

# WORLD PARK

MARCH 2012

## King Cobra

Coming soon to Six Flags!

INSIDE

75 years of BALPPA  
Kemah Boardwalk  
Social Media  
+ more!



# Complete Lily Pad Walk Setup

Zebec provides a Complete Lily Pad Walk Setup including Foam Lily Pad Floats, Overhead Netting and Pool Side Safety Padding – All made in our USA 70,000sf Cincinnati, Ohio factory. Lily Pad setups are custom designed for each project and constructed to fit your specific area.

### Complete Lily Pad Walk Setup

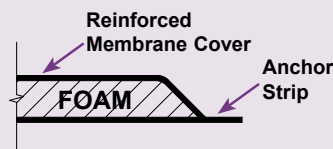
- FOAM Lily Floats
- Overhead Netting
- Entry Pool Side Padding

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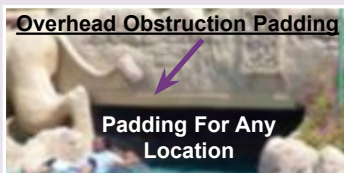
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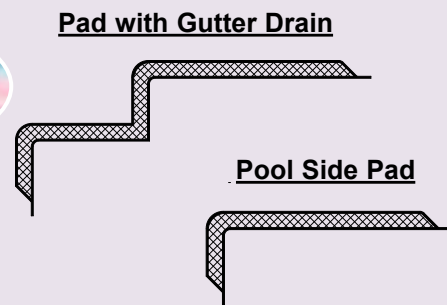
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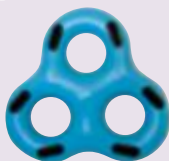
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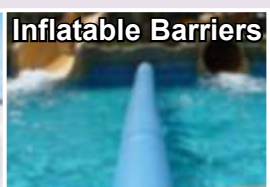
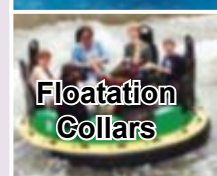
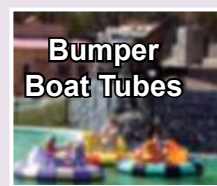


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“ I think we have evolved from being fairgrounds at the sea to amusement parks, and now we are adding theming, but they are not true theme parks as you might see in some other places ”

Gary Smart and others discuss the British park industry as BALPPA celebrates 75 years, P24



“ Using mobile phones, visitors are already documenting their day out at your park, rating the experience and sharing it with friends – and the entire online world – as it happens. So keep your ear to the ground! ”

Klaus Sommer Paulsen on social media, P36



**THIS MONTH'S COVER SHOT:** Following its debut last summer in Turkey, Polin Waterparks & Pool Systems is to install a further eight King Cobra slides this year across the globe – including its first ever in North America. See page 20. [www.polin.com.tr.com](http://www.polin.com.tr.com)

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# ParkWord

March 2012



It was encouraging to learn of the Koch family's plans to take over the former Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom (see page 14).

The operators of Holiday World and Splashin' Safari have built up considerable goodwill in Santa Claus, Indiana, with a family friendly operation renowned for its friendliness and cleanliness. Where other parks "nickel and dime" their guests from the parking lot onwards, the Kochs believe their offer of free parking, free soft drinks and free sunscreen contribute significantly to guest satisfaction. As you'll read from Dan Koch's response to the 'Big Question' on page 5, they have also resisted implementing a ride reservation system for similar reasons.

This may sound a bit too worthy, but don't let the homely image fool you – this is a park now exceeding one million in annual attendance. Combined with a programme of sustained investment; visitor numbers, in-park spending and length of stay have all increased since free soft drinks were introduced in 2000.

The Kochs now intend to bring these same values to Louisville, Kentucky, if they are successful in reopening Kentucky Kingdom as Bluegrass Boardwalk by May of next year. First they must secure \$15-\$20 million of financing.

Opened in 1987 as an extension to Kentucky State Fair, the park survived just one initial season. It was resurrected by local businessman Ed Hart in 1990, who ran it successfully until 1997, before selling out to Premier Parks, where it would soon become part of a burgeoning Six Flags portfolio. Hart was at the helm of one of six companies that expressed an interest in the park following the departure of a somewhat leaner Six Flags in 2010, yet ultimately he failed to reach an agreement with the State Fair board.

With high profile corpses such as Six Flags New Orleans and Hard Rock/Freestyle Music Park still blotting the US landscape, it would be tragic to see another abandoned park turn to rack and ruin. The Koch family has 14 months to bring the amusement to Louisville. I look forward to raising a glass of free "soda" when it does.

Owen Ralph - Editor



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# Big Question



Do you offer a 'fast pass' or ride reservation system at your park?



**Todd Houglund, Ocean Park, Hong Kong:** We are currently evaluating queue management systems options with the intention of implementing one in the very near future. We believe it is a service that many of our guests are looking for. In fact, they have indicated they are willing to pay for this premium service, and therefore it would be an additional revenue stream for the park. A similar "Privilege Ticket" has already proven itself at our popular Halloween Bash event, where tickets sell out quickly each year.



**John Hildebrandt, Cedar Point, USA:** We are introducing several options. Fast Lane will avoid lines on all of the park's most popular rides all season long. Fright Lane will offer quick access at all of the haunted houses and the CornStalker fright zone during our HalloWeekends. We were able to gain experience with this concept last season at our sister park Kings Island and it was very popular, especially with guests who have time constraints. These passes will be available for purchase online and in the park, and daily quantities will be limited. We will continue to offer our VIP Tour option for guests who want a personal escort throughout their day at Cedar Point, including the ability to skip ride lines.



**Hannes W Mairinger, Heide Park, Germany:** In 2011 we introduced an electronic ride reservation system, which we call the "Express Butler" [by Lo-Q] to replace the previous paper pass. The Express Butler is a guest service which allows guests to plan their day, view waiting times, make ride reservations and avoid spending time physically waiting in the queue line. In the meantime, the guest can visit other attractions and proceeds to a separate ride entrance at the reserved time. This new system [€8 per Express Butler device and then €10 per guest] has been very well received and increased guest satisfaction.



**Dan Koch, Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, USA:** We have chosen not to go in this direction. We see the park as the great equalizer, where everyone has the opportunity to enjoy our rides, shows and attractions equally. We work hard to keep lines short, and moving, and we plan to continue in this direction as we grow.

# Figures of Fun

**4.99**

British pounds – costs of knight's helmet, the best selling item of merchandise at Gulliver's theme parks in the UK

**14**

number of decks on Disney Fantasy, the latest ship in the Disney Cruise Lines fleet, launching March 31

**60**

metres – height of Divertical, the world's tallest water coaster, opening this summer at Mirabilandia, Italy

**1,600**

number of individual Lego models "in residence" at new Legoland Hotel in Windsor near London

**100,000**

US dollars – average revenue per employee at a large American amusement park

Produced in association with AECOM.  
www.aecom.com/economics

# Ups & Downs

**Disney Jobs Boost** - Walt Disney Parks & Resorts will create 10,000 jobs this year around the world according to chairman Tom Staggs

**Tower Tragedy** - A 14-year girl fell to her death last month from the "Eiffel Tower" drop tower at Hopi Hari in São Paulo

**Out of Werk** - The operator of the Ring<sup>o</sup>Werk theme park/FEC at the Nürburgring race track has had its contract cancelled by the German government

**Flags Payback** - Six Flags shareholders are due a tenfold increase in quarterly cash dividends from ¢6 to ¢60 per share

**Tower Treat** - Visitors to SeaWorld Orlando can now ride the Sky Tower for free. Guests were previously asked for a \$4 upcharge



# ParkHoppin'

with Paul Ruben



## Bear Necessities

Last summer I travelled to Canobie Lake Park in New Hampshire to report on Untamed, their new Euro-Fighter by Gerstlauer. The only rollercoaster of its kind in New England and one of only four in the United States, the ride was custom-designed to Canobie's specifications with an "Untamed" Grizzly bear theme.

The coaster's cars, which hold eight passengers each, feature a roaring Grizzly on the front. The station and surrounding area are designed in a rustic "Adirondack" style with 64 carved bears throughout the loading area. Some of the bears are large, some small, but the one pictured here (on the right) is the most cuddly. That is, if a carved wooden bear can be cuddly. Even the coaster's track supports are painted to resemble birch trees.

We all know that Disney offers themed rollercoasters. Universal offers themed rollercoasters. Herschend Entertainment offers themed

rollercoasters. But do you recall many family-operated parks, at least in North America, offering a heavily-themed rollercoaster? Before the appearance of Untamed I do not, except for the Golden Nugget, a Wild West themed coaster/dark ride on the former Hunt's Pier in New Jersey. That ride has now been moved to Knoebel's, where it has been re-themed as a coal mine tour called Black Diamond. A trend in the making?

Most coaster stations are functional. Form follows function, with few decorative touches. But Untamed has more than the bear necessities. The station is gorgeous,

a feast for the eyes. Once aboard, guests are treated to a vertical lift coaster. It features an initial climb that takes riders 72ft into the air. From there, riders plummet into a 97 degree drop that elicited plenty of screams before they zoom through a series of loops, twists and zero-gravity rolls over 1,184ft of track.

Untamed is the largest coaster to come online in New England since 2002 and the first to be added to Canobie Lake Park's line-up of four rollercoasters in two decades. The park's other rollercoasters include the Corkscrew Coaster, Dragon Coaster and the Yankee Cannonball, one of the most popular and historic wooden coasters in New England, marking its 76th birthday this year.

While visiting Canobie Lake Park, I couldn't resist a ride on their bumper cars, appropriately called the Dodgems. The original Dodgem was a rear-steering monstrosity invented in 1922 by Max and Harold Stoehrer of Methuen, Massachusetts, just seven miles away from the park. During my ride one guest was steering particularly erratically, which got me thinking, Can a person be arrested for drunken driving on bumper cars? Less than an hour away by car, Boston area parks such as Whalom Park, Paragon Park and Revere Beach all had Dodgems, too, but like the Dodgem company are now part of history. Fortunately, Canobie Lake Park lives on and flourishes.



# Big splash!

## Mirabilandia's record-breaking water coaster

Standing almost 200ft (60 metres) tall, Divertical will become the world's tallest water coaster when it opens this season at Mirabilandia. The Intamin attraction, now under construction at the park near Ravenna/Rimini, will also become Italy's tallest rollercoaster.



## Showzam! brightens up winter in Blackpool

Thanks to its annual illuminations, the British seaside resort of Blackpool enjoys a season longer than most – right through until the beginning of November. But now the season starts earlier than ever too, and a relatively new event is providing people with another reason to visit over the winter.

A 10-day celebration of circus, magic and variety, Showzam! takes place at various venues around the town during the "half-term" school holidays each February. This year a record 20,000 visitors descending on the festival hub, Showzam! Central at the Winter Gardens (pictured below), to see an intriguing selection of fairground side shows, live acts and curiosities.

Elsewhere in the town there was a full programme of fringe shows, street theatre and events including Variety by the Sea, Circus Bollywood and a Burlesque-style Carnival Ball at Blackpool Tower. Behind-the-scenes tours were offered at the the Tower, Pleasure Beach and Grand Theatre, while Carnesky's Ghost Train provided a chilling twist to half-term.

Now in its fifth year, Showzam! grew out of a 2007 project called Admission All Classes, which looked to revive and celebrate Blackpool's proud tradition of populist entertainment. The event is curated by Professor Vanessa Toulmin from the National Fairground Archive at the University of Sheffield. Research collected at this year's event suggests Showzam! is becoming a nationally recognised festival, also attracting overseas visitors from as far a field as the USA.





The ride will feature a vertical launch system similar to that on Pilgrims Plunge at Holiday World (USA) – currently the world’s tallest water coaster – followed by an extended track layout including two splash sections.

Passengers in each of 11 boats will travel at speeds of up to 110kmh during the 2 minute 40 second experience. Dubbed, “the Formula One of the Seas,” the attraction will feature a motorboat racing theme and is set for a June 2012 debut.

“Divertical will be not only be the highest water coaster in the world, but thanks to its imposing size and its innovative concept will also become an icon of the park,” notes Mirabilandia CEO Riccardo Copo.

Part of Parques Reunidos group, Mirabilandia is Italy’s second most popular amusement park (behind Gardaland), entertaining around 1.5 million guests a year. Divertical will join in a thrill ride line-up that also includes the Intamin launch coaster iSpeed and B&M inverted coaster Katun.



## Cartoon Network waterpark for Thailand

Construction has begun on the world’s first Cartoon Network-themed waterpark, which will open next year in Thailand.

Located on the east coast of the country in idyllic Bang Saray, close to Pattaya, Cartoon Network AMAZONE will feature the licensed properties Ben 10, The Powerpuff Girls, Johnny Bravo and The Amazing World of Gumball.

The waterpark will incorporate an Amazon Rainforest theme and feature signature attractions including a gigantic family wave pool, a winding adventure river, speed-racing slides, family raft rides and one of the world’s largest interactive water play fortresses for kids.

“At Cartoon Network AMAZONE families can step into our vibrant world of animation and vacation like never before,” says Sunny Saha, senior vice-president and managing director of Turner Broadcasting Asia Pacific. “We are very proud to have Thailand as the spectacular backdrop for the world’s first Cartoon Network-themed waterpark.”

Turner will develop the waterpark together with local attraction and resorts operator Amazon Falls Co Ltd. Creative design is being handled in-house by the team at Cartoon Network Asia in Hong Kong, with equipment supplied by Polin Waterparks & Pool Systems. Phase one is already under construction. When complete it will cover 14 acres of coastal plains and attract a projected 800,000 visitors a year.

“Thailand has excellent tourism credentials, a vibrant culture with a vast history and also the most welcoming people in the world,” notes Amazon Falls chairman Liakat Dhanji. “Cartoon Network is a global household name, and we have no doubt that by welcoming our guests to meet their favourite Cartoon Network heroes, it will be a great draw for our park.”

Bang Saray retains its charm as a fully functioning fishing port yet is in close proximity to leading golf courses, resorts and some of the best seafood restaurants in Thailand. With over five million tourists a year to the surrounding Chonburi province, it is one of the country’s most popular tourist destinations. The Thailand Board of Investment has pledged to offer, “as much assistance as required” to the project.



## Park Law

by Heather M Eichenbaum Esq



### Resolving Claims for Less Cost

Claims for personal injury are inevitable in the amusement industry and usually culminate in lawsuits. Those lawsuits are public record and, therefore, available for all to discover. Alternative Dispute Resolution (“ADR”) is one way of resolving claims more quickly, confidentially – and for considerably lower cost.

A typical ADR pre-lawsuit will cost about a quarter of the cost of taking a claim through a lawsuit and trial. ADR may take the form of mediation, binding arbitration or non-binding arbitration.

A mediation is, simply stated, a meeting with a neutral mediator whose job it is to try to resolve the dispute by each side coming to a compromise. The parties to a claim can agree to mediate a claim at any time – before or after a lawsuit is filed. The parties can agree to conduct discovery and exchange expert reports before the mediation or not.

The mediator essentially acts as a go-between or negotiator. Generally, the mediator will request written submissions that summarise each party’s position before the mediation and then work with the parties, together and separately, to reach a resolution on the day of the actual mediation. That resolution can be confidential by agreement of the parties.

A binding arbitration is a private (out of court) mini-trial which is a final definitive resolution to a claim. A non-binding arbitration is the same except that either party can reject the arbitration outcome and file a lawsuit or appeal. An arbitration is more involved than a mediation but less formal, time-consuming and expensive than a trial.

As with mediation, parties to a claim can agree to either form of arbitration before or after a lawsuit is filed. Parameters for the arbitration and lead in to it (conducting discovery) can be negotiated and agreed upon by the parties and reduced to a written arbitration agreement. Usually only the parties, and maybe a fact witness or two, will testify at an arbitration, reducing the cost of experts, whose opinions can be submitted by reports.

Arbitrator(s), who are usually local attorneys or retired judges, will request written submissions that summarise each party’s position and then conduct the mini-trial and issue a written decision on the claim. The parties can agree that decision will be confidential.

As trials can be extremely costly, and usually not the only way a claim can be resolved, Alternative Dispute Resolution should be considered as an alternative by all amusement venues and claims handlers, both pre-suit and once a lawsuit is filed. Because the parties can agree to the terms for ADR in a written contract, there is often more flexibility than in a lawsuit. Not only will ADR save you considerable time and expense, it will also avoid unnecessary public commentary and media attention regarding the claim.

*Heather Eichenbaum is a member with Spector Gadon & Rosen PC, practising in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In addition to defending amusement venues, she also handles and provides training in crisis management. Legal counsel to and a board member of the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials in the United States, she is also a member of IAAPA, NJAA, OABA and the IISF. Should you need legal assistance, reach Heather at: +1 215 241 8856 or heichenbaum@lawsg.com*



# Angry Birds Land

## App meets amusement park in Finland

Särkänniemi Adventure Park in Tampere, Finland, is to open a new zone based around the computer game Angry Birds. Set to open this summer, Angry Bird Land promises an "interactive entertainment experience where the physical and virtual world combine."

Developed in association with the Finnish software developer Rovio Entertainment, the new addition to the park will feature design from Bruce D Robinson of Cincinnati. Details of the planned rides and attractions will be released later this spring.

Since it was released for the iPhone in December 2009, Angry Birds has become the biggest-selling paid "app" ever in both Apple's UK and US App Stores. The game has now been downloaded more than 700 million times across all platforms.

"We wanted to create a unique themed area associated with a strong brand," says Särkänniemi CEO Miikka Seppälä. "The Angry Birds characters were born in Finland but are known worldwide by people of all ages. This is a perfect fit for our park."

According to Rovio's executive vice-president of licensing and merchandising, Harri Koponen, the new addition at Särkänniemi will be, "the first of several Angry Bird parks around the world" with the goal being "to motivate the fans, both adults and children, to exercise and enjoy the outdoors."

Särkänniemi's 2012 season starts on April 28.



Särkänniemi

# Kernels

**Lo-Q** has signed a three-year deal with Palace Entertainment/Parques Reunidos to introduce a virtual queuing system at Splash Splash waterpark in Riverhead, New York. Guests will be able to rent a Q-band waterproof wristband, enabling and reserve a "virtual" place in line at the park's most popular slides.

A troupe of Mexican Olympic high divers will be the stars of a new show opening this summer at **Pleasure Beach**, Blackpool, England. La Quebrada will be performed in a purpose built arena in the shadow of the Big One rollercoaster. The park's live entertainment offer will receive another boost in July when the 75th edition of the IAAPA Big E Award-winning skating spectacular *Hot Ice* opens at the Pleasure Beach Arena.

Professional simulation specialist **Cruden** has moved into new premises in Amsterdam to handle increased orders from customers in the motorsport, automotive, attractions and training markets. The new facility is just 15 minutes from Schiphol airport and two minutes from the Amsterdam ring road.

# Ninja Turtles take over Nickelodeon Universe

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Shell Shock is one of three Gerstlauer attractions opening this season in North America. The 72-ft-tall SkyFly attraction is destined for Nickelodeon Universe at the Mall of America.



The ride features a giant arm with 12 single seat gondolas. During the experience, passengers are free to flip "wings" by their side in order to complete barrel rolls in the sky.

The new ride is one of three SkyFlies opening this season around the world, the other two going to Nigoland in France and Legoland Deutschland. The indoor park in Minnesota already boasts a Gerstlauer EuroFighter and spinning coaster.

# Legoland Windsor Hotel

Guests at Legoland Windsor near London will be able to enjoy the "ultimate sleepover" at the world's first purpose-built Legoland Hotel.

At the entrance is a clock tower featuring a 6-metre smoke-breathing Lego dragon, while featured in the lobby is a floor to ceiling exploding toy box mobile and a reception wall made from 6,000 mini Lego figures. A team of six children have been appointed as "junior concierges" for the official opening on March 17.

With this addition to the park, operator Merlin Entertainment has now rebranded the property Legoland Windsor Resort.



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# Greece Frightening!

## House of Fear opens in Athens

Allou! Fun Park in Athens has opened Greece's first scare attraction. The House of Fear was created by the UK's AtmosFEAR! Entertainment Group (AEG), and will open year round.

Eleven performers keep intrepid visitors on their toes across 13 individual horror environments. Special effects, illusions, lights, chilling soundtracks and vile smells combine with Hollywood style costumes and make-up to create the chilling House of Fear.

"Creating the first scare attraction for Greece has been an interesting journey for the AEG team," says creative director Jason Karl. "With no obvious cultural benchmark or point of reference we had to develop a theme which the Greek audience could relate to. After exploring several ideas we decided we would challenge guests to endure a series of disconnected nightmares featuring claustrophobia, total darkness,

demonic possession, blood sacrifice, being burned alive, cannibalism, murder and inanimate objects coming to life."

This fun for all the family experience was launched this winter with a nationwide media campaign, which generated queues of over three hours on busy nights. Three casts of performers (33 in total) have been recruited and underwent special training at a three-day "Scream School" in Athens. The attraction has been designed with a variable throughput to allow for high to low season operation.

"Each environment is vaguely related to its predecessor which creates cohesion, but we can adapt and add different scares, environments and characters as the attraction evolves to keep it fresh," adds Karl.

"The AtmosFEAR team worked tirelessly to create the attraction in only a few weeks," notes Allou commercial director Vaya Klingou. "They did an



AtmosFEAR's Jason Karl with Nikos Venierakis, Vaya Klingou and Stratos Drimalitis from Allou Fun Park

excellent job in training the scare actors and making The House of Fear the talk of Athens."

Allou! Fun Park welcomes more than three million guests a year. The House of Fear represents the 47th scare project for AtmosFEAR in its 11 year history, but its first outside the UK or Ireland. Its regular Halloween "haunt" is Scare Kingdom in Lancashire, England.

## Coney Island comeback continues

New York City's new look Coney Island is pulling in the tourists. Central Amusement International (CAI), the Zamperla-backed company that operates Luna Park and Scream Zone, has revealed that the number of out-of-town visitors to these two parks more than doubled in 2011, up from 22,500 to nearly 58,000.



"When we opened Luna Park in 2010, we helped to reintroduce the Coney Island brand to the world," said CAI president Valerio Ferrari. "News has spread that Coney is back, and now people want to experience it firsthand."

Total attendance in 2011 at Luna Park and Scream Zone was 644,000. Over the last two seasons, CAI has invested more than \$30 million in the parks, equipping them with a large selection of Zamperla attractions. This summer, the company will introduce more amusements, as well as a revitalised Boardwalk. Additional Coney Island amusement outlets include Deno's Wonder Wheel Park.

## SpongeBob gets wet on Gold Coast

The world of Nickelodeon has arrived at Sea World Resort & Water Park on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia.

At SpongeBob SplashBash, guests can join everyone's favourite bright yellow sponge and his nautical friends in a water playground packed with fun features including a giant tipping bucket. A musical fountain show lights up the attraction after dark with special LED effects.

Meet and greet opportunities with SpongeBob SquarePants and other Nickelodeon characters are available in the resort's lobby.



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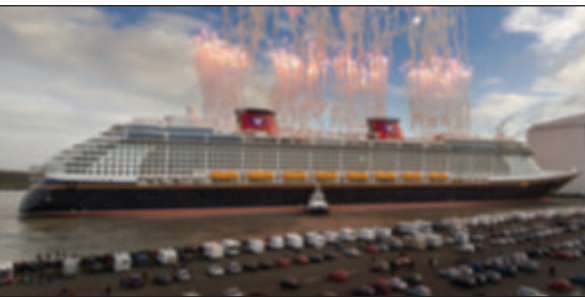


# Disney dreams

## New hotel and cruise ship launched in Florida

The newest ship in the Disney Cruise Line fleet launches later this month. The family-friendly **Disney Fantasy** makes its maiden voyage from Port Canaveral in Florida on March 31.

The entertainment line-up on board includes two Broadway-style musical stage shows, *Wishes* and *Aladdin*, a detective adventure game featuring the



Disney Fantasy at the shipyard in Germany

Muppets, princess makeovers at the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique and regular pirates nights. Meanwhile the Thea Award-winning *Animation Magic* is a new dinner show in Animator's Palate restaurant that brings guests' cartoon drawings to life. After dark, the Europa entertainment district will come alive with its many bars and lounges.

Built for 4,000 passengers, the Disney Fantasy offers seven-night Caribbean cruises, including a stop at Disney's private island in the Bahamas. The German-built vessel is 1,115ft (340m) in length and weighs 128,000 tonnes.

Meanwhile a new resort hotel is due to open at Walt Disney World near Orlando. **Disney's Art of Animation Resort** features wings with dedicated family suites themed around classic Disney or Disney-Pixar films – *Finding Nemo*, *Cars* and *The Lion King* – with a fourth wing featuring standard guest rooms dedicated to *The Little Mermaid*.



Little Mermaid room at Disney's Art of Animation Resort

Pixelated patterns and wavy ribbons of colour decorate the hotel's exterior, while pencil drawings of Ariel, Lightning McQueen, Nemo and Simba adorn the entryway. A chandelier composed of animation storyboards enhances the lobby.

The property, situated adjacent to Disney's Pop Century Resort, will open in phases beginning in late May 2012. The 1,120 family suites include two bathrooms, a kitchenette and three separate sleeping areas that can sleep up to six. Some 864 standard rooms sleep up to four each.

## New report examines US parks/FECs market

The United States amusement park and family entertainment centre (FEC) industry produces annual revenues of around \$16 billion, according to a report published in February by the company Research & Markets. The market is also highly concentrated, with 85% of the revenue from the nation's c.3,000 individual amusement outlets generated by the top 50 companies.

This capital intensive industry relies on strong marketing of new attractions combined with a healthy economy stimulate demand, says the report. The industry is also labour intensive with average revenue per employee standing at about \$100,000 for large parks or half that for smaller operations such as FECs.

Amusement parks get about 55% of their income from admissions and about 30% from food, beverage and merchandise sales, continues the report. The remainder is made up from a mix of parking fees, commission income from third-party exhibitors, advertising and fees for hosting parties and other events.

The report, entitled *Amusement Parks & Arcades*, is available for \$129 via [researchandmarkets.com](http://researchandmarkets.com)

## 'Eye do'

Local girl Sharon Fuller provided a great PR opportunity for Blackpool Tower when she chose to make a leap year proposal to her boyfriend from the top of the UK seaside landmark.



Taking advantage of the special date – February 29

– the 31-year-old popped the question to her partner of six years, Simon Dunkerley. Over 500ft down below, the words "Marry Me!" were written in the sand on Blackpool's famous beach. Simon said yes.

Blackpool Tower was relaunched by Merlin Entertainments and Blackpool Council last September, complete with a "Eye" branded glass floored observation deck and Blackpool Tower Dungeon.

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# Bluegrass Boardwalk

## Kochs come to the rescue in Kentucky

The former Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom in Louisville, Kentucky, is moving closer to reopening following a deal between Bluegrass Boardwalk Inc and the Kentucky State Fair Board. Bluegrass Boardwalk is a partnership of four members of the Koch family from Santa Claus, Indiana, where they operate the successful Holiday World & Splashin' Safari theme park/waterpark.

The Fair Board has granted the Kochs lease approval on the 57-acre, amusement park and waterpark in Louisville. The family must now secure

\$15-\$20 million of financing, including incentives from Kentucky's tourism cabinet, if they are to reopen the park for May 2013.

"We can't wait to get started," said Dan Koch last month. "We've got a lot of work to do to get the park reopened in just 15 months, but we'll get it done. We'd like to thank the Fair Board for putting their faith in us and the community at large for their tremendous cheers of support."

Dan Koch is Holiday World president and forms Bluegrass Boardwalk together with his sister Natalie

Koch, their cousin Kathy Kamp, and her husband, Michael Kamp, who is Holiday World's general Manager. Dan, Natalie and Kathy are grandchildren of Holiday World's founder, Louis J Koch, who opened the Indiana park in 1946.

"We're bringing our business model of exceptional safety, cleanliness, friendliness and value for families," says Natalie Koch. "That means free soft drinks, free sunscreen and free use of innertubes."



## Doing it by the book in California



In 1960 plans were announced for Bible Storyland, a \$15-million theme park in Cucamonga, California, which its creators hoped would rival Disneyland. Judged to be

blasphemous by local clergy, the project was abandoned.

Bible Storyland may be gone, but it's not forgotten. The park is the focus of a new documentary film, and it's a hoot. It tracks art dealer Harvey Jordan, who acquired over 50 original concept drawings for the park prepared by Bruce Bushman, a former Disney artist. Complete with dream sequences, animation and even a curse, the film plumbs the depths of Bible Storyland and its affects on the compulsive Jordan, his marriage and his family.

The 60-acre theme park would have featured Bible-themed rides and attractions. The project was conceived by showman Nat Winecoff who had previously helped sell Disney's park to investors. Backers of Bible Storyland included yo-yo promoter Donald Duncan and actor Jack Haley, who played the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*.

As envisioned, the park would have been heart-shaped, "symbolic of God's love for humanity." Divided into six areas, including Babylon and the Garden of Eden, each would have had rides, bazaars, restaurants and dioramas. Awaiting park-goers would have been such enticing experiences as chariot racing in Rome, a ferry ride across the River Styx or a "Ride To Heaven." There were even plans to sell "lion burgers," reversing the old biblical tale of Christians being fed to the lions.

*Bible Storyland The Movie* is available now on DVD from [biblestorylandmovie.com](http://biblestorylandmovie.com)



## Winter work at Drayton Manor

The British company Severn-Lamb proved it's capable of doing more than just building people movers when it completed a number of jobs this winter at local amusement park Drayton Manor.

This included refurbishment of the gondolas on one of the park's oldest rides, the Chairlift (pictured). The Buffalo coaster also came in for some attention, while a new engine and stern drive were fitted to the Drayton Queen Mississippi riverboat, which Severn-Lamb supplied new to the park back in the 1980s. Other work included a full refurbishment of the park's Drayton Queen train and maintenance of the back-up systems on various rides and attractions, including the G-Force coaster and Thomas Land's trains.

"There has always been a very good relationship between Drayton Manor and Severn-Lamb, which goes back to the early 1970s when the company supplied our first Rio Grande train," notes park operations manager David Bromilow. "This kind of service is part of our preventative maintenance programme, and is particularly important in these days of longer seasons and operating periods. We feel extremely confident in what Severn-Lamb does, it is really like having our own off-site maintenance team."

*\*Park World was sorry to hear of the passing of Michael Severn Lamb on February 7 and sends condolences to the family and all Severn Lamb employees past and present. Obituary next issue.*



## New on Morey's Piers

This attractive boat ride is one of three new attractions opening in 2012 at Morey's Piers in Wildwood, New Jersey. Named Riptide, the Chance Morgan ride will open on Mariner's Landing Pier, replacing the Sea Dragon. Meanwhile on Morey's Surfside Pier, a Zamperla Happy Swing called Happy Feet will debut together with a 16-seat Kang 'A' Bounce.



## Mack makes personnel changes



Kurt Mack-Even

Kurt Mack-Even has retired from Mack Rides after 35 years with the German ride manufacturer. The company has now appointed a new executive board comprising Christian von Elverfeldt as managing director/CEO, Thorsten Koebele, handling sales and marketing, and chief technical officer Günther Burger.

"Since the seventies, Kurt Mack-Even was always Mack Rides' face to the customer," the board notes in a recent statement. "We are more than glad we can count on his advice even in his post 'retirement'! Kurt will continue consulting our sales department and be available for his clients."

Koebele meanwhile boasts 13 years' experience as a design engineer and project manager and head of Mack Rides' development department.

## Bob Gurr advises Producers Group



Bob Gurr

Legendary ex-Disney Imagineer Bob Gurr has joined the board of advisors at The Producers Group.

A winner of the prestigious TEA's Thea Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1999, he is one of the elite few to receive his own window on Main Street in Disneyland.

Based, like Walt Disney Imagineering, in Glendale, California, The Producers Group is headed by joint CEOs and executive producers Bob Chambers and Edward Marks. Its portfolio includes lots of work for Universal.

## EAS conference programme takes shape

The conference topics have been confirmed for October's Euro Attractions Show (EAS) in Berlin. The event will also feature exclusive behind-the-scenes tours to local attractions including Tropical Islands and Filmpark Babelsberg.

Some of Europe's leading industry experts will participate in education sessions on Halloween events, emerging markets, waterparks, social media, new technologies, sustainability, safety, and food and beverage trends. *Park World* will reveal some of the confirmed speakers in due course.

The conference programme takes place on Wednesday and Thursday, October 9 and 10, with a special FEC/Indoor programme set for October 11 in addition to the three-day IAAPA Institute for Attractions Managers from October 7 to 9.

The main EAS trade show – now firmly established as Europe's premier event for parks and attractions industry – will take place from October 9 to 12 at Messe Berlin. Situated on the edge of the German capital, the venue is near many hotels and restaurants and also enjoys excellent public transport links both to the city and its new airport.

More than 350 exhibitors are promised and organiser IAAPA Europe is anticipating more than 7,000 visitors, including several newcomers from Eastern Europe thanks to Berlin's location.

[iaapa.org/eas](http://iaapa.org/eas)



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# The Swarm

## Coaster crashes into Thorpe Park



Following the launch season of Raptor at Gardaland in Italy, Thorpe Park near London is about to launch Europe's second – and tallest – Wing Coaster from Bolliger & Mabillard (B&M)

The Swarm features stark theming including the wreckage of a plane and fire truck. Ahead of its official launch on March 15, the park invited former fighter pilots to test the attraction. The ex-RAF (Royal Air Force) and Red Arrows pilots, who together form aerobatic display team The Blades, reached speeds of up to 100km/h during the intense thrill ride.

Built on its own island, The Swarm features an inverted first drop of 127ft and several exciting near misses (or near hits!). With cars suspended either side

of the track, all 28 riders are left completely exposed with nothing above or below them and thanks to car's massive "wingspan" of almost six-metres, each twist in the track produces a spectacular effect.

"I am a self-confessed adrenaline junkie but even as a pilot used to G-force there were some gut-wrenching moments," reports Blades team leader, Mark Cutmore. "I have to admit the near miss element is eye-watering – you really do feel as if you are going to crash into the structures."

The Swarm is Thorpe Park's second B&M ride, joining the inverted coaster Nemesis Inferno. Additional Wing Coasters will open this season at Dollywood in Tennessee (Wild Eagle) and Six Flags Great America near Chicago (X-Flight).

## Kernels

The **Dollywood** Company is to bring a major family entertainment centre (FEC) to Nashville. The company have entered into a memorandum of understanding with Gaylord Entertainment for a 50/50 joint venture adjacent to the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center. Phase one of the project is slated for a summer 2014 debut and would consist of an approximately \$50 million water and snow park.

The sale of the German theme park **Fort Fun** has fallen through following revelations that would-be buyer Matthäus Ziegler had been convicted of fraud. The park will remain under the ownership of Compagnie des Alpes for the 2012 season.

**BRC Imagination Arts** has presented preliminary plans for a theme park in Braunschweig-Wolfsburg, Northern Germany. The park is one of more than 100 projects proposed as part of a masterplan for the region. "This is the first time we have been asked to work on a tourism offer for an entire region," BRC Europe's Bart Dohmen tells *Park World*.

**Paultons** Family Theme Park in England is to open an SBF-Visa Drop 'n' Twist tower called Magma. The ride will feature theming from RMA and is due to open in time for Easter.

Greg Pearn has been appointed the new operations manager of **Madame Tussauds Blackpool**, England, moving from Merlin Entertainments' neighbouring Sea Life attraction. Matthew Titherington remains as Madame Tussauds' general manager.

Premier Rides president Jim Seay has been re-elected as chairman of **ASTM Committee F24** on Amusement Rides and Devices. The 500-member collective is responsible for global safety standards that cover design, manufacturing, maintenance, inspection and operations for amusement rides, water-related rides and devices, plus and special rides and attractions.

The Safari Railroad at **Tolledo Zoo**, Ohio, will feature three new look CP Huntington locomotives when it resumes operation this spring. The Ohio zoo recently purchased one new loco from Chance Morgan while refurbishing two 2003 models it already owned.

Theming and Animatronic Industries (**TAA**) has appointed two new project managers. Jim Cassidy joins the German company after 22 years in sales with Sally Corporation, but also boasts strong technical skills including welding, pneumatics and fabrication of robots. Meanwhile Frenchman Christophe Batista is an expert in rockwork theming, having themed zoos in Morocco and Hamburg.



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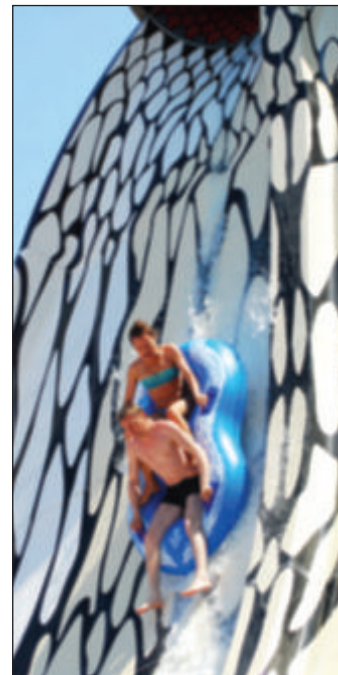


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# King Cobra bites!

## Polin slide planned for eight parks worldwide

Following its debut last summer in Turkey, Polin Waterparks & Pool Systems is to install a further eight King Cobra slides this year across the globe – including its first ever in North America



The eye-catching duelling waterslide will make its debut this summer at Six Flags Great Adventure's Hurricane Harbor waterpark in New Jersey, Aqualand Frejus in France, Shandiz Indoor Waterpark in Iran, plus further installations in Italy, Turkey, Beijing, Thailand and Indonesia. Several other potential sites are also under negotiation.

The Six Flags order represents a major coup for the Turkish supplier as it pushes into the North American market, and the park giant is hoping the attraction

become a guest favourite in New Jersey.

"We are thrilled to work with Polin on this landmark project," confirms Six Flags Great Adventure president John Fitzgerald. "We are confident that King Cobra's

intense ride experience and unparalleled design will make it one of our most popular and entertaining water attractions."

Launched last year at MAXX Royal resort in Turkey, and also Djubga Waterpark in Russia, King Cobra features a pair of parallel slide paths. Waterpark guests race against one another as they twist, turn and ultimately fall prey to the fearsome snake.

The encounter begins inside a spiralling tunnel slide before riders plunge 8 metres and accelerate up to of 51 km/h as they hurtle into the cobra's mouth. This one-of-a-kind attraction boasts tremendous spectator appeal – as well as being a heart-pounding experience for riders.

"At Six Flags, together with special effects like fog, sound and lighting, King Cobra will feature a custom-designed, themed tower," reveals Polin sales manager Kubilay Alpdogan.

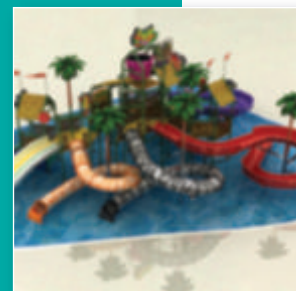
Located in Jackson, New Jersey, Hurricane Harbour is the sister waterpark to one of the busiest amusement parks in the Six Flags chain, featuring more than 20 high-speed thrill slides, a water playground, a million-gallon wave pool and a half-mile-long lazy river.

[polin.com.tr](http://polin.com.tr)



## Aqualand expands again!

Operated by the Aspro group, Aqualand is Europe's largest chain of waterparks, with 13 properties in France, Portugal and Spain. Polin will be supplying no fewer than five of these with new attractions this summer, following the success enjoyed last season with new slides at Aqualand Bassin d'Arcachon and Aqualand St Cyr Sur Mer.



The new additions for 2012 include a King Cobra for Aqualand Frejus, a tropical-themed water play structure (as pictured) for Aqualand Cap d'Agde and, coming to Aqualand St Cyprien, Polin's Uphill Navigatour water coaster and a tunnel body slide with patented natural light effects. There are new attractions too for Aqualand St Cyr Sur Mer, which gets a tropical-themed Aquatower, while Aqualand Bassin d'Arcachon is set for a mini pirate slide.

All the new slides will open in the summer and feature Polin's signature RTM (Resin Transfer Moulding) finish, meaning they appear shiny on both the inside and outside.

[aqualand.fr](http://aqualand.fr)

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The English amusement park Drayton Manor welcomed operators from a smaller but burgeoning sector of the attractions industry.

**Owen Ralph** reports from the annual conference of the National Farm Attractions Network (NFAN)



Adam Henson (centre) presents the award for attraction over 75,00 attendance to Andrew and Anna Wolfe of Willows Farm

## UK Farm Attractions of the Year

The winners of the NFAN Farm Attraction of the Year Awards for 2011 have been revealed as Marsh Farm in Essex winning (venues hosting between 20,000 and 75,000 guests) and Willows Farm

Village in Hertfordshire (over 75,000). Find out what makes them special at [marshfarmcountrypark.co.uk](http://marshfarmcountrypark.co.uk) and [willowsfarmvillage.com](http://willowsfarmvillage.com)



Drayton Manor Hotel, host venue for the conference

# FARM MEETS PARK!

## Attraction owners meet at Drayton Manor



Left to right: NFAN chairman Matt Heast with Adam Henson of Cotswold Farm Park and Ian Russell from Wroxham Barns

**N**ow in its 12th year, the conference was extended to a two-day fixture for 2011. NFAN members enjoyed tours of White Post Farm near Nottingham and Sacrewell Farm and Country Centre in Peterborough on February 7, followed by dinner in the Drayton Manor Hotel. The next day a full conference programme was staged inside the hotel, while in the Hamilton Suite a small exhibition featured a diverse range of companies keen to tap into or build their presence within the sector.

By general consensus, farming is a challenging industry in 21st Century Britain and so it's no surprise that many farmers have chosen to diversify beyond the business that many of them were born into. Established in 1996, the NFAN now boasts over 205 members and there are estimated to be around four times as many farm attractions in the UK. What began as farm shops or pets corners have, in some cases, developed into quite elaborate operations offering everything from tractor rides and corn mazes to large Halloween spectacles.

And how many visitors do such attractions entertain? An indication was provided by the conference's accompanying award ceremony, with two categories for Farm Attraction of the Year: Under and over 75,000. That's not enough to cause major headaches to the likes of Drayton Manor, which now entertains over a million guests a year, but as families increasingly seek "authentic" days out, farm parks have a loyal set of fans and are perfectly in keeping with the zeitgeist.

The conference programme began with a keynote session from Adam Henson, owner of Cotswold Farm Park. What was a rare breeds centre ("they are rare because you can't make any money from them") developed by his father had grown organically under Adam's watch before receiving a massive boost when he landed roles as a television presenter on the BBC's *Countryfile* and *Lambing Live*. Renaming the park Adam Henson's Cotswold Farm Park to capitalise on such TV exposure, Adam and his business partner hope to develop a nationally recognised brand and have already launched spin off products and events including a beer and a Food and Farming Festival. Above all, "honesty and integrity" are key to "AH" brand.

A panel session followed, with contributions from Adam Henson, Tim Rollings of Fishers Farm Park, David Taylor of Taylor Design & Play, and Paul Sharpe from Kids Play. New revenue streams, pricing/discounting and market saturation/consolidation all came up for discussion. On the latter topic, David Sharpe noted that, "Most fellow play centre operators want to be farm parks and most farm parks are putting in play barns."

Following a presentation on customer service from Jonathan Winchester of Shopper Anonymous, Ian Russell from Wroxham Barns revealed how he had used food and drink to widen the visitor demographic and stimulate trade outside traditional peak times. In the process his farm had gained a reputation higher than many local restaurants and hotels.

A five-minute annual general meeting preceded lunch. If only all trade associations were so efficient! The afternoon programme began with an update on the industry code of practice with David Coackley from the Health and Safety Executive, followed by a session on collecting membership income by direct debit with Andrew Wolfe from Willows Farm Village and David Blower from Hatton Country World. The day's business came to a close with the presentation of the Farm Attraction of the Year awards (see panel).

From suppliers of toys, play equipment and climbing walls to providers of insurance and market research, around 40 companies provided trade stands.

"This was the first time we exhibited at the NFAN event," revealed Helen Ede of mascot company Rainbow Productions. "The day presented a perfect opportunity to meet many existing clients and helped raise our profile with farm park operators. We are already working with an increasing number of farm attractions across the UK, supplying official personal appearances by famous children's characters such as Peppa Pig and Shaun the Sheep."

Sponsors of the event included Davies & Co (chartered surveyors), Marsh & Company (insurance), S Gregory (insurance), Agility Marketing and the *Farmer's Guardian*. 

[farmattractions.net](http://farmattractions.net)



Exhibitors were keen to target the farm attractions market

## RAAPA Expo

Organisers are promising this month's RAAPA Expo will be 50% bigger than last year's event in the Russian capital.

This, the 14th international exhibition from the Russian Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (RAAPA) will consolidate its position as the biggest industry event for Russia and the CIS (former Soviet) countries. Support for the event has been pledged by the Moscow government and International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA).

Around 150 companies from over 20 countries, including Russia, Belarus, Italy, China, Great Britain, Turkey, India, Switzerland and the Netherlands, will participate in the three-day exhibition.

Ahead of this, RAAPA will hold its 17th conference examining "Prospects of amusement industry development in Russia" on March 19 and 20. Topics to be addressed on this occasion include raising the profitability of amusement parks, economic efficiency of family entertainment centres and safety of kiddie rides. For a second year, the Italian publisher Fato Edizioni will also hold a special edition of its Golden Pony Awards, on March 21.

RAAPA Expo 2012 takes place at the All Russia Exhibition Centre (VVTs) Moscow from March 21 to 23. See [raapa.ru](http://raapa.ru)



## DEAL 2012

Over 200 exhibitors from 30 countries are confirmed for the latest edition of DEAL (Dubai Entertainment Amusement and Leisure), the Middle East's premier trade show and meeting place for the theme parks and amusement industry.


"Last year contracts worth millions of dollars were signed at DEAL indicating renewed confidence in the region's leisure sector," notes Abdul Rahman Falakna, chairman of exhibition organiser International Expo Consults. "This year visitors can attend dedicated seminars, see technology at its innovative best, network with industry peers and develop profitable business relationships."

Following a record attendance set in 2011, more than 5,000 visitors are expected at the show, which is now in its 18th year. These will include key players from the Middle East, Africa, Mediterranean and Asia.

Exhibitors will include international names such as Falgas Industries, Rainbow Productions, Sega, Triotech and Zamperla alongside local suppliers and distributors including Amusement Services International (ASI) and Warehouse of Games.

DEAL 2012 takes place from April 17 to 19 at the Dubai World Trade Centre, United Arab Emirates. See [themeparksdubai.com](http://themeparksdubai.com)





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## Q Lines

# BALPPA 75 YEARS OF FUN

This winter the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions (BALPPA) reached its 75th anniversary. Following a celebratory dinner the night before, *Park World* editor Owen Ralph sat down at EAG Expo in London on January 24 day with a group of former/future BALPPA chairmen to share their reminiscences about the association and the British parks industry in general.

Our panel includes current BALPPA president **John Collins OBE** (ex-Barry Island Pleasure Park/Tussauds Group), **John Bollom** (Mumbles Pier), **Gary Smart** (Harbour Park, Littlehampton) and **Marshall Hill** (Funland, Hayling Island).



## What would the industry in Great Britain have been like 75 years ago?

**John Bollom (JB)** – It was very much families and individual members, not corporations.

**Marshall Hill (MH)** – A lot of them were showmen operating at the seaside.

**John Bollom (JC)** – Yeah, Billy Butlin was a showman wasn't he? He had all the holiday camps and was one of the founder members.

**JB** – George Booth from our company Amusement Equipment was also a founder member and then when dad [Stan Bollom] took over the firm, he joined the BALPPA committee in about 1950, or the AAPP as it was in those days. Leonard Thompson from Blackpool Pleasure Beach was always the guiding light of it really; whatever he said went. My father received a phone call from Leonard: "Bollom, you don't come to the meetings do you?" "Well no Mr Thompson, we are concessionaires of yours at Blackpool and we don't think it's right that the hare runs with the hounds," dad replied. "Nonsense, you've got your own parks at Alexandra Palace and Southend. There's a meeting tomorrow, come and pick me up at Claridge's at 9 'o' clock." It was a bit of a scary meeting. The first item in the agenda was to elect a chair. Leonard Thompson said, "Well we've got Bollom here now; he'll take the chair." So the first ever meeting my father attended he was elected the chair! He actually became the association's longest-serving member, and chairman twice, once in the '50s and then again the '70s

## What were some of the early challenges for the association?

**JC** – It was formed as a reaction to the government wanting to tax games of skill, midway games.

**JB** – That's right, they called it the "coconut tax"! There were big regional differences among prize payouts in those days. The idea was to create a single voice for the industry.

**JC** – There were also huge problems in the early '50s during the Festival of Britain. Festival Gardens at Battersea was way behind schedule and the LCC [London County Council] appealed to the industry for help. Leslie Joseph came in from Porthcawl and really sorted it out; it opened on time and that ultimately is why Leslie was knighted, for saving the embarrassment of the government.

## What are the benefits of BALPPA membership?

**JB** – What's great about this association is the exchange of information and knowledge. A lot of new members when they come in really don't understand the openness between the members. From Merlin

down to a little guy like me in Mumbles, there's always something you can learn from somebody else.

**MH** – You've got to be in it to win it, and if you don't go to any of the meetings you are not going to find anything out. I had a conversation with one of my partners and he said it's a waste of money, so I told him we'd just got a £25,000 rebate on rates and planning. Where does he think I hear about these things? If it weren't for us sharing information as members we would never know about all these issues.

**Gary Smart (GS)** – Then there's the trade associate members. On a summer meeting, a supplier gets to work a coach load of operators. They can sit and talk, and it's just a nice relaxed way of meeting people over several days.

## Why are piers a special part of the industry in Great Britain?

**GS** – Piers are a great icon of the seaside, there's a sort of British quirkiness about them.

**JC** – Most of them were built at a time when Britain really set the standard for worldwide engineering, and they are very unique structures, whereas in North America many of them have been replaced with concrete jetties.

**MH** – You don't see many piers in mainland Europe do you?

**JB** – Most British people have a soft spot for them, but we have been losing one or two piers a year in recent times. The exception to the rule was Weston-super-Mare and that was only because the individual involved had the wherewithal to do it.

## Beyond parks and piers, how has BALPPA widened its membership over the years?

**JB** – The only exclusion that we used to have was local authorities, although Southport Corporation was one of the founding members, presumably because they were operating Pleasureland.



*In conversation (from left to right) are John Bollom, Owen Ralph, Marshall Hill and John Collins. Gary Smart has his back to the camera*



JC – As Alton Towers developed and other inland parks started appearing, it seemed reasonable to welcome other types of visitor attractions, whether that's museums like Beamish or more recently farm parks.

**How did the emergence of inland "theme park" Alton Towers affect you as seaside park operators?**

JB – I think you have to give credit to John Broome for creating what was the first UK theme park as such. It raised the bar generally, and John was the first one to bring American standards of operating to the UK. I remember you would go up there and he had pavement-scrubbing machines to get rid of chewing gum. I didn't even know these things existed!

GS – He did things properly. But it was all about the Corkscrew [looping coaster]! He spent the previous summer touring round looking at all these things, came back, put the Corkscrew in, and that was Alton Towers. That ride was in all their marketing.

JC – It was actually Geoffrey Thompson [Blackpool Pleasure Beach] who brokered the deal on the Corkscrew. I was with Geoffrey when he introduced John Broome to Roland Koch, the German operator. Overnight he created the opposition to his own park, but that's how kindhearted Geoffrey was. The Revolution [looping coaster] came soon after at the Pleasure Beach.

**Would you accept the proposition that theme parks have never really caught on in the UK?**

JC – I think "theme park" is a very overused phrase. I think there are very few true theme parks in the world, and certainly the UK.

MH – Look at the American Adventure, it just didn't happen did it? And they threw enough money at it.

JC – I have to say I was a real idiot at Barry Island because I tried to take on the theme parks by putting in a jungle boat ride ...in South Wales. I must have been nuts!

GS – I do think a certain theme should run through



BALPPA chairmen past and present pictured at January's 75th anniversary dinner. From left to right: John Collins OBE, Gary Smart, Adrian Mahon, David Cam, Richard Pawley, Colin Dawson, John Bollom, Roland Mack (IAAPA chairman) and Tim Batstone

**AAPP to BALPPA**

Formed in November 1936 by a handful of 11 families, the Association of Amusement Park Proprietors (AAPP) became the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions in 1986.

Today the association represents interests of over 180 operating members, in addition to over 100 trade associate members. The current BALPPA chairman is Merlin Entertainments' Adrian Mahon, while former BALPPA and IAAPA chairman John Collins OBE serves as the association's president.

Well regarded within the corridors of power, BALPPA has been said to 'punch above its weight' when it comes to lobbying activities. Currently on the association's agenda is a fight to reduce the level of VAT (tax) on tourism and an appeal for 'daylight daving,' which would bring the UK into the same time zone as the rest of Western Europe and give most BALPPA members and extra hour of daylight in the evening. A continuing source of interest to the membership are the UK's gambling regulations, reflecting the

importance of coin-operated gaming revenue to operators on the coast.

As well as its political activity, the association provides a social programme, including get togethers at various trade shows and events, an annual dinner in London, and tours to parks at home and abroad during BALPPA's summer meetings and autumn regional meetings.

There now follows a list of the 11 founder AAPP members, proving just how strong the industry's roots at the seaside are:

- Leonard Thompson, Blackpool Pleasure Beach
- Oliver Dalton, Brighton Palace Pier
- HFB Iles, Dreamland, Margate
- Cyril Bertram Mills, Olympia Circus & Fair, London
- FE Williams, Kursaal, Southend
- William Butlin, Butlin's Holiday Parks
- GE Booth, Amusement Equipment Ltd
- Robert Parker, Blackpool Tower
- Alderman Wood, Southport Corporation
- DF Warren, Merrie England, Ramsgate
- E Kingsman, Clacton Pier
- Albert Hargreaves, Fleetwood Pier



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“ I think you have got to give credit to John Broome for creating what was the first UK theme park as such [Alton Towers]. I remember he had machines to get rid of chewing gum. I didn't even know these things existed!

John Bollom

Blackpool Pleasance Beach c.1937.  
Leonard Thompson was a founder  
AAPP member and his son Geoffrey  
a leading light within BALPPA

Image as used in the book *Blackpool  
Pleasure Beach – More Than Just An  
Amusement Park*

your park. There is nothing wrong, because we are at the seaside, with giving our restaurant a bit of a maritime theme, putting in few ship's anchors etc.

**JB** – It's more branding than theming isn't it?

**MH** – We are trying not to make things look so much like a fairground anymore, so we've got rocks around things, flowers, landscaping.

**GS** – I think we have evolved from being fairgrounds at the sea to amusement parks, and now we are adding theming, but you are right they are not true theme parks as you might see in some other places.

#### Did the arrival of Disneyland Paris make much of an impact in the UK?

**JB** – I don't think that it has really had the impact that anyone expected. I remember going to the opening with dad and we all thought this was going to be the be all and end all for Europe and it hasn't, for whatever reason. I don't know if it's the cost or the weather, but people I speak to all say the same: they'd rather go to Florida.

**GS** – I think the inland British parks have had far more impact than Disneyland ever did.

#### What was the reason for the formation of Europarks?

**JC** – It was formed by BALPPA together with the German association VDFU as a way of getting together to have a say in what might or might not happen transpire within the European Union (EU).

**GS** – What we worried about was legislation coming out of Brussels without any monitoring whatsoever. It served its purpose very well and we did actually chase down a few threats, but now IAAPA Europe has taken over and carries a lot more weight.

#### How has industry changed in Britain in recent times?

**GS** – There's been an enormous social revolution in the last 20 years. Tastes have changed, there's more



The Corkscrew at Alton Towers, pictured here in 1981, really put the park on the map

Image courtesy National Fairground Archive

disposable income, people are travelling more overseas.

**MH** – We mustn't forget Sunday shopping, that's affected us. Sunday used to be our day.

**JB** – We used to be the only game in town; we're not now.

**MH** – Now Saturdays are better days because of all the divorces, you get all the weekend dads down.

**JC** – I don't think we want to be encouraging divorces now do we!

**MH** – And then at half-term you get all the grandparents bringing the grandkids, because their parents are all out working.

**GS** – The grey market has become quite a key market, however when the education act came in the early '90s, stopping trips to the seaside, we lost the school groups almost overnight. There used to be a healthy trade with coaches coming down to the coast from South London, you'd be very busy in June and July; every Monday to Friday you'd be packed. That trade has basically gone. I have no idea, but I am guessing the Olympics will not be good for us this summer either.

#### A lot of British parks have closed in the last decade. How do you survive at the seaside?

**MH** – Margate, Rhyl, Redcar, Spanish City; it seems like every year we loose one don't we? Because people are sitting on property that's worth a lot of money, they sometimes have to make quite a hard decision.

**JB** – I think there is now a genuine spark of recognition of the importance of our industry to seaside economies. In a lot of seaside towns we are the major employer, and when an attraction goes the affects are huge.

**MH** – The typical seaside park is 5 acres, but we've got a lot of big parks around us – Thorpe, Chessington, Legoland – and we simply can't compete with them, so we target families.

**GS** – We know though that if we have good weather – sunshine – then when the kids are off school we will





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**“** You will see more branding in the next 10 years definitely; the new generation are used to brands in everyday life and we have got to recognise that. This industry has got a record of being able to spot the social changes and adapt

**Gary Smart** **”**

*Peppa Pig World at Paultons Park, part of a growing trend in recent years for branded attractions*



get them and they will come to use rather than go inland.

#### **What progress is the association making on ongoing issues like VAT and daylight saving?**

**GS** – I think the issue of VAT is one we must keep chiselling away at, because if you look around the EU there are others that have an advantage over us because of their lower tax rates. We can't be blind to that. Daylight saving may happen. We got so far with it, but I'm afraid it gets mired in the Union (UK) politics, which are all up in the air at the moment. We've also been able to ward off several other threats. Last year's Machine Games Duty (MGD), for example, would have been particularly serious for our members had it not been for the exemption we secured on non-monetary prize machines.

**JB** – Yes we have done very well to get the prize exemption. My concern with VAT is that whatever rate it came in at, it would not be the same in a few years. I actually remember when VAT was 5% – for everything – but I've only ever know it go up, not down.

#### **Explain why London remains such an important meeting place for BALPPA members each January**

**JB** – It all goes back to the old Amusement Trades Exhibition (ATE), which started at the Horticultural Hall around 1936 I think. A few years after the war it moved to Alexandra Palace, then onto Olympia and Earls Court as ATEI, before the show was sold about five or six years ago. It was a different era back then, it used be called meeting week; the BALPPA dinner was on Monday night, the Fellowship on Tuesday and then the BACTA [British Amusement Catering Trades Association] on the Thursday night.

**GS** – We have always held our AGM in January to because everyone was here in London anyway, and the dinner is a bit of a legacy from that.

**JB** – Now we have EAG Expo at Docklands, but I preferred it when we were at Olympia, and I think that's why Euro Attractions Show (EAS) was a big success last September at the same venue. One year at ATEI we had a European rides show in Earls Court 2 and there was at one time a vision of doing a joint ATEI/IAAPA European show in London on an annual basis.

**JC** – We were dreaming even further, thinking there would probably only be two or three such shows around the world – IAAPA in the States, London and then one in Asia or the Middle East. The first EAS was in London, organised by ATEI.

#### **What are some of your fondest memories of BALPPA's summer meetings and events?**

**GS** – We always used to have one year in the UK and then one on the continent somewhere. Geoffrey [Thompson] suggested Torquay, he said it was really nice and recommended a hotel. When we got there and it was just like Fawlty Towers, I don't think Geoffrey had actually stayed there since the 1950s – they really hadn't touched it since!

**JC** – When we used to go to Europe you'd have quite a fair itinerary, two or three parks a day. We'd be on the coach all day and then suddenly Geoffrey would spot a signpost. "Oh look, a model village! Shall we go and do that?" So off we all went to the model village...


**JB** – You talk about memories, but it's all about the people really. People like Geoffrey, and Pat Evans who could really make you laugh in a very strange way. I remember a German trip where we were in Munich and a reception had been arranged for us. We were all stood there drinking champagne when the mayor came over. "Ah Mr Evans, have you been to Munich before?" he asked. "Only as a bombsite!" Pat always spoke his mind – and more besides.

#### **Where will the British parks industry be in 10 years' time?**

**MH** – I think we will see more Thomas Lands and Peppa Pig Worlds appear, that's for sure.

**GS** – Yeah more branding definitely, the new generation are used to brands in everyday life and we have got to recognise that. This industry has got a record of being able to spot the social changes and adapt.

**JC** – Looking from the outside to a degree, I think you won't find three better examples than those people and families sat around this table. When they are so involved with ownership there are ways and means of bucking the trend or moving that little bit faster in the marketplace.

**GS** – My boys have just come into the business in the last three years and they bring new thinking that challenges the old thinking, and that's entirely right. 

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# Kemah Boardwalk

## Fun 'n' food in Texas

Gary Kyriazi traces the development of this classic waterfront amusement park, one of several Texas attractions operated by the Landry's restaurant, hospitality and entertainment group



Aviator



Inverter

It's simple: the mystic, infinite attraction of water. It's human: we're drawn to water. It's worldwide: on any body of water – lake, river, or ocean – you erect a pier, a wharf or a boardwalk, and as human beings we flock there. It's our nature.

As amusement parks proliferated and prospered in the early 20th Century, wherever there was a body of water, there was an amusement park. The water was first, the amusement park second. Trolley companies built their tracks from the cities to the water, the weekend crowds hopped on the trollies and went to the water, where they swam and spent their money on food and amusements.

Today, those traditional waterfront parks that have been spared the wrecking ball and not replaced by condominiums continue to thrive on this basis, be it California's seaside parks, New York's Coney Island, New Jersey's seashore, Blackpool Pleasure Beach in England or the few other remaining oceanside, riverside or lakeside parks. The industry adage is "you can't go

wrong with water." You go in the water, stroll the boardwalk, wharf, pier or promenade, and the amusements are secondary, albeit necessary.

"In our case, we tell people to come to Kemah Boardwalk to have a great meal, stroll the boardwalk, and then the amusements are third," says 43-year-old James Doering, general manager of amusements at the Kemah Boardwalk, south of Houston, Texas. Jim has spent all his life in the amusement industry, starting at 17 as a ride operator for Six Flags St Louis (Six Flags Mid-America at the time) and spending 25 years with Six Flags, the last eight with Six Flags Fiesta Texas, until his transfer in 2011 to Kemah Boardwalk. "From San Antonio, Texas, to Kemah was an easy move for me and my family. And then again," he adds with a smile, "there's the attraction of the water."

### Restaurants and Rides

Kemah Boardwalk is essentially a small, regional park, though it manages to get its share of visitors to



The Boardwalk comes alive after dark with its restaurants and rides



Stingray Reef Aquarium

the state of Texas. Its marketing is generally in the nearby greater Houston area, with print advertising in San Antonio and Dallas, and occasional Louisiana travel guides.

"Our restaurants are the real magnet," Doering explains, "for locals and for visitors. They're all arranged along the boardwalk, and all tables have views of Galveston Bay (off the Gulf of Mexico). Even in our hotel, every room faces the bay."

It's a draw that is not only timeless, but encourages the "stay-cation" that is replacing "vacation" for most families in today's economy. The Boardwalk is affordably drivable from the greater Houston area, and there's enough diversity of amusement to satisfy the entire family. There's no gate fee, and the family can pick and choose their pleasures between the restaurants, food stands, games and rides, topped by the Boardwalk Bullet – a wooden coaster from the Gravity Group – and Boardwalk Beast, a speed board that thrills 138 happily-soaked passengers on a wild 25-minute tour of Galveston Bay.

Kemah's growth was essentially through acquisition and expansion. Landry's Seafood House opened in 1990, joining other high-level restaurants along the waterfront. Landry's methodically began purchasing the other seafood and steak restaurants which included The Flying Dutchman, Saltgrass Steak House, the Chart House, Lighthouse Buffet and Red Sushi Hibachi Grill. By 1997, Landry's owned all the larger restaurants and smaller eateries, and proceeded to build the 52-room Boardwalk Inn Hotel, complete with retail. Landry's opened the Stingray Reef Aquarium in 1998, its main attraction allowing guests and children to pet and feed a tankful of stingrays. In 2001, the pedestrian boardwalk was built along the water, along with three rides from Chance – a Ferris Wheel, Carousel and CP Huntington train – and the Kemah Boardwalk as an amusement park was born.

### Sights and Sounds

Subsequent growth was rapid, and today Kemah Boardwalk is artfully crammed with 40 rides, games and attractions. At every location, guests are met with the sights and sounds of a classic waterfront amusement park, the sound and smell of the water meshing with the screams from the rides. The train winds throughout the entire park, with railroad signals, gates on the walkways and many crossings. Guests who may not take a single ride will enjoy exhilaration similar to the thrill-seekers.



Ferris Wheel (obviously)

As with any water-locked amusement park, space is an issue, but Kemah Boardwalk is meeting the challenge. For Kemah's major wooden coaster in 2007, the Gravity Group had its work cut out, and necessarily designed a twister to end all twisters, a triple-layer, tightly banked ride that includes 42 track crossovers. After Hurricane Ike of 2008 damaged much of the park, it replaced its original carousel with a space-saving double-decker carousel, again from Chance.

"We're pretty much maxed out on our horizontal space now," Doering concedes, "so the creative juices are flowing on how to grow."

Yet since Kemah Boardwalk's fine restaurants are its magnet, they are not locked into a public expectation of requiring a new thrill ride every year.

"We're in a good position," Jim Doering smiles, "and we have a strong foundation. We've got the water, the restaurants, the boardwalk and the rides. But we're not complacent either, we can't be. This is the amusement industry after all, and we're always thinking and planning, taking it one season at a time."

### kemahboardwalk.com

Gary Kyriazi is author of *The Great American Amusement Parks*, and the writer/producer of *America Screams*, the first pictorial history and television special about American amusement parks. He has been a researcher and historian on American amusement parks for more than four decades

## Boardwalk rides and attractions

As at other Landry's amusement outlets, Chance rides feature strongly in the line-up of rides and attractions at Kemah Boardwalk:

- Boardwalk Bullet (Gravity Group wooden coaster)
- Drop Zone (Larson drop tower)
- Boardwalk Tower (Chance observation tower)
- Ferris Wheel (Chance)
- Double-decker Carousel (Chance)
- CP Huntington Train (Chance)
- Wipeout (Chance)
- Aviator (Chance)
- Inverter (Chance)
- Balloon Wheel (Zamperla)
- Pharoah's Fury (Chance pirate ship)
- Boardwalk Bouncer (Moser tower)
- Boardwalk Beast (speedboat)
- Stingray Reef & Rainforest



Boardwalk Bullet



A general view featuring the observation tower, Drop Zone, Aquarium and Boardwalk Bullet

Drawings on its expertise at Kemah Boardwalk, Landry's is moving ahead with a new multi-million dollar amusement outlet in Texas

PLEASURE PIER

# Pleasure returns to Galveston Island

The 1,130ft-long (350m) Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier will open this May, featuring 16 rides including a rollercoaster, log flume and Star Flyer.

In the late 1940s, Galveston's original Pleasure Pier was the largest of its kind in the United States. America's top dance bands routinely filled the mammoth Marine ballroom and visitors watched motion pictures in an open-air stadium as ships passed in the Gulf of Mexico. A wide variety of rides and midway concessions were featured along the pier, together with a designated fishing area. For decades, the venue was a popular family destination, until it was destroyed by Hurricane Carla in 1961. Four years later the Flagship Hotel opened on the property, gaining the title of the only hotel in North America built entirely over the water. In 2008, it too was wiped out by a hurricane.

Landry's chairman and CEO Tilman Fertitta hopes that the new Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier will capture a special place in people's hearts, in the same way as Santa Monica Pier in California or Chicago's Navy Pier. The nostalgically themed attraction will be reminiscent of another local historical landmark, Galveston's Electric Park.

"Much of our plans for redeveloping the pier are inspired by the people and places that define Galveston's rich heritage," says Fertitta, a native of the island. "We intend to perpetuate that vision with Pleasure Pier and create a lasting legacy for future generations. We have a proven track record for projects of this magnitude and complexity, and understand what is required to convert today's battered pier into a world-class venue."

Situated on Seawall Boulevard at the junction of 25th Street, the rebuilt structure will hold between 6,500-7,000 people at a time. Traditional rides will include a 36ft (11m) Chance Morgan double-decker carousel with ride-on sea creatures, horses and chariots. The Galaxy Wheel will be a 100ft-tall (30m) Chance Morgan Ferris Wheel acting as a beacon for the pier with bright LED lighting. Pier Pileup is the name of the park's Bertazzon bumper car track



featuring antique and classic cars. The Italian company will also supply a Wave Swinger called Gulf Glider.

Iron Shark will be a Gerstlauer EuroFighter coaster with a 100ft vertical lift and beyond vertical drop, followed by four inversions including a diving loop and a backstretch that cantilevers over the water. The ride will feature 1,300ft (400m) of track and reach speeds of up to 50mph (80kmh). Pirate's Plunge will be a twin-drop log flume by the Anglo-French supplier Interlink, featuring both a 22ft and 42ft drop. Texas Star Flyer will be a 200ft-tall (60m) Funtime Star Flyer, billed as the tallest tower swing ride in Texas.

A Frisbee-style Revolution ride by Chance Morgan will swing out over the water, as will a Sea Dragon pirate ship by the same manufacturer. Sky Shooter, an SBF-Visa Airborne Shot Sky Shooter will let riders control the "fly-out" feature of the arms, while the 60ft-tall Cyclone (Fireball) by Texas' own Larson International will travel both forward and backward inside a giant loop. Another Bertazzon attraction will be a Musik Express called Rock & Roll. Children's rides will include an S&S Frog Hopper drop tower, Zamperla tea cups and SBF Visa big-rig truck ride.

In addition to Texas's first ever Bubba Gump Shrimp Co restaurant, the pier will offer seven quick service food and beverage outlets, a gift shop, candy store and entertainment stage. Entry will be \$10 for adults or \$8 for children 4ft (1.2m) and under, with all-day ride passes costing an additional \$15.99/\$11.99.

With the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier, Landry's hopes to reignite interest in the area, promote tourism, economic growth and bolster civic pride. Here's hoping there are no more hurricanes on the horizon.

www.pleasure-pier.com

## Fish & fun

From family-friendly offerings like the Rainforest Cafe and Bubba Gump Shrimp Co to the upscale McCormick & Schmick's or Oceanaire, if you've even eaten in one of these places you've been a guest of Landry's. The restaurant, hospitality and entertainment group is headquartered in Houston, Texas, and boasts a portfolio of around 30 restaurant brands specialising in seafood and steak, with outlets across the United States.

As well as its amusement parks – Kemah Boardwalk and the soon to open Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier – Landry's also operates four Downtown Aquariums, some with rides, in Denver (Colorado), Nashville (Tennessee), Kemah and Houston (Texas). So whether you want to marvel at a fish or eat one for dinner, Landry's has it covered.

landrysinc.com



Track under construction at Gerstlauer factory in Germany for the pier's Iron Shark coaster



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Now in its 25th year, Old Town remains an affordable alternative to Central Florida's big theme parks. Park World takes a look at what makes this Kissimmee amusement outlet unique

Since opening on December 12, 1986, Old Town has retained its allure as a typical small American town from the 1950s or early '60s. In fact, were it not for the introduction of new rides and attractions, you might almost have thought time had stood still in this little corner of Central Florida, just outside Orlando.

Originally designed as a place for families to relax, dine and shop after a day at the area's large theme parks, notably at Walt Disney World, there's something else at this Kissimmee venue that hasn't changed over the years – the entry price; it's free.

"Many perceive the '50s and early '60s as an era when the heart of America was small communities, and times were good," notes Gary Conroy, the park's president. "That loyalty and sense of belonging is captured in Old Town because of the passion and dedication of the shop owners and various communities that help create the atmosphere guests love."

Conroy is under no illusion as to the opportunity offered by his neighbour with the big ears: "We see Disney as an asset to our business model because it provides us with a customer base," he tells us. "People enjoy coming to Old Town after spending the entire day at the larger, crowded theme parks. We offer less hustle and bustle, less chance of standing in long lines and, more importantly, fewer requirements to empty your wallet. Yet we still maintain a theme park feel. That is what our guests appreciate and why they keep coming back."

In 2010, all of Old Town's amusement assets were acquired by Brothers Entertainment Management Group, which has overseen operations of the park for over a decade.

To celebrate the 25-year milestone, Old Town's owners are inviting visitors past and present to share their memories by posting photos on the park's Facebook page. The photo with the most "likes" will earn its owner an Old Town family pack. Many of those images could come from customers of the Old Town Portrait Gallery, one of Old Town's original merchants, where customers dress in period costumes.

"We chose to open our business here because it had a community that felt like family," remembers Charlotte Thompson, whose late husband John was the gallery's original owner. "Despite some shops changing over the years, that underlying feeling still exists."

Another draw for families has been Old Town's renowned classic and muscle car cruises, the longest running, weekly automobile events in the world. Partly because of these cruises, Friday and Saturday nights are the busiest times of the week for the park.

"You'll often see the same people out there every weekend," notes Dave Dean who has brought his classic cars to Old Town for 22 years. "It's a nice place to gather where people are friendly and can relax."

In recent years new attractions have included the Pepsi AMPventure Experience ropes course, however Conroy insists, "We are committed to Old Town's identity as a small town community from a nostalgic era. We will continue to focus on raising the standard so that we provide all the dynamics of a theme park in a small environment."

Several special events are planned for 2012, including an American Hero Fest, as well as new stores. Next time you're in Orlando, take a detour from the well-trodden tourist path and check out Old Town for yourself. [E](#)

[myoldtownusa.com](http://myoldtownusa.com)



## Rides and attractions

Old Town features around 20 rides and attractions including the 1,437ft-long Windstorm rollercoaster by Zamperla, Century Ferris Wheel by Chance, Carousel, Larson Tilt-A-Whirl, ARM Flying Dutchman and Super Shot tower ride, Fajume Wacky Worm coaster, bumper cars, go-karts, children's rides and active attractions like the AMPventure ropes course, zip line, climbing wall and laser tag.

A SUPERventure wristband allows a day's unlimited use of 12 attractions for \$24.95, while the \$34.95 AMPventure also includes zip line, rock wall and ropes course. A value pack of 30 ride tickets is available for \$25, or 45 ride tickets for \$35. Individual tickets sell for \$1.25 each. Children's rides require two tickets each, while most attractions range from 4 to 6 tickets each.

But don't forget, Old Town admission is free!



# Panoramic wheel For joint operation



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# INTERLINK

Rapid River



Log Flume

Water Battle



Panoramic Tower

[www.interlink-lg.com](http://www.interlink-lg.com)  
email: [info@interlink-lg.com](mailto:info@interlink-lg.com)

# The Social Rollercoaster

## Harnessing the power of the 'outernet'

Do you remember when the internet was something you used simply for marketing a new ride or selling tickets? And do you remember when the only way your guests could access the web was from computers in their homes or offices? Now that it's possible to be online all of the time, **Klaus Sommer Paulsen** asks how attraction operators can harness the power of social media within their facilities

Things have changed, and will keep on changing. The internet has gone outdoors – becoming the "outernet" – and our mobile phones have been transformed into computer terminals providing infinite internet access. Using such platforms, visitors are already documenting their day out at your park, rating the experience and sharing it with their friends – and the entire online world – as it happens. So keep your ear to the ground!

"You have to think mobile first," comments Lance Hanish in the digital newsletter *Media Notes Canonical* (sophis1234.tumblr.com). "We live in a digital age, and an age of transition. There is nothing superficial about it; it changes marketing, communication and brand experiences to the core."

First you must accept that that the communication overload – or "communi-chaos" as Grey New York's Per Pedersen once called it – has reached a level too high for its own good. Every day in the Western World we are exposed to more than 5,000 brand signals. So

A search for "theme parks" on Pinterest produced this

when you can't get the interest and the time from customers by shouting at them liked you used to with traditional marketing, what can you do? You become part of the discussion online.

This doesn't just mean Facebook or Twitter. New social networks are emerging all the time. For example the virtual "pin board" Pinterest is becoming a powerful force as users share the things they love with potentially millions. Its popularity is increasing so fast that from writing to publishing this article, the number of users leapt from 10 to 12 million. Take a look at <http://pinterest.com>.

### Tracking the conversation

If you're worried that you can't keep track of what people are saying about you across social media and the web in general, fear not, you certainly aren't the first with such concerns. That's why there now are several tools for tracking what is being said online

about you or your company. Spiral16's monitoring software, for instance, will let you know if you are getting the good or bad wrap, and even helps you recognise who influences most with their opinion. Yet as with any other tool, it's most effective when wielded by those who understand it so, as with all your social media activity, you should assign the right people to the job, even if that means working with someone from outside your organisation.


To engage audiences online consider offering unique digital experiences related to your park or attraction, such as games or other entertainment. This presents a challenge to the attractions industry. You may find yourself competing with sponsored products from established brands, but equally you have a great opportunity to extend your own brand in the digital arena, building loyalty and stimulating interest among the paying guests of tomorrow.

As we design the next generation of theme park attractions, we should be thinking not only about how the public relations or marketing department can follow social media, but how such features can be built into the experience from the very beginning. Create something of value for your visitors, and they will simply have to tell others about it!

### Enriching the experience

One way of doing this is by providing enriching experiences that can only be enjoyed at your venue. Offered by the Dutch company of the same name, TapeMyDay (TapeMyDay.com) combines face recognition technology with a network of cameras to track visitors as they make their through a park or attraction. Those that opt in will be able to relive their entire day on video – and share it online. This bespoke service is also a wonderful viral marketing opportunity for attraction operators. Several other video and photo systems are available, providing images that can be uploaded instantly to your guests' chosen social media platform.

Whenever there is an extra dimension to the guest experience, people will spend more "dwell time" in your facility. This of course is the holy grail for attractions operators: a state where people find a reason to stay beyond a specific purpose. The longer they stick around, the more money they spend. Correctly integrated into a ride or attraction, social media is one way of achieving this.

The term "information technology" (IT) may evoke memories of nerdy types tinkering away on computers in darkened rooms, yet thanks in large part to the internet we are all engaging with IT every day. Across the world, millions of people of all ages are collecting, processing and distributing data – and enjoying it – as they share their experiences, good and bad, with others online. Parks and attractions need to wake up to this reality and develop a cohesive digital strategy rather than simply offering a website or a Facebook page. 

## Two-way traffic

Where once parks and attractions pumped out the marketing material and hoped it would reach potential guests, now they can reach them directly via social media – and they can reach you.

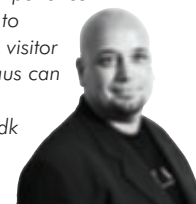
If you used to keep your fans at arms length, consider that you could foster a new generation of brand ambassadors by responding directly to their Tweets, Facebook posts etc.

It helps to have someone on your staff who is a proficient user of social media themselves. Stay "on message" of course, but in the spirit of the honest, open social internet, be natural too. No one likes a PR robot.

"To be frank, we used to keep the fans at a bit of a distance," Efteling CEO Bart de Boer told *Park World* a couple of years ago before his social media conversion. Now he's an enthusiastic Twitter user (@drsbartdeboer), and regularly hosts events to keep fans abreast of new developments. They of course then tell all their friends online.

This time of year is of course a great time for posting construction updates, photos etc ahead of the new season. Armed with such information, fans will feel up to speed with all that is happening at your park and hopefully they – and all their online friends – will show up once the gates are open.

Based in Denmark, Klaus Sommer Paulsen is an award-winning director of digital media, and member of Themed Entertainment Association's Europe and Middle East Division board. As founder of CNA Creative Network Agency ([www.cnagency.dk](http://www.cnagency.dk)) he aims to bring new media, marketing and experience design together to create enriching visitor experiences. Klaus can be reached at [ksp@cnagency.dk](mailto:ksp@cnagency.dk) or on Twitter: @klauspaulsen



# ShowGuide

Exhibitions and networking for amusement professionals

• March 21

**TILEzone**

London Transport Museum, UK  
+44 1885 846181  
tile@andrich.com  
www.tileweb.org



• March 21 to 23

**RAAPA Expo**

All Russia Exhibition Centre (VVTs), Moscow, Russia  
+44 1905 360165  
raapa@raapa.ru  
www.raapa.ru



• April 17 to 19

**DEAL 2012**

Dubai World Trade Centre, UAE  
+971 4 3435777  
jacob@iec.ae  
www.themeparksdubai.com



• May 2 to 7

**Hauntcon**

Monroeville Convention Center,  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA  
+1 877 467 5786  
info@hauntcon.com  
www.hauntcon.com



• May 10

**Scarecon**

Norbrec Castle Hotel, Blackpool, UK  
+44 7712 440361  
info@scarecon.co.uk  
www.scarecon.co.uk



• May 14 to 16

**AALARA Conference**

Crowne Plaza, Surfers Paradise,  
Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia  
+61 7 3807 3508  
info@aalara.com.au  
www.aalara.com.au



• June 5 & 6

**WWA 1st Asian Symposium**

Hong Kong, China SAR  
+1 913 599 0300  
kelly@waterparks.org  
www.waterparks.org



• June 6 to 8

**Asian Attractions Expo**

Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition  
Centre, China SAR  
+852 3796 2568  
alee@iaapa.org  
www.iaapa.org/expos



More events at [www.parkworld-online.com](http://www.parkworld-online.com)

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**C and S**

**Midi Onda**

**Old Timer**

**Lady Bug**

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# Web Guide

Online resources for the amusement industry

## BUMPER CARS



[www.candsrides.biz](http://www.candsrides.biz)

## CASHLESS SYSTEMS



[www.embedcard.com](http://www.embedcard.com)

## COIN HANDLING EQUIPMENT



[www.cumminsallison.co.uk](http://www.cumminsallison.co.uk)

## DARK RIDES



[www.sallycorp.com](http://www.sallycorp.com)

## EXHIBITIONS



[www.hauntcom.com](http://www.hauntcom.com)

## FAMILY/CHILDRENS ENTERTAINMENT CENTRES



[www.whitehutchinson.com](http://www.whitehutchinson.com)

## HIGHWAY 66 COIN OPERATED SCALED DOWN BOWLING SOLUTIONS



[www.amusement.qubicaamf.com](http://www.amusement.qubicaamf.com)

## INTERACTIVE PROJECT DISPLAY



[www.eyeclick.com](http://www.eyeclick.com)

## INTERACTIVE RIDES



[www.trio-tech.com](http://www.trio-tech.com)

## LEISURE ENGINEERING



[www.garmendale.co.uk](http://www.garmendale.co.uk)

## MAZES



[www.amazenmazes.com](http://www.amazenmazes.com)

## PARENT & CHILD BATTERY RIDES



[www.worldofrides.com](http://www.worldofrides.com)

## PEOPLE MOVERS



[www.dottotrains.com](http://www.dottotrains.com)



[www.severn-lamb.com](http://www.severn-lamb.com)

## PLANNING & DESIGN



[www.forrec.com](http://www.forrec.com)



[www.kcc.be](http://www.kcc.be)

## PLAY STRUCTURES



[www.iplayco.com](http://www.iplayco.com)

## REVIEWS AND INFORMATION



## RIDES



[www.gerstlauer-rides.com](http://www.gerstlauer-rides.com)



[www.mondialrides.com](http://www.mondialrides.com)



[www.tschu-tschu.de](http://www.tschu-tschu.de)

## RIDES



[www.prestonbarbieri.com](http://www.prestonbarbieri.com)



[www.wiegandslide.com](http://www.wiegandslide.com)



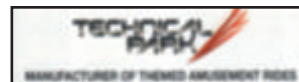
[www.pax.ru](http://www.pax.ru)



[www.ridesandfun.com](http://www.ridesandfun.com)



[www.sbfrides.com](http://www.sbfrides.com)



[www.technicalpark.com](http://www.technicalpark.com)



[www.mack-rides.com](http://www.mack-rides.com)



[www.vekoma.com](http://www.vekoma.com)

## SHOWS



[www.falconshow.com](http://www.falconshow.com)

## 4D ATTRACTIONS & SIMULATORS



[www.simworx.co.uk](http://www.simworx.co.uk)

## SNOW & ICE



[www.snow.biz](http://www.snow.biz)

## SPECIALIST PRINTING



[www.syndicateprinters.com](http://www.syndicateprinters.com)

## THEMING AND DESIGN



[www.jaravision.com](http://www.jaravision.com)

## THEMING AND DESIGN



[www.sarner.com](http://www.sarner.com)

## TRADE ASSOCIATIONS



[www.alesuk.org](http://www.alesuk.org)

## TICKETING



[www.accesso.com](http://www.accesso.com)



[www.gatewayticketing.com](http://www.gatewayticketing.com)



[www.nationalticket.com](http://www.nationalticket.com)



[www.omniticket.com](http://www.omniticket.com)

## VISITOR VIDEO SYSTEM



[www.tapemyday.com](http://www.tapemyday.com)

## WATER RIDES



[www.interlink-ig.com](http://www.interlink-ig.com)

## WATER RIDES & PARKS



[www.proslide.com](http://www.proslide.com)



[www.vanegdom.nl](http://www.vanegdom.nl)



[www.whitewaterwest.com](http://www.whitewaterwest.com)



[www.wiegand-maelzer.de](http://www.wiegand-maelzer.de)



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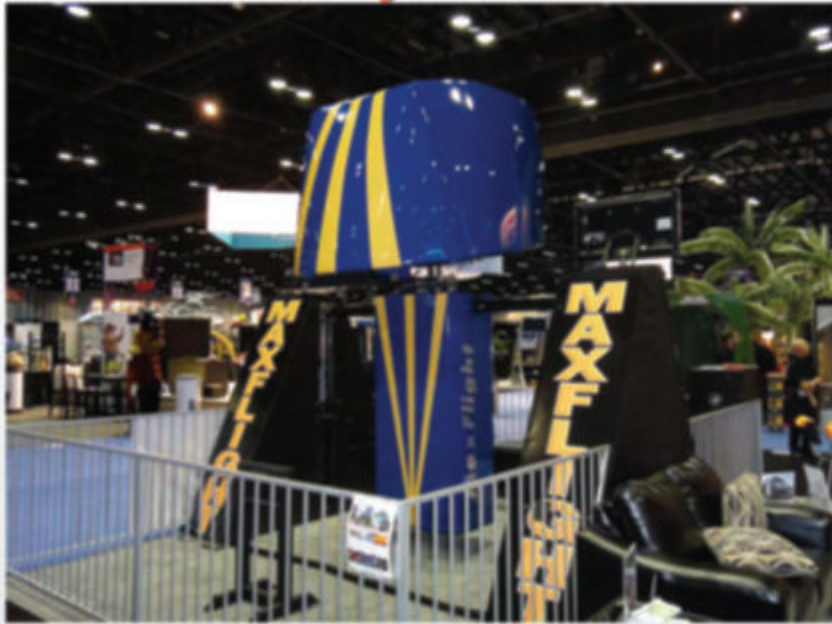
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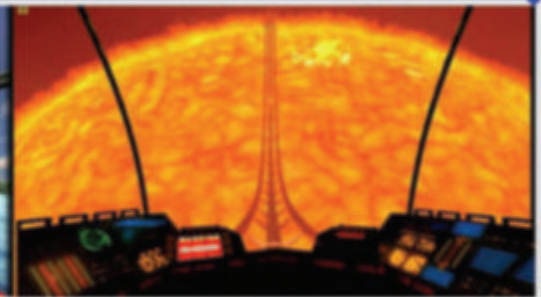
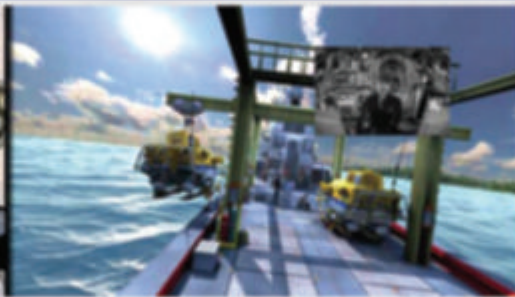
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