

The Great Movie Ride

June 22, 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great Movie Ride is a journey into the legacy of Walt Disney and more than 80 years of movies that he created and inspired. See the origin of Mickey Mouse, help Oswald the Lucky Rabbit find his way home, and ride into the action of the greatest Disney films with Uncle Walt as your guide in a magical traveling movie theater. You'll visit the deck of Steamboat Willie and the Gates of Oz, escape from the tentacles of a giant squid and the force of The Black Hole, fly with the Rocketeer and dance with WALL-E, and be transported to Narnia, Treasure Island, and Wonderland. Journey back to 1927 and take a trip through one man's incredible legacy. Take a seat in The Great Movie Ride and *begin your journey into the movies*.

QUEUE – THE EARLY YEARS

Through the great golden doors of Grauman's Chinese Theater, we enter the ornate lobby and the very beginning of Walt Disney's journey into the movies. Posters for Walt's last Alice Comedy are already partially-removed from open display cases and lying in the trash, temporarily abandoned by theater workers on a break. It's 1927 and something new is coming. Something big.

Moving into the main theater, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit is introduced to the world as his premiere film, Trolley Troubles, flickers cheerfully on the silver screen. The queue slowly winds closer to the screen as the audience enjoys Oswald's early transportation trauma and the false start of his would-be leap to super stardom.

Before reaching the screen, the queue turns and we exit out the side door. It's late at night on a Hollywood side street. A stack of newspapers waits on the sidewalk for early morning to deliver terrible news. The year is now 1928 and a young Walt Disney has just lost the rights to Oswald. In a gloomy alley across the street, the shadow of a dejected cartoon rabbit lowers his ears and slowly walks away into 78 years of obscurity.

Turning the corner and passing through a tight door, guests step into the aisle of a passenger train car. The bright daylight and blurred landscape outside reveals that we're zipping along on a cross-country journey. Traversing to the next car, we observe figures frozen in a snapshot in time. It's a young Walt sitting with his wife, Lillian, and contemplating a sketch he has just finished. The rough drawing of a little mouse named Mortimer seems familiar to us but not quite right to Lillian.

At the far end of the car, we step through the door and into the humble Disney Studios. While Ub Iwerks hovers, still and thoughtful, over his drawing of the newly-renamed Mickey Mouse, Walt has his head buried in strips of film at a splicer, whistling an enthusiastic rendition of “Turkey in the Straw”. For just a moment, visitors might catch a glimpse of a recently lost cartoon character looking longingly in through the window before disappearing.

Walking out the studio’s front door, we are transported to a fantasy-like evening on the half-scale stylized streets of New York City. Bright neon signs and swirling spotlight beams light up the sky with excitement and lead us to the doors of the Colony Theater. It’s November 18, 1928 and the marquee announces that Mickey Mouse is premiering in Steamboat Willie on the big screen tonight.

It’s time to take a seat in the theater, follow in the footsteps of Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse, and begin our journey into the movies.

LOAD – THE TRAVELING THEATER

The small but beautiful theater is warm with wooden floors, brass fixtures, and red velvet curtains. Enthusiastic Ushers guide guests into four aisles of red velvet theater seats, which are built into a traveling theater base. As they close the doors on the low sidewalls of this unique vehicle, the feature presentation begins.

The slow and smooth moving theater slides beyond the curtains and the lights dim. In the darkness, a distant screen flickers to life, showing Steamboat Willie. The grainy, crackling sound of familiar whistling pulls the theater slowly closer to the screen.

SCENE 1 – ANIMATION

Unseen but always with us, the voice of Uncle Walt narrates our journey through his eyes. He says, “Animation offers a medium of storytelling and visual entertainment which can bring pleasure and information to people of all ages everywhere in the world. Animation can explain whatever the mind of man can conceive.”

As we reach the screen, it fades away to reveal a live paddle wheeler with Mickey Mouse at the helm. The quiet soundtrack suddenly swells to fill the entire space with an orchestral score as we travel into the fully dimensional world of the black and white cartoon.

Our theater sails a wide berth from Mickey steering at the bow of the steamboat to the stern where we see Mickey joyfully playing the xylophone on a bouncing cow’s big round teeth.

Opposite the steamboat, the shoreline is alive with dancing animatronic Flowers and Trees from the Silly Symphonies. Careful observers may spot Oswald trying to dance along with the animated foliage. With a flourish of magical music, a wave of projected Technicolor splashes across the scene as Walt decides to reboot production on this cartoon with the latest available technology.

Beyond the dimensional trees, brightly decorated horses bob gracefully along with us in media. They're carousel horses! Mary Poppins and Burt ride beside the traveling theater, waving cheerfully. As we arrive at a picnic table by the water, we are briefly entertained by the antics of cartoon penguin waiters. Their short waddling dance concludes as one jumps into the water with a cannonball splash.

Our theater rotates from the small pond of the penguins to a vast, shimmering ocean at night. Surrounded by icebergs, we watch in awe as a pod of whales from Fantasia rise majestically from the water and take flight. A single whale dives into the water beside us, sending a great wall of animated water into the air.

The theater turns again as more splashes burst around us. High up on a rock in front of us, the figure of Sorcerer Yensid commands the seas while his Apprentice cowers behind him. He brings order to Mickey's chaos as the traveling theater passes into a dark cave in the rocks below him.

SCENE 2 – LIVE ACTION

The dark warms up to another movie screen, revealed by drawn red curtains. On it, we see a brief montage of scenes from Disney's earliest live action films as Walt's voice says, "I always like to look on the optimistic side of life, but I am realistic enough to know that life is a complex matter."

To the booming sounds of cannons and an epic score, the screen rises to reveal a sweeping semi-dimensional vista of the battle of the Alamo. Real fire burns on the old mission as registered-projections of armies battle in the distance. In the foreground, an animatronic Davy Crockett defiantly raises his rifle into the air one last time.

Our theater rotates 180 degrees from the battle and we look up to see a peaceful and reflective Lone Ranger and Tonto atop their horses on a rocky bluff. As we continue to rotate away from them, the Rocketeer suddenly blasts a trail over our heads in media. Right behind him, the Absent-minded Professor's Model T and Miss Price's magical bed fly along at a slower and bumpier pace. We follow their trail as they pass over the excitedly waving figures of the Love Bug and Mickey Mouse (in matching racing gear). Herbie briefly flashes his headlights at us, leaving us in darkness.

With a sudden crack of lighting, the night sky above us glows a stormy blue, silhouetting the flailing tentacles of a giant squid. To our starboard side, the squid surfaces and gnashes its giant beak at us. Following the thrashing tentacles overhead, we find the length of the Nautilus surfaced to port. The doomed submarine's crew bravely fights the animatronic monster's vicious attacks as we slip quickly between them. As we escape to safety, the last tentacle swings by with Oswald in its firm grip.

With a final flash from the storm, we fall back into complete dark and silence.

SCENE 3 – SCIENCE FICTION

In the vast black, Uncle Walt tells us, "The human species, although happily ridiculous at times, is still reaching for the stars." A red nebula forms in the emptiness in front of us and parts like curtains to show another screen. The screen briefly shows us scenes from Disney's forays into science fiction before fading away into a star field that spreads all around us.

A rotating whirlpool of light appears. Silhouetted in the swirling light surrounding the black hole, the USS Cygnus sits in defiance, dark and still.

The quiet wonder of the Universe's ultimate force is suddenly disturbed by an entirely different kind of power. Lines of energy shoot out in every direction, forming the image of a grid-like ground plane in the speed tunnel we've just entered. From behind, two lightcycles fly overhead and land in front of us. Our vehicle dodges and banks quickly to avoid the glowing plasma of their jetwalls, but ultimately crashes into one of them, sending us out of the speed tunnel with a spectacular digital explosion. In the mayhem, an airborne Oswald (dressed as a Tron Program) flies past us while one of the lightcycles stops and opens up to disclose Tron Mickey as its driver.

As our eyes adjust after the flash, the red beam of a lightsaber appears before us. Glowing and steaming grills light up in circles all around us, revealing the animatronic figure of Darth Vader, standing in the carbonite freezing room of Cloud City. He points his lightsaber at us and says, "You don't know the power of the dark side." The traveling theater shakes then spins violently as pieces of equipment fly off the walls and zip over our heads. Barely escaping in time, we turn to face a massive blast door with red details that slowly opens horizontally like large metal curtains.

SCENE 4 – ADVENTURE

Behind the door is another movie screen playing scenes from more Earth-bound Disney action adventures. Walt's voice says, "I don't like formal gardens. I like wild nature. It's just the wilderness instinct in me, I guess."

The screen rises and the theater sails into a peaceful, evening shoreline populated by a beautiful blending of miniature environments. First we observe the dim candlelight and jaunty organ music of the Swiss Family Robinson treehouse followed by the piled-up pirate architecture that is Shipwreck Island at worlds end. Suddenly, a futuristic flying pirate ship passes overhead on its way to Treasure Planet.

Our theater turns 90 degrees to face a small span of ocean between two pirate ships. As we move between them, an animated figure of Long John Silver appears on the deck of one ship and cries, "Them that die will be the lucky ones!" Responding to the threat from the other ship, Pirate Gonzo pops up and says, "Wait! Not so fast." To the chaotic sounds of Muppet screams and chickens, cannons blast on both sides and we can feel the cannon balls whizzing by.

Squeezing through the battle to freedom, the Traveling Theater passes the back of Silver's ship where we see the figure of Oswald standing nervously at the end of the plank while Mickey tries to encourage him to jump into a small dingy that he is rowing.

Turning away, the Traveling Theater approaches the tattered masts of several sunken ships peaking above the water. As we get closer, two red sails part like curtains to reveal another silver screen.

SCENE 5 – DIGITAL ANIMATION

On that screen, sharp and dazzling images of digital animation from Disney and Pixar flash by while the voice of Walt says, "We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

The screen rises to reveal a strange all-white collection of seemingly random geometric structures. Through the magic of registered-projection, a world of digital animation is rendered onto the dimensional blank canvas around us. To one side and over our heads, the tree from A Bug's Life is drawn from roots to leaves, while on the other side, the skyline of Paris appears, one building at a time as the silhouette of a rat scampers across them.

Further along, a floating house is drawn to life as it rises into the air by balloons and flies over our theater. Below it, a winding white ribbon rapidly becomes the miniature racetrack for Lightning McQueen.

Suddenly, directly in front of us, an 8-bit brick wall is built from floor to ceiling. The wall continues to rise and we seemingly rise with it as windows appear, randomly populated with citizens, broken glass, delicious video game pies, and a misplaced 8-bit Oswald. Near the top of the building, we pass by Wreck-it Ralph and Fix-it Felix before we leave the building and turn into a starry night sky.

Streaks of ethereal light swirl above the traveling theater to the opening strains of beautiful music. It's EVE and WALL-E (with a fire extinguisher) dancing an intricate ballet of flight over our heads via the magic of animatronics on unseen Kuka arms. Moving planets gradually appear in the distance as they dance, three of them briefly forming the bright outline of Mickey Mouse.

Leaving the robots behind, we turn to face a large, red closet door. On approach, a red light glows above it and the door swings open toward us.

SCENE 6 – MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE

We pass through and see another screen. This one shows us following a nervous Oswald through a dark industrial corridor filled with many mismatched closet doors. As we pass each one, a red light above lights up and the door opens to reveal the silhouette of a famous Disney Villain.

Scary music creeps in as Walt tells us, "Life is composed of lights and shadows, and we would be untruthful, insincere, and saccharine if we tried to pretend there were no shadows. Most things are good, and they are the strongest things; but there are evil things too, and you are not doing a child a favor by trying to shield him from reality. The important thing is to teach a child that good can always triumph over evil."

The screen rises, exposing a final dimensional door. It bursts open as a monstrous Runaway Brain Mickey jumps out at and wags his crazy tongue at us.

The theater rotates away and past a set of holiday doors carved into trees before landing on a nighttime scene in a graveyard. An animatronic of Frankenweenie's Sparky sits obediently on his grave wagging his tail, while in media, Jack Skellington slowly climbs an unfurling hill against the backdrop of a giant moon in the background.

The theater keeps moving, passing semi-dimensional flat scenes that transition from the graveyard to the rollicking chaos of Pleasure Island and then the fearsome tents of Mr. Dark's Carnival. We approach the largest tent and its red curtained entrance opens to receive us.

SCENE 7 – FANTASY

Inside the tent, a new movie screen displays dreamlike imagery from many of Disney's greatest fantasy films. Uncle Walt tells us, "Fantasy, if it's really convincing, can't become dated, for the simple reason that it represents a flight into a dimension that lies beyond the reach of time." The final sequence shows the live action White Rabbit leaping into the rabbit hole just as the

screen rises. Now our theater seems to be falling down the hole too, though our theater is actually passing horizontally through a rotating tunnel of dirt and floating furniture.

Reaching the end of the hole, we see the White Rabbit. When he turns and looks back, we see that it is Oswald, looking desperate and lost. Suddenly an over-sized Cheshire smile and eyes appear in mid-air above him and say, "Who are you?"

Oswald darts away and we follow around a corner into the daytime scene of a snowy forest. Oswald stands by a solitary lamp post, searching for something. For just a moment, a shadow that reminds us of Uncle Walt passes across the snow. Oswald springs off and into the trees where the shadow came from.

The Traveling Theater rotates around to face a completely different kind of tree; the Apple Trees from Oz. The animatronic trees seem to be upset by the presence of Oswald and our Theater and begin to throw apples at us that we can feel whooshing by. Narrowly turning to safety again, our view changes to the front gates of the Emerald City. Once again, Oswald looks lost, now standing on the Yellow Brick Road.

The large doors of the City swing open and a bright but welcoming light spills out from them. The voice of Walt tells us, "I hope we'll never lose sight of one thing... that it was all started by a mouse". The light from the doors dims until we see the silhouette of Walt walking through the doors, holding Mickey's hand. Closer to us, Oswald looks on hopefully then, unnoticed, he turns away, dejected.

Just when Oswald has finally given up all hope, Uncle Walt stops, turns back with an outstretched hand, and his voice comes from the light this time. "Come on, Buddy," he says as an overjoyed Oswald runs to join him. "Let's see what comes next". They all vanish into the light as the Traveling Theater follows through the doors.

SCENE 8 – THE GRAND FINALE

To the beautiful chords of an orchestral overture, the Traveling Theater moves through a series of slowly opening red curtains. Uncle Walt says, "Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly focused on the future. It's kind of fun to do the impossible." At the end of the introductory passageway, the Theater joins a great many others that are already in a large circular space.

The room is a classical art deco version of a Circarama Theater that is reminiscent of movie palaces in the Golden Age of Hollywood. Continuously playing on the nine screens, is a long loop of multimedia musical presentations, chronicling the entire history of the films created and inspired by Walt Disney. Our small Theater moves through the space, "dancing along" with the other Traveling Theaters, but we only stay for a short while. The presentation loop is long enough that we never see the whole thing and will experience a different finale with ever

journey. However, the loop is divided into short chapters, ensuring that our brief experience builds to a satisfying climax before we exit the room.

As our journey ends where it began in the Colony Theater, Uncle Walt speaks to us one final time, "Around here, however, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

Leaving the Traveling Theater behind, the exit of the journey is a short hallway adorned with a variety of classic Mickey Mouse cartoon posters. But something is just a little bit different about them. In each, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit is also featured in the co-starring role he had always searched for.