactive LBE ventures.”

He also notes that the Care Bears aren’t just for kids. “They resonate with adults as well, tapping into a sense of nostalgia and a universal desire for joy and comfort,” states Prinzo.

Cloudco’s Vice President of Marketing, Kristeen Tibbits, adds, “We want guests to leave a Care Bears LBE feeling uplifted, with the renewed sense of joy and care that the Care Bears represent. We aim to offer experiences that are so enjoyable, fans are eager to return and to share the experience with others.”



Kristeen Tibbits

To aid in these efforts and ensure authenticity, Cloudco offers prospective partners creative support that goes beyond basic licensing. As brand guardians, the Cloudco team participates in the ideation and development processes with the goal of retaining the authentic essence of the Care Bears in every project. Prinzo shepherds projects throughout the complex process; Tibbits and her team spearhead digital campaigns and social-first strategies to amplify reach and engagement.

A happy guest enjoys cookies and a beverage at the Care Bears Café



Drinks and desserts are on the menu at the first Care Bears-branded Baskin-Robbins ice cream store, which launched in 2021 in Seoul, South Korea

Cloudco's extensive retail experience has the capacity to benefit licensees and operators through tools to increase per cap spending. Cloudco also offers the opportunity to create bespoke merchandise, which adds value to the guest experience and also taps into the collectibles market, driving fans to seek out exclusive items. The blend of memorable experiences and exclusive merchandise offerings are key for LBEs. Most importantly, says Prinzo, "We are fully committed to growing the Care Bears brand and working closely with our partners to ensure that every LBE initiative is a success."

From greeting cards to multimedia entertainment

While looking to the future, Cloudco also honors its long history. Cloudco began as part of the American Greetings Corporation more than a century ago. Tibbits explains, "Cloudco has grown from a greeting card company's creative division into a multimedia entertainment company with a diverse portfolio of iconic and enduring properties." That ascent into multi-platform entertainment was buoyed by the company's clear understanding of consumer engagement and brand storytelling.

The Care Bears started as greeting card illustrations and quickly became immensely popular during the 1980s and early 1990s, starring in animated television series, movies, and merchandise for audiences worldwide. The Care Bears live in the magical land of Care-A-Lot, where they strive to spread love, caring, and kindness throughout the world. Each Care Bear character is depicted as a colorful bear with a unique belly badge that reflects their personality and special abilities. The characters, like Funshine Bear, whose sunny disposition lights up any situation, and Share Bear, who encourages others to share their feelings, possessions, and experiences with those around them, are not only entertaining but also convey valuable lessons about friendship, compassion, empathy, and caring for others.

Over the years, the Care Bears franchise has continued to evolve, introducing new characters, storylines, and adaptations to resonate with contemporary audiences while maintaining the timeless message of spreading love and kindness. *Care Bears: Unlock the Magic* is the latest animated series featuring the colorful characters. It launched globally in 2019, with a new season rolling out right now, and takes fans on new adventure in the whimsical land of Silver Lining. The series centers on messages of friendship and empathy and features classic characters alongside some new Care Bears. Prinzo notes that the series has influenced the contemporary aesthetic of the characters, which has been reflected in current merchandise as well as Cloudco's initial LBE initiatives.



Of the 1,800 Baskin-Robbins stores in South Korea, the Care Bears-branded location is number one



The Care Bears Express at Langham Place Mall provided a variety of experiences including interactive games (top) and a walk-in train car complete with plush bears (bottom)



A guest poses with a giant Love-A-Lot Care Bear at the Care Bears Café

In addition to the Care Bears, Cloudco’s roster of popular brands includes Holly Hobbie and Madballs. “Each of these brands has its own unique legacy and fan base, and they all reflect our company’s dedication to creating engaging content with heart and humor,” Tibbits says.

Tibbits has been with the company for nearly 13 years. “What I personally enjoy about the Care Bears is their unwavering optimism and the joy they bring to people’s lives,” she shares. “It’s a brand that celebrates kindness and encourages us to look out for one another, which is a powerful and needed message in today’s society.”

Tibbits says that Cloudco has learned that fans see the Care Bears as a warm and comforting element in their lives. In a world where there is so much turmoil, the Care Bears’ universal qualities of love, kindness, tenderness, humanity, and friendship resonate with consumers around the world.

Looking ahead: Cloudco and Care Bears goals

Looking to the remainder of 2024 and beyond, Cloudco’s goals are centered on growth and connection. “We aim to



Care Bears Express at Langham Place Mall

deepen our engagement with fans through experiential ventures, like the Care Bears LBEs, and to forge strong relationships with new partners in different entertainment sectors,” says Tibbits. “We’re also looking to push the boundaries of storytelling to bring our characters to life in new ways.”

Prinzo concludes, “We’re dedicated to creating a world where the Care Bears continue to inspire and bring people together, and we can’t wait to share the new and exciting endeavors ahead.”

Connect with Cloudco and Care Bears

Owners, operators and other potential partners interested in exploring Care Bears LBE and licensing opportunities are encouraged to reach out to:

Robert Prinzo, Head of Global Licensing,
Cloudco Entertainment (rprinzo@cloudcoentertainment.com)

Charlotte Payne, International Licensing Director,
Cloudco Entertainment (cpayne@cloudcoentertainment.com)

In-person meeting opportunities include Licensing Expo 2024 (Las Vegas) in May, and Brand Licensing Europe in September 2024 (London). Attendees to the former can expect to see a colorful Care Bears display and discover the innovative ways Cloudco is bringing them into new markets and product categories. At the latter, Cloudco will further demonstrate the global appeal of the Care Bears, sharing insights into international strategies and unveiling new partnerships that span across various regions.

In addition, those fortunate enough to gain entry to The Toy Insider’s Sweet Suite (July 2024, New York City) will enjoy an exclusive, engaging Care Bears experience. Another opportunity awaits at New York Comic-Con in October 2024, where fans will be able to immerse themselves in the world of Care Bears with exclusive merchandise, interactive experiences, and a special photo op with their favorite Care Bear. •



Wendy M. Grant has worked in marketing for more than 25 years. She served as Director of Marketing and Communications for San Diego’s Fleet Science Center, home to the world’s first IMAX Dome Theater, where she directed marketing for all exhibitions, films, shows and events for 13 years. She served on the Marketing

Committee for the Giant Screen Cinema Association and she was a board member for the Giant Dome Theater Consortium. Prior to working in the museum field, she was Director of Marketing at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar where she helped to produce the annual Miramar Air Show. Since 2019, Grant has worked as a communications consultant, writer and editor, with clients in the education and entertainment fields.

Care Bears merchandise appeals to guests at Care Bears Express



Uncovering the past at Deutschlandmuseum

Chris Lange explains how Creative Studio Berlin tucked 2,000 years of German history into a one-hour immersive museum experience

interview by **Martin Palicki**

Honored with a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement, Deutschlandmuseum opened summer 2023 in Berlin. The compact museum covers 20 centuries of German history in twelve distinct exhibits that immerse guests into fully themed environments, invites them to touch and explore artifacts, and provides opportunities for thoughtful introspection. Creative Studio Berlin Owner Chris Lange worked closely with project owner Robert Rückel on the museum's design, which was executed in a short ten-month span. Lange went into detail on the museum's ceiling-to-floor immersive environments and how his team dealt with sensitive issues like the Holocaust while speaking with InPark's Martin Palicki in advance of the 30th Annual Thea Awards Gala (March 16, 2024).

Why did you want to work on Deutschlandmuseum?

This is really a project close to my heart. I'm German, I live in Berlin and grew up in East Berlin, so I know that part of our history quite well. Though I've had the pleasure of working on many different attractions in town, including the Berlin Dungeon and Madame Tussauds Berlin, I was excited to take on a project that focused on Germany's history. In most projects we are building fantastical worlds where we lean on history only as inspiration to make our own stories and worlds come alive. But here we were relying on real history, and there was great responsibility for how those stories were told. I knew Creative Studio Berlin (CSB) was the perfect company for this project.

Highly themed environments immerse guests in history at Deutschlandmuseum. All photos courtesy of Deutschlandmuseum

Tell us how you became involved in the project.

The owner, Robert Rückel, got in touch with me because he saw the work we did recently at Madame Tussauds Berlin. He was also aware of my work from the Berlin Dungeon, which is also an immersive edutainment experience, though it relies more on actors to convey much of the story. He reached out to one of my old Merlin Entertainments colleagues who oversees the operation of those facilities and then got in touch with CSB.

Do you think those projects influenced his vision for Deutschlandmuseum?

I think they certainly impacted his idea of what you can do with a museum or the way an attraction is designed. He understood that history can be presented in a way that uses storytelling and environment to transport guests back in time.

Also, there are so many outstanding museums in Berlin, including the famous museum of German history with many beautiful artifacts in traditional exhibits. Robert's vision was to do it completely differently.



Themed staircase leading up to "The Middle Ages" watchtower



Chris Lange and Robert Rückel in "The Weimar Republic" shopping passage

What was your scope of work on the project?

Robert owns the Deutsches Spionagemuseum (German Spy Museum) next door, which has more of a traditional museum format. He already has a team of historians and experts there who he worked with to come up with a rough outline for Deutschlandmuseum. The team had already divided two millennia of German history into certain "chapters" that they wanted to cover in a one-hour experience targeted to tourists, families and school groups. They had identified a starting point of the Teutoburg forest (where Germany was formed). That was the foundation that we used for the start of the design.

Creative Studio Berlin did all the creative work for the museum, designing the 12 different chapters and determining which ones would be immersive spaces (where we themed the walls, ceiling, floors, and even the smells) and which rooms would be abstract spaces (which include more text, interactive displays and more traditional museum exhibition content). We also assembled and managed the team of contractors and specialty vendors that helped fabricate and install the exhibits.

What was the buildout space like?

We were working with an existing building that had hosted exhibitions before, so we had clean walls and nice hardwood floors. When we started, Robert hoped to not have to move any of those walls and to keep all the flooring. But when you start designing you see that certain spaces need to be bigger or smaller. Figuring out the layout was like a puzzle. We had structural columns to work around and two staircases to incorporate. We really tried to make those staircases part of the story and I think it worked out quite well. The first set of stairs leads to the Middle Ages, where you ascend a watchtower and look out over the landscape. The other staircase can be found while exiting an apartment building, walking down to street level. Both staircases are integrated into the scenery and storytelling.

What do you think makes this project special?

If you think about it, we managed to convey 2,000 years of history into twelve different rooms during a one-hour experience that we created and installed in ten months' time, for less than 5-million Euros. We had to



Scene extension showing a knight tournament in “The Middle Ages”

employ a lot of innovative themed entertainment tricks to create this experience. For example, we were extremely limited in ceiling height and had a lot of technology that needed to be hidden. We couldn't just throw one big projector in to get the scene extensions we needed. Instead, we had to design the space to allow for four smaller projectors.

The media was also really important. Loops have to be just the right length to keep people's attention but also keep them moving through the museum. And the reset can't be obvious. In the knight's tournament you can't have someone fall off the horse in a battle and then suddenly they are back on the horse to battle again. Our solution was to have people come out and drag that person back into a tent and the horse runs off before the loop resets. It's those kinds of little details we deal with in theme park and attraction design all the time.

What steps did you take to ensure historical accuracy?

This was absolutely critical. The project historians really held us to a high standard. We made sure that the trees in the forest were accurate to the real site. We would have loved to use pine trees, which would have been nice visually. But they had to be German Oak trees with the right kind of bark on the tree. We also matched the rock and sediment types to what is accurate for that region.

In projects with traditional IP you need to get the owner's permission for just about everything involving their brand. In this case, history was the IP and our historians were the licensors!

You mentioned that you had immersive and abstract rooms. Can you tell me about the difference and how you came to the right balance between the two?

Deutschlandmuseum has twelve rooms; seven are immersive and five are abstract. The immersive rooms are themed from ceiling to floor. The abstract rooms are more like a traditional exhibition space with cases, artifacts and graphics. Everything

we show in the abstract rooms we try to present in a completely different way from how people might experience them elsewhere. For example, the King's crown, which you can see in the museum down the street, was enlarged and is presented in a way that you can touch it and examine the jewels. We wanted to break the rules of the traditional exhibition case.

We put the abstract rooms between the immersive rooms to give your brain a little bit of rest. From a design viewpoint, it also allowed us to put larger amounts of history into a smaller space. While the immersive rooms represent a specific place or moment in time, the abstract rooms can cover several hundred years of history in one space. I've also discovered that if you move from immersive space to immersive space you tend to forget things. But if you break them up with the abstract spaces, people tend to remember the entire journey.

How did you approach the Holocaust?

Obviously, there are other great museums in Berlin that specifically deal with the darker chapter of German history and the Holocaust. We wanted to present it from a different angle that still resonates today. We decided to show how propaganda can motivate people into doing horrible things.

Our solution was to build a labyrinth of human silhouette cutouts. At first you see and hear their muted reactions while listening to a political speech. Then you turn around the corner and the cutouts are more aggressively cheering in support. You turn around the corner again and there are cutouts of soldiers running with weapons. Behind the next corner you see injured people and hear their moans and wails. Since the cutouts are static, the emotion is created by the soundtrack, which had to be handled very delicately.

We also installed direct lighting in the walls that creates long shadows of the cutouts while also making guests feel uncomfortable as it shines directly onto them, like an interrogation.

This is the space I'm most proud of because it was something very new for me, and it delivers on an intensely emotional level. I didn't want to take a didactic approach saying "Nazis were bad," because that has been done before. Instead, I wanted people to come to the understanding that the atrocities that occurred were a direct result of how ordinary people acted and reacted. They need to feel uncomfortable and question what they would have done in that situation because – crazily – it all seems to be happening again.

How do you future-proof a history museum?

Our final immersive space takes people into a "S-Bahn" carriage from 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down. As you enter the old train wagon you look at the windows that are screens showing media clips from the mid- to late-20th century. Then you step into the next wagon and it's a modern car like the ones used today. The screens in there show clips from the 21st century. It's designed in a way that this media can be updated as needed to keep it fresh and current without having to tear out walls.

You mentioned earlier how theme park design influenced your work on this project. Can you expand on that?

I can condense the experience into three principles that we used on this project that came directly from my work on theme parks:

- Don't overcomplicate things and use your design language instead of words to tell a story. Use architecture, props and visual cues in a scene instead of a sign. In our first room there's a shield of a Roman soldier on the ground and there's blood on it, so it's pretty clear that he lost the battle.
- Smells help set a mood and scene. Theme parks use scents all the time, but it's not as popular in museums. In the Deutschlandmuseum we used scents of forest, rotten castle walls, book printing machines, fire, gun powder, cigarettes and more.
- Technology has to be hidden. In traditional museum exhibitions a projector hanging from the ceiling is fine. But in an immersive environment it has to be invisible, along with all the other AV tech and controllers that power the experience. And they have to be seamlessly integrated with the built environment.



Soldier cutouts in "The Third Reich" installation



Stained glass workshop in "The Middle Ages"



Themed forest with scene extension, sculpted trees and artificial foliage

Rüde and Theming Architect Robert van den Boom worked endlessly to get the project done in those ten months. I also need to recognize the other companies we contracted with who delivered such wonderful work. Our partner Bentin Projects designed the light, audio, video and show technology. Crossworks Projects installed it all. Constantin Bänfer and Jonas Kartenbeck oversaw all graphic and media design. Playing History designed and built the unique interactive elements. Ravir Film produced all video content. And of course, our theming vendors Atelier Thilo Krause and Movie Construction put their heart and soul into every bit of scenery.

Ultimately, you want to create an experience with friends and family that people remember. Those memories stick when they involve things people haven't seen, heard or experienced before.

What sort of team did you assemble for the project?

I first have to say that Robert, the owner, was such a good partner and willing to take everything to 100%. He always opted to go for the better guest experience. The talented and passionate team here at Creative Studio Berlin was simply fantastic. Our Art Directors Dominik Wieland, Marina Rütten, Oliver Marraffa and Jan Wünsche, our Producer Daniel

How has the response been?

The public response has been phenomenal. But you know what else is really great for us as a company and as a larger industry? This project has gotten so much recognition from the museum community. Clients and owners of other museums have been quite impressed with the museum and now want to use that little bit of theme park magic in their new experiences as well. •



There's More To Us Than Just Curves

From Flat to Curved.
Simple to Custom. Indoor to Outdoor.



Nanolumens has a dvLED solution for you!

Let's start your new project!



Designed and
Assembled in the USA

info@nanolumens.com
1-888-771-NANO (6266)



Supporting themed entertainment
through technology since 1964



electrosonic.com

ETC THEME PARK LIGHTING SOLUTIONS

LET YOUR IMAGINATION TAKE FLIGHT

Things are bigger in theme parks. ETC's lighting solutions scale to handle everything from the largest attractions to every inch of LED tape and all the colorful luminaires in between. Whatever your vision, whatever the requirements, ETC can bring it to life.



FIND YOUR LIGHTING SOLUTION AT
etconnect.com/themeparks



Climb every mountain

Anakeesta continues its aggressive growth plan in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, with new rides and attractions

article and photos by Martin Palicki

Perched high in the mountain above tourist-focused Gatlinburg, Anakeesta is only accessible to guests by taking either a chair lift or bus, both of which operate continuously from the ticket booths and entrance down at street level.

Once at the peak, the delightful world of Anakeesta reveals itself. Unlike many traditional theme parks that are set up in a circular shape, Anakeesta's lands and pathways meander, following the landscape of the mountain, with attractions, shops and restaurants tucked in wherever space allows.

Technically, owners Karen and Bob Bentz actually don't think of Anakeesta as a theme park, nor as an adventure park (with which perhaps their offerings more closely align). Instead,

it's more of a hybrid concept, combining highly themed and detailed environments with various play, entertainment and activity offerings.

For thrillseekers, the park has a zipline course and America's first single rail mountain coaster, Rail Runner, which opened in 2018. For less adventurous guests, there's a tree canopy walk, play structures, climbing nets and more. And for those who just want to take in the views, there are plenty to be had. The park's Anavista tower places the impressive Smoky Mountains on display, along with views of up to three states on clear days. Beautiful gardens are scattered around the park, along with live entertainment, restaurants and shops.

Above: At night BirdVenture comes alive with colorful and flexible LED lighting thanks to ETC's Mosaic controller.

ETC's Mosaic helps light up the night at BirdVenture

After dusk is when Anakeesta's new Birdventure attraction really comes to life. Each of the three birdhouses are illuminated inside and out with colorful LED lights that accentuate and define the beautiful structures. Controlling them all is ETC's Mosaic system. As a leading supplier and innovator in the lighting and control world, ETC has many themed entertainment credits including high-profile projects at Vienna's Prater amusement park and Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi.

According to Anakeesta Technical Operations Manager Brian Myers, the park has used ETC products to control the park's lighting since its opening and chose to continue with Mosaic for this addition due to its reliability and flexibility.

"ETC's Mosaic allows us precise control over every LED bulb so we can change color exactly when we want it to," explains Myers. "Additionally, the lighting is integrated with sound and music to create a fun, completely themed environment."

Each birdhouse has special features that Mosaic manages. Harmony Blue's home includes a special selfie photo mirror. A framed "portrait" of Owlbert Einstein above his fireplace periodically comes to life, with Owlbert speaking directly to guests on a video loop. Chisel the Woodpecker's home uses small LED lights to illuminate his collection of art, periodically cycling through a light show.

The Mosaic system also controls the LED lights in and outside the slides, which are motion-controlled, creating small lighting shows as guests slide down.

Gear for the project includes ETC's Mosaic Show Controller, providing 1,024 outputs that deliver DMX control of color-changing and color-mixing lights. ETC's Echo Relay Panel with relay and 0-10V control supplies power and 0-10V dimming throughout the area.

"BirdVenture is wonderfully done and we're so happy Mosaic is a part of bringing this attraction to life," says Scott O'Donnell, Themed Environment Specialist at ETC. "Mosaic lets designers go wild with plenty of outputs, the ability to accept triggers from show control, and easy creation tools, so it's a perfect fit to also let guests imagine life as a bird in the Smokies."

For more information visit etconnect.com



One of BirdVenture's defining features is the array of slides built into the hillside

If the park's identity is a blend of play, adventure and relaxation, then its IP is the mountains themselves. Capitalizing on the views and embracing the surroundings comes naturally to Anakeesta, and is a key element of what sets the park apart from larger regional competitors.

Growing to meet demand

In 2022 the Bentz family announced a multi-year \$34-million expansion of Anakeesta. The first phase opened near the end of 2022 with the debut of Astra Lumina, Moment Factory's first Lumina Night Walk installation in the United States. The evening attraction generates additional revenue and was designed to help extend the guest's day and entice people to the park at night.

More recently, the park opened two major attractions within a new land, Stone Village. The first is Hellbender, the park's second mountain coaster, built by Weigand Rides. It's named after an endangered breed of salamander native to the region. The idea is that riders are playing the role of a hellbender salamander racing down the hill. Each car has its own cute name (such as Sally Mander) and is equipped with the latest safety technology. Sensors identify when one car gets too close



Anakeesta President Bryce Bentz shows off the business end of Weigand Rides' Hellbender mountain coaster cars



Owlbert Einstein's home includes climbing netting to access the attic and a portrait above the fireplace that periodically comes to life



Stone Village, with BirdVenture on the left and a small section of the Hellbender track on the right, as seen from the Anavista tower

to another and initiates automatic braking to slow the car down. Onboard battery packs power the safety system as well as nighttime running lights.

According to Bryce Bentz, Anakeesta's President, the park plans to add additional lighting features for evening riding as well as onboard cameras to capture the experience for guests.

The ride is smooth and fast, with a max speed of 25mph over the 2,700 feet of track. An additional 700 feet of lift track returns the cars to the station. Fun elements include several 360-degree helix sections and slalom-style maneuvers. Each car can hold up to two passengers, offering up to four times the capacity of the park's Rail Runner. Along with the new ride the park debuted a new Coaster Pass for \$16.99, allowing two coaster rides. Guests can use it to ride both coasters or one coaster twice.

The second major attraction to open is BirdVenture, a highly themed play structure built around the homes of three fictional Anakeesta avian residents. Kids (and limber adults) can venture into the treehouses, have a photo of them taken in Harmony Blue's birdhouse, climb to the attic of Owlbert Einstein's home,

and explore the art collections of Chisel the Woodpecker. The birdhouses, beautifully decorated, perch high on the edge of the hill. Below, a series of seven slides offer opportunities to zip down to the bottom of the hill. A staircase and a unique boulder climb offer routes to return to the top.

At night, BirdVenture takes on a delightful personality with colorful lighting illuminating the houses and LED lighting inside and outside the slides. The slides include motion-activated sensors that either put on a little light show as someone enters the slide or change color within the slide as guests whiz by. Additional theatrical lighting and a special soundtrack make BirdVenture really stand out [see sidebar].

Anakeesta's expansion is far from complete. The park recently announced exciting changes coming soon to the Astra Lumina experience. One scene will be upgraded with new technology and another entirely new scene will be added to the show. Further expansions to Stone Village, including new shopping options and entertainment, will open soon. For more information, visit anakeesta.com •

Partner: SNC Alliance



OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD EXPERIENCES. AND THE SMART TECH BEHIND THEM.

- Complete range of projectors
- Built-in warping and blending
- Projection software tools
- Image processing
- Show control and content management
- Switchers and AV distribution
- Extended warranties and support



Explore our solutions:
christiedigital.com/completeAV

CHRISTIE
complete

END-TO-END A/V SOLUTIONS



The newest game in town

Vegas goes all-in on experience destinations

by Martin Palicki

Much like the Strip skyline, the attractions scene in Las Vegas is always changing. Since expanding its offerings beyond gambling decades ago, the city has become something of a proving ground for the experience industry, willing to try different concepts and with the capital and space to make it happen. The most recent wave of immersive attractions seems to capitalize on post-pandemic trends favoring experiences over shopping. 2021 was a key year in Vegas, as both FlyOver Vegas opened on the Strip and nearby Meow Wolf's Omega Mart debuted at AREA15 - soon followed by Illuminarium and Lost Spirits Distillery in adjacent buildings.

Now, more experiential attractions are coming to the Las Vegas Strip, continuing the city's tradition of constant reinvention and new development. Three brand new experiences opened in the second half of 2023, each employing technology and immersion to entice audiences.

Museum of Illusions

Considered their flagship location, the Museum of Illusions (MOI) is located between The Cosmopolitan and The Shops at Crystals. It's one of more than 45 privately owned Museum of Illusions scattered across four continents, and part of 11 new

locations that opened in 2023. The company offers a franchise model and is based in Croatia, where the first Museum of Illusions opened in 2015.

According to Pien Koopman, Marketing Manager for MOI Las Vegas, "Each museum has a core set of exhibits, but we also offer special touches for each city." In Vegas, that means a unique slot machine illusion, a room where you appear to be playing poker with a table of clones, and others.

Many of the exhibits are classic illusions, such as where one line looks longer than another, but they are the same size. MOI makes it interactive by providing a measuring tool so guests can check for themselves.

The museum is designed for taking photos. Several exhibits provide a setting where you can take a photo, flip it and appear to be performing superhuman feats. Others rely on mirrors and other optical illusions to help create the perfect selfie.

Naturally, the museum employs tricks common to themed entertainment, such as a vortex tunnel, two-way mirrors and projection effects. MOI Vegas is also introducing seasonal



Exhibits at Museum of Illusions Las Vegas include a mix of both optical tricks and technology-enhanced experiences



ARTE MUSEUM LAS VEGAS uses projection mapping to immerse guests in the wonders of nature.

exhibits utilize Christie's Pandoras Box video playback and processing solution to manage and deliver media content.

Other exhibits are more interactive, especially the "Live Sketchbook" where guests use crayons to color in an animal before scanning it into a computer. Moments later, the animal appears in animated form, traversing across the room's long screen.

The largest exhibit is "Garden," an expansive room with projection-mapped walls, floors and structures. Several different experiences are presented in the room. One focuses on Korean imagery and history, another on classic painters, and another presents artistic interpretations of Las Vegas.

events. During InPark's visit, the facility was decorated for the winter holidays and Santa made an appearance to take photos with guests, using an effect to make it look like Santa and guests were precariously hanging off the side of a building.

Koopman says the shift toward experience-based attractions in Vegas really took off thanks to the pandemic. "Vegas was hit really hard," she explains, "and we started to look for things we could create that didn't pack lots of people into small spaces." Towards that end, MOI offers timed ticketing and guests flow naturally through the space.

ARTE MUSEUM

Located next to Museum of Illusions is ARTE MUSEUM, the sixth installation of the projection-heavy immersive experience from d'strict, based in the Republic of Korea. It's the first ARTE MUSEUM located outside of Asia. New locations are also scheduled for Dubai (UAE), Busan (Korea) and Santa Monica (USA). d'strict is known for creating public art installations and other immersive experiences around the world.

According to their own materials, ARTE MUSEUM invites guests to "step into the world of ETERNAL NATURE" through a series of 12 exhibits that employ projection technology, a custom soundscape, lighting, and curated scents.

Most of the exhibits surround guests with projected imagery on the walls and floors, some incorporating mirrors for different effects. The environment is contemplative and reflective. Perhaps most impressive is the "Beach" exhibit where waves appear to crash onto the floor and rush up to guests' feet. The division between wall and floor essentially vanishes in the simple but effective projection effect. Projection throughout the museum is handled by 34 Barco UDM 4K22 and 48 Barco G62-W9 projectors. Several

For an additional fee, guests can visit the Arte TeaBar and enjoy a cup of milk tea that illuminates with projected flowers when placed on the table. That moment when the server places the cup down is an unexpected surprise and adds a touch of whimsy to the experience.

ARTE MUSEUM also offers timed ticketing to ensure a steady, but not overcrowded, flow of people through the experience. Discounts are offered for off-peak visits.



The Atrium part of The Sphere Experience showcases new technologies, including AI-enhanced robots



View from the tech booth inside Sphere
Above photos credit: Sphere Entertainment

Sphere

Opened at the end of September 2023 and connected to The Venetian Resort via a pedestrian bridge, Sphere made international headlines with its LED exterior and impressive high-resolution curved LED screen inside. The venue has changed the landscape of Las Vegas and brought attention to the technology advancements that made Sphere possible. Rock band U2 inaugurated the venue with a months-long tour at Sphere. But guests can also experience everything the venue has to offer by booking seats for The Sphere Experience featuring director Darren Aronofsky's *Postcard from Earth* film, with shows scheduled regularly.

The Sphere Experience starts with time in the expansive Atrium. There, five AI-powered humanoid robots named Aura chat with guests. The interactions between the computers and humans are entertaining, if not a bit unnerving. Naturally, people seem to enjoy asking Aura about the future of technology, and AI in particular.

Sphere Immersive Sound powered by HOLOPLOT, the venue's next-generation sound system, also has an exhibit showcasing its directionally focused sound system. It's similar to a demonstration HOLOPLOT often presents at industry events.

Elsewhere in the Atrium visitors can be scanned to have a virtual avatar created, take in some computer-generated

art, enjoy giant holograph-like imagery and stock up on snacks and beverage for the main show.

Once inside the main bowl the sheer size of the screen is apparent immediately. With no support beams, nearly every seat provides a full view of the screen, which offers 16k x 16k-resolution.

In addition to the screen, *Postcard from Earth* takes advantage of other special effects systems built into the space, including haptic seats, wind effects and scents. The film tells the story of two humans arriving at a distant planet as they recall their time on Earth and the events that led them to leave for a new home. The storyline is largely a vehicle for showcasing grand vistas and stunning scenery from around Earth, captured with Big Sky – an ultra-high resolution camera system built by Sphere Studios.

The experience is a super-charged version of a traditional domed theater, with the LED screen providing crisp, bright images without edge warping. At times, objects in the film even appear three-dimensional.

Postcard from Earth lasts nearly an hour, which seems like the perfect length for such an immersive experience. More films and concerts are planned for Sphere, giving Vegas visitors ample reason to return again and again. •

PRIMORDIAL RANKED #1 ON USA TODAY 10BEST READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

Interactive
Dark Coaster

Alternate
Ending

LEARN MORE
WWW.TRIO-TECH.COM



Lagoon



Get ready to be **INSPIRED**

Chloe Hausfeld talks TEA in advance of the Thea Awards Gala and INSPIRE week

interview by Judith Rubin

Interviewing Hausfeld for this story was InPark Editor Judith Rubin, who was on staff at TEA for 15 years as publicist and director of publications.

Chloe Hausfeld recently joined TEA's executive leadership team, reporting to Executive Director Lindsey Nelson. Hausfeld is responsible for the generation and growth of non-dues revenue stream and plays a critical role in helping identify and prioritize key partnerships and industry alignments for this leading association serving the attractions sector.

"Chloe understands TEA's unique value proposition and will be the best person to tell our story to the rest of the world," says Nelson. With a long tenure in the entertainment and attractions industry, many remember Hausfeld serving JRA (now part of RWS Entertainment Group) as Vice President. Prior to joining TEA, her most recent position was with Baynum, where she cultivated key client and vendor relationships for Amusement Solutions.

Hausfeld grew up in the themed entertainment business and is well on her way to being as familiar and visible a face in the industry as her father, Keith James, who is JRA President, a TEA Past President and recipient of Thea lifetime honors.

What drew you to take this position with TEA?

When Lindsey and Melissa first approached me with the opportunity, I was humbled and honored to have been thought of. I was fully supported, and in a great place with Baynum Amusement Solutions, but just couldn't ignore the opportunity they were throwing my way. Having the chance to serve as the staff liaison between TEA and our global partners, both internally, and industry-wide drew me to continue conversations, and really create the position along with them.

You're part of a leadership dynasty via your connections to Keith James and JRA. TEA has been around for some 35 years now, a full generation, so you're "2nd generation." What does that signify to you?

This signifies EVERYTHING to me. I'm literally alive because of this industry. Keith (Dad) and Patti (Mom) James met at Kings Island, and the rest is history. Lex and I were born while they were circling the globe due to Dad's job



Chloe Hausfeld preparing to present her dad, Keith James, with The Buzz Price Thea Award for a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements at the 2016 Theas Gala.

opportunities. One of my earliest memories is visiting Dad in the trailers at Universal Studios, while the park was being built. Having the ability to start my career in the industry with my family (that includes the rest of the staff, not just Keith) at JRA is something that I will forever hold dear. Being able to learn the ins-and-outs of the industry, from one of the best (a little biased, but I dare someone to challenge that!) is not something I take lightly. Joining the TEAm felt like coming full circle. It gave me the ability to assist in building a legacy for the people that helped to create it all – people I've known, respected, and cared for, for as long as I can remember, and that's pretty special. Not everyone gets this chance.

The creators of TEA and the Thea Awards realized a vision and filled a need. They could see and feel the difference it made. Thirty-five years later, there are many in the industry for whom TEA has simply always been there to serve them. What would you point out to help foster appreciation across all generations of what TEA does for its members and the industry?

What insight those founders had! There is no shortage these days of industry awards ceremonies. But the creators of the Thea Awards formed a very specific, innovative vision and model, all those years ago – a model that has distinguished TEA and the Thea Awards and continues to do so.

It's imperative that these experiences, attractions, parks, etc. be celebrated, but it's also essential that the companies and individuals who participated in their creation be just as celebrated. The TEA created a platform to do just that. What started out as an idea on a cocktail napkin culminated into an elegant affair, rewarding excellence for the creation of compelling educational, historical, and entertainment projects across the globe.

In many cases, due to non-disclosure agreements, companies and individuals are not able to market the projects that they took part in developing. With the Thea Awards, TEA has gone a long way in making it possible for owner/operators, creatives and suppliers to share the stage – both at the INSPIRE Conference and the Theas Gala. The industry needs to continue showcasing these relationships, cultivating awareness and respect for the process it takes to produce breakthrough contributions, year after year, in visitor attractions.

What are some of your favorite memories from the Thea Awards weekend of events?

INSPIRE week has always been a great networking event to meet new people, but also to connect with old friends. Having the opportunity to learn about the creation of the Thea Award recipients, while sitting next to longtime colleagues and friends (and form new relationships as well) has always been an occasion of excitement, reinforcing our love for the industry and enthusiasm to take part in it.

The memories are endless, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't have a favorite. Being a member of the group that introduced Dad when he was presented The Buzz Price Thea Award for a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements in 2016, will never be topped.

Please give us your thoughts about the value of the INSPIRE Conference paired with the Gala – the totality of these events and why it is important to try to be there for the full weekend?

While all of the events are closely linked, there are definite delineations to their programs. The INSPIRE Conference has grown from the fan-



Chloe Hausfeld with her dad, Keith James, at the TEA Thea Awards Gala in California

favorite Case Studies, into a fully immersive networking and educational signature event that inspires all levels and disciplines within the industry.

Back by popular demand, the addition of the Leadership Forum; a half-day event, programmed specifically for C-suite attendees, features three presentations, and group roundtables. This continues to show TEA's emphasis on creating events that are mutually beneficial to our members, potential members, and the industry as a whole. The Thea Awards Gala, the grand finale of the week, is the most elegant affair of our industry's entire year, and is a celebration of the endless hard work of our members across the globe. The event is unmatched, showcasing experiences and their creators, from all sizes and budget parameters. TEA has continued to produce an exceptional event throughout the years, providing well-deserved recognition to the recipients of excellence.

One of your responsibilities is cultivating sponsorship. Is there special value for sponsors in this 30th year of the Thea Awards, considering that TEA is a mature organization and the Thea Awards and INSPIRE are likewise established, mature events with a solid international presence?

These events can't happen without the support of TEA sponsors. The association can't survive without the support of TEA sponsors. So, yes, these relationships



TEA Staff (L to R): Ben Donan, Laura Singler, Clara Allen, Lindsey Nelson, Chloe Hausfeld, Kristen Kimbrel, Becky Nadora at TEA's International Mixer during IAAPA Expo 2023



Emmett McDonald, Alexis McDonald, Patti James, Keith James, Chloe Hausfeld and Eric Hausfeld at the 2016 TEA Theas Gala



Mark Amos, Randy Smith, Patti James, Linda Round, Rick O'Connell, Shawn McCoy, Kate Batt, Rebecca Parnell, Clara Rice, Fletcher Hausfeld & Chloe Hausfeld @ Give Kids the World Village for the annual IAAPA Footprints from the Heart Walk/Run



Linda Round, Keith James, Dan Schultz & Chloe Hausfeld @ The JRA Booth at IAAPA Expo

are inexpressibly important. TEA was founded to bring together like-minded individuals in a common cause. Supporting TEA through partnership opportunities is how these connections continue to happen.

Regarding INSPIRE Week specifically, there is a wide range of opportunities to support the event with exclusive benefits for global industry visibility before, throughout, and after. INSPIRE Week is an ever-evolving program that TEA does our best to develop year-after-year; instilling our vision and mission through a conference based on our core values.

In regard to the Thea Awards and TEA INSPIRE, why is it important to attend every year? Why THIS year in particular?

Based on widespread appeal, the Leadership Forum, added in 2023, will be returning to the INSPIRE program, now including a Welcome Reception the evening before. Further add-ons to INSPIRE Week include Pop-Up Production Sessions and INSPIRE the Night.

There's something new and different every year, but there's certainly been an enormous change this year, specific to location. It's been some time since TEA has moved venues, and heading to the glamour of Hollywood seemed like the right move to celebrate such a milestone. Apart from the fresh inserts to the INSPIRE program, we're amping up our red carpet entrance to the gala with Hollywood-style photo

ops, and after-party. We'd like to promote the new VIP tables as well, but they sold out immediately! So, yes, people should be reserving EVERYTHING now!

We're thrilled to continue celebrating and honoring 30 years of the Theas!

What do you find most valuable about TEA? How can members get the most out of their membership?

Most valuable? The people. It seems cliché, but it is typically the answer I have for most questions that involve value, and this industry (thank you for teaching me that awareness...you know who you are). TEA has managed to develop a credo of recognizing both owner/operators and the complete credits list of contributing vendors and individuals to the creation of specific attractions, and I find that to be legitimate and necessary.

Get involved! There are many opportunities to participate - do what you can. The more you give (and I'm not speaking on a monetary value), the more you gain, and the relationships that you will make, professionally, but more importantly personally, will help pave the path to the rest of your career.



Minnie Mouse & Chloe Hausfeld @ TEA Summit

What else would you like to say about how TEA and the Thea Awards have transformed and enriched the industry?

THANK YOU! Thank you to the ones who came before us.

Thank you to the ones who continue to assist, support, and participate throughout the year to make everything TEA does a successful possibility.

And, thank you to a team that strives to adapt to what our members expect, and endeavor to champion future opportunities.

Looking beyond the Gala and INSPIRE, what are some opportunities members and sponsors can look forward to later in 2024?

I've really hit the ground running since joining the team, and while INSPIRE Week has caused a bit of "Blitz Mode," I'm really looking forward to what Q2 and Q3 have in order for me. Some of my immediate targets are leaning into tertiary markets that are mutually beneficial to our members, their members, and the association as a whole, aligning event planning both globally, and with our regional support, and working with our amazing volunteers to support our members where they feel they are needing subsidized value.

I'm truly excited to see where we can go, and look forward to continued partnerships with longtime and new friends, to get us to that mountaintop.

But, to get things started, I can't wait to see everyone during INSPIRE Week! •

QUINCE IMAGING
Immersive Technology Solutions for Live Events
 Transform Your Space Into a Mesmerizing Adventure
 That'll Highlight All the Right Aspects of Your Creation Utilizing Technologies like
 Projection Mapping, LED Walls/Floors/Ceilings or Shapes, AR, Gamification, and Interactives.



PROJECTION & LED
Cover massive pallets with stunning visuals



SCENIC DESIGNS
Elevate your designs with our creative tech



INTERACTIVE TECH
Gamification and other highly transformative technologies



IMMERSIVE SPACES
Utilize LED, Projection & Interactives to create amazing spaces

EmotionCrafters congratulates
InPark on their 100th issue!

*Emotion*crafters



Music
You
Feel



Crafting emotions through
music and sound design



emotioncrafters.com

Providing music, sound design, and audio services for:
attractions | parades | nighttime spectaculars | immersive experiences
exhibits | stage shows | themed area ambiance

The UCF/Universal Creative Lab

Industry and academia collaborate to empower Themed Experience students

by Peter Weishar, Professor of Themed Experience; Program Director, Themed Experience MS Degree and MFA Track, University of Central Florida (UCF)

Collaboration between industry and academia can range from sponsoring research labs, endowed chairs, to donating entire buildings. The most common exercise is simply to invite speakers and industry panels to review student work.

As the Director of a graduate Themed Experience program at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando, I am always looking for opportunities to collaborate with the best in the industry. These in-depth, multi-year collaborations offer unique, priceless learning opportunities to students.

An extensive collaboration takes many months of planning, a flexible and engaged partner and many hours of work and negotiation to make it happen. This is a step-by-step outline of the process behind the successful creation of the UCF/Universal Creative Lab.

The proposal

Three years ago, I met with Mark Woodbury, Chairman and CEO of Universal Destinations & Experiences. The meeting was facilitated through UCF Advisory Council members Bob Ward and Mike West, with other colleagues. In the time leading up to our meeting, I prepared a short proposal for the collaboration that included budget, an estimated time commitment for Universal subject matter experts, benefits for Universal, proposed timeline, and a clear delineation of responsibilities and deliverables for both UCF and Universal Creative.

Internal and external approvals

Prior to the meeting I coordinated with the UCF Foundation and upper administration. Every major university has a Foundation that oversees philanthropic gifts and donor relations. They help the institution coordinate relationships and external philanthropic transactions. Many universities have an office of commercialization to deal with outside businesses as well. Due to the scale and proximity of UCF and Universal Creative, we had to ensure there were no conflicts that would jeopardize or cannibalize existing or developing relationships.

The proposal included a dedicated, collaborative class that needed to go through a series of approvals. Universities are divided into Colleges, Schools, Departments, and Majors. The class proposal had to make its way through the Curriculum Committees

of each division. Before I could present it to the University Graduate Curriculum Committee, the class needed to be vetted by representatives from all departments to assure the new class did not encroach upon another discipline.

Curriculum approval takes approximately eight months for a temporary, one-off class called a Special Topic. It takes more than a year for a class to be added to the course catalog. Therefore, the new course proposal had to be initiated at the beginning of the process in order to be ready when the agreement was complete.

Following the internal approval process, we then worked with Universal Creative to formalize the program and collaborate on press announcements.

The class

I couldn't ask for a better partner than Universal. While launching a world-class park in Beijing and building the new Universal Epic Universe, dozens of enthusiastic Universal Team Members went above and beyond to deliver far more than promised. The class meets at Universal Orlando, either in the parks or the design offices and research labs. The logistics of moving 20 students through backstage, sometimes after the park has closed, are quite impressive.



Chris Oliver, VP Engineering providing a tour of Hagrid's Magical Motorbike Adventure



Mark Woodbury, and Chris Oliver (left) in the executive boardroom for the final critique of the first UCF/Universal Creative Lab with Peter Weishar (right).

Eliza Lee, Team Member Experience, Universal Creative says, “There are a lot of details running in the background. We need approvals for everything. There are many teams involved to make sure we are providing students with a meaningful experience. We are also documenting the classes with pictures. We work with Universal Creative to identify the right speakers for the occasion and work around some very busy schedules to make sure that we’re showcasing the best talent and content.”

My co-teacher, Chris Oliver, Vice President, Engineering and Safety, Universal Creative, noted, “It surprised me to see what resonated with students. The back-of-house class where we show operation and ride maintenance, the Consumer Insight class, and the class featuring industrial engineers teaching about guest flow and managing attraction capacity are all extremely popular with the students.”

Results

Without a doubt, this multifaceted team effort was worth it. The UCF/Universal Creative Lab was a successful collaboration – well-orchestrated and presented, and beneficial to students in its exclusive access to the workings of the attractions industry. It was a hugely popular offering in the UCF Themed Experience Graduate programs. Many of the students have subsequently been hired for Universal internships or as full-time Team Members.

Chris Oliver commented, “I’m excited to show UCF students what we do behind the scenes to develop an attraction. This is not just the fun storytelling portion of themed entertainment, but everything else that goes into creating an experience for our Guests. This collaboration is also a fantastic recruiting tool as we spread the word about all types of themed entertainment careers. It gives them a chance to see inside of our world and,

hopefully, they like it enough to consider a career at Universal or a theme park.”

Susan Cummings, Assistant Director and Executive Producer with Universal Creative said, “For me, it is inspiring that I might help shape their careers and support our industry in a unique way. Graduates don’t get a degree and then immediately go to work at Universal Creative as a Vice President. There are many steps up that ladder. You can take everything that you do in life, or any job you have, and know it might lead you to where you eventually want to be. This is one of the most satisfying projects that I’ve been part of!”

I’m always grateful for our deep industry relationships. For this collaboration, Universal Creative went far beyond the letter of our agreement and exceeded expectations to make an extraordinary experience. But that is no surprise, as creating extraordinary experiences is what they do best. •



Peter Weishar (peter.weishar@ucf.edu) is the Director of the Themed Experience Graduate programs at the University of Central Florida. He is a founding member and Chair of the Steering Committee of the Themed Experience and Attractions Academic Society. Previously, Weishar was Dean of Fine Arts at FSU and Director of the Themed Experience Institute. He also served as Dean of Entertainment Arts at SCAD where he founded the first MFA in Themed Entertainment Design. Weishar has authored three books, *Digital Space: Designing Virtual Environments*; *Blue Sky: The Art of Computer Animation*; and *CGI: The Art of the Computer Generated Image*. Central Florida. He served as an Associate Member of the TEA Eastern North America Division Board. In 2023 he was awarded the Peter Chernak Distinguished Service Award by the TEA.

Barbie



LAS VEGAS
**LICENSING
EXPO**

**LEVEL UP
WITH THE BRANDS
CONSUMERS LOVE**

**21-23 MAY 2024
Mandalay Bay
Convention Centre**

IT STARTS HERE.



GET YOUR TICKET

GLOBAL
**LICENSING
GROUP**

LAS VEGAS
**LICENSING
EXPO**

LONDON
**BRAND
LICENSING
EUROPE**

CHINA
**LICENSING
EXPO**

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
LICENSE GLOBAL



Bermuda Storm

An accomplished team helps create a Thea-recognized attraction for Chimelong

by Gene Jeffers

The Bermuda Storm attraction highlights the ability of Chimelong Group to pull together a global team capable of integrating and successfully delivering the highest quality attraction. Creating it in the early years of COVID-19 pushed creative and management skills to the next level. We hear from team members Su Creative Studio, FAR Out! Creative Direction, Brogent Technologies, Mack Animation, Yessian Music and Sound Design, Kraftwerk Living Technologies, Technifex, Visual Terrain.

Stepping from the vast interior of Chimelong Spaceship through a fairly modest entryway, you find yourself within a Caribbean-themed environment: palm trees, fiery pink and orange sunset sky, island music in the background. On a tired warehouse wall a large poster beckons you to join Captain Bob and Charlie, his animated (pri)mate, on their whale watching adventure. Inside the warehouse you find a holding area for the good ship Conch. The evening sky glows through upper windows, illuminating murals of island scenes and a large-scale model of the ship. The curious glance inside Captain Bob and Charlie's shared office displaying communication and navigation equipment. Charlie's banana peels litter the room and a few photos of famous people who have enjoyed the tour hang on the walls.

You are in line for Bermuda Storm, an attraction being honored in 2024 with a TEA Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement. "The Bermuda Storm attraction invites guests to encounter a next step immersive theme park experience," wrote the Thea Awards Judging Committee in its official remarks, praising the attraction "for seamlessly integrating a unique collection of innovative technologies and specially created show elements that support a wild and crazy mythical sea adventure."

A crazy, crazy idea

Creating a new major attraction was seen as critical for the success of Chimelong Spaceship, the world's biggest indoor theme park, located in Zhuhai, China. Mr. Su Zhigang, the Chief Creative Officer of Su Creative Studio (which consists of a number of creative divisions: live entertainment, engineering and technology, planning and architecture, media content, IP development, flora and fauna exhibits, etc.) wanted to create "a large, exciting motion-based attraction with top quality media, audio, lighting, video and SFX."

"Mr. Su's vision and ambition has always been for bigger and better! After the first exploratory meeting for this project, I thought he had finally exceeded his ambition. A giant motion base boat in front of a massive curvilinear screen surrounded by a moat of actual water? This sounds insane! Someone

Above: Bermuda Storm is a major new attraction at Chimelong Spaceship. All photos courtesy Chimelong, unless otherwise noted



Su Zhigang
 Founder and Chairman,
 Chimelong Group
 Chief Creative Officer of
 Su Creative Studio, Chimelong



Rick Rothschild, Founder
 and Chief Creative at FAR
 Out! Creative Direction



Stefan Rothaug, Director
 of Marketing, Brogent
 Technologies



Kevin Murphy, Senior
 Vice President, Kraftwerk
 Living Technologies



Lars Goldenbogen, Media
 Producer, Mack Animation



Monty Lunde, Founder/
 CEO, Technifex



Lisa Passamonte Green, CEO/
 Principal, Visual Terrain



Steven Young, Principal
 Designer, Director of
 Design, Visual Terrain



Brian Yessian, Partner/CCO,
 Yessian Music & Sound Design



Yas Takata,
 Media Content Director

needed to talk some sense into him,” said Yas Takata, Media Content Director for the project. “Fortunately he was not dissuaded, and we tinkered and went through endless trials and tests. It was challenging but the team coalesced behind Mr. Su, Chimelong and a strong vendor team, and we are all proud of the result.”

This year Mr. Su is being honored with The Buzz Price Thea Award – Recognizing a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements as “the leading force of the themed entertainment industry in China.”

“The feature attraction for Chimelong Spaceship had to be large,” Tony Sze, Senior Consultant of Chimelong Group explained. “Large enough to satisfy many people, large enough to keep wait times as low as possible, large enough to match the guest expectations generated by the enormous scale of the entire theme park.”

The core concept was to build the world’s largest motion-base attraction, equipment supplied by Brogent Technologies based in Taiwan. “This was a crazy, crazy idea to build a giant boat simulator within this enormous indoor park,” Stefan Rothaug, Brogent’s Director of Marketing explained. “To meet the capacity demands, we suggested two boats, but Mr. Su was insistent. One boat, hundreds of people.” This led to a record-breaking 24.4 meter (80 feet) wide and 25.6 meter (84 feet) long 3D platform poised 7.1 meters (23 feet) off the ground, capable of Heave (+/- 0.45m/1.5ft), Roll (+/-5 degrees) and Pitch (+/- 7 degrees) and an eventual capacity of 304 standing passengers. (Longer than a tennis court, and twice as wide.)

Finding the way

To help develop a storyline involving a big boat in the water, Chimelong reached out to creative director Rick Rothschild, Founder and Chief Creative at FAR Out! Creative Direction. They had worked together on previous projects, and Rothschild saw this as an opportunity to be part of something



The briefing room uses windows and special effects to give guests the feeling they are already on a boat at sea.

extraordinary. “Mr. Su had envisioned a really big experience, utilizing an immense ride system. It just needed a compelling storyline – one that would deliver the excitement of the fantastic while embracing the overall theme of the park,” he said. “It had to tie into his interest in focusing on the importance of water to sustaining life, a thematic throughline of the park, while we needed to create a wild and crazy piece of pure attraction entertainment.”

“As a team, we brainstormed endlessly to find solutions to the many technical and creative issues a project of this magnitude offers,” Chris Ho, Executive Creative Officer of Su Creative Studio recalled. “Add to that the nerve-wracking challenges presented by COVID-19 – lack of manpower both domestically and within our international suppliers, visa difficulties, shut-downs and travel restrictions. Everyone pulled together to make our on-time opening of Bermuda Storm happen.”

The crowd mills around you, commenting on the ship model, the office, the artwork on the walls. Overhead, screens run commercials for various activities, concerts, restaurants, places to see on the island. As boarding time approaches, the screens switch to the Chinese Travel Network and their review and backgrounder of Captain Bob’s Whale Watching tours followed by a black-and-white image of Captain Bob with Charlie in the background and an invitation for you to come on board.

Working together seamlessly

Filming of the on-screen commercials, the ship’s crew and the main theater film were undertaken by Mack Animation in Germany. “There was a challenge to have Captain Bob, played by a live actor and Charlie, an animated primate, work together seamlessly,” Lars Goldenbogen, Media Producer at Mack Animation noted. “We knew Captain Bob would have to be a little bit cartoonish, and Charlie a little bit human. We knew they would be presented to guests on the ship in holographic form.” A lot of effort went into creating a Specialized Projected Spatial Effect (SPSE) to generate a sense that the characters looked solid and appeared real rather than transparent.

The excitement mounts as you and the crowd of guests travel across the dock, line up, board the Conch and are ushered into the main hold of the ship, a large room with a clerestory of windows along the top of the walls. Everything is a bit grimy, has the appearance of being well used. Warm sunset colors stream through the side portals, their beams striking inside the room. Charlie plays DJ and enlivens the party atmosphere with some reggae tunes. Captain Bob appears and outlines the adventure ahead and sends Charlie off to get the voyage started. You hear a rumble from below, feel the ship tremble as it prepares to head out to sea. Your heart beats a little faster as the engine sounds increase and the light through the clerestory swings



The 304-person motion platform is engineered to the highest safety standards and manufactured with precision to ensure a flawless and safe exhilarating experience. Photo courtesy Brogent

across the room as the Conch heads out to sea. Captain Bob outlines the safety procedures for going out on the deck and some rules for keeping the ocean clean and healthy. Doors open and you walk down a corridor onto the bow of the boat.

Adventure lies ahead and you can't wait!

Building authenticity

Thanks in part to a wide array of special effects and efforts, guests can feel the authenticity of the experience as they approach the ship - and they will soon see, feel and hear much more. "Kraftwerk Living Technologies referred us to Mack Animation to do the sound design," said Brian Yessian, Partner/CCO at Yessian Music & Sound Design. "Right away we could see it was such a unique project with queue, pre-show and a large dome screen, huge moving platform, and all the challenges that come from working with a massive speaker array in a dome, complete with systems on board the platform and point source systems that are all working together."

Creating just the right mix of deep rumbling engines and clanking machinery coming from the belly of the ship to match, mask and integrate a wide range of sounds and effects during the main show became the challenge. "It was amazing to see how well everyone collaborated and worked together," Yessian

adds. "Along with balancing a large number of BIG sound effects with a full orchestral score; there is the constant battle with environmental noises, actuators, mechanics, wave and wind special effects with the need to keep them realistic within the context of the sonic story and physical movement of the platform. Small audio nuances can jar people right out of the immersion you are working to create. It's our job to create the perfect balance of sound."

Show action specialists Technifex contributed a broad range of equipment and installs, from a central lift and cannon on the bow of the ship (at one point Charlie rises to chase away pirates atop a smoke firing cannon) to lighting effects, bespoke water and wind effects along with handrails on the motion base that provide a "shocking" lightning tingle. "It was impressive how dedicated Mr. Su, Chimelong and Rick were to creating an emotional, visceral experience," said Monty Lunde, Founder/CEO of Technifex. "They were completely focused on the show and what kind of tech was required. Whatever was needed to immerse the audience and make the events feel as realistic as possible was included in the show." Equally impressive was the progression of the storyline from queue to exit, the beats the creative team put into the script, and what effects would be needed to support the story and the illusion of being on board a ship at sea.



Brogent crafted a colossal cervo hydraulic system, utilizing precise calibration techniques to effortlessly propel the giant cylinder while achieving a remarkably lifelike motion effect. Photo courtesy Brogent

Among the challenges facing the project were fitting show action equipment within the physical constraints of a moving platform carrying hundreds of people. “And water effects,” Lunde added. “They wanted big water effects between the motion base and the curved screen, which could not get wet. Splashing and wave effects had to be visible to the guests but contained within a very narrow space.” As Technifex did not initially have full specs on the base, they had to engineer significant malleability and flexibility into the equipment to ensure it could be tailored onsite. “Brogent were very helpful, providing critical infrastructure within their motion base that allowed for the placement of our show action equipment and special effects,” said Lunde. “In the end, the effects all support the story.”

Setting the scene

Lighting design played an essential role in creating that sense of being on an island and on a ship. Visual Terrain provided solutions to reinforce the sense of place and time within the queue, pre-show and during the main show. “When we became involved, there was a fully developed story,” Lisa Passamonte Green, CEO/Principal in Charge said. “From day one the goal was to make lighting a part of the storytelling and expand the guest immersion, make it feel real.”

“We have to help make people feel the story,” explained Steven Young, Principal Designer, Director of Design at Visual Terrain. “We have to offer solutions to help make the guests believe they are on this ship. For example, we proposed a way to ensure that wherever the guests are within the attraction, the direction of the sun is evident and consistent. When the ship leaves the dock and turns out to sea, the light inside the ship coming through the clerestory shifts to reflect that movement. When guests go out on the foredeck, the projection of the sun on the dome screen is right where they expect it to be.”

That sense of realism is essential to a guest’s satisfaction. “These details and techniques really matter when you are trying to immerse people in a moment away from everything else,” said Passamonte Green. “Finding that balance between light and shadow, between real and artificial light is a highly subjective art form using highly technical equipment.”

For Goldenbogen and the Mack Animation crew, the five-minute ocean film for the main theater was by far the most difficult part of the project. “The size of the screen and its huge ocean scenes; water is the most challenging thing you can do in simulation,” said Goldenbogen. Each frame is unique and comprises hundreds of layers. “Five minutes straight of water, water, water, giant waves, whirlpools, storms, tornadoes, everything interacting with the water, 60 frames per second on a 10,000 by 2,000 format.”



Bermuda Storm immerses guests in huge ocean scenes.



Yessian's studio in Detroit (pictured) is where audio is pre-mixed and prepped before the on-site mix during install. Credit: Yessian

Hundreds of terabytes of data had to be rendered, which required massive computing power.

As you step out and onto the foredeck, the immensity and depth of the scene is overwhelming. Cerulean and jade water surrounds the bow of the ship and reflects the orange, deep yellow and crimson in the sky. You see row upon row of handrails and take your place, gripping firmly. Captain Bob announces something of interest to one side and the foredeck begins to pitch and heave as the Conch changes course. The sun and sky and sea shift to match the sense of movement, the sounds of water and machinery rise.

One large, fully integrated system

The 40 meter (131 feet) diameter, 1,682 square meter (18,000 square foot) curved projection screen creates a breathtakingly realistic and immersive environment. The spectacle of being on a calm, evening cruise is fully realized through visual, sound, lighting and special effects as the audience steps into the main theater and onto the platform. Within minutes this will change as the fury of wind gusts, the crackle of lightning, and the pounding of raindrops will all synchronize perfectly with dramatic visuals on the screen.

“Our role as the audiovisual - with a big AV - designer was to create one large, fully integrated system that would deliver all of the AV technology and media replay elements for the queue, preshow and main theater,” said Kevin Murphy, Senior Vice President at Kraftwerk Living Technologies (KLT). “We supplied hardware and specialized services, combining and synchronizing audio, video, screen and show control systems.”

Vibration and a high-powered immersive (Spatial) 41 Channel 3D Sound System allow voyagers to experience a truly immersive adventure. “It was really intriguing to get the chance to use our skills and experience on a huge Low Frequency Effects (LFE) sound system, with substantial ultra-low

frequency required to simulate the experience of really being on a ship in a storm,” Murphy said. “We believe it is a first at this scale.”

The system features three different types of loudspeakers: fifteen 2 x 18 inch subwoofers behind the screen, two VLFE (very low frequency elements) on the floor to support frequencies from 11Hz to around 30Hz, as well as a large number of transducers below the platform, to generate a vibrating effect to simulate the boat ride. Capable of generating frequencies from 1Hz up to around 100Hz, the system gives the content creator the freedom to immerse the audience and pull them into the drama of the ship, the storm and the story.

Integrating all the effects - Brogent's motion base, Visual Terrain's lighting, Yessian's sound, Technifex's special effects, and Mack Animation's films - involved significant challenges for KLT. To prepare for the installation of the attraction, a mock-up was built in Austria near KLT headquarters. “The dome of the Main Show was set up in quarter scale and the Captain Bob pre-show in full scale,” Murphy noted. “Technical experts, creative heads and several parties involved in the project came together to prove the creative and technical concept, and to test content and motion profiles. We even had a Motion Sickness Expert study the ride and its impact on riders.”

After a smooth beginning, things aboard the Conch begin to go terribly, terribly wrong very quickly. The ship is consumed by a storm of the “paranormal kind,” pirates approach menacingly, and, after a raucous cannon battle, are repelled by Charlie; a towering 300-foot tsunami strikes; the ship is shoved skyward, then plummets; wind and water are rising and churning; a massive tentacle-bashing kraken grown from all the human waste and garbage that has found its way into the ocean attacks, slewing and twisting the platform. As the story goes, the pleasant sunset cruise has become a nightmare.



The entrance and queue sets for Bermuda Storm are intricately themed and support the attraction storyline.

Lightning crashes overhead and your hands feel its electric energy race through the handrail. Can the Conch and its passengers survive? Can you survive? Only time will tell.

The keys to success

That the Bermuda Storm project survived a global pandemic is itself a success story. “In a way we were handed a blank sheet of paper, an enormous motion base and a predetermined location and space,” Rothschild said. “We pulled together a top-tier international team to work with an extraordinarily talented local Chimelong team, crafted an engaging and exciting storyline, completed the design and pre-production, and then had our knees knocked out when COVID-19 struck.” Traditional approaches to conceiving, designing, and fabricating a major attraction had to be adapted and adjusted.

Bermuda Storm highlights Chimelong’s determination to conceive, create and successfully deliver fantastic experiences to their guests. Significant investment was made to ensure that concepts on paper were effectively realized in the final product. “Keys to the project were the many hours spent to create scale mockups, designs and plans for execution,” Chris Ho said. “Having a great sense of the objective - and even though scattered across the globe during a pandemic, assembling a great team of specialists - were essential to creating a world-class, multiple system integrated, media-based attraction. Especially on this scale.”

It is hard to give justice to the Bermuda Storm experience with mere words, and perhaps it is best to come see and feel for yourself this incredible whale watching adventure with a crazy captain aboard the world’s largest motion base platform inside an immense video dome filled with immersive sound, light, wind, water and other effects. •

More info:

Chimelong Group: www.chimelong.com/group

FAR Out! Creative Direction, Rick Rothschild:
[linkedin.com/in/rickrothschild](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rickrothschild)

Brogent Technologies, Inc.: www.brogent.com

Kraftwerk Living Technologies: www.kraftwerk.at

Mack Animation: www.mackanimation.com

Technifex: www.technifex.com

Visual Terrain: www.visualterrain.net

Yessian Music & Sound Design: www.yessian.com



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) look forward to traveling and spending more time with their two daughters, son-in-law and three grandchildren.

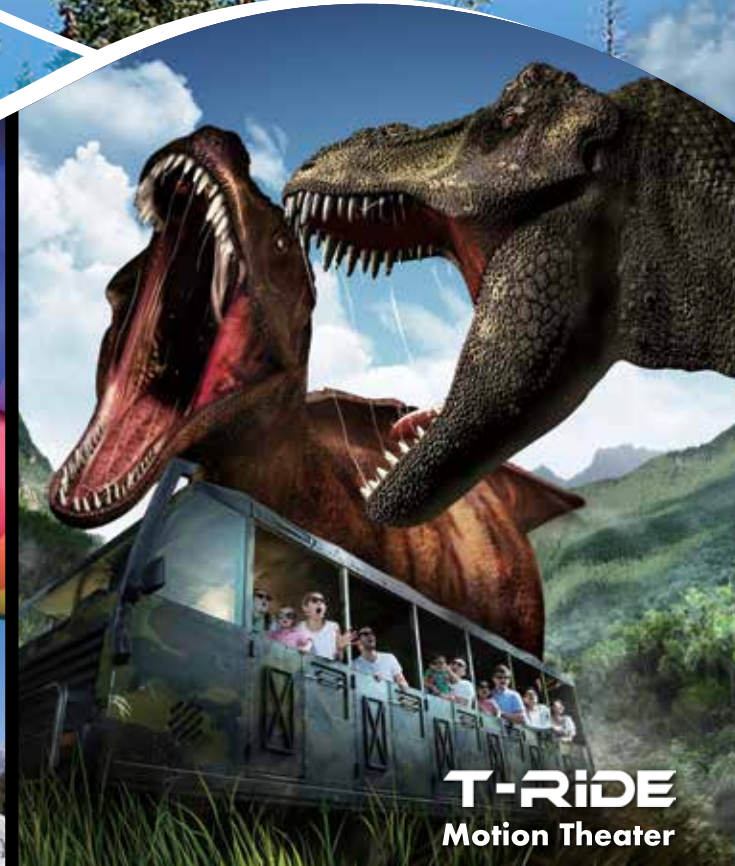
Leading Provider of Flying Theater & Media-Based Solutions



10K Film is
now available
for licensing



V-RIDE 360
Standing Flying Theater



T-RIDE
Motion Theater

BROGENT

WWW.BROGENT.COM | sales@brogent.com



40 YEARS

TECHNIFEX

Producing Entertaining Technologies



Chimelong Bermuda Storm

Celebrating 40 years providing special effects solutions to the Themed Entertainment industry.





Remembering Dick Nunis and Marty Krofft

Colleagues pay tribute to two industry leaders
curated by Joe Kleiman

We pay tribute to two influential pioneers of the themed entertainment community whom we recently lost – long-time Disney theme park executive and operations specialist Dick Nunis, who set the standard for guest-centric operations, and Marty Krofft, who with his brother Sid established one of the most famous puppeteering companies of the late 20th Century.

DICK NUNIS

Dick Nunis, who passed away December 13, 2023 at age 91, approached theme park operations by looking at it as more than just structures and attractions. He understood the need for the human connection and that all the architecture, the attraction design, the dining and shopping were able to be enjoyed by guests because of the positive interface with cast members. With Van France, he developed the Disney University training program for cast members. In 2022, during a D23 Q&A session, Nunis said, “One of the phrases we used a lot in training—‘the magic mirror of your smile’—that was my phrase.” According to his wife Mary, that meant that “you smile and ‘the mirror’—in this case another person—smiles back.”

By 1961, Nunis had become Director of Park Operations at Disneyland. In 1971, he became the Executive Vice President of both Walt Disney World and Disneyland. His role would expand when, in 1980, he was named President of Disney’s

Outdoor Recreation Division, overseeing the expansion of the Walt Disney World Resort with the additions of Epcot Center and the Disney-MGM Studios, along with a slew of hotels, waterparks, and shopping and dining options.

Nunis was well known for pushing his staff to meet goals and deadlines, but foremost, he instilled a belief in the company that people made the difference, that a single interaction could transform a theme park visit into an experience. It’s a philosophy that has carried over to theme parks, attractions, and hospitality operations worldwide.

Nunis interacted with all divisions of the Disney company involved in theme park design and operation during his career. We are grateful to entertainment designer Ron Miziker, former Imagineer Rick Rothschild, and former Disneyland Resort President Matt Ouimet for sharing their memories:



Ron Miziker, Founder/ Creative Consultant, Miziker Entertainment Group

Ron Miziker is a live entertainment specialist with 50+ years’ show experience. In 1971, he joined Disney, where he served as an Entertainment Producer and

Director, responsible for a number of opening ceremonies, parades, and special events, including playing a key role in the development of the Main Street Electrical Parade. In 1983, he moved on to the Disney Channel, to take on the role of Vice President of Original Programming. Following his time at Disney, Miziker founded and helmed Miziker Entertainment for thirty years, successfully completing more than 500 projects for over 200 clients in 24 countries. The company he founded remains a leader in live entertainment and spectacles, led by Ryan Miziker, Charlotte Huggins, and Sean Chung. In 2015, Miziker was honored by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) with The Buzz Price Thea Award for a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements.

“His leadership enabled Walt Disney World to open on schedule.”

I was the Director of the Live Entertainment division during the last couple of months before the opening of Walt Disney World. Like all the other directors – such as for merchandise, operations, food and beverage, etc. – we were required by Dick to do site walk-throughs with him when he decided to have one... which was frequent. We'd spend half a day or more as a group tramping through every part of the park during those final days of construction.

These treks were hot, dirty, buggy, and intense. Along the way, Dick would stop and ask the appropriate director questions like, “Why isn't the equipment installed in this facility yet? You said three days ago it was being installed and I see nothing! I want it installed by tomorrow! If it is not here, I'll get someone else to get it here!” On a walk-through two weeks before opening, we were walking in a few inches of water along the waterway of the Jungle Cruise as it was being filled for the first time. My beeper went off. It was for my wife's message that she was being rushed off to the hospital to deliver our second child, and to come as quickly as I could. I looked up and Dick was giving demands and pointing in every direction. I looked down and the water was now up to my ankles. Dick paused. I took this opportunity to say that I had an emergency and needed to leave immediately. It caused a verbal explosion. No one leaves Dick's walk-through. When he paused, I jumped in with my reason for leaving. Dick stood still. Stared at me for a second or two and said, “Why in hell are you just standing there? Get the hell out of here and go to your wife! But be back in two hours.”

That was the kind of person Dick was. Demanding and dedicated to getting the enormous project he loved completed on time; yet very caring when required. That is why I believe he was truly a great leader and I respected him. I also believe that Walt Disney World would never have opened on time without Dick Nunis leading the charge.



Matt Ouimet

Matt Ouimet joined Disney in 1989, acting in a number of roles within the company. During his tenure at Disney, he served as Executive General Manager of Disney Vacation Club, President of Disney Cruise Line, and President of Disneyland Resort, where he oversaw the resort's 50th Anniversary celebration. In 2011, he was named President of Cedar Fair Entertainment, a leading North American theme park and waterpark company, and became CEO in 2012. In 2017, Ouimet stepped down as CEO, but remained on the company's board through 2023.

“Great guest experience became part of my professional personality”

Disney hired me to be the CFO of their real estate division, the Disney Development Company. This was during the latter years of Dick's career. Internal political tensions were high between the various divisions and Corporate. For years, “gold footballs,” the windshield stickers that gave you all-property access, were only given to long-tenured cast members who ultimately achieved an executive role. But, under Michael Eisner, some of us got our footballs with no internal track record. Given this environment I was always plainly scared whenever it came to interaction with Dick. To his credit, he always treated me fairly, and only once threatened to “take me off his speed dial.” What is most important to share is that no one taught me more about the importance of delivering Disney-level guest experiences. It wasn't just an intellectual lesson, it was one that became part of my professional personality. Dick truly created the foundation for the great guest experience Disney is known for.



Rick Rothschild, Chief Creative, FAR Out! Creative Direction

Rick Rothschild is a former Creative Director with Walt Disney Imagineering, where he lent his creative talent to such notable attractions as The American Adventure, Pleasure Island, and Soarin' Over California. With his own firm, FAR Out! Creative Direction, Rothschild has advanced the flying theater and motion simulator genres with the FlyOver attractions found throughout North America and in Iceland, for experience company Pursuit, and the Bermuda Storm ship simulator experience at Chimelong Spaceship [see article on page 46] which was recently announced as the recipient of a TEA Thea Award. Rothschild is a Past President of the Themed Entertainment Association and was recently named a TEA Master of His Craft.

“Respect and kindness”

Early on in my work at Imagineering, I remember well a session with Dick where he rhetorically asked “Do you know the three reasons why our guests love Disney parks?”... to which he answered, “One... Our cast members are always friendly, helping to make sure our guests have a great experience. Two... Our parks are clean and always well maintained. Three... Oh, and then... there’s the attractions you here at WED (given when he said this was in the late ’70s) create for our guests.”

The order in which Dick presented these three reasons was extremely important to him... if you don’t first make the experience at a Disney park a personal, helpful, and friendly one, the rest of what is there for the guests to enjoy will be diminished. That goes along with guaranteeing that any day in the park feels as fresh and well appointed as opening day, guaranteeing a fully enjoyable experience of all that Imagineers create.

This was a simple message spoken by a fully devoted Disney guy that I carried with me through my career at Imagineering and to this day. Remembering who we are all working to bring joy and excitement to with all we create in themed entertainment and just how important treating them respectfully and with kindness is. Thank you Dick! RIP

MARTY KROFFT



L to R: Sid Krofft, H.R. Pufnstuf, and Marty Krofft

Marty Krofft, one-half of the puppetry powerhouse Sid and Marty Krofft, passed away November 25, 2023 at the age of 86. In 1958, he became assistant to his older brother Sid, creating the Krofft Theater, later renamed to Sid and Marty Krofft Productions. Marty would soon move on to manage the business with Sid overseeing the creative, a relationship similar to that between Walt Disney and his brother Roy. Though the partnership could be tumultuous at times, the company’s body of work brought significant innovations to the art of puppetry while remaining true to its roots, and influenced many creative designers over the years. The Krofft company performed at three world’s fairs (Seattle, New York, and San Antonio) and a number of theme parks, including Six Flags parks and Kings

Island. We were privileged to speak with Marty’s brother Sid as well as former Krofft designer Jeremy Railton, who became a creative industry force in his own right.



Jeremy Railton, Senior Partner, Railton Entertainment Design

Jeremy Railton is a production and creative designer whose experience ranges from zoos to live theater, television productions, concerts (stars such as Barbara Streisand and Cher), and themed experiences, including TEA Thea

Award recipient Crane Dance at Resorts World Sentosa. Railton is also a recipient of The Buzz Price Thea Award for a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements. At the time that the Krofft puppets were performing at the various world’s fairs, there were twenty-three artists on payroll. “Jeremy was one of them,” shared Sid Krofft. “I interviewed Jeremy and hired him – he was extremely well qualified!”

“The show went on”

After working for Sid and Marty Krofft for many years from the Atlanta park, H.R. Pufnstuf, Donny and Marie, Pink Lady and many Saturday morning shows they treated me as a family member! It was always fun with a crazy ambitious energy about them. Sid and Marty ruled entertainment from the early seventies to early eighties.

Pink Lady, a Japanese pop culture duo signed to do an NBC variety show. For the pilot shoot, and as a welcome and way to break the ice for the two shy non-English speaking singers, Marty thought it would be fun to give the girls a laugh. The sketch was brought to an end by the girls opening a door to see a huge Sumo wrestler! Marty suggested to his friend Billy Barto, a well-known little person actor, that he dress up as a sumo wrestler and it would be a funny surprise.

It didn’t go well. The girls screamed when they opened the door and ran cowering to a corner of the set, literally shivering with fear! Evidently in their culture seeing a little person like that was very bad luck!! Almost a curse! But they recovered and the show went on!

Sid Krofft, Co-Founder, Sid and Marty Krofft Productions

I didn’t really know my brother growing up. We came from a big family and I was on the road since I was ten years old. He was eight years younger.

At fifteen, I was performing on Broadway, then I followed that with tours of the States and Europe. I had a very adult puppet act opening for Judy Garland and Liberace. I did the Folies Bergere and the Lido in Paris, and did a big show in London for about six or seven months, including a command performance for the Queen.

I had an assistant named Ray Arnett, who left me because he got a better job, so Marty joined me in 1958 when I was at the Flamingo in Vegas, to be my assistant. He had written in his yearbook that he wanted to be a puppeteer like his older brother and change his name to Krofft. Krofft was something I picked up as a showbiz name.

Marty was really the business end of the company. He was great at sales. He could sell anything – when he was young, he sold cars, and pendants at Yankee Stadium. It was a gift.

The Maitre d' at the Flamingo had saved enough money to open his own venue in Los Angeles. It was a restaurant, a club, and us, doing a T&A puppet show, the kind of entertainment I saw in the clubs in Paris.

This show, Les Poupées de Paris, was so popular that we were invited to perform it in a nine-hundred seat theater at the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle. They built a theater for us and the girls came down from the ceiling and there was a 50-foot rotating stage and a fifty-piece orchestra. For the opening show, they ushered in Billy Graham, and that night he had a rally with 100,000 people and he told them, "Don't go see the show called Les Poupées de Paris because the women there don't wear bras." We were invited next to the 1964 fair in New York, where we had an even bigger theater, with 1,200 seats, but they made one caveat – the female marionettes had to wear bras until 5:00 p.m. After that, when the kids had gone home, the bras could come off.

"Take the lead"

At one point, we had 250 people in our factory. One day, in 1962, Marty and I are having lunch in the Polo Lounge with dancer Cyd Charisse and her husband Tony Martin and Walt Disney is in the next booth over. He comes over to say hi to Cyd and Tony and they introduce us to Walt. He says, "I've heard of you guys. In fact, I'm going to Seattle to see the fair before it closes. Can I give you some advice? You're marketing yourselves as the Krofft Theater. Always put your name above everything you create because some day, it'll be worth something." I mentioned this to our publicist and he said, "Yeah, Krofft Theater means nothing, but I can sell two brothers." That's how we became Sid and Marty Krofft. Later, a lot of our employees moved on to work for Jim Henson. Everyone thought the Krofft puppets were Muppets. Marty met with Jim and told him the Walt Disney story and then Jim started putting his name on all his projects.

We did a lot of work for Six Flags. I used to run a lot and sometimes I'd join a pickup game of volleyball afterwards. One day, I start a game and a friend of mine tells me that he's looking for new attractions for Six Flags parks. They were about to open a new park in Georgia, and that he would mention us to Angus Wynne, who owned the parks. I didn't think much of it. Wynne had a competing show, a Broadway-style show, that played at the 1964 world's fair. Our show was a success. His flopped. A few days after that game, I get word that Wynne wants to meet.

Our shows at the fairs were 50 minutes long. This Six Flags one was shorter – only 25 minutes, but it was the hit of the park. At the Georgia park, people were lining up for hours to see it.

We later had our own park, called the World of Sid and Marty Krofft, in downtown Atlanta, but it only lasted six months. When we agreed to the park, the city promised they'd clean up the downtown by the time we opened. They didn't, so we didn't get the traffic.

I was the creative guy. Marty handled the business end. He was the only person I had big arguments with. He wanted to cut our television budgets in half because that's what the studio wanted. So when you watch our TV shows, like H.R. Pufnstuf, which actually started as a show we created for Coca-Cola at the 1968 San Antonio World's Fair called Kaleidoscope, you'll see there are no sets. Everything was wood cutouts and paint. That only made our scripts and our performances that much stronger.

And it's important for people to know this – a lot of people think our TV shows were for kids. They really weren't. They were written for adults. A lot of our stuff was written by television writers who also worked on Star Trek.

The last words I said to Marty at the foot of the bed, and the nurse said he could hear me, was "Marty, it's Sid. I'll see you in my dreams." Then he passed away.

Marty was my little brother, he was one of a kind. Everyone who met him experienced something very unique. Every single dream I had, he got it produced.

I tell people, "Everyone is so creative, every single person. If you stay focused on a creative thought, you'll get it done. Tell everybody to go left, because everyone always goes right. Don't follow the leader – take the lead."

We didn't always get along, but we were an incredible team, and we worked together in a big way. Marty was like a man of steel – he never gave up. People can learn from Marty – stay focused, never give up, and you'll get it done. •



Issue #101

**Saudi Entertainment + Attractions Expo
IAAPA Expo Asia
InfoComm • Licensing Expo**

DEADLINE: March 29, 2024



Smart Control for Media & Entertainment

CELEBRATING
15 YEARS



Entertainment



Edutainment



Architainment



Design

We use cutting-edge technology and design techniques to create custom solutions that push the boundaries of what's possible in AV installations.



Implementation

We take a systematic approach to implementing our solutions, ensuring highly efficient operational workflows and minimizing downtime.



Support

Our team is ready to support your systems to ensure maximum uptime for your business-critical operations. 24/7 if needed.



Monitor & Manage AV Systems

Learn more at isaacplatform.com

Contact us

 smart-monkeys.com

 Miami & Orlando, FL



07-09
MAY
2024
RFECC, RIYADH

YOUR GATEWAY TO THE FASTEST
EMERGING, MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR
ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE
MARKET IN THE MIDDLE EAST

GET YOUR FREE PASS

