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ON THE COVER

Hallmark turned to a team of seasoned professionals to help craft the first ever Hallmark Christmas Experience in Kansas City, MO.

Photos courtesy of Hallmark

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team & contributors

PUBLISHER
Martin Palicki

SENIOR CORRESPONDENT
Joe Kleiman

CONTRIBUTORS
David Willrich
Gene Jeffers
Jim Ogul
Judith Rubin

DESIGN
Keaton Jadwin

EDITORIAL ADVISOR
Judith Rubin

NEWS EDITOR
Jordan Zauha

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE
Jordan Zauha

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Rising from the ashes

**Martin Palicki,
Publisher**

With alarming headlines grabbing our collective attention every day, it might be worthwhile to remind people that – as of this writing – just one month ago whole swaths of Los Angeles were on fire.

As someone firmly rooted in the American Midwest, it's easy for those of us outside of Southern California to regard wildfires as a sort of near-regular activity that is, at the very least, part of some cycle of growth and regeneration. To some extent, that is true.

But this was different. I think we all know the levels of devastation that befell entire neighborhoods. Now, with our attention moved on to other news, it almost feels like we've forgotten what a big deal this is to our industry. The creative attractions community has long called that region home and countless professionals and businesses were directly impacted. Even more are likely to be affected indirectly in the coming months and years.

I envision the fires having an effect of being a trend accelerator, much in the same way the pandemic hurried along shifts that were already beginning (e.g., online ticketing, digital reservation and payment systems, etc.). I imagine this will further hasten the ongoing decentralization from the L.A. region for our vendor community – whether that's to Central Florida (which has its own natural disaster considerations) or elsewhere. I expect the trend of consolidation that we've seen in the last couple of years to continue. Some businesses may not recover at all or choose closing up shop as the simplest succession planning option. From the operator side, one must wonder if new development will avoid the area or if high insurance rates will disincentivize locating new businesses in the region.

I think it's important to realize the potentially large impact this event (along with other extreme disasters and economic shifts) will have on our industry and to try and prepare for further disruption. It feels like the industry – or at least the vendor community – seems to be holding its collective breath, waiting to see what will happen. Between the fires, concerns over trade wars and global uncertainty, a solid dose of stability would be really helpful right now, though that seems unlikely in the short term. In the meantime, let's be there for one another – for those who lost everything, for those struggling to find employment in our industry, and for everyone just trying to get by.

For resources and options for how to get involved, visit artsforla.org/wildfire-relief.

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



"Everything is different"

**Jordan Zauha,
News Editor**

In today's landscape of intensely short deadlines, swifter visualization demands, challenges surrounding artificial intelligence usage, and the need to stay on the bleeding edge, the design and construction of visitor attractions feels more complicated than ever. The need to raise the bar for guests often requires pioneering technologies to meet heightened guest demands, creating a sense of uncertainty with each and every project. After all, we live by Arthur C. Clarke's oft-repeated tenet: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

And that's why in spite of all the above realities of our work, I have come to adore the Thea Classic Award as one of my favorite categories of the TEA Thea Awards. When one strips away a sense of nostalgia for the attractions this award honors, the category can be an excellent reminder to the entire industry that well-made, engrossing experiences transcend the novelty of yesterday's cutting-edge technology. Like all attractions, The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man leveraged incredible technology for its time. (In fact, the creators have told many stories over the past years of the immense and unforeseen challenges while developing and building this guest favorite.) Yet, even after decades of new technological upheavals, the attraction remains a staple of Universal Islands of Adventure due to its central design focused first and foremost on the holistic guest experience rather than any one part or new-fangled feature.

The technology and construction of our industry's greatest attractions support an overall visceral and engaging experience that never tires of itself. The experiences we make – no matter our role – have the potential to endure long past the initial "fad" phase and linger in the hearts of guests and our fellow (and future) creators. It's this universal rule that should always guide our work and creations, whether or not we're using the latest technology or relying on centuries-old tricks. (I'm looking at you, Pepper's ghost.)

And *that* is something that – I dearly hope – never changes.

Jordan is a freelance writer in the themed entertainment industry.



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

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InPark News highlights new projects and products in the industry. To include your news item in print, contact news@inparkmagazine.com.

Haus Collection completes initial rollout, expands team, and prepares for accelerated growth

CINCINNATI, OHIO – Haus Collection, the strategic growth agency founded by Morgan Rottinghaus, is celebrating the successful launch of its business and a period of rapid expansion. Since opening its doors in June 2024, the company has built strong momentum, adding new clients and partners while solidifying its reputation for delivering high-impact strategic growth solutions.

Specializing in relationship development and strategic execution, Haus Collection provides clients with VIP, white-glove service, guiding them toward sustainable success. The firm’s approach is rooted in the philosophy that authentic relationships naturally lead to business opportunities, emphasizing trust and connection as the foundation of growth. Their expertise lies in key stakeholder growth charrettes, strategic execution plans, relationship development, team workshops, and executive growth coaching for business owners and teams.

"Taking that leap of faith allowed me to create my own destiny, doing what truly fulfills me," says Morgan Rottinghaus, CEO & Founder. "Every startup faces the fear of the unknown but securing that first client was an exhilarating milestone. When the train began to roll, there was no looking back. The momentum has been incredible, and I am grateful to be working alongside industry peers I have known for decades. This growth has also created an exciting opportunity to expand our leadership team."

Strengthening leadership with key addition

Haus Collection is thrilled to welcome Jay Rottinghaus as President and Co-Founder. With Jay joining the team, clients now benefit from both his and Morgan’s extensive industry networks and complementary expertise.

"Bringing Jay on board was an easy decision – his vision and expertise align perfectly with our mission. Having him as my partner at Haus Collection is a defining moment," says Morgan. "We challenge each other to raise the bar for ourselves and our clients. We believe in building meaningful, authentic relationships and finding unconventional ways to drive success."

Before joining Haus Collection, Jay Rottinghaus served as Executive Vice President, Strategy at LF Studios, where he spearheaded growth initiatives. A recognized leader in the themed entertainment industry, he has worked with top global brands across both corporate and



Morgan Rottinghaus, CEO & Founder (left) and Jay Rottinghaus (right), President & Co-Founder

themed entertainment industries, including Disney and Universal. He currently serves as the Finance Chair of the TEA Eastern North America Division Board.

"I have dedicated my career to two key areas: building strong relationships that drive sustainable growth and translating growth objectives into actionable business strategies. Joining Haus Collection is an exciting next step, allowing me to leverage my experience to positively impact a broader range of companies," said Jay.

About Haus Collection

Haus Collection is a boutique growth agency dedicated to helping businesses unlock their full potential. Their team of seasoned Growth Executives specializes in relationship-driven strategies that fuel measurable and sustainable growth. By combining market insights with a tailored approach, they navigate today’s complex business landscape, empowering clients to excel in competitive industries.

Guided by instinct, strategy, and an unconventional mindset, Haus Collection doesn’t just meet expectations – they exceed them.

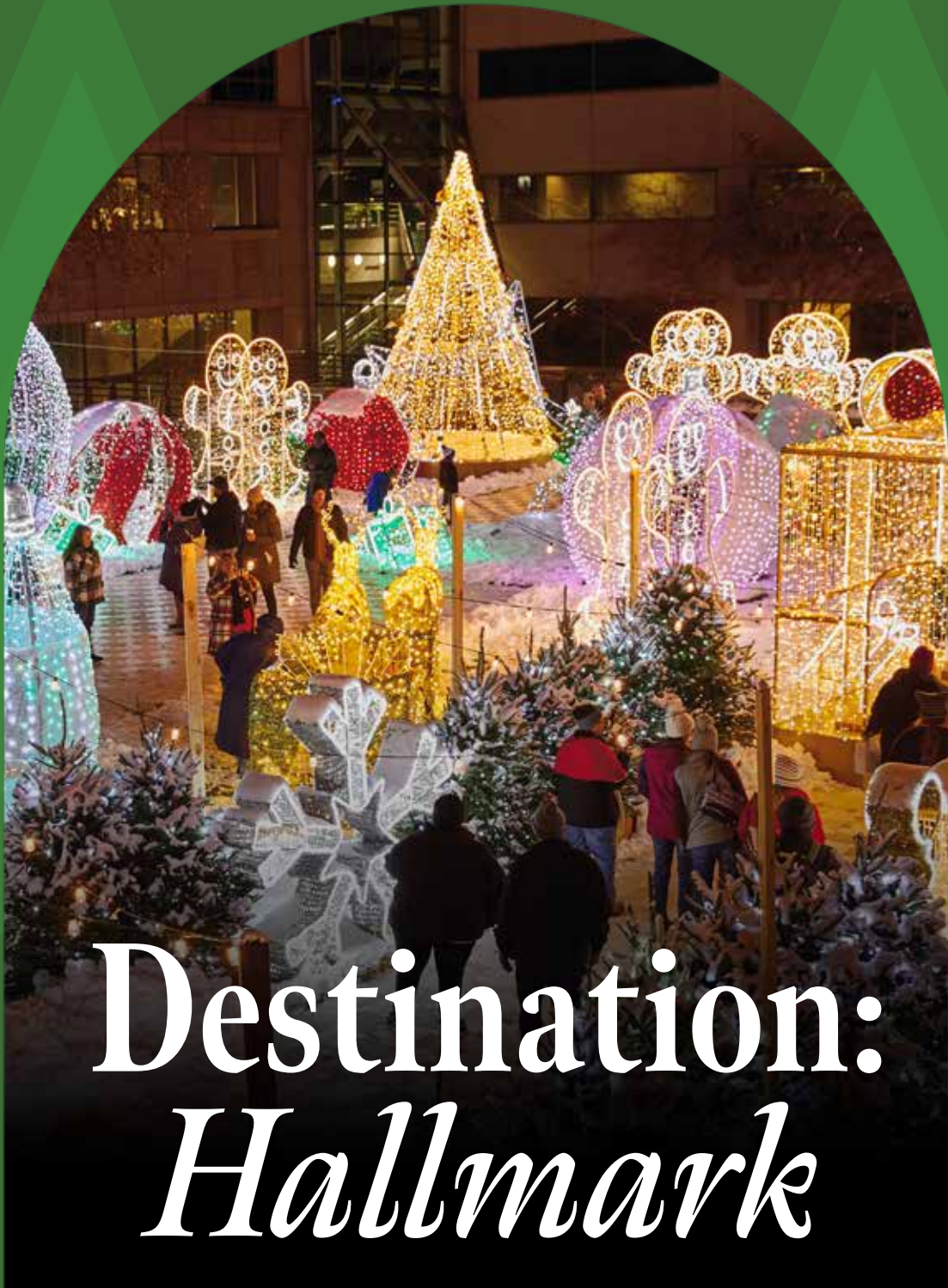
For more information, visit www.haus-collection.com or contact: hello@haus-collection.com. •

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the **Extraordinary.**



Destination: *Hallmark*

In 2024, Kansas City became the center of the Christmas universe. InPark took an in-depth look at the team and process that helped conceive, design, produce and install the first-ever Hallmark Christmas Experience.

by Judith Rubin

Custom lighting and playing with scale creates a magical zone within the Hallmark Christmas Experience. *Photo courtesy of Superfly*



Crown Center Square transformed for the Hallmark Christmas Experience with the 100-foot, color-changing LED-lit tree as focal point. Photo courtesy of Hallmark

Big Christmas visions come true

As a leading brand with a passionate following, Hallmark has embarked on a fresh and bold venture into the experiential space. One might have expected even Hallmark to take it slow on its first such foray. Even with the brand's very strong Christmas presence, it is a mighty tall order to motivate tens of thousands of people to travel to Kansas City, Missouri – in the midst of winter – to participate in a brand new seasonal experience.

Banish all doubts and thoughts of half-measures! The Hallmark Christmas Experience started big, stayed big, and delivered big. It did so every step of the way with the characteristic optimism of a Hallmark Christmas movie. In fact, a red-carpet Hallmark movie premiere event was a bold feature of the very first weekend.

“Creating ways for people to celebrate and connect is core to our brand,” said Lindsey Roy, Senior Vice President Brand Experiences at Hallmark and a 25-year veteran of the company. “We wanted to find new ways people can immerse themselves in the Hallmark Christmas magic.”

Her words rang true as the retail, media, and lifestyle brand juggernaut posted sparkling, seasonal success in 2024, starting with two inaugural Hallmark Christmas Cruises on the Norwegian Gem, followed by the first-ever Hallmark Christmas Experience. The latter drew attendance of more than 100,000 to Crown Center in Kansas City over four consecutive weekends between November 29 and December 22, underscoring Hallmark's close relationship with its customer/fan base – and paving the way for future endeavors.

Those tens of thousands of people made their way to Crown Center on some of the most festive days of the year, to stroll and shop in the Christmas market, gather around the 100-foot LED-lit tree, connect with their favorite Hallmark stars and artists, make new friends and snag souvenirs. Many traveled significant distances, arriving from all 50 U.S. states – and over 20 countries. The program spanned a wide variety of free and ticketed events including VIP packages and Hallmark-themed hotel rooms.

The right team

The Hallmark Christmas Experience was a truly seasonal event, centered on a brand that is closely identified with Christmas by virtue of its products, media and culture. In addition to the program offerings, visitors treasured the chance occasions – the unscripted moments and personal touchpoints uniquely fostered by out-of-home, themed gatherings.

“We brought the charm of a Hallmark movie town square to life. We created a space for people to come and have shared experiences and forge new bonds – whether they had known one another before or met at our event,” said Roy. She oversaw the creation of the Hallmark Christmas Experience, helming the internal project team and leading the collaboration with the external operational partners over a 14-month timeline from green light to opening day.

“My heart was completely touched; as someone who has worked in this industry for a long time, this project was special,” said Chaz McEwan, who assumed the role of executive producer on behalf of Bay Laurel Advisors (BLA),



LED lighting, scale and branding all came together to sustain the festive atmosphere and environment. Photo courtesy of Superfly

the producer team that helped drive the project. McEwan is a producer and creative executive whose broad background of more than 40 years in the business includes roles with Walt Disney Imagineering and Universal Creative, along with a background in theater.

“I’m a Hallmark nut from way back, and I love Christmas,” said Stephen Feener, Chief Projects Officer of Superfly, which was producer/operator on the project. “There is just so much history and story.”

“Hallmark is now a player in the LBE arena, and it’s not just because of their creative acumen; it’s because they know it’s all about the fans,” said George Wade, President, Bay Laurel Advisors. Wade has a long track record helping brands move into experiential formats. He serves on the Board of Directors for Licensing International and was honored in 2024 by License Global as one of “The Influentials” making unique contributions to the field of branded experiences.

“Hallmark’s vision was ambitious and the team was up to the task,” said Wade, who had a prior working relationship with the company by way of Hallmark subsidiary Crayola, having been instrumental in the development of the Crayola Experience venues and other Crayola LBE ventures.

The core external team working with Hallmark’s internal teams included, in addition to Bay Laurel Advisors and Superfly, Dimensional Innovations (design/build/fabrication) and B Morrow Productions (concept design services). There were numerous subcontractors as well. [See sidebar for additional credits.]

Christmas central

Crown Center – an 85-acre mixed-use retail, office, hotel, and entertainment complex – proved the ideal location. Its massive public square is the site of many festivals and events. It is the site of Hallmark headquarters and the Hallmark Visitor Center and is home to seasonal attractions, including the city’s annual Mayor’s Christmas Tree spectacle and the Ice Terrace skating rink. It has two on-site Marriott-operated hotels with a combined total of 1,500 rooms.

“Crown Center itself was a major player in this whole production; it has the infrastructure along with a strong knowhow of its market and the facility itself to support this grand project,” said McEwan. He cited the contributions of Crown Center Redevelopment Corp. President Stacey Paine. “She and her team partnered closely with Lindsey Roy and her team, and their joint efforts were especially powerful. One marker of the event’s success is that the two Crown Center hotels were near full occupancy for the entire run.”

“The final product encompassed pretty much everything contained in the initial concept: a blend of branding, hospitality, holiday/seasonality, live event, food and beverage, red carpet, stage shows, retail, and, of course, making lifelong memories for Hallmark fans. Tiered experiences ensured there was something for everyone,” said Wade.

Culture and connection

The program was built around the myriad of things Hallmark fans love and seek out. Everything was there to experience – from finding the perfect card they could send from the card



Chaz McEwan,
Executive Producer,
Bay Laurel Advisors



Stephen Feener,
Chief Projects Officer,
Superfly



Lindsey Roy,
Senior Vice President
Brand Experiences,
Hallmark



George Wade,
President,
Bay Laurel Advisors



Spencer Farley,
Practice Director,
Entertainment + Hospitality,
Dimensional Innovations



Photo courtesy of Superfly

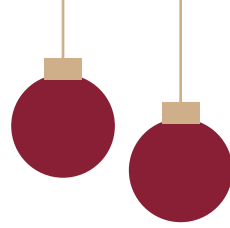


The Christmas Market came together by transforming tents with customized facades and signage.
Photo courtesy of Dimensional Innovation

Tents with customized facades delivered the feeling of being dropped into a Hallmark Christmas village. Photo courtesy of Hallmark



Inside the Christmas Market. Photo courtesy of Superfly



sending station, to picking a special gift and gift wrap, to getting their Hallmark Keepsake Ornament

signed by the artist, to taking a course from Hallmark creatives, and – of course – seeing the stars from their favorite Hallmark movies and series. Hallmark brought the magic of the season to life in stores, on screens, and in person.

Hallmark movies have been around since the 1950s under the renowned Hallmark Hall of Fame banner, and today the media arm is a major component of the company's success, operating three leading linear cable networks, as well as a streaming service and membership program, Hallmark+. The many content offerings include scores of feel-good seasonal movies, scripted and unscripted series, and annual Hallmark Christmas movies, which have made their stake in pop culture. Hallmark's unique brand of storytelling and its captivating actors have legions of enthusiasts. Appropriately, giving fans the opportunity to engage with network stars was a solid plank of the Hallmark Christmas Experience, with over 40 Hallmark Media stars appearing. For visitors, one of the eagerly sought chances – widely discussed and visible in the continuous social media dialogue surrounding the event as a whole – was to connect with a Hallmark star for a selfie and a chat, whether as part of a ticketed event or a spontaneous meeting.

"There were many 'actors in the wild' moments that delighted the fans – unannounced, completely sincere, personal interactions with the guests – one moment after another," says McEwan. "In addition to followers of the movies there was just as big of a fanbase there for the creative sessions tied to Hallmark cards, writing, ornaments and more. People traveled far and wide for high-touch opportunities with Hallmark artists."

Hallmark's brand promise is ingrained in culture and connection and as a natural extension, the Hallmark Christmas Experience was bound to reflect this.

"Our products and content across the business are rooted in warmth and positivity, meaningful connections, family gatherings, and seasonal traditions – a winning formula that means so much to so many," said Roy. "We brought the best of our iconic brand together during the most special time of year."

Tying it all together

An intricate web of production and operational details supported the wide range of activities, whether one-off, recurring, or continuous. "This was a hybrid event, and it was our job to work with the Hallmark team to put those pieces together into a cohesive guest experience," said Feener.

Hallmark and the team

Note: The making of the Hallmark Christmas Experience involved many more people than we can name here, on both the internal and external teams. We are only able to list key companies and figures, while extending our congratulations to everyone involved.

Hallmark

- Lindsey Roy, Senior Vice President Brand Experiences
- Jen Walker, Senior Vice President Creative
- Nikki Meek, Senior Director Brand Experiences
- Chris Stathos, Director Partnerships
- Liz Fizette, Project Management Director
- Anna Kambarami, Creative Director

Crown Center

- Stacey Paine, Crown Center Revelopment Corp. President
- Anne Deuschle, Crown Center Marketing Director

Bay Laurel Advisors

- George Wade, President
- Chaz McEwan, Producer

Superfly

- Stephen Feener, Chief Projects Officer
- Kat Graves, Executive Producer
- Terry McMahan, Vice President of Creative Production
- Ron Collins
- Bob Franklin
- Fabian Gordon

Subcontractors to Superfly

- Legacy Sounds (Technical Production on the exterior square, including the 360-degree LED screen built around the tree) - Andrew Maxwell, Jocelyn Rivera
- Hive Events (technical production in the Westin ballroom) - John Monroe, Kali Moxley
- Rob Ross Design (lighting for the tree light shows and exterior square)

Dimensional Innovations

- Spencer Farley, Practice Director, Entertainment + Hospitality
- Morgan Phillips, Project Manager
- Daren Nybo, Design Engineering Coordinator
- Mather Saladin, Design Engineer
- John Raridon, Project Engineer
- Noah Fondren, Designer
- An all hands-on deck effort from countless DI members for Load-In

B Morrow Productions

- Brian Morrow, Owner
- Andrew Carey, Creative Manager
- Amanda Trauger, VP Creative & Design

The McBride Company

- Ryan McBride, Creative Director
- Alicia L'Heureux, Interior Designer
- Katelyn Lynch, Signage and Graphics Designer



Aerial view of Crown Center shows the Hallmark Christmas Experience coming together with the market tents, the Christmas tree and other elements. *Photo courtesy of Superfly*

Operations had to be baked in from the start. This industry is replete with tales of projects that found themselves without resources for operational needs after design-build-open was complete. But in a make-or-break, finite event such as this one, where each weekend needed to be successful, there's not the luxury of adapting over time. "Each weekend was a temporary event," said Wade. "Each had its inherent challenges to identify and overcome. Part of the team's success was its ability to pivot quickly from weekend to weekend based on guest feedback and their own observations."

The project tapped Superfly's deep well of experience in producing large-scale events, working with media brands and creating unique attractions – an extensive portfolio that includes The FRIENDS Experience, the annual Outside

Lands music festival in San Francisco, and the first several NBC BravoCons. Superfly also founded (and then for many years operated) the annual Bonnaroo Music Festival in Manchester, Tennessee. The company has some 40 employees plus an ample network of contractors.

Feener spoke of the need to identify a unifying, on-brand focal point. This role would be assigned to Crown Center's annual 100-foot live Christmas tree. "The Mayor lights the tree on the Friday after Thanksgiving, and we added nightly tree lightings after that. We made it center stage, like a theme park castle." The tree also became the site of regular programming and broadcasting, with a seamless, branded blend of media content, live presentations and events made extra special and highly visible thanks to programmable, color changing LED lighting and a cylindrical LED videowall around the base, and a stage.

Between shows, the tree would revert back to its traditional look of warm, white lights. Studio RRD was subcontracted by Superfly for this part of the project, and also to install programmable LEDs throughout the square and in the booths of the Christmas market. The twinkling, dynamic lights combined with the 360-degree videowall at the base of the tree and the Light Walk attraction to help create a cohesive world and guest experience. "I wanted to use the whole footprint," said Feener. "People on upper levels can see what's going on onstage. Everyone in the square can feel included." The AV subcontractor, Legacy, provided the creative team with a suite of tools that allowed for a wide range of programming flexibility. [See sidebar for more team information.]



During the event, the adjoining hotel featured Hallmark Christmas-themed hotel rooms, created through a collaboration between The McBride Company and Hallmark. *Photo courtesy of Hallmark*



Red carpet touchdown

Kansas City Chiefs and Hallmark fans united during the first weekend for the outdoor red-carpet event at Crown Center Square on November 30, 2024, celebrating the premiere of *Holiday Touchdown: A Chiefs Love Story*, starring Hunter King and Tyler Hynes. Attendees were encouraged to show up in their Chiefs gear or favorite Christmas sweater, and later to shop the merchandise tie-ins at the Holiday Hallmarket pop-up store and experience the square.

“The Hallmark Christmas Experience was the perfect location for the red-carpet event,” said Roy. “It brought the incredible film full circle uniting the cast, special guests, and the community once again at the red-carpet event. The morning snowfall added to the magical Hallmark moment.”

It was a genuine Hollywood experience in the Midwest. Fans lined the streets for a chance to see the stars of the movie along with other stars there for the Hallmark Christmas Experience. Fans near and far were able to be a part of the red-carpet event with a live feed on the Hallmark Channel.

The Christmas Market

The Christmas Market is another example of the close collaboration between the Hallmark teams and external production teams producing something new yet quintessentially Hallmark.

“The incredibly skilled Hallmark creative community developed a beautiful style guide and creative resources to share with partners, immersing them in the brand and feel of the event,” said Roy.

“B Morrow Productions [BMP] was already creating concept designs for the project when we came on board, and we joined those conversations,” said Feener. “Superfly has extensive previous experience using tents at festivals and how to make tents not feel like tents. We utilized Hallmark creative resources, working with their talented creative team transforming red-top tents with charming facades for that Christmas feeling. Everything outdoors felt like a Hallmark movie square came to life.”

“BMP did a super job dialing into the brand, and they worked very effectively with Hallmark,” said McEwan. “At Bay Laurel Advisors, George and I both know theater as well as brick-and-mortar projects. We realized we needed a design firm that was accustomed to working with strong brands, had experience with live events and thematic holiday design, could develop a concept quickly, and understood Christmas. That was BMP. It was beautiful to see Hallmark creative translated from 2D ideas into a 3D experience.”

“You felt like you’d been dropped into a Hallmark-style Christmas village,” said Spencer Farley, Practice Director, Entertainment + Hospitality at Dimensional Innovations, which provided fabrication for this part of the project and were involved from initial concept through install and post-opening touchups throughout the event. The company, with a 120,000-square-foot facility in Kansas City and 225 employees, has an extensive track record in the museum, theme park and entertainment space. “It’s part of our core values to do things that have never been done before, to create remarkable experiences,” said Farley.

Left: Kansas City Chiefs and Hallmark fans united during the first weekend for the outdoor, red-carpet event at Crown Center Square on November 30, 2024, celebrating the premiere of *Holiday Touchdown: A Chiefs Love Story*. Photo courtesy of Hallmark. Center: The star-studded tree lighting. Photo courtesy of Superfly. Right: Giving fans the opportunity to engage with network stars was a solid plank of the Hallmark Christmas Experience, with over 40 Hallmark Media stars appearing. Photo courtesy of Hallmark.



“Creating ways for people to celebrate and connect is core to our brand,” said Lindsey Roy, Senior Vice President Brand Experience at Hallmark and a 25-year veteran of the company. “We wanted to find new ways people can immerse themselves in the Hallmark Christmas magic.”

Photo courtesy of Hallmark



Photo courtesy of Dimensional Innovations

The materials mix included aluminums, MDF, acrylic, and vinyl printing. “We selected materials that could withstand staying outside for weeks on end in a Missouri December,” said Farley. “Everything was fabricated in-house. This was a very close collaboration, engaging our design studio and engineering studio in partnership with Hallmark and Superfly. Most of our scope was around the square, including the vendor booth facades and the displays around the Christmas tree. We would get layout approvals from Hallmark and then go back to our production floor. It was all hands on deck.”

Authenticity

“Hallmark has an authentic product and IP,” said McEwan. “They are who they say they are. The branding and creative staff know what they want and go after it – they’re a superlative creative team that won’t compromise quality. They partner well and are lovely to work with. It was a remarkable year of collaboration and partnership.”

“Hallmark always made us feel part of their team, as if we were a family,” said Feener. “They truly live their brand and that made it all the more meaningful to be working with them. What they sell is what they live by.”

“The need for true connection and shared experiences is everlasting,” said Roy. “The Hallmark Christmas Experience further delivered on our brand promise of connection and community. From an internal company perspective, it was fantastic. We were all energized by our fans finding magic and making memories.”

Memorable projects don’t happen by chance. They require a team of experienced professionals to design, plan, execute, and operate large-scale experiences. The Hallmark Christmas Experience is a shining example of how collaboration and expertise come together to bring joy to the world of Hallmark fans of all ages. Can we expect more Hallmark-branded experiences in the future? Of course the answer must be “Yes!” (They just announced the Hallmark Christmas Experience will be back for year two. And, the 2025 Hallmark Christmas Cruise is already completely sold out.) The fans are eager for more. Future Hallmark projects are bound to usher in new ideas, opportunities, and models for branded experiences. •



Judith Rubin is Editorial Adviser and Contributor to InPark. She has been chronicling the visitor attractions industry since 1987. She is based in St. Louis, Missouri.

Expo 2025 update

Crafting the USA Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai

by Jim Ogul



The Innovation Realm, USA Pavilion at Expo Osaka 2025.
Photo courtesy of BRC Imagination Arts

As the countdown to Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, progresses, the spotlight turns to the team behind the creation of the USA Pavilion. Set to be a highlight of the expo, this ambitious project is a testament to the collaborative efforts of some of the most innovative minds and organizations from the United States.

Expo 2025 Osaka overview

World Expo 2025, officially known as Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, will be held on Yumeshima Island in Osaka, Kansai, Japan, from April 13 to October 13, 2025. The Expo's theme, "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," aims to address global challenges and inspire solutions through international collaboration. With expected participation from more than 150 countries and regions, the Expo will showcase cutting-edge technologies, cultural exhibits, and visionary ideas that shape the future. Over the six months, the Expo is projected to attract around 28 million visitors, offering a platform for cultural exchange, technological innovation, and global dialogue.

Architectural design by Trahan Architects

The architectural vision for the USA Pavilion is spearheaded by Trahan Architects, renowned for their ability to blend traditional aesthetics with modern innovation. Drawing inspiration from the Japanese wabi-sabi philosophy, Trahan Architects designed a pavilion that features two wooden triangular structures and a striking illuminated suspended cube. This design not only pays homage to the beauty of imperfection but also symbolizes the confluence of American ingenuity and Japanese artistry.

Immersive experiences crafted by BRC Imagination Arts

At the heart of the pavilion's engagement strategy is BRC Imagination Arts, a design and production company known for creating transformative and immersive experiences. BRC's expertise ensures that the pavilion will captivate visitors with interactive exhibits and state-of-the-art technology, showcasing America's groundbreaking achievements in space exploration, renewable energy, and biotechnology. The pavilion's theme, "Imagine What We Can Create Together," invites visitors to explore how imagination fuels innovation and collaboration across America and with international partners.

One of the highlights of the USA Pavilion is Spark, the official mascot. Spark symbolizes the "spark of imagination and creativity" and is designed to guide visitors through the pavilion's various interactive exhibits. The animated character combines American motifs with a playful sense of boundless possibility.

Strategic oversight by the U.S. Department of State

The U.S. Department of State provides strategic oversight and coordination for the pavilion, ensuring that it aligns with national priorities in science, technology, and culture. A dedicated Expo Unit within the State Department works year-round to plan and execute the U.S. presence at the expo, while the appointment of a Commissioner General ensures that all aspects of the pavilion are meticulously managed.

Location and accessibility

The USA Pavilion is strategically located on Yumeshima Island in Osaka Bay, positioned halfway between the Forest of Tranquility and the East Entrance Plaza. This prime location ensures high visibility and accessibility for visitors entering from the East Entrance. The pavilion is designed to be fully accessible, with ramps, elevators, and other necessary accommodations to ensure that individuals with disabilities can enjoy all exhibits and events without barriers. This commitment to accessibility aligns with broader goals of inclusivity and equal opportunity.

Expected attendance and impact

With an expected attendance of approximately 28 million visitors over six months, and the USA Pavilion anticipated to attract 5-6 million visitors, this is a prime opportunity for the United States to present its story on a global stage. The pavilion's combination of tradition and innovation aims to leave a lasting impression on all who visit, fostering greater understanding and appreciation of American culture and achievements.

As Expo 2025 approaches, the USA Pavilion stands as a symbol of creativity, collaboration, and cultural exchange. The dedicated efforts of the development team, along with the U.S. Department of State, promise to make the pavilion a memorable and impactful experience for all visitors. •



Since retiring from the U.S. State Department in 2011 after a 30+ year career in world expos, James Ogul (jogul@comcast.net) has remained on the scene in an advisory and consulting role. He writes regularly for InPark Magazine about world's fairs. See his free online book, Tales From the Expo.

A longer version of this article appears on inparkmagazine.com



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Getting to know Lynn Willrich

Meet the 2025 recipient of the TEA Peter Chernack Distinguished Service Award

by David Willrich

How people know Lynn

Lynn Willrich's remarkable career in themed entertainment has often taken place behind the scenes at DJW, the company she co-founded with her husband (and humble author of this feature) David Willrich in New Forest, U.K. It wasn't until David began volunteering as a Board Member for the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) in 2008 that Lynn's presence became more widely known. As a devoted wife and mother, Lynn quickly emerged as a beloved and welcoming figure at TEA events, embodying the spirit of community and support.

Lynn, the worker

As co-owner of DJW, an audiovisual design, integration, and consultancy firm, Lynn plays a pivotal role in the company's success. Established in 1986, DJW has a reputation for quality and service, focusing on innovative solutions tailored to the unique needs of each project. Operating across various sectors, including themed entertainment, museums, and visitor attractions, DJW fosters a culture of teamwork and collaboration. Lynn's ability to juggle multiple roles within the organization as finance director, HR manager, office manager and more is instrumental to our company's achievements. With six Thea Awards, four Inavation Awards, and four AV Awards (among others), DJW strives to deliver the very best projects (of which we are proud to be a part).

Lynn has assimilated an incredible knowledge of both our industry and the solutions that DJW design and engineer. She is frequently the first contact new clients have with the company, where she shares her knowledge and advice. Lynn understands how important "story" is to our business and is very quick to drill down into the story to be told, or to focus a client on the story rather than getting hung up on the technology that they think they want! She prepares them for passing their call onto the technical team by conditioning them to start thinking about the stories they wish to tell and the guest experience they wish to create.



Lynn Willrich and (article author) David Willrich at the TEA Thea Awards Gala.

Lynn, the matriarch and volunteer

While both Lynn and David are cherished members of the TEA community, they also have a family life. (Though, sometimes those lines are blurred!) Together, they raised three children: Tim, Chris, and Hayley. Hayley and her husband Michael (who is also Installation Manager at DJW) have two kids, Roman and Ayda, making Lynn a proud "Nana" who devotes much of her time to her grandchildren. Oldest son Tim, who runs his own U.K.-based Production Company for film and bespoke experiential / immersive content, also gets involved with the TEA through SATE, as content producer. Chris has been at DJW for over 20 years and is currently a Director, Project Manager and resident troubleshooter.

Of all the kids, Chris is currently the most active in TEA, having just finished a term as Europe and Middle East (EME) Board President, and now serves on the International Board. Chris says, "We're all immensely proud of Mumsy. We've known our whole



The Willrich family on holiday in 2023 (L to R: Tim, Shirley, Trevor, Lynn, Chris, Hayley holding Ayda, Michael, and David, with Roman on the toboggan.)
All photos courtesy of Lynn Willrich

lives what an incredible and supportive human being she is, and for the TEA to recognize her contributions over the years is special for our entire family!”

Lynn has been a constant presence at TEA events across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Whether helping with name badges, offering guidance, or making crucial introductions, she exemplifies the essence of a TEA volunteer, selflessly giving her time without ever asking for anything in return.

Lynn, the hobbyist

Lynn's passion for volunteering extends beyond the TEA; she has dedicated 55 years to Girlguiding in the U.K., 40 of which as a Leader of Brownies and Guides. She also enjoys playing table tennis in a local league with her club, currently serving as Vice-Chairperson and Welfare Officer. She previously helped at a local Netball Club for girls for about 10 years. (Netball is like basketball, but with teams of seven playing in set areas of the court, and players cannot run with the ball.)

Lynn is also known for her exquisite Japanese embroidery, a traditional art form that preserves and perpetuates the cultural heritage of Japanese embroidery through the pursuit of Nuido. The word Nuido is made up of two parts: Nui, or embroidery, and Do, the way of Nui, which refers

to the acquisition of technical skills and knowledge. The craft involves the use of silk thread on silk material, extremely tiny needles, and a lot of patience!

Two years ago, Lynn joined her church choir, and a year later the bell ringing team, hoping to build up to the point of being able to ring ahead of church services and weddings! She likes to say three of her hobbies are ping-pong, singsong and ding-dong!



Lynn enjoys practicing Japanese embroidery.

With such a full life, it's remarkable how Lynn balances her personal interests with her professional commitments, and still maintaining her volunteer support of organizations such as TEA. The entire Willrich family joins in thanking Lynn for her service and dedication to not only our company and our family, but the Themed Entertainment Association as well. •

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Making connections that last

THG Creative's work on The Freedom Theater at The National World War II Museum builds on the company's expansive history of projects creating inspiring and engaging visitor experiences

by Gene Jeffers and Martin Palicki

From entire theme park and resort master plans to intimate, immersive theaters; from sky-high observation decks to expo pavilions, THG Creative has worked for 20 years with high-profile clients worldwide to transcend the ordinary and create ever greater immersive experiences. Every project is a one-off, each requiring design agility and an instinct for helping clients find new and remarkable ways to satisfy guest desires. The work of this independent creative agency spans myriad industries including theme parks, destination attractions, rides, resorts, museums, casinos, sporting events, and brand experiences.

"Sometimes we do blue sky and conceptual work on a project; other times we shepherd the project from concept right through design, build, installation and opening day," says Phil Hetteema, CEO of THG Creative. "But on every project we ensure that we are creatively responding to our client's and their guests' needs."

THG's secret for achieving that? Making connections with guests through the visitor experience. "As designers we have to thread the needle to find the right level of emotional awareness for every project," says Nichole Garza, THG's Director of Project Development. "We rely on expertly crafted storytelling and interactivity to accomplish that."

The story of the Four Freedoms

Garza points to THG's decades-long relationship with The National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana, as a prime example of how THG has approached museum design through effective and emotionally engaging storytelling. The partnership has resulted in two award-winning theatrical experiences: *Beyond All Boundaries* (opened in 2009) and the new Priddy Family Foundation Freedom Theater.

According to Garza, THG was tasked with creating an intimate attraction within a new building on their campus that helped complete the museum's story. "We were asked to build on the success of *Beyond All Boundaries* and finish the narrative arc through a complementary experience," she says. The THG team had to create a story that functioned as a "finale" to the WWII story even though it might not be the last thing guests experience during their visit to the museum. Given that challenge, the team focused on the freedoms the Allied forces were fighting for, capturing the outcome of WWII while also providing context to the war appropriate for any point in a visitor's journey.

The new show focuses on the Four Freedoms laid out by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear), and the expanding global role the United States was destined to play in the post-WWII era.

Above and opposite: The Freedom Theater at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana, creates an immersive experience with LED screens, special effects, a moving theater and an engaging storyline. All photos courtesy of The National WWII Museum.



Phil Hetteema,
Founder and Chief
Executive Officer,
THG Creative



Erik Neergaard,
Chief Creative Officer,
THG Creative



Jodi Roberdes (AIA),
Lead Architect,
THG Creative



Nichole Garza,
Director of Project
Development,
THG Creative



Kate McConnell,
Senior Creative Director,
THG Creative

Headshots courtesy of THG

The Freedom Theater opened to the public in December 2023 and follows in the footsteps of Beyond All Boundaries. The need for this ticketed attraction to handle sufficient audience flow directly conflicted with the available space within a new building filled with exhibits and displays. The inspiration came to seat the audience on a turntable, which managed both requirements while creating a host of new challenges. “Conceiving of a theater on a rotating platform is complicated enough; determining how to physically integrate that theater into a relatively small footprint within a structure designed by a partner firm adds exponentially to the complexity,” says Jodi Roberdes (AIA), who served as lead architect for THG on the project. “THG is unusual for a design firm in having an architecture department integrated within the company, ready to meet all of those challenges.”

The installation comprises of a pre-show area and a three-act show. “Because of the small space, there are tons of lighting, electromechanical and scenic elements packed around the audience,” explains Roberdes. The 44-foot diameter turntable is split in half, allowing 65 guests seated on one half to view the first of three acts before rotating 90 degrees for Act Two and then beyond to 180 degrees for Act Three. Once there, the other side of the table is loaded with 65 more guests for Act One. Throughout the entire 20-minute show, moving scenery, shattered buildings, and video screens appear and disappear; projection mapping covers walls and ceilings, and rich sound fills each half of the theater. An inflatable, acoustic gasket and double thick walls had to be designed to prevent sound bleed between the two audience groups.

The architectural team had to work around entryways, exits and sprinklers all while keeping the technology and mechanics invisible. “Ninety percent of this job was problem-solving, making sure all the elements were installed

and coordinated seamlessly,” Roberdes emphasizes. “We didn’t want anything to invade the show environment or intrude on the audience experience.”

Whether on entire new builds or on projects installed within existing facilities, her department helps ensure that attractions fit elegantly within infrastructure, audience flow patterns and other constraints. “We can foresee problems that will arise, provide solutions early in the design process to ensure that the build and installation goes smoothly and efficiently,” Roberdes says.

Naturally, THG worked with a wide range of talents, vendors and suppliers to bring the theater from concept to opening day. “As a creative design and production firm, THG Creative relies on networking and relationships with the best vendors and suppliers to deliver a quality installation to our clients,” says THG Chief Creative Officer Erik Neergaard. “Every THG team member has deep and lasting connections throughout the entire experience design industry, from multimedia and projection mapping specialists to scenic fabricators, lighting and sound experts, show action equipment and special effects providers.”





THG developed a turntable solution to fit The Freedom Theater into the required space and still achieve the desired throughput.

When the museum opens in 2028 it will cover six floors in Central Park West. “Our storyline for CMoM is that this is a space entirely for kids where they are the discoverers and the creators and the makers,” says THG Senior Creative Director Kate McConnell. “We want kids to come in and start with ‘What or who do I want to be today?’ and the museum will offer them ways to explore and interact with their answer to that question.”

Not only does that align with the museum’s mission, but it encourages repeat visitation and expands the museum’s potential audience. “The interactive format of the exhibits we are designing will mean the experience is always new for guests every time they come in. Guests are always going to see and create something different,” says McConnell.

Since opening, The Freedom Theater has received critical acclaim, both from visitors and organizations. The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) awarded it a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement, Museum Attraction. In their notes, the Thea Awards Committee said the project “delivers originality, excellence, and impact. The storytelling renders the history both compelling and relevant today. The design and technical excellence are original and imaginative, perfectly supporting the story and the emotional track.”

International Awards Associate (IAA) also honored the project with two separate MUSE awards in 2024: The Muse Creative Award for Experiential & Immersive - Live Experiences and a Muse Design Award for Interior Design - Cultural. Both MUSE awards, along with the Thea Award, acknowledge The Freedom Theater’s ability to connect with guests on that emotional level.

The interactive connection

In addition to story, THG employs interactivity to help make that emotional connection. THG Creative’s current work on the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMoM) provides another window into how these design principles come together. In 2018, CMoM announced plans to move to a new building and acquired a former church property for the project. They brought THG on board as a creative partner to help design the experiences, exhibits and activities within the new facility.

Thinking of interactivity and storytelling in new ways

While the free-form experience of CMoM contrasts with the linear show format of The Freedom Theater, McConnell points out that both projects are centered on story and interactivity.

“We don’t only think of interactivity in terms of physical engagement. Even if an experience is set up where the guest is primarily an audience member, such as in The Freedom Theater, our goal is to inspire the visitor to interact with the story on an emotional and intellectual level,” explains McConnell. “We want them to think about the narrative, talk about the concepts with friends and maybe even research the topic more.” At its core, that form of interactivity can be just as potent a visitor experience as a child exploring a hands-on exhibit.

“Whether it’s discovering through play or contemplating concepts like freedom, our goal of inspiring interactivity through story is what makes experiences at visitor attractions and cultural institutions meaningful and valuable,” asserts Hettema. “Creating experiences that not only allow but encourage guests to explore and engage with stories and ideas is at the core of THG’s design principles.” •



Gene Jeffers, former (2001-2013) TEA Executive Director, writes 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.

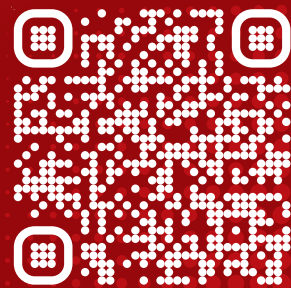
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Treasure found!

The team behind Treasure Hunt: The Ride talks about the attraction’s success and recent upgrades
interview by Martin Palicki

A close partnership between animatronics/dark ride designer Sally Dark Rides (Sally) and design/fabrication firm Daniels Wood Land (DWL) resulted in the opening of the interactive attraction Treasure Hunt: The Ride in July 2023. Located in Cannery Row in Monterey, California, the attraction blends special effects, scenic props and media into a story-rich dark ride. Over the course of five days in May 2024, the team upgraded the attraction, based on guest feedback.

The ride has been honored with a TEA Recognition of Merit award, IAAPA Brass Ring Award, USA Today Reader’s Choice Award as well as a Golden Ticket nomination. We asked Rich Hill (Chief Creative Officer, Sally Dark Rides) and Ron Daniels (President, Daniels Wood Land) for an update on the attraction.

InPark Magazine: The attraction has been open for a year and a half. How has it been going?

Rich Hill: Our first year started off with a bang but tapered off as the busy tourism season ended. Our second year of operation has seen a sizeable increase in attendance.



Rich Hill

Ron Daniels: People are loving it. We learned quickly that there was a desire for a longer ride experience. So we got together with the Sally team and adjusted the ride vehicle timing and added new effects. The results of that have been fantastic.

IPM: Tell us more about the changes you made.

Rich: We added 15 seconds to each of the scenes, increasing the duration from 3:45 to over 5 minutes. In each scene, we’ve added a ton of secondary show elements that help extend the primary story beats. Some of the major additions include a “Skeleton at the Wheel” animatronic character that comes to life, warning that danger is just around the corner. Additionally,

our big “Kraken Attack” scene is now amplified with projection mapped tentacles extending out of the screen, and lightning bolts surround the ride car in a fantastical, thrilling moment.

Ron: We also added six 360-degree rotations of the vehicle along the track, giving guests the chance to enjoy more of the scenic elements and dive deeper into the storyline. We also better utilized the on-board audio system. In the first iteration of the ride, the audio was used for subtle sound effects, but during the update we added custom audio from the character Molina [see sidebar] in transition areas to better set up what would happen in the next scene.

IPM: How do you plan to keep the attraction fresh and encourage repeat visits?

Ron: We have developed seasonal events that help drive repeat and new visitation. This year we created a Halloween event called Haunted Harbor on Cannery Row. During this event, the DWL crew installed a haunted overlay to rebrand the ride as Treasure Haunt: The Ride, and we added professional, live scare actors and costumed staff. The DWL shooting galleries next door also received Halloween overlays and they were rebranded as



Treasure Hunt: The Ride smoothly integrates media and physical sets, accomplished via the close collaboration of Sally Dark Rides and Daniels Wood Land.

Above: Through a mix of immersive media and physical sets, guests witness the spirit of pirate Hipólito Bouchard fiercely protect his treasure against the invading guests. *Photos courtesy Sally Dark Rides*

The story behind the Treasure Hunt

Excerpted from an article* by Joe Kleiman

Guests to Treasure Hunt: The Ride are first greeted by an animatronic barker pirate and his parrot situated on a ship's mast in the center of the Cannery Row marketplace, hawking the adventures that await inside. Once through the turnstiles, guests learn about the ride's backstory. As the tale goes, pirate Hipólito Bouchard hid his fortune of plundered treasure hundreds of feet underground in recently discovered caverns, guarded by a kraken. Guests board an elevator, where video screens on the sides and top of the room create the illusion of being in a large elevator shaft. The elevator fails to operate and the attendant calls a maintenance mechanic to fix the problem. Seen through the overhead "windows," the mechanic doesn't quite accomplish the job and the elevator appears to fall hundreds of feet, crashing into the caverns below.

At this point, the far side of the elevator collapses and animatronic figures of the town drunk, Molina, and his trusted donkey can be seen in the caverns. Molina gives more of the backstory, warning guests that Bouchard's ghost is lurking about. The queue continues through a mineshaft before arriving at the loading station. Here, guests can insert Power-up Tokens (available for an extra charge) that give them a competitive scoring advantage with the targeting system, supplied by Alterface.

Molina acts as onscreen guide throughout the ride, but inevitably, something always goes terribly wrong. In the first scene, Molina teaches guests how to fire their pistols and aim at targets. Errant shots from guests cause barrels of gunpowder to explode, creating a torrent of water projected not only on the screen but also on the floor of the room. A splash of water into the vehicle helps round out the 4D effect.

The water carries the guests to other caverns, where they are introduced to the ghost of Bouchard. Bouchard summons the kraken that has guarded the treasure for more than 200 years. Vehicles are sent down a corridor, shaped like the hull of a wrecked ship, with the animated tentacles of the kraken visible overhead, finally coming face to face with Bouchard, projected onto a mist screen. The final scene features a battle against Bouchard's undead crew, with physical skeletons popping out from the ceiling just feet in front of guests, smoothly integrating physical props with the onscreen media.

**see "Sally Dark Rides and Daniels Wood Land use Monterey history as an interactive dark ride adventure theme," InPark issue #99*



Carnival of Carnage and Dead Man's Aim. The neighboring escape room made some modifications to become a walkthrough attraction called Pier of Fear. We bundled all four attractions into a single unlimited access ticket. It was extremely well received and provided an exciting Halloween seasonal attraction that drew guests from as far as 300 miles away. The neighboring businesses were very excited as well and expressed a desire to be part of next year's event. Plans are now in motion to expand Haunted Harbor into a six-week event, starting on weekend evenings, and growing from there.



Ron Daniels

IPM: One of the notable elements of Treasure Hunt is that you are functioning as creative/vendor and also the operator. How has that dynamic played out since opening?

Rich: While we have had some experience with this arrangement in the past (we were partners in the Ghost Blasters ride at Mall of America for a time), Daniels Wood Land has been doing the heavy lifting from an operational standpoint. Sally Dark Rides is there for support and guidance, but the team at DWL have done an amazing job keeping the ride running like a clock. Those turnstiles keep on moving!

IPM: What have you learned from developing this project?

Ron: I learned the importance of having good partners – and I know we chose a great partner with Sally. While DWL has been in business for 26 years, we are a scenic and special effects company that has never built a ride before. By partnering with Sally we avoided a tremendous number of mistakes.

I also gained a new appreciation for how a team comes together. In the past, we have always been subcontractors on a project. For Treasure Hunt we had the role of assembling and managing 15 different subcontractors – which was a fantastic learning experience. As we continue to work in that subcontractor role on other projects, I have a better understanding of how all these trades and services zipper together to create brilliant attractions like Treasure Hunt: The Ride. •

Above: No pirate attraction is complete without plenty of swashbuckling skeletons.

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The production team for the film ride Jet Star II at Lagoon in Farmington, Utah. From left to right: Robert Ingle, Kris Rowberry, Nicholas Laschkewitsch and Scott Schaffer. All photos courtesy of American Coaster Enthusiasts

“The Legacy of Schwarzkopf”

A new documentary tells the story of iconic ride designer Anton Schwarzkopf

interview by Martin Palicki

Roller coaster fans around the world recognize the name Schwarzkopf as a classic attraction designer. As many parks continually seek to reinvent themselves (and as spare parts become harder to access), many of his rides are starting to disappear. Before it was too late, a team of ride enthusiasts and industry professionals decided to chronicle Anton Schwarzkopf’s life, work and rides in a new documentary “The Legacy of Schwarzkopf.” To find out more about the project, InPark caught up with three of the film’s creators: Robert Ingle (Producer), Nicholas Laschkewitsch (Director), and Kris Rowberry (Executive Producer).

InPark Magazine: Where did the inspiration for the film come from?

Kris Rowberry: It was twofold. During the height of the pandemic, Nicholas, Robert and I began talking about starting a new project because we had the time to do it! Secondly, we wanted to recognize the centennial of Schwarzkopf’s birth (July 1924).

IPM: What were the personal experiences that led you to want to profile Schwarzkopf?

Nicholas Laschkewitsch: Growing up in Northern California’s Bay Area, California’s Great America was an integral part of my childhood theme park exposure. In 2002, while I was finally tall enough to ride the park’s Schwarzkopf shuttle loop, Greased Lightnin’ (formerly The Tidal Wave), I was too afraid to take the challenge. Unfortunately, this proved to be the ride’s final season at the park. Despite this, I have always been a big fan of the park’s other Schwarzkopf attractions. These personal experiences on his rides at a young age certainly made an impact on me. I know Robert and Kris were inspired by Schwarzkopf’s attractions at California’s Great America also.

IPM: Do you have favorite Schwarzkopf attractions?

Robert Ingle: All of them! It might sound cliché, but I genuinely struggle to pick a favorite because I believe there’s no such thing as a bad Schwarzkopf ride. Each of his creations have such unique character and charm that it’s impossible to choose just one.

Kris: I'm a personal fan of the Bayern Kurve flat ride and nothing beats the power of a flywheel shuttle loop.

Nicholas: One of the most exciting opportunities this project afforded me was the chance to experience so many of Schwarzkopf's rides that I had yet to, most notably Olympia Looping at Oktoberfest. This has since become one of my absolute favorite Schwarzkopf attractions.

IPM: What do you want audiences to take away from the film?

Kris: We hope that the film highlights just how influential Schwarzkopf has been for the attractions industry. We also hope that people recognize how many of his rides are disappearing. Treasure every moment and savor every ride you go on.

Nicholas: I want viewers to understand how much of an innovator Anton Schwarzkopf was. Given the technology and resources available to him in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, the ideas that he and his team were able to bring to life should be commended. Schwarzkopf is a fantastic case study in never giving up and always dreaming big. As a mechanical engineer in the themed entertainment industry, his work certainly left a lasting impression on me.

IPM: What do you think are the key parts of the Schwarzkopf legacy?

Kris: His attention to detail. His willingness to constantly adapt and retool. And finally his willingness to take unskilled workers and train them in the art of creating amusement rides. His fingerprints are all over the industry to this day.

Nicholas: Schwarzkopf was bold in every idea he came up with. The development of the vertical loop is one of the most important aspects of Schwarzkopf's innovations with Werner Stengel, culminating in the Great American Revolution opening at Magic Mountain in 1976. Aside from the vertical loop, Schwarzkopf's wildly popular portable coasters stand the test of time.

Rrobert: Anton was dedicated and passionate about his craftsmanship right up until his retirement. His ability to find dedicated workers, regardless of their background or prior knowledge, truly showcases his talent for seeing the potential in people, which in turn helped create unforgettable rides.



Nicholas Laschkewitsch films the ride panel of Shock Wave at Six Flags Over Texas.

IPM: What challenges did you have in producing the film?

Nicholas: Our last big film project as a team was "The Legacy of Arrow Development" in 2015, which was a much smaller project and only had us filming domestically here in the U.S. One of the biggest challenges with wanting to tell the Schwarzkopf story effectively was the necessity of traveling the world to capture his most important attractions. The global scale of Schwarzkopf's impact on the amusement industry was eye opening to me and the logistical hurdles we needed to surmount made this project a really unique challenge – though one we were thrilled to tackle.

IPM: What did you love most about producing the film?

Robert: Preserving numerous rides and collecting the personal stories of Schwarzkopf's influence on both the industry and individuals was truly special. Traveling internationally to experience all these attractions was another highlight for me.

IPM: How can people view the film?

Robert: The film is currently being shown exclusively at ACE (American Coaster Enthusiasts) regional events and will be streamed on the ACE YouTube channel soon. •

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