



# PRESS RELEASE



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## **Themed Entertainment Association Announces 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Recipients**

Orlando, Florida Nov. 18, 2008 – “The prestigious Thea Awards recognize and honor excellence in the creation of outstanding visitor experiences, attractions, exhibits and places,” said Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) President Nick Farmer of Farmer Attraction Development, Leicester, UK. “Truly international in their recognition of outstanding productions, the Thea Awards focus international attention on innovation within the Themed Entertainment and Experience Design Industry.” The Awards will be formally presented March 7, 2009 at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Gala sponsored by Economics Research Associates, a lavish, black-tie dinner event at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, CA.

As TEA continues to rise in stature – the association is an increasingly valuable resource to the entertainment development community and its many intersecting lines of business – the Thea Award becomes more prestigious. The Thea Awards Nominating Committee evaluated more than 120 nominations in order to recommend the current slate of 17 Thea recipients, with final approval by the TEA International Board of Directors.

### **Recipients – 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards**

***Thea Lifetime Achievement Award: Robert L. Ward***

***Thea Classic Award: EPCOT, Walt Disney World, Orlando, FL***

***Thea Awards for Outstanding Achievement (AOA)***

**Attraction: The Simpsons Ride, Universal Studios Hollywood CA & Orlando, FL**

**Attraction Limited Budget: BeWILDerwood, Norwich, Norfolk, UK**

**Attraction Limited Budget: The Forgotten Mine, Molenheide, Belgium**

**Museum: The Newseum, Washington DC, USA**

**Museum: National Museum of the Marine Corps, Quantico, VA, USA**

**Museum Exhibit: Operation Spy, International Spy Museum, Washington DC, USA**

**Museum Exhibit, Limited Budget: Forces of Nature, Arizona Science Center,  
Phoenix AZ, USA**

**Learning Experience: Air Force One Discovery Center, Ronald Reagan Presidential  
Library & Museum, Simi Valley CA, USA**

**Technical: Muppet Mobile Lab, Hong Kong Disneyland, China**

**Science Center: Audubon Insectarium, New Orleans LA, USA**

**New Theme Park Land: Jungala, Busch Gardens, Tampa FL, USA**

**Event Spectacular: 2008 Summer Olympics, Opening Ceremonies, Beijing, Chiina**

**Live Show: Finding Nemo, The Musical, Walt Disney World, FL, USA**

**Live Show: Legend of Mythica, Tokyo DisneySeas, Japan**

**Casino Attraction: Tree of Prosperity, Wynn Macau, Macau, SAR, China**

## **Details – 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Recipients**

### **THEA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

#### **Robert L. Ward**

Robert Ward's 38-year career in the leisure time, resort destination and entertainment industries worldwide includes 20+ years with Universal Studios Parks & Resorts. He was a founding member and key executive of the creative think tank that conceptualized, designed and implemented Universal's global entertainment projects.

After gaining an art degree at Florida State, Robert Ward's career began with Walt Disney Imagineering in Orlando in 1971. During the late '70s, he formed a consulting company to provide planning, design and creative services for developers. In 1980, he joined the fledging Universal Studios Planning and Development team, where he participated in Universal's initial exploration of expansion opportunities in the US. For Universal Studios Hollywood, he was the creative leader in developing new, state-of-the-art attractions that would become the foundation for a unique, cutting-edge entertainment product and business model for the company.

During the mid-'80s and early '90s, Bob led the conceptualization and master planning of the Universal Orlando Resort, Universal's \$3 billion premier entertainment destination including Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure Theme Park, CityWalk Orlando and Universal's hotels Portofino Bay, Hard Rock Hotel and Royal Pacific.

As Senior VP of International Development for Universal Parks and Resorts, Bob was responsible for all design and planning aspects of overseas new business opportunities. He participated in the creation of Universal Studios Japan, Universal's Mediterranean Resort and numerous concepts for entertainment-based destination businesses in Europe and Asia. His work with the Chinese Government and private entities resulted in the proposed \$1 billion Universal Studios Shanghai project.

In 2005, Bob established his consulting practice which focuses on bringing his unique brand of world-class "signature placemaking" for clients in the areas of large, mixed-use, leisure and resort destination developments. He also remains very active in the promotional and educational aspects of our industry through his regular participation in conferences, seminars and school presentations.

### **THEA CLASSIC AWARD**

#### **Epcot, Walt Disney World, Orlando FL, USA**

EPCOT (the name was originally an acronym denoting "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow" in accordance with Walt Disney's original vision) is the revolutionary creation that demonstrated that education and entertainment can be part of the same attraction package and successfully presented in a theme park environment. EPCOT combined thoughtful, intelligent content and visionary R&D (research & development), all powerfully delivered via state-of-the-art theme park storytelling and technical excellence. Even today EPCOT ranks among the best-attended theme parks worldwide. The World Showcase, Test Track, Soarin', Spaceship Earth and more continue to draw enthusiastic guests season after season.

Since it first opened in 1982, EPCOT has revolutionized and redefined the possible in several sectors of the themed entertainment industry and it has influenced not only the development of theme parks but also museums, branding experiences, educational attractions and more. For more than a quarter century, it has been the gold standard for information-based or inspiration-based themed entertainment. The world continues to study EPCOT, learn from it and aspire to emulate it. In addition, through opportunity or inspiration, EPCOT also launched the careers of many who today lead our industry, including a number who today lead companies that are active members of TEA. By all that EPCOT dared, all that it achieved, and all that it signifies even today to our entire industry, it fulfills the conditions of a Thea Classic venue, continuing to inspire the world and set high standards while standing the test of time.

## **THEA AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT (AOA)**

### **ATTRACTION**

**The Simpsons Ride™, Universal Studios, Hollywood CA & Orlando FL, USA**

For over 20 years *The Simpsons* television show has entertained millions around the globe. In 2008, The Simpsons came to the world of theme parks by way of Universal Studios Hollywood and Florida. Located within the facility that formerly housed Back to the Future – The Ride, this new attraction features a hilarious ride simulation experience presented via digitally projected computer animation. After entering “Krustyland” (the low-budget, fictitious theme park from the TV series created by shameless huckster Krusty the Clown), guests are regaled with snarky ads, parody attraction posters and other fun visuals inspired by the show. Guests queue inside Krustyland before boarding a simulator ride ostensibly set up as a roller coaster in this park-within-a-park. Instead (as always!) something goes horribly wrong and the ride vehicle goes crazy, encountering dozens of regular characters from the show, experiencing laugh-out-loud antics and over-the-top (even for a simulator!) locales.

The Simpsons Ride utilizes the same “container” as the old Back to the Future ride but this new experience is much more than just a change of software. The new show is fully integrated into its location while paying homage to its groundbreaking predecessor in one of the best ride films ever created. The characters, locales, storylines, lexicon and history from *The Simpsons* TV show’s 20+ year run come to hilarious life in the deft hands of the attraction’s creators (helped by James L. Brooks, Matt Groening and Al Jean). Once guests are aboard the simulator, true belly laughs ensue as Homer, Marge, Lisa, Maggie and Bart careen out of control. In true Simpsons fashion, it is an amazing tribute to the wonderful wacky world we inhabit each and every day. The Simpsons Ride has special resonance for the themed entertainment industry because of its many references to well-known entertainment brands, as guests encounter pirates, a mine, penguins, “Back to the Future Square” and more.

### **ATTRACTION LIMITED BUDGET**

**BeWILDerwood, Norwich, Norfolk, UK**

BeWILDerwood is 50 forested acres of wild family fun in Norwich, Norfolk, UK, featuring a themed environment designed for enchanted adventures. Amid the setting of Twiggle Treehouses, Boggle Villages, zip wires, slides, the Muddle Maze, the broken bridge and the memorable Scary Lake, guests encounter such weird and wonderful characters as Mildred the Crocklebog, Swampy the Wood Witch and Thornyclod, the Giant Spider. Tom Blofeld, creator, land owner, park owner, and author of the children’s book, *A Boggle At BeWILDerwood*, has fashioned a fantasy setting in natural woods where his book’s characters live and their whimsical villages are recreated in authentic detail—all built for £1.8 million. The park is geared

toward 4- to 14-year-olds and their parents. The magical journey starts with a boat trip through the Dismal Dyke and across Scary Lake. Guests learn the ancient art of Bogglebutt, get lost in the Muddle Maze, balance on one leg while eating mud stew, and tramp through the woods for a late-night lantern procession through the Treacherous Trail. The entire park is filled with clever and whimsical details, signage, and 'information' concerning the parks inhabitants and locations. Author/owner Blofeld has created the U.K.'s "first environmentally friendly adventure park" of pure, imaginative outdoor fun that is reminiscent of what parents remember from childhood. And from the expression of joy on the faces of young guests, it's clear they are having the times of their lives.

As a simple escapade of traditional play, BeWILDerwood is a testament to the power of storytelling. This imaginative park is a story-driven reality adventure, conceived with a passion for nature with all structures built of sustainable materials. A 'holistic environmentalism' approach was applied throughout—from food sold on site being sourced within Norfolk, to reclaimed lifeboats converted to electric, fences made from wood harvested on site, recycling 70% of waste on site, and upgrading local footpaths, bridle and cycle paths to allow sustainable access. In today's world, it is reassuring that a natural, outdoor experience can captivate and satisfy today's techno-savvy youth with an entire day of monstrous merrymaking.

### **ATTRACTION LIMITED BUDGET**

#### **The Forgotten Mine, Molenheide, Belgium**

Since the early 20th century, one form of themed entertainment has continued to provide guests with a highly interactive, social experience that crosses the borders of age, gender and decades of technological change. In all these years not much has changed in the neighborhood pastime of miniature golf. Now, 92 years after the sport rose to popularity in the US, the TEA is pleased to recognize The Forgotten Mine located in Molenheide, Belgium, for the total reinvention of that grand old game. The Forgotten Mine takes a traditional outdoor golf game indoors, staging it on multiple levels and floors. Highly themed mine tunnel settings combine with animatronics, explosive sounds and special effects to deliver an engrossing, guest-activated experience that takes a traditional fun time to a dazzling new level.

The movements of a rather unassuming golf ball activate unexpected motions in the scenery, and set into play a riot of calamities involving conveyor belts, mining apparatus, dynamite explosions, as well as wind and water effects. The sheer unpredictability of it all influences the game play with surprising twists that help motivate guests to return again and again. And the playing field is virtually level for all family members. Grandparents can enjoy competing with totally captivated youngsters and the resulting social interaction helps keep players fully engaged.

### **MUSEUM**

#### **The Newseum, Washington DC , USA**

The Newseum is an interactive museum of news and journalism centrally located in Washington, D.C. Prior to reopening in its new, seven-story, \$450 million incarnation on April 11, 2008, the Newseum operated out of Rosslyn, VA. With a stated mission "to help the public and the news media understand one another better," the Newseum presents media in every possible format from panoramic, multi-screen and interactive, to large and small theaters, a 4D presentation, do-it-yourself telecasting and reproductions of daily newspapers' front pages.

The overall message of the content is to underscore the achievements of journalists in creating awareness of current events and issues, point out the need for a free press and transparency in reporting, and mark and celebrate great moments in history as documented through the media. There are pieces of the Berlin Wall and other artifacts, a 9/11 presentation, a Pulitzer gallery, an early printing press display and an archive of news stories through the centuries.

The project's generous budget afforded the opportunity for this institution to push the limits, and its mainly technology driven contents do an exceptional job of holding their own in the midst of an impressive and massive architectural envelope with open, light-filled spaces that presented special challenges for theater and exhibit design, acoustics and audiovisuals. Collections are exhibited in elegantly composed casework, and presented in a storytelling context – supported by multiple small film galleries as well as the multiple larger showcase theaters. Immersion is achieved through thoughtful and complex execution, and the grand display of current day technology, anchored in personal and emotional moments of our times as captured by the press.

The Newseum sets a new bar for large cultural institutions in major metropolitan areas. One comes away having also learned a tremendous amount about the history of news making and media technologies.

## **MUSEUM**

### **National Museum of the Marine Corps, Quantico VA, USA**

The National Museum of the Marine Corps tells the story of the United States Marines. It is designed to appeal to the general public, at the same time as appealing to its core audience, Marines who are steeped in the history and traditions of the Corps. The 85,000 sq ft of exhibits are intended to place visitors in the boots of the Marines while still housing a substantial collection of artifacts. Through a series of immersive, 4-D exhibits, where even the temperature and humidity are altered to enhance the experience, augmented with unique media applications, the story is told through a first-person narrative that transports the visitor into the world of the Marines.

This 118,000 sq. ft., \$90 million museum (with plans to expand to 200,000 sq. ft.) is an excellent and successful example of the evolution of museums into the world of immersive storytelling. Utilizing all the latest techniques and technologies of the themed entertainment industry and theatrical and lighting effects in conjunction with traditional museum, curatorial and educational requirements, the National Museum of the Marine Corps presents a compelling story based experience to its diverse audience. A masterful balance has been reached between the theatrical immersive galleries and the surrounding supporting exhibits. Each scene is given its appropriate historical context as well as contemporary relevance that is understandable to lay persons, families and school groups. This museum enthralls visitors as well as the Marines, whose 273 years of history is captured here. Attendance figures bear this out. Since opening in late 2006, the museum's attendance has been triple the original projections.

## **MUSEUM EXHIBIT**

### **Operation Spy, International Spy Museum, Washington DC, USA**

Operation Spy is a new interactive attraction at the International Spy Museum. It combines live-action, video characters, role-playing, themed environments, special effects and hands-on activities into an exciting experience. Guests assume the role of US Intelligence Officers and

are thrust into the secret world of espionage and special agents. During their experience they will penetrate a high-security compound, crack a safe, interrogate a suspect agent and engage in other covert activities in an effort to complete their mission.

You have been hired as an intelligence officer and are now entering the ambiguous world of espionage. You have been transported to the fictional country of Khandar and have safely passed border security. You and your fellow officers must follow your field contact, evade suspicion and travel through a backstreet as the shopkeepers are opening their market stalls.

The nondescript door in the courtyard reads “Khandar Exports,” but is actually the front for the intelligence agency command post in Khandar. Your mission is to locate a missing nuclear trigger device before it falls into the wrong hands. You have one hour to complete your mission. As the Station Chief briefs you on your first task you must sort out and track your suspects. Next you must decrypt a phone that might lead to the identity of the suspect behind the trigger’s disappearance. Next you must break into the suspect’s compound without being intercepted. You must override the security system to gain access to the suspect’s office. You must search the office for clues and scan documents required for evidence. Other officers set off to crack a safe found in the office and all must rendezvous back at the safe house to interrogate the suspect.

A simulated helicopter rescue takes the team to a debriefing location where the Station Chief lets the team know how they scored. Overall scores are based on how well the team performed in each interactive challenge as well as decisions they made throughout the experience. There is more than one outcome, so success is not guaranteed. This unique adventure takes the interactive concept to a new level by combining innovative features of exhibits, movies, computer games, theatrical environments and rides into an exciting experience. The plot is inspired by actual cases from intelligence files. Operation Spy immerses the guest into active participation and brings to life the complexities and ambiguities of the intelligence world.

## **MUSEUM EXHIBIT LIMITED BUDGET**

### **Forces of Nature, Arizona Science Center, Phoenix AZ, USA**

On a budget of just \$1.7 million and a schedule of nine months, the Arizona Science Center transformed its Earth Sciences Gallery into the new home of a dynamic and compelling, immersive educational experience—the Forces of Nature. The first in a series of galleries that the Arizona Science Center is revitalizing to increase relevance to today’s guests, the Forces of Nature is a multi-sensory adventure. Included in the new gallery are the Immersion Theatre where – in a five-minute show - visitors can experience what it feels like to be in the middle of a hurricane, tornado, wildfire, volcanic eruption and monsoon. At the Magic Planet, a five-foot digital globe with a 360-degree image displays the last six weeks of weather patterns. Stardust Faces of Science is where visitors meet a volcanologist, a hydrologist, and a meteorologist. Other gallery demonstrations include the Lava Lab, Liquid Nitrogen experiments, Combustion reactions, Carbon Exchange, Plates on the Move, Rock Cycle, and Motion in the Ocean. There’s also the special Mr. Wizard wonder: The egg in a bottle! TEA’s Thea Awards Committee recommended this project on the basis that Forces of Nature represents a vision for the future of science centers in addressing changing audience expectations and showing how a compelling educational experience can be created within a limited budget.

## **LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

### **Air Force One Discovery Center**

#### **Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum, Simi Valley CA, USA**

Students visiting a presidential library usually expect typical field-trip fare. They may well ask what does this have to do with me? But young visitors to the Air Force One Discovery Center find themselves plunged into extremely realistic replicas of the Oval Office, the White House Press Room, the Military Station Room and Air Force One. Students are cast as reporters, military leaders, advisors, or even the president. Here each plays a role in responding to a rapidly unfolding crisis that seems all too real. The result is an innovative, involving and highly personal experience of presidential decision making that achieves a highly successful educational experience with the enthusiasm of compelling role playing entertainment. The kids are completely engaged. Even the teachers, parents and chaperones wish they could participate. The Air Force One Discovery Center sets a new immersive, involving standard for student activities at educational attractions everywhere.

## **TECHNICAL**

### **Muppet Mobile Lab, Hong Kong Disneyland, China**

Muppet Mobile Lab is a fully-autonomous, animated effects wheeled vehicle designed for personal interaction with park guests. Simply put, it allows park guests to have real-time one-on-one interaction with Muppet characters. The vehicle contains two animated Muppet characters in addition to a large array of special effects, all controlled live by remote operators. It is supported on only two wheels, with stability being maintained by an active wheel propulsion system which maintains safe balance during all motions and special effects. Effects include water nozzles, water spray, smoke, confetti cannons, mechanical vision gags, changeable signage and sound effects. Both on-board animated characters are capable of a wide range of body, head, and facial motion and expressions synchronized with their spoken voices during guest interaction and conversation.

The Muppet Mobile Lab is a unique interactive guest attraction which embodies truly engaging character personalities that instantly and naturally connect with humans in such an immersive manner that the entire apparatus is accepted as an actor rather than as a machine. This characteristic almost completely overshadows the incredible technical achievement of multiple control systems seamlessly combined into one device – in that park guests instantly relate to the characters rather than noticing the technology.

The Muppet Mobile Lab, which currently operates daily at Hong Kong Disneyland, proves that the attraction can integrate human interaction in any location in any language, without requiring prior guest knowledge of the supporting back story. During the development of the attraction, the Muppet Mobile Lab was demonstrated to guests at Epcot and Disney's California Adventure to test its reaction with guests. Proof of the runaway success of this groundbreaking actor-machine can be viewed in numerous video clips published on YouTube.

## **SCIENCE CENTER**

### **Audubon Insectarium, New Orleans LA, USA**

The Audubon Insectarium opened to the public in June of 2008 and is the first major project to open in New Orleans since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. It is housed in the historic 17th century US Custom House, a grand building at the edge of the French Quarter, on Canal Street. The 24,000 square foot Insectarium uses the tools of themed entertainment trade to create an entertaining, educational and immersive experience that illustrates how insects pollinate plants, decompose waste material, and are fundamental to our ecosystem while adding intrigue, color

and splendor to Earth's environment. Visitors learn about insects through interactions with on-site naturalists, engaging and highly themed exhibitry, and one-of-a-kind "bug encounters," such as a 'den' where people are the size of insects and learn what life is like for an ant, and a 4D theater experience where insects in an animated show receive awards for various specialties. This unique venue also narrates New Orleans history from a distinctive vantage point. A swamp that transitions from day to night illustrates the different insects and creatures that inhabit this singular region. For the adventurous, there is bug cuisine offered in Bug Appétit: chocolate chirp (crickets) cookies, mealworm pasta, deep fried Dragonflies and more. The last stop in the Insectarium is the Japanese Butterfly garden, a tranquil garden space.

The Awards Committee noted the extremely imaginative approach and high quality and detail of execution in the facility, engaging guests at every sensory level (sight, taste, touch, smell and sound) and pushing the sense of fun and discovery to new heights. From the colorful and artfully displayed insect specimens to the unique bug chandeliers throughout the facility, excellence in design and craftsmanship pervade this facility. Interactive experiences are executed to the highest levels and represent the blending of techniques used in the themed entertainment industry, with the educational mission of a legitimate and serious science center.

## **NEW THEME PARK LAND**

### **Jungala Busch Gardens, Tampa FL, USA**

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay's newest and most ambitious park enhancement project to date, Jungala is set in the Congo area. The four-acre attraction invites guests to discover exotic creatures, explore a colorful village hidden deep in the jungle and connect with the inhabitants of the lush landscape through up-close animal interactions, multi-story family play areas, rides and live entertainment. At Jungala's center, a vibrant village comes alive with the sights and sounds of this jungle paradise. Towering trees, cascading waterfalls and elaborate stone structures shape the landscape, transporting guests to a mythical place where the inhabitants—both human and animal—live in complete harmony with nature. Larger-than-life stilt walkers highlight the beauty and grace of the colorful jungle flora and fauna. Zoo educators introduce guests to jungle creatures such as lemurs, coatimundi and toucans, and children are invited to participate in impromptu games and musical play throughout the day. Two signature rides add to the excitement of Jungala: Jungle Flyers and Wild Surge, while Tree Tops Trails features three levels of climbing activities where families can explore different layers of jungle life.

Jungala successfully blends programmatic elements and experiences—including rides/attractions, live entertainment, up-close animal interaction and habitats, dining, and retail—in a truly unique and immersive environment. Educational, entertaining and thematically-consistent, Jungala provides a layered experience, where guests of all ages can learn, participate actively, or simply enjoy the life-like jungle environment, rides, attractions and area entertainment. Buildings and multi-level platforms, walkways, caves, and tunnels are seamlessly integrated into the jungle landscape in which animal habitats extend into the visitor area, making the animals accessible to guests as never before.

Jungala attains a new level in experiential design and programming by successfully integrating all elements of the visitor experience—education, entertainment, dining, and retail—into a unique, engaging and realistic recreation of an African jungle environment.

## **EVENT SPECTACULAR**

### **2008 Summer Olympics, Opening Ceremonies, Beijing, China**

The Opening Ceremonies for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games had an estimated global TV

audience of one billion people for the four-and-a-half-hour spectacular. The show, featuring 10,000 performers, 2,008 drummers and a sky-walking, torch-bearing gymnast lighting the Olympic Flame, received rave reviews. It was generally agreed that the world may never witness an opening ceremony of this magnitude and ingenuity, partly due to the creative genius of Zhang Yimou, the internationally acclaimed Chinese filmmaker who commanded a \$300,000,000 budget to express his artistic vision.

Unanimous praise has been lavished on the huge precision cast, exquisite costumes, innovative performance concepts and a “purpose built” award winning stadium. The Opening Ceremonies represented a masterful fusion of China’s classical heritage with its 21st century aspirations, all seen through the lens of an original artist. The show stands out as a perfect blend of traditional stadium stagecraft and the newest technology in program software, projection and LED technology, yet the line between technology and human performance was so subtly drawn that the audience was left gasping “How did they do that?”

### **LIVE SHOW**

#### **Finding Nemo: The Musical, Walt Disney World FL, USA**

The stage musical of Finding Nemo is a Disney Animal Kingdom attraction, inspired by the Disney-Pixar feature film. Set in an enchanted undersea world, in Disney’s newly enclosed theater, it represents the first time Disney has created an all-singing-and-dancing musical from a non-musical feature. Finding Nemo: The Musical is a 30-minute show with live actors, larger-than-life puppets, and original music and lyrics. It is a rich and polished production on every level. The musical has strong lyrics, melodic tunes, a clear narrative and lavish production values. The wonderfully inventive costumes and puppetry stand out, without dominating the choreography and direction. This show represents a benchmark of quality for all theme park musical adaptations.

### **LIVE SHOW**

#### **Legend of Mythica, Tokyo DisneySea, Tokyo, Japan**

The Legend of Mythica at Tokyo DisneySea was created as a once-a-day, daytime spectacle for the fifth anniversary of the park, which is located next door to Tokyo Disneyland. The show is designed to play to all guests on a grand scale, utilizing both the water of the park’s central Mediterranean Harbor, and surrounding walkways. The show is a tour-de-force of imagination carried out by theme park and stagecraft expertise, creating and blending (on 10 waterborne barges) pyrotechnics, large-scale fountains, lifts as tall as 70 feet, and 130 performers on sea and land. The Disney characters are interwoven within a fantasy story among a dragon, a unicorn, a phoenix and a hydra – all of enormous scale so that thousands of guests can view the daily, 20-minute extravaganza.

Mythica’s success and popularity has exceeded all its predecessors on this water stage. The key is the scale, the fantastic sculptural centerpiece, and 10 barges that unveil myriad special effects, huge animated figures, Disney characters and 130 performers. From the centerpiece sculpture itself, fountains flow, Mickey Mouse rises 60 feet in the air and a “white goddess” rises 12 feet beyond even Mickey—all accompanied by a choreography of music, dancers, drummers, bungee jumpers and jet skies, creating an unparalleled visual spectacle! The show represents some of the very best international teamwork of Disney staff working with high-caliber industry designers and creatives, and Japanese builders. The spectacular result is still going strong, now beginning its third year.

### **CASINO ATTRACTION**

#### **Tree of Prosperity, Wynn Casino, Macau SAR, China**

First came the Volcano at the Mirage, then Treasure Island's Pirate Battle and now, for his casino in Macau, Steve Wynn brings us the Tree of Prosperity. This spectacular, wealth-showing, auspicious tree makes regular appearances in a show that delights—and more importantly, attracts—gamers and non-gamers alike. Guests arriving at Wynn Resorts Macau enter through a rotunda that is 100 feet in diameter. In the center of the floor is a 30-foot diameter dome covered in Western Zodiac symbols. Overhead is a 70-foot ceiling dome featuring the 12 symbols of the Chinese Zodiac. As the show begins, the ceiling dome is revealed to be a carefully calibrated iris, which retracts to reveal an LED video screen on which a dramatic show appears. When the video screen splits in two, a 30-foot diameter, 13,000-crystal chandelier descends from the ceiling. This activates the floor dome, which opens to reveal a tree that rapidly grows to a full height of 38 feet while lighting reflects changing seasons. The tree's 60 limbs with 2,000 branches and 98,000 leaves are made of gold and brass leaf.

In what may well be a first for in the themed entertainment business, the Tree of Prosperity has become its own revenue source. The Tree speaks directly to the hearts and traditions of the Chinese and Asian guests through its symbolism and spectacle. As a result, at the close of each show, the gamblers are inspired to shower the Tree of Prosperity with money in hopes that it will be returned to them when they hit the slots and tables.

The Thea Awards Committee found that through its combination of extraordinary technological expertise, elegance of design and some of the best designers and manufacturers in the business, the Tree of Prosperity represents excellence in the creation of a compelling experience in a compelling space.

### **About TEA**

The TEA (Themed Entertainment Association) is a nonprofit organization representing some 7,000 creative specialists, from architects to designers, technical specialists to master planners, scenic fabricators to artists, and builders to feasibility analysts working in more than 600 firms in 39 different countries. TEA is an international nonprofit organization founded in 1991. It is dedicated to connecting organizations seeking to engage, enchant, educate and entertain their guests and visitors with the creators of compelling places and experiences worldwide. Its members have conceived, designed, fabricated and produced highly successful experience-based museum exhibits, science center interactives, corporate visitor centers, live events and live performance venues, themed entertainment and retail centers, casinos and resorts, themed restaurants, aquariums, zoos, heritage centers, theme parks and more. For more information, visit [www.TEACConnect.org](http://www.TEACConnect.org).

### **About the Thea Awards**

Like the TEA, the Thea Awards, sponsored by Economics Research Associates, were created to bring recognition to achievement, talent and personal excellence within the themed entertainment industry. From a modest beginning in 1994, the Thea Awards have become internationally recognized as a symbol of excellence. The public is welcome to attend the black tie 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Gala, which will be held March 7, 2009 at the Disneyland Hotel. Tickets may be ordered online at [www.teaconnect.org](http://www.teaconnect.org). The name of the award is a play on three words: the first is "Thea," the Greek goddess from whom all light emanates. Thea was the mother of Helios (the sun), Eos (the dawn), and Selene (the moon). The second key word is "Theater," a word derived from the goddess Thea. The third word, of course, is TEA, the name of our association.

### **About Economics Research Associates**

Economics Research Associates is an international consulting firm focused on economic analysis for the entertainment and leisure industry, real estate development, public-policy analysis, tourism, and economic development. Since its founding in 1958, ERA has completed over 15,000 assignments yielding unmatched experience in land use economics. In the process, the firm has made important contributions to some of the world's most innovative and successful development projects. Their projects span the globe and range from repositioning single land uses to New Towns planned over 30 years. In broad terms, ERA assists private developers and public agencies in assessing the future economics and outcomes of real estate projects and economic development plans. ERA offers a diverse array of economic analysis and tools to answer complex problems. Website: [www.econres.com](http://www.econres.com).

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