

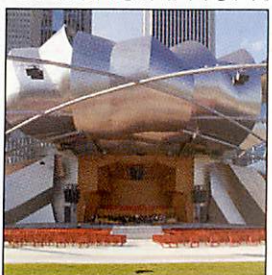


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inside arts & entertainment



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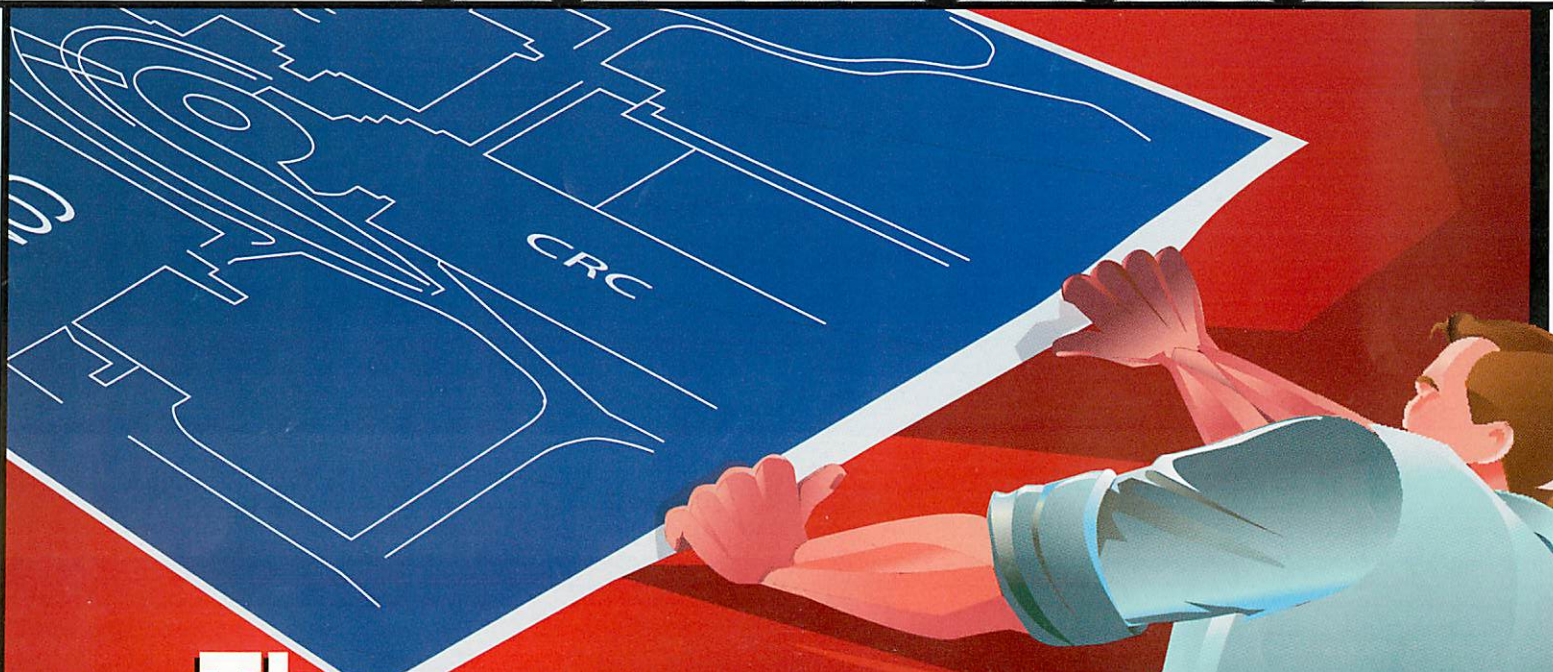


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The Design/Build Debate

Working Together In New Ways

by Kirsten Nelson

Audiovisual consulting has come a long way since the days of custom-built control systems designed to operate a small variety of displays, loudspeakers, microphones, mixers and amps. That was the 1960s, and it wasn't until the 1980s that interfaces appeared on the landscape, solving all sorts of integration issues. The advancement

of serial and RF control systems in the 1990s continued this streamlining of systems design, and today there are products to fit every need, following the entry of IP, ethernet and of course the internet.

In addition to an evolution brought on by the increasing amount of technological solutions to problems formerly worked out on paper, the role of the consultant has also

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At the NSCA Fall Business Conference in Tampa, FL, Nov. 7-9, Olszewski and Wolfe will continue the discussion in person at "Design Build—Is it the Way to Go?"

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Variations On A Theme Park

by Steven J. Thorburn

With families staying closer to home and choosing to drive to regional attractions rather than flying to major theme parks, even smaller attractions must implement novel methods to attract a more diverse audience. The "George Eastman House" in Rochester, NY now offers "speed dating" events in its program mix to help make ends meet. Historical houses like Hearst Castle in California and Mount Vernon in Virginia are putting on Broadway-style productions and adding fast-food outlet franchises as a way to help make ends meet.

At this year's TiLE (Trends in Leisure Environments) conference in Europe, the standing-room-only "Emerging Markets" session found delegates and exhibitors enjoying a preview of the changing shape of the attractions industry. Presenters recounted their experiences in markets that were undergoing major changes in locations such as China and the Middle East. Of the three theme parks that were approved for construction in China, only Disneyland Hong Kong, slated to open to 2006, is still

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moving forward.

While projects like the newly opened Smithsonian Air and Space Museum near the Dulles Airport or the reworking of the exhibits at the Natural History Museum are large and very fun projects, they are few and far between. To find work right now you need to look for venues with an educational component like zoos or aquariums that bring a focus to nature, or regional family-oriented attractions.

Anything dealing with education has a better chance to find funding of some type. For example, in Florida, a 3 1/2-acre indoor theme park recently opened for children. In this park, the children take on roles of firefighters, archaeologists, actors, doctors or other professionals, so they can get a taste of the working world as an adult.

Others are trying to open new parks such as Lincoln's Land in Illinois, or family resorts



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▲ **The themed entertainment business has shifted significantly toward family oriented attractions, such as LouLou Al Dugong's leisure center in Dubai.**

and indoor water parks near Niagara Falls, or creating sports parks that are scaled replicas of famous baseball venues such as Fenway Park, the Polo Grounds, Yankee Stadium, Forbes Field or Wrigley Field.

Another place to look for work is at the retail developments around existing parks and attractions. Earlier this year, \$90 million of general tourism projects were reported for the Pigeon Forge, TN area (home to Dollywood). The projects include Walden's Landing, a specialty shopping and dining complex; Boyd's Bear Country, a destination retailing facility for stuffed bears, collectibles and crafts; and Belle Island Village, a multi-faceted development.

There are lots of opportunities for digital signage, visual displays and audio systems in the retail and restaurants in that region.

While the global amusement industry value is reported to be \$19 billion annually, we are still seeing smaller, much simpler, projects. The following are typical of projects found in the RFPs that the TEA (Themed Entertainment Association) provides to its members: "U.S. Special Operations is looking for wayside exhibits (the maps/pictures at roadside turn-offs); exhibits design and construction for U.S. Capitol Visitor Center and U.S. Holocaust Museum; driving simulators for police training from Ari-

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theme parks

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zona to Atlanta; interactive, interpretive exhibits for Hatfield Marine Science Center at Oregon State University; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and North Carolina New River State Park; U.S. Navy wants three axis flight motion simulators."

The most notable project we found out about this year was the Glenfiddich Single Malt Whiskey display exhibit at London's Stansted Airport. The exhibit includes an estimated 500 bottles on display, film of the distillery and production process, and a huge 3D hologram of Glenfiddich's stag, which follows you as you move round the unit.

It will be interesting to see how this November plays out for the theme and leisure industry.

IAAPA's 86th annual convention will again be held in Orlando, November 15-19. With attendance anticipated at 30,000, it will be a great time to check up on the pulse of the industry.

Steven J. Thorburn, PE, (SJT@TA-Inc.com) is co-founder of Thorburn Associates, an acoustic and audiovisual system design and engineering firm with offices in northern and southern California and North Carolina.