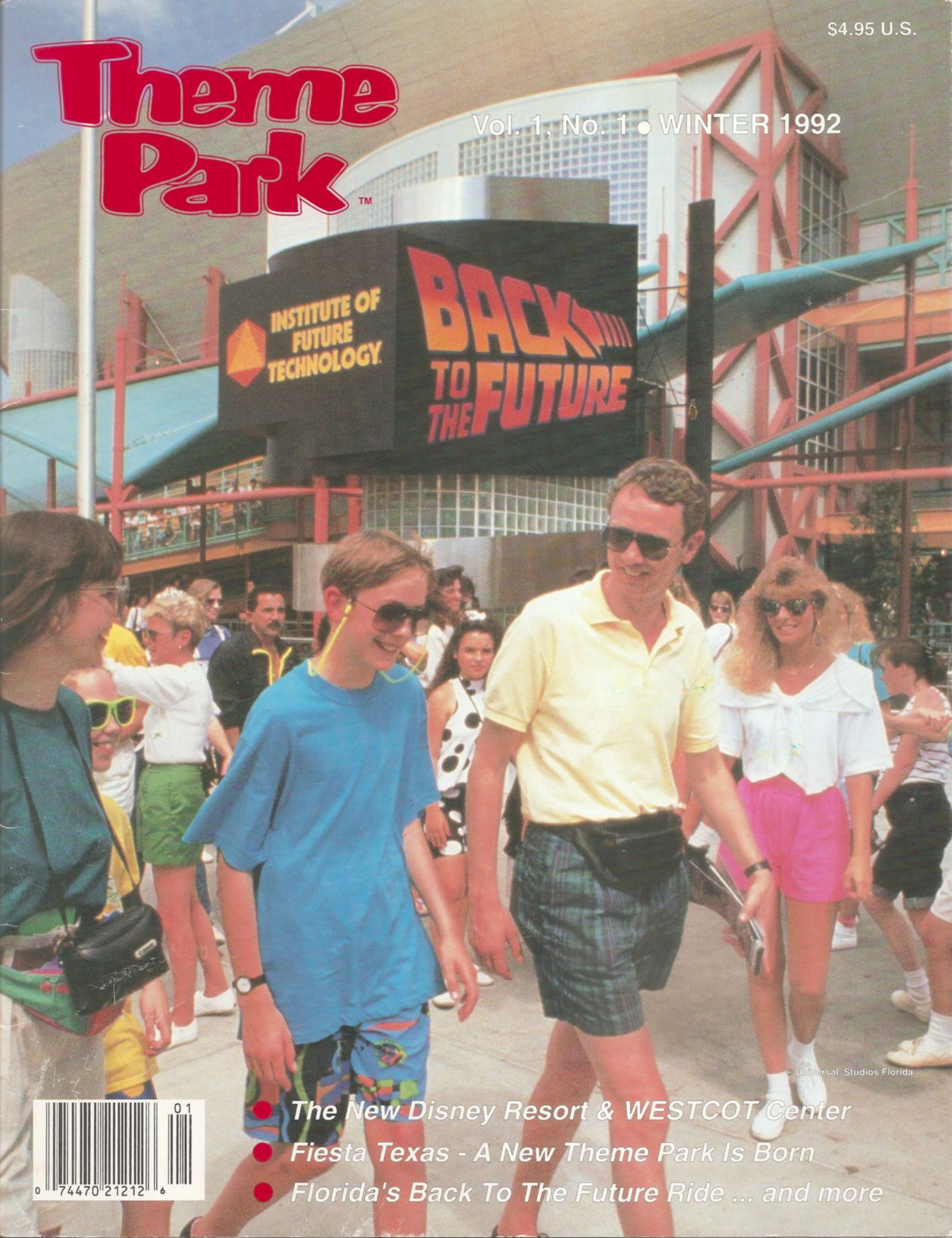


Theme Park™

Vol. 1, No. 1 • WINTER 1992



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- *The New Disney Resort & WESTCOT Center*
- *Fiesta Texas - A New Theme Park Is Born*
- *Florida's Back To The Future Ride ... and more*

Theme Park™

WINTER 1992
Volume One, Number One

Laughter Publications, Inc.™



"We Don't Stop Playing Because We Grow Old, We Grow Old Because We Stop Playing!" SM

ON THE COVER: Happy and excited people exit from Universal Studios Florida's outstanding new attraction, "Back To The Future - The Ride."

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WHAT'S A THEME PARK? 6

Van France takes on the not-so-enviable task of trying to define just what a theme park actually is. It sounds easy, but as Van will tell you, the task turned out to be more than he bargained for. Read on and you might be surprised!

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Contributing Editor Arthur Levine brings you some insight into how Universal Studios Florida's great new flight simulator ride "Back To The Future - The Ride" was developed. It's a very interesting and technical article for fans of the park and ride development in general.

FIESTA TEXAS- THERE'S MUSIC IN THE AIR! 14

There's a new kid that will soon be joining the theme park world. Fiesta Texas, a brand new musical park will open its doors this spring just outside of San Antonio, Texas. Manned by many ex-Disneylanders, Van France takes you backstage at the cast members' orientation program.

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Publisher Steve Fiott gives you a sneak preview of the Walt Disney Company's latest venture. Disneyland Park falls within the boundaries of the new Disney Resort for Anaheim. There are many questions yet to be answered before the Resort is completed in the "Disney Decade."

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In This Issue...

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Well, here it is, the first issue of **THEME PARK** magazine! In this issue we're going to take you on some varied theme park journeys. As promised, **THEME PARK** will take you behind the scenes at the parks, and will provide you with glimpses of the people and talent that have created these wonderful places.

The theme park business isn't really all that old, but, that depends on just how you actually define the word "theme park." In this our premier issue, theme park consultant and veteran Van Arsdale France takes on that task. His insightful and often amusing article may open some eyes, and it should help us all understand just where that somewhat elusive term originated. Van combines his over thirty seven years of theme park experience with Webster's dictionary to try and solve this little riddle. Where did the term "theme park" actually come from? Who first used it? How did it originate? Van attempts to answer these questions and the answers may not be what many of us thought they would be.

Contributing Editor Arthur Levine takes us "Back To The Berkshires" in western Massachusetts to learn where Universal Studios went when it came to developing their sensational new Florida attraction, "Back To The Future - The Ride." His article will document the steps needed to design it, and will offer some insight into future flight simulator based rides. Arthur has long been a theme park "Park-A-Holic." His insightful writing will enable us all to get a glimpse of just how this attraction came about, both historically and technically.

Publisher Steve Fiott gives us a glimpse into what may be happening in Anaheim as the

Walt Disney Company unveils its proposed Disney Resort. Steve has kept in touch with the resort's plans as well as the reaction of the surrounding communities and its press. His feeling about how the project has been presented may surprise many of you who know him as a very loyal Disneyland fan. This article should keep you right up to date on this massive project, one of the Company's largest in this, the "Disney Decade."

Van France takes you on a tour of a new theme park that will open this Spring in San Antonio, Texas. The project has a lot of Disney alumnae working on it. It will be the first park that will be themed around the various forms of music. Fiesta Texas promises many unique attractions that should make it a gem. Van takes you down to Texas for a pre-opening visit, and a look at how the company has set up its training programs.

Our regular features will be unveiled slowly. And as the magazine evolves, many more will be added. In this issue, Arthur Levine brings you facts from around the world in **THEMED NEWS**. **THEME PARK POSTCARD** presents you with some outstanding views from theme parks around the world, many of which you may have missed on your visits. Publisher Steve Fiott pulls no punches in his column, **THE LAST WORD**. **THEMED REVIEWS** will always tell



it exactly like it is. In this issue, it jumps off by reviewing Walt Disney World's new parade, Spectromagic, and a few other theme park events and programs. This feature has many talented contributors, and should be one of our best! In the future, we plan on adding regular features like Van France's **WHAT A THEME**, and **CHEERS & JEERS** will soon make its debut. It will be very similar to the feature of the same name found in our sister publication **Storyboard/The Art Of Laughter**. **READERS FORUM** will allow you, our readers, to have your say on all the vital issues that come up.

Everyone here at **LPI** welcomes you to our premier issue. It's been a long time coming! We thank you all again for your patience, understanding and support. It's been a large comfort to all of us here. So we want you to sit back, relax and enjoy reading the first issue of **THEME PARK**, your magazine!

Happy Reading



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Back To The Berkshires!

by Arthur Levine

The fabled "Imagineers" are heralded for their Disney park creations. But, who are the unsung heroes creating the attractions for other theme parks? One of the industry's leading movers and shakers is Berkshire Ridefilm. The creative folks at Berkshire have seen the future for theme park attractions—"Back to the Future," that is—and it is simulation rides.

Also known as ride films or movie rides, simulation rides have been the source of great excitement at the parks over the past few years. The Berkshire-produced "Back to the Future, The Ride" attraction at Universal Studios Florida is garnering widespread fame as state of the art theme park entertainment.

Ride films combine flight simulator technology with slam-bang motion picture footage shot from a subjective perspective that puts the viewer in the starring role. They create the illusion of movement, while guests never actually move more than two feet in any one direction, they careen at high speeds down roller coasters, hang glide off cliffs or travel light years through space.

When they're not designing alternative worlds, the wizards at Berkshire stake their claim in *this* world in the quaint New England town of Housatonic, nestled in the lovely Berkshire mountains of western Massachusetts. The facility is housed in an unassuming, converted mill building. When one enters the ancient factory doors, there is the requisite exposed beams and bricks. Huge panes overlook the storybook Housatonic River below. But wait! There's a volcano that has ripped a hole clean through to the floor above. And over there is an eight-foot tall dinosaur posing in a prehistoric setting.

Presiding over this unusual melange is Douglas Trumbull. As a Hollywood special effects legend, Trumbull is revered for his impressive resumé of movie credits. But his heart has always been in providing audi-

ences with a level of entertainment that goes beyond the two-dimensional 35mm movie experience.

Trumbull had always been fascinated by flight simulators and managed to talk his way into a few test flights some years ago. The entertainment possibilities excited him. If pilots could use the simulators to realistically recreate mundane take-offs and landings, Trumbull reasoned, why not adapt the concept to blast off to other galaxies?

In 1974, Trumbull designed and demonstrated a prototype of the world's first

films produced by other competitors have been regularly popping up ever since at theme parks, casinos, festivals and other sites. But it is Doug Trumbull who pioneered the idea and first got ride films into motion.

So, how does Berkshire create a ride film that puts guests into the center of the action? It's accomplished with trial and error, a lot of attention to detail and an acute sense of the effect the ride will have on guests, according to Trumbull. "You start to become intimate with the audience when you move their body around. It's invasive. You have to be very careful and aware of what this will do to them physiologically and emotionally. You now have a direct, physical relationship with your audience. They are totally immersed and are bombarded visually, acoustically and tactually. This is a whole new art form," says Trumbull.

As Trumbull describes the mechanics of producing a ride film, his language is peppered with a fair amount of medical jargon. He talks about the central nervous system, kinetics and the brain's interpretation of movement. The trick is to achieve the maximum impact by taking an audience to the edge without exceeding their sensory threshold. Otherwise, there is a risk of inducing motion sickness, disorientation and visual discomfort.

Trumbull explains one of the tricks he uses to simulate movement. "If we tip the seat back, it creates an artificial sense of acceleration. The weight shifts to the back of the seat. The eyes see images of forward acceleration. The horizon is shifted and the inner ear and other sensory information fools the nervous system into thinking that you're experiencing actual movement," says Trumbull.

The basic components of a simulation ride include the projection screen or dome, the projector, the film, the sound system and a motion hydraulic system. These

"Ride films combine flight simulator technology with slam-bang motion picture footage shot from a subjective perspective that puts the viewer in the starring role."

simulator ride. While it caused quite a stir, he was under exclusive contract to Paramount at the time and they would not back any further development. After he broke free from Paramount, Trumbull formed his own independently-financed company and continued to refine his invention.

In the mid-80's, Trumbull unveiled the first commercial application of his ride film concept for an attraction called "Tour of the Universe." The synchronized motion base was themed as a spaceship and the show took guests on a trip around the universe. It opened to rave reviews in Toronto, Canada.

The essentially similar "Star Tours" simulation attraction was launched at Disneyland a couple of years later. And ride

are all controlled and synchronized by an electronic timing clock. Sometimes sensory ticklers like a blast of air or fragrances are included to heighten the illusion.

The motion base, which can be an entire theater, a section of seats, each individual seat or, in the case of "Back to the Future," a mock eight-passenger DeLorean car, is programmed to move in sync with the action on the screen. The hydraulic actuators which control the movement are fed a series of digital signals from a computer memory system.

One of the innovations Berkshire uses when they are in the middle of producing a ride film is to view the "dailies" from a motion base. This immediate feedback allows a constant refining of the synchronization between the image and the motion. To screen the footage from a fixed seat would be meaningless. For "Back to the Future," Trumbull and his crew gathered daily in the moving DeLorean to experience and review their work.

Berkshire invites area residents to their facility to test and help fine-tune ride films in production. Kids and teens invariably love the experience, no matter how intense. According to Berkshire's Kate Jones, adults, particularly older women, are sometimes overwhelmed by these trial rides. "I've seen some people reduced to tears. Of course, that helps us know that we have to tone it down," said Jones. That's quite a testament to the power of the medium. But, as Jones says, "I tell people that all they have to do is shut their eyes and the sensation is gone."

Berkshire Ridefilm was not involved with "Back to the Future, The Ride" from the start. MCA/Universal officials conceived the project as a great way to combine a hit film series with simulation technology and the Omnimax film process. It was MCA who came up with the brilliant stroke of a "flying" DeLorean car to transport guests through time. The film was scripted, the Omnimax equipment was bought, the concrete was poured for the building that would house the attraction and all of the specs were established.

"Then, production began," explains Trumbull, "and they immediately discovered that they were in trouble. The relationship of the film was not matching up with the motion base. There was blurring, reflections and other technological problems. The production ground to a halt."

Trumbull was called in as a white knight and he immediately declared the origi-

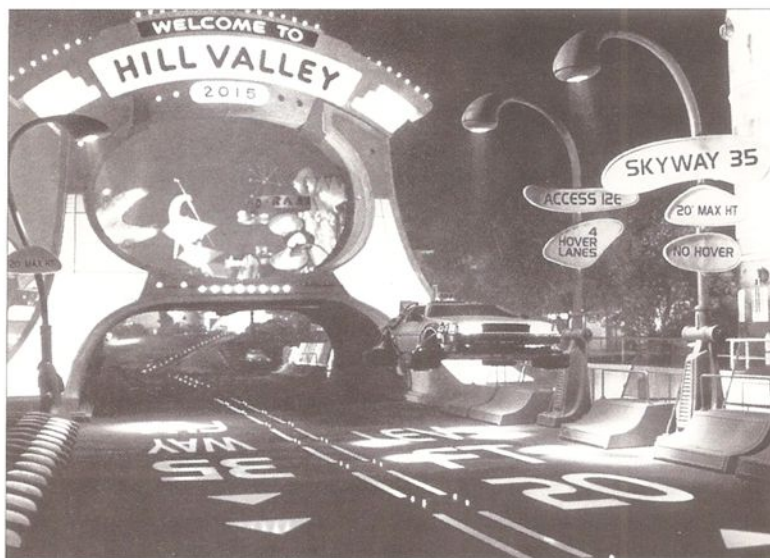
nal script unfilmable. He took a reverse-engineered approach to the project and let the technology dictate what could be filmed. Rather than film the action and try to match up the motion later, a successful ride film script has to reflect an awareness of the motion component.

Trumbull helped develop the new script and then produced the ride film that appears today as the attraction in Orlando.

By all accounts, Berkshire has come up with a real winner. The three minute and fifty-eight second ride through time to battle the evil Biff and save the universe is a must-see in Orlando. **Theme Park** publisher Steve Fiott declares "Back to the Future, The Ride" as the single finest theme park attraction he has ever experienced. It's being touted as something of a saviour for Universal Studios Florida as well. After months of mechanical breakdowns with some of the other attractions, lower-than-expected attendance and other King Kong-sized problems, "Back to the Future" opened in May of 1990 to great acclaim. It is now a rallying point for the park and a cause for renewed optimism.

The attraction houses two side-by-side theaters. Each theater has twelve eight-passenger DeLoreans arranged in three levels in front of a massive 80 foot Omnimax domed screen. Ride aficionados and Universal employees claim that the top level provides the best vantage point for experiencing the attraction. The dome envelops guests so that even their peripheral vision is filled. The attraction's capacity is about 2,000 people per hour or 20,000 per day.

Now that they've travelled around the universe and through time, where do the folks from Berkshire go from here? Trumbull says that he is developing a new, as yet unnamed, attraction for Universal Studios that will be even more technologically advanced and spectacular than "Back to the Future." The motion base will have more fluidity and freedom of movement and Trumbull is experimenting with an improved



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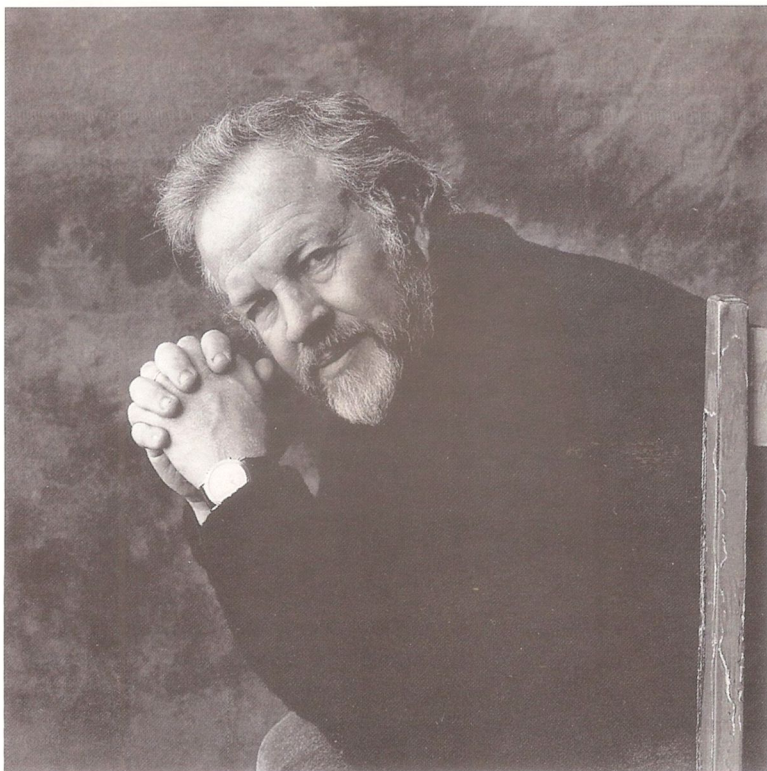
The Back To The Future attraction visits Hill Valley

filming process. Circus Circus is building a new casino in downtown Las Vegas that might feature a Berkshire-produced attraction in its enormous tower. And there are a number of other projects in various stages of development.

Trumbull and his team also continue to explore available and emerging technology. With his lifelong pursuit of melding an audience with a movie, it's no surprise that Trumbull is intrigued by the possibilities that virtual reality holds as an entertainment medium. The Berkshire technicians are working on an attraction that would combine a scripted film with the free-form, interactive experience that computer-aided virtual reality allows, but in a more controlled setting.

While theme parks provide an obvious environment for Berkshire's creative output, Trumbull envisions a whole new industry emerging from ride film technology. If ride film theaters could be modularized and mass-produced—another project that Berkshire is developing—the mountain could be brought to Mohammed—or, at least to Mohammed's hometown. Malls, multiplex movie theaters and even downtown storefronts could become the sites for an international network of ride film theaters. It would certainly give new meaning to the term, "motion picture palaces."

Berkshire and other studios could provide an ever-changing array of shows for these new entertainment centers. Trumbull does not view this concept as necessarily challenging the film industry. "Let's say that Hollywood is about to release 'Batman II,' the movie," Trumbull offers as a hypothetical example. "What if simultaneously, ride film theaters debuted 'Batman, the Ride?' They



Douglas Trumbull of Berkshire Ridefilm

could be strategically partnered and create excitement for each other; it could be a great, symbiotic relationship,” says Trumbull.

Trumbull’s career has taken something of a circuitous route from the hallucinatory “2001” to the promise of ride films. If his goal has always been to create the experiential involvement that he believes audiences crave, he says that he’s now ready to properly readdress where to go after “2001.” Ride films need not be hyper-kinetic, heart-in-your-throat experiences. Trumbull talks of creating a ride film where the physical experience is much less intense than “Back to the Future”—something longer, more ethereal, even hypnotic.

Trumbull and his Berkshire Ridefilm may have invented the perfect drug for the 90’s and beyond. Ride films—and theme parks themselves, for that matter—are a safe, non-toxic, legal and acceptable way to experience an alternate reality and forget about life for awhile. And, after all, that *is* something we all occasionally crave.

DOUGLAS TRUMBULL: THE MAN IN BACK OF THE FUTURE

Douglas Trumbull, chairman and creative guru at Berkshire Ridefilm, is a 21st century Renaissance man. He has made a career out of pushing the envelope—and redefining the technology of entertainment.

in films, science fiction novels and poking around Disneyland. Captivated by the theme park, Trumbull was especially taken by an early exhibit, the Art of Animation. Even at a young age, he was fascinated by the possibility of creating fantasy worlds. Trumbull says that “Making paintings come alive and have them move around you was like heaven to me.”

His first job was at a technical animation studio assisting with the production of NASA space films. One of the projects he was involved with was the development of an attraction called “To the Moon and Beyond” for the 1964 New York World’s Fair. Filmed in Cinerama 360 and projected onto a dome, the attraction was an early precursor to Omnimax.

After seeing his work at the fair, Stanley Kubrick tagged Trumbull as one of his special effects supervisors for the landmark “2001: A Space Odyssey.” It was Trumbull who developed the innovative slit scan photography which made possible the breathtaking Stargate Corridor sequence.

Trumbull credits Kubrick with opening his eyes. He says that, “Working with Stanley Kubrick showed me that film could be a subjective experience—that the audience could actually become part of the film. Kubrick was using every available technological opportunity for “2001”—Cinerama, giant wraparound screens, six channel stereo

Trumbull was deeply and equally influenced by his father, an engineer who was constantly tinkering with technical equipment and mechanical devices, and his mother, a commercial and fine artist. Together they provided the perfect environment for the development of Trumbull’s unique hybrid techno-art form. Raised in southern California, Trumbull spent his formative years immersed

sound—whatever it took to send the audience off into space.”

Taking his cue from Kubrick, Trumbull’s subsequent Hollywood special effects work includes classics such as “Close Encounters of the Third Kind,” “Silent Running,” “Star Trek: The Motion Picture” and “Blade Runner.”

In 1972, he began a research and development partnership with Paramount Pictures to explore new and better ways to deliver movies to the public. As a result, Trumbull developed Showscan™, which packs more frames per second of film to create a 70mm high-resolution, high-speed enhanced viewing sensation.

But Trumbull was dismayed by what he viewed as the regression and implosion of the film industry. Opulent movie houses and the promises of 70mm and Cinerama were replaced by claustrophobic multiplexes. Hollywood would not accommodate Showscan™ or any of Trumbull’s innovations.

While the movie industry was going backwards, Trumbull watched as theme parks embraced all forms of alternative entertainment technology. So, he abandoned his incredible career in traditional theatrical films for the challenges that simulation rides and theme park attractions offer. He has also left behind the stress and barracuda-like environment of Hollywood for rural New England.

Ironically, Berkshire Ridefilm is now swamped by inquiries from the same major studios who once ignored Trumbull. After the runaway success of “Back to the Future-The Ride,” “Star Tours” and other projects, everyone wants a piece of the simulation action. That’s fine with Doug Trumbull. But as the rest of the world slowly catches up to him, he is already exploring virtual reality, holography and other new-generation entertainment techniques.

The casual and soft-spoken Trumbull brings a sense of wonder and joy to his work at Berkshire Ridefilm. After living with the “Back to the future” ride for almost two years, he still enjoys the thrill it provides. The little boy who was fascinated by the opportunity to create other worlds has never left Trumbull. As he says, “I may never actually get to the moon or travel to the stars in my lifetime. But I can go there in my mind and I can simulate the experience.” Fortunately for everyone, he has invited all the rest of us along for the ride, and what a ride it has turned out to be!



Themed Reviews...



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If a thrill packed ride is any indication, Universal Studio Florida's **BACK TO THE FUTURE (BTTF)** attraction is the finest "thrill" or "flight simulator" based ride I've ever been on! Its technology puts it far ahead of the Disney/Lucas **STAR TOURS (ST)** attraction, or Disney's own **BODY WARS (BW)** at EPCOT Center.

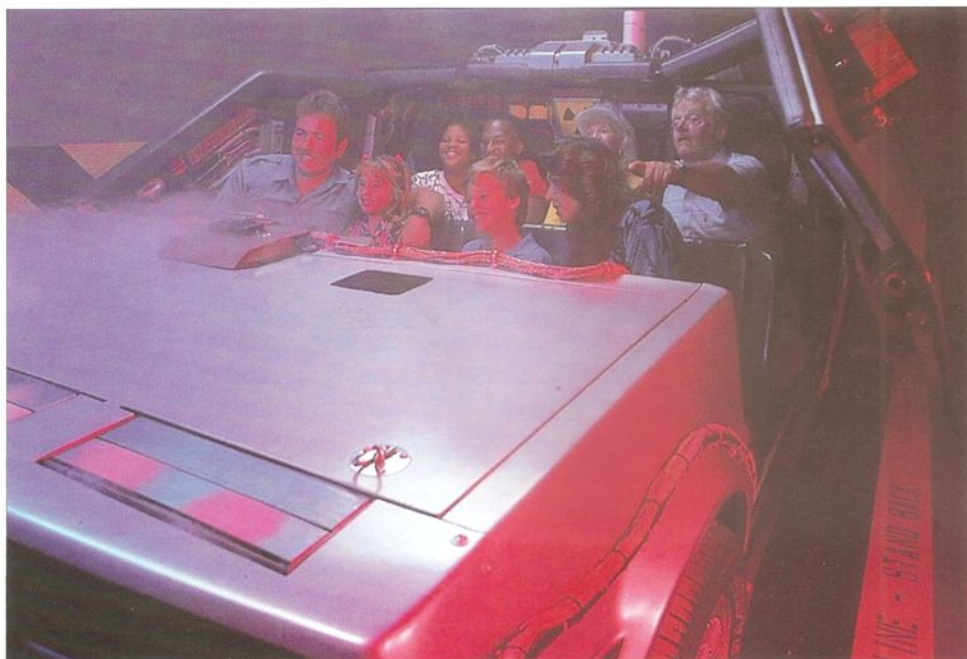
The pre-show of **BTTF** is very well handled. The line moved very well every time a reviewer has been on the attraction. One of the best points of this section of the ride is the fact that there are multi-levelled entrances to the attraction, so that even the line and entry point to the show varies a bit.

The pre-show deals primarily with Biff, the villain in the **BTTF** movies breaking into Doc Brown's laboratory and getting away in a DeLorean. The filming of this supposed escapade is both realistic and amusing. By the time you finally reach your "vehicle" (an over-sized DeLorean no less) to begin your chase after Biff, you're ready to enter the actual attraction, both you and your fellow time travelers.

Each DeLorean carries eight people when full. Now I can hear people saying what a low capacity ride that must be. Wrong! The DeLoreans are lined up one beside the other, and one level on top of the other, with each protruding slightly further out from the one above so that without leaning forward and looking back over your shoulder, you can't see the cars above. It appears to actually have a higher capacity than either **ST** or **BW**. Your DeLorean has no roof, so that you really are in a three dimensional ride rather than sitting watching a screen as with **ST** and **BW**. The action is happening all around you. It's so realistic, that it almost seems frightening!

You'll zoom **BACK TO THE FUTURE** as you chase Biff trying to capture him and retrieve the DeLorean he has stolen from the laboratory. You're almost eaten by a Dinosaur, burned to a crisp in a volcano and piled up into the set of **BTTF** before you capture Biff and return to the lab.

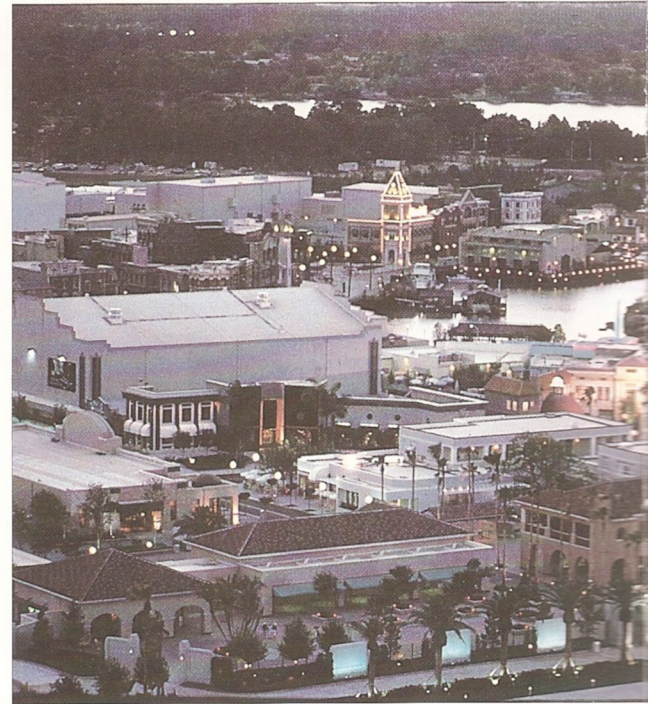
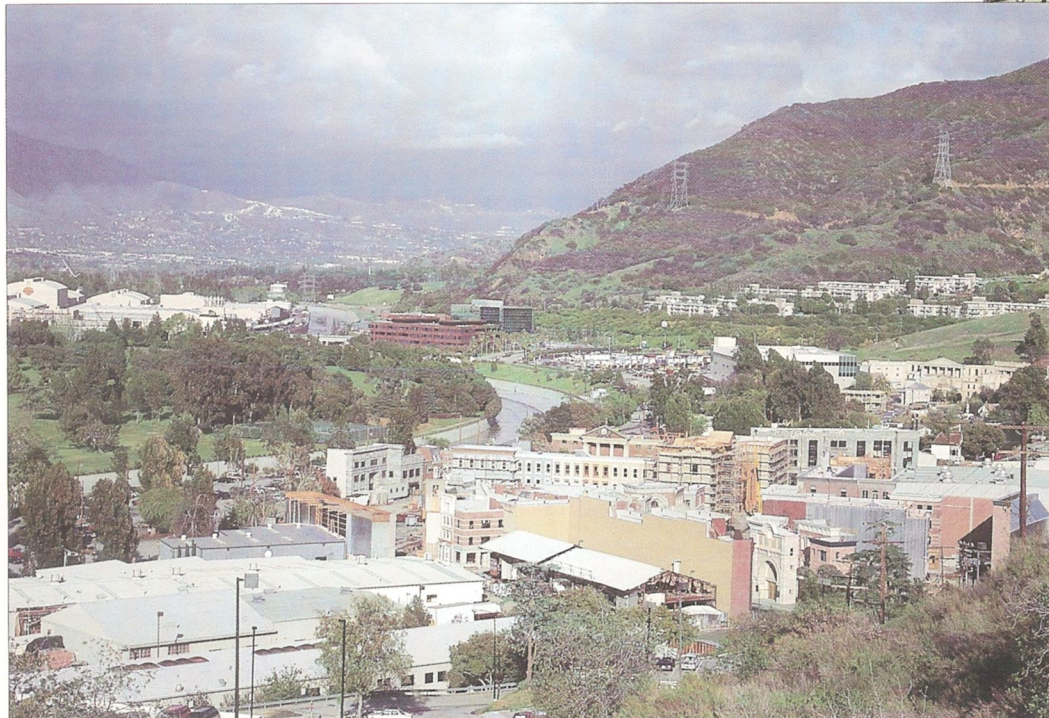
Wow, all in all, the **BTTF** attraction must be considered "state of the art" in flight simulator based ride technology. And just think, it was all developed for Universal Studios in Western Massachusetts. That's about as far from the glittering lights of Hollywood as you can possibly get!



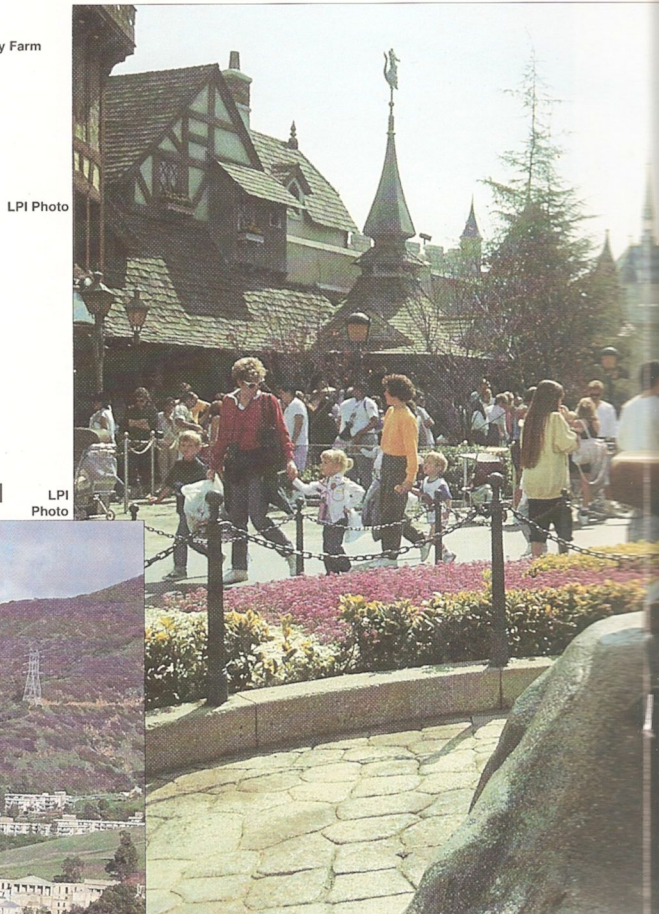
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ABOVE: Camp Snoopy at Knott's



ABOVE: Universal Florida at night



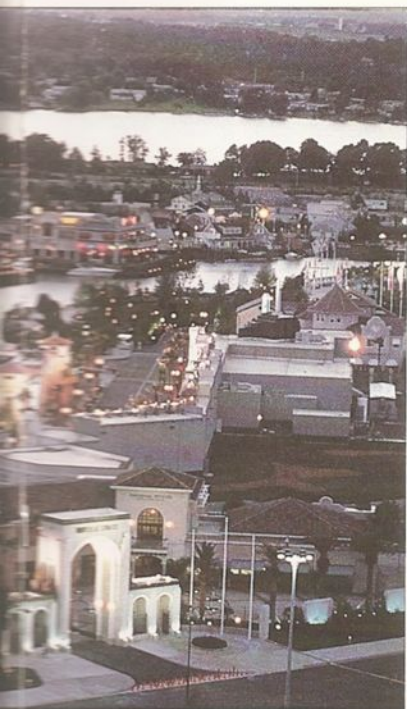
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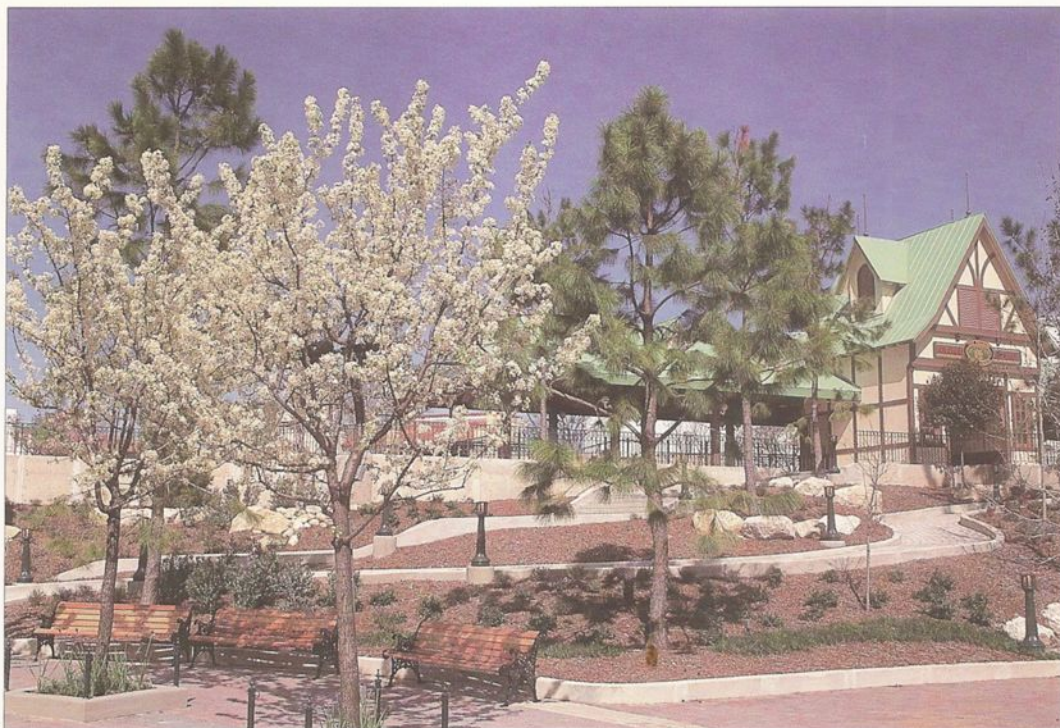
Some beautiful
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Fantasyland at Disneyland Park

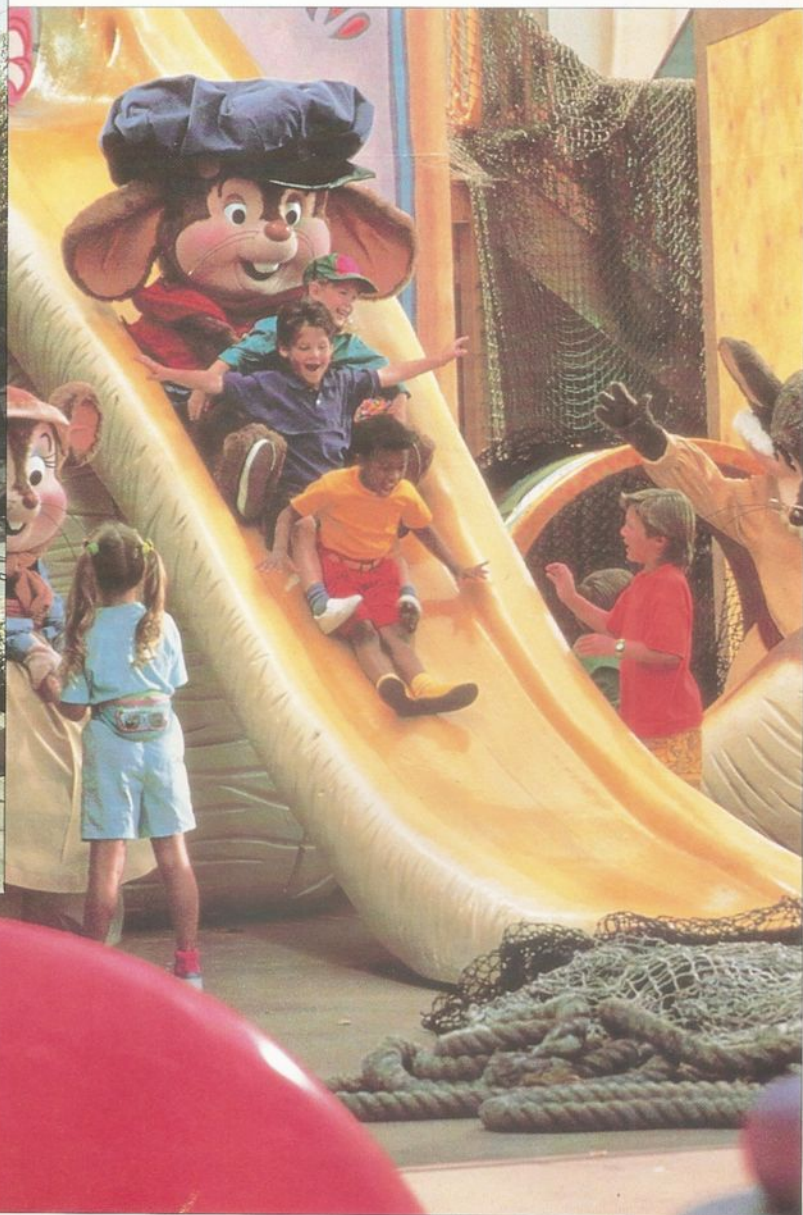


© Fiesta Texas

ABOVE: Fiesta Texas BELOW: Fievel at Universal Hollywood



ful views from around
**Theme
Park** world!



© Universal Hollywood

"In my personal opinion, and those of virtually everyone I know who has ridden the attraction (BTTF), it's far and away the best flight simulator based ride around."

FROM PAGE 32

know exactly what goes on. Most times, I pay to enter just like everyone else. In that way, I don't owe any person or company a thing. I can write about exactly what I see and feel with no remorse or guilt. And that's the way all our reviewers will work. We want unbiased reports and reviews. Not everything is wonderful at these parks, and it's very important for us to appraise our readers about what's going on. I can hear you asking, "All right, so what's new and exciting?" Let's move on.

You'll find my evaluation of the Disney Resort project elsewhere in this issue. It's a bold undertaking, and one that will heavily impact the theme park world for decades to come. My experience with it so far has been limited, but this article will tune you in to how I personally view the project.

Euro Disney seems to be right on schedule, at least on the surface. I'm not sure if you've all read the newspapers recently about the French Minister of Culture who referred to the project as, "France's Chernobyl." Not a very positive view. But then, the French have always been very unique people, very set in their own ways as you might expect with their rich cultural heritage. We'll have to see how it goes for Disney "over there."

There is no questioning the fact that the Euro Disney resort will be lovely. Its colors are bright and cheerful as necessitated by the often dreary surroundings and weather outside Paris, especially in December, January and February.

The new Euro Disney Sleeping Beauty Castle, is wonderful. It has a size that falls between that of the smaller Disneyland Castle and that of its larger cousins in Florida and Tokyo. The colors of the Euro Disney Castle are almost exactly those of

Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle. I'm glad somebody finally figured out that the cold, grey tones found in the Florida and Tokyo castles don't seem to work as well as the warm pinkish hues of those found in California's castle. Many times, size isn't everything. Disneyland and Euro Disney's castles both prove that.

Fiesta Texas, a new theme park that will be opening this spring is visited in this issue by Van France. This new musically themed park seems to be a gem. If you're looking for a way to spend a musical and exciting few days, Fiesta Texas may be a good choice. I'm told that its wooden roller coaster is the highest and steepest in the world. That should give you thrill ride lovers something to try out. Although roller coasters are usually associated with amusement parks rather than theme parks, the rest of Fiesta Texas certainly qualifies as a theme park. For those who enjoy a less stressful attraction, the music halls are brimming with fun, and there are many less taxing attractions to visit. Fiesta Texas is a welcome addition to the theme park world.

Florida's Universal Studios Tour has done a lot of good things. Their attractions are wonderful and the park itself is laid out very well. Then there's the fantastic "Back To The Future" attraction. In my personal opinion, and those of virtually everyone I know that has ridden the attraction, it's far and away the best flight simulator based ride around.

But, someone ought to tell the people at Universal Florida that getting into their park is an awful adventure! Getting in and out of the parking area is an even worse experience.

There are two exits off the highway to get to the park, and both have what appears to be two lane roads into the parking stations where you pay. However, both two lane roads merge at the toll station, and the road become by our count, EIGHT lanes. It's a madhouse! Once you get past that

point, the parking lot attendants have no idea what they're doing, nor do they seem to really care. I watched four of them laughing together, leaning on a sign while the public got lost while running into each other trying to figure out where to go. This situation has happened repeatedly to many visitors. While there's no questioning that it's a great park once you're inside, getting there is certainly not fun!

Getting into theme parks seems to be a difficult situation in many cases. Case in point, one of the oldest theme parks, Knott's Berry Farm.

Beach Boulevard is not easy to navigate in any instance, but when you approach the entrance to Knott's Berry Farm you find that the road goes right through the middle of the establishment, separating the main parking areas from the theme park itself. Once you're able to find your way from these lots through the maze of restaurants and gift shops to the admission gate, no easy task in itself, the actual park is very confusing.

Their Guide Book could be easier to understand. The map inside is very confusing and hard to follow, especially for the first-time visitor. But once you find your way around, you'll discover that Knott's is a great place to bring the family. There's something there for everyone from Mrs. Knott's famous Chicken Restaurant to a wide variety of themed attractions. There's a Mexican Village, excellent live entertainment year round and a wide variety of thrill rides. If only they could get people in and out easier.

Well enough for now, welcome to TP, and see you all at the parks!



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