



# PRESS RELEASE



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**PHOTOS AVAILABLE**

## **TEA's Thea Awards Ceremony Set for March 8 at Disneyland Hotel**

### **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Honor Outstanding Achievement In The Creation of Compelling Places and Experiences**

BURBANK, CALIF. USA Jan. 31, 2008 – “The annual Thea Awards recognize and honor excellence in the creation of outstanding visitor experiences, attractions, exhibits and places,” said TEA President Nick Farmer of Farmer Attraction Development, Leicester, UK. “Whatever the continent and whatever the venue -” says Farmer, “- be it a museum, visitors center, theme park, waterpark, heritage center, retail complex, casino, cultural attraction - TEA's Thea Awards have the power to focus international attention on innovation within the Experience Industry. That is why a Thea Award confers great worldwide prestige and is known as the industry's highest honor.”

On March 8, TEA will present 17 Thea Award recipients with Thea Award statuettes at the **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Gala**, a lavish, black-tie dinner event at the Disneyland Hotel. Some of the award recipients will travel from as far away as Israel, Australia, Singapore, Japan and Ireland. The Gala, which regularly sells out, is a who's-who gathering of the themed entertainment industry. Top designers, architects, creatives, analysts, and technical artists, plus industry leaders representing some of the best-known entertainment companies in the world, will be in attendance. The event is open to the public. Tickets: [www.teaconnect.org/boxoffice\\_2008](http://www.teaconnect.org/boxoffice_2008).

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.

As a global alliance, TEA is growing and expanding to meet industry demands. Significant new leisure and recreation developments are being planned and built in many parts of the world, especially the UAE and Asia, and TEA recognizes the need to enlarge its quality talent pool to support this new demand. TEA has recently embarked on a Fast Track Expansion Initiative, which is being fueled by contributions from leading organizations including Walt Disney Imagineering and Universal Creative.

Economics Research Associates is an official sponsor of the Thea Awards Gala. “The Thea Awards celebrate the highest and best achievements in our industry, and our company is proud to sponsor the Thea Awards Gala,” says John Robinett, Senior Vice President of Economics Research Associates. “Since the very first Thea Awards in 1994, these honors have showcased the imagination, engineering, and know-how that have entertained and educated audiences

around the world. It is important to recognize the many people behind the scenes who create the great diversions of our day.”

## **Recipients – 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards**

**Thea Lifetime Achievement Award: Jack Rouse**, Jack Rouse Associates

**Thea Classic Award: SeaWorld**, San Diego, CA

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

**Attraction: Shuttle Launch Experience**, Kennedy Space Center Visitor Center, FL

**Attraction Limited Budget: Awakening of the Temple Lobby Show**, Aztec on the River, San Antonio, TX

**Attraction Rehab: Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage**, Disneyland, Anaheim, CA

**Exhibit: Noah’s Ark at the Skirball**, Skirball Community Center, Los Angeles, CA

**Museum: Donald W. Reynolds Education Center**, Mount Vernon, VA

**Heritage Center: The Chain of Generations Center**, Western Wall Heritage Foundation, Jerusalem, Israel

**Exhibit Limited Budget: Cleveland Avenue Time Machine Experience**, at Troy University’s Rosa Parks Museum

**Traveling Exhibit Limited Budget: CSI: The Experience**, Fort Worth Museum of Science & History, Fort Worth, TX

**Science Center Limited Budget: Cosmos at the Castle**, Black Rock Castle, Cork, Ireland

**Event Spectacular: Songs of the Sea**, Sentosa, Singapore

**Live Touring Event: Walking with Dinosaurs**, WWT-Rex Pty. Ltd., Australia

**Event Spectacular: Peter Pan’s Neverland**, Universal Studios Japan

**Technical Achievement: KA Floating Stages**, Las Vegas, NV

**Themed Training Experience: Battle Stations 21**, Great Lakes Naval Station, IL

**Interactive Adventure: Kim Possible World Showcase Playtest**, Epcot, Walt Disney World, Orlando, FL

### **About TEA**

The TEA (Themed Entertainment Association) is a nonprofit organization representing some 6,500 creative specialists, from architects to designers, technical specialists to master planners, scenic fabricators to artists, and builders to feasibility analysts working in nearly 500 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.TEAConnect.org](http://www.TEAConnect.org).

### **About the Thea Awards**

Like the TEA, the Thea Awards 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 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Gala, which will be held March 8, 2008 at the Disneyland Hotel. Tickets may be ordered online at [www.teaconnect.org/boxoffice\\_2008](http://www.teaconnect.org/boxoffice_2008). 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).

## **Details – 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Thea Awards Recipients**

### **THEA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

**Jack Rouse**, Jack Rouse Associates, Cincinnati, OH

Jack's formation of the firm that bears his name (with colleagues Keith James and Amy Merrell), in 1987 is a milestone in a multi-faceted career that spans more than 30 years. Jack Rouse Associates has become one of the most recognized global names in experience design, serving a variety of industries: museums, zoos, sports facilities, theme parks, entertainment complexes, cultural venues, community developments and corporate environments.

### **THEA CLASSIC AWARD**

**Sea World**, San Diego, CA

With more than 130 million visitors since its opening on March 21, 1964, SeaWorld is San Diego's leading tourist attraction and one of the most popular marine-life parks in the world. The founding principles of education, entertainment, research and conservation make SeaWorld an ideal place to learn about, enjoy and gain an appreciation for some of the ocean's most fascinating animals. Spread out over 189 acres on beautiful Mission Bay Park, SeaWorld is known for spectacular animal shows, interactive attractions, aquariums, rides, beautiful landscaping, dining facilities and education programs for all ages.

## **THEA AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT**

### **ATTRACTION**

#### **Shuttle Launch Experience**

Kennedy Space Center Visitors Center, Kennedy Space Center, Florida

A hallmark of the Kennedy Space Center has always been to uphold scholarship through visual communication excellence. Shuttle Launch Experience begins with this tradition and virtually takes off from there! After a pre-flight briefing, guests board a unique shuttle simulator module that adds a new dimension to the kinetics of motion simulation. The experience is pushed over the top by maximizing the power of suggestion, sensory effects and great storytelling to delivering the heart pounding impression of the journey into space that is experienced by the astronauts. The result leaves guests "wowed" without the usual effects of nausea induced by traditional simulation. The kinetic journey is climaxed by a spectacular "Earth reveal," as the entire ceiling of the shuttle module opens to an encompassing orbital view of our planet.

#### **ATTRACTION LIMITED BUDGET**

**Awakening of the Temple** Lobby Show, Aztec on the River, San Antonio, Texas

This 10-minute, multimedia show is presented in the lobby of the Aztec on the River, a restored 1926-era exotic themed motion picture palace in San Antonio, Texas. The show makes use of animation and animatronics, lighting effects, surround sound, and simulated smoke and fire to showcase the historic building and "awaken" the spirit of Xochitl, who tells modern mortals of

ancient Aztec mysteries. The show's climax features a seven-foot-long feathered serpent rising out of the floor to tower above the audience.

### **ATTRACTION REHAB**

#### **Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage**, Disneyland Park, Anaheim, California

One of the most technologically complex attractions ever built at a Disney park, "Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage" is a 12-minute journey in 52-foot long submerged vessels that were originally placed in service at Disneyland in 1959. In this state-of-the-art renovation, Disney Imagineers created a new undersea world in which visitors embark on an expedition of colorful reefs, ancient ruins, massive whales, and an erupting volcano and come face-to-face with Nemo and other memorable characters from the Disney-Pixar Academy Award winning animated feature. Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage is groundbreaking in its application of new technology, combining popular animated film characters and storytelling for a crowd-pleasing underwater experience.

### **EXHIBIT**

#### **Noah's Ark at the Skirball**, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California

Noah's Ark at the Skirball allows guests to *walk through* and *take part in* the Noah's Ark story: interacting with fanciful animal sculptures, helping to construct the ark, helping the animals board the ark, creating the sounds and effects of the storm, sharing the voyage aboard the ark and arriving at a better world. Upon entering the galleries, visitors are welcomed into a pre-flood zone, offering hands-on opportunities to make thunder, rain and wind using low-tech, mechanical sound devices, and invented instruments. Visitors begin to meet pairs of life-size animal puppets from the five continents, all creatively crafted from recycled materials – or, in many cases, everyday objects such as bottle caps, bicycle parts, baseball mitts, croquet balls, mop heads, and rear-view mirrors – 186 species in all.

### **MUSEUM**

#### **Donald W. Reynolds Education Center**, Mount Vernon, Virginia

This lively and experiential telling of the George Washington story reveals the life and character of the first US President through a series of 16 exhibit galleries and theaters covering 17,000 sq. feet. "A 40 Year Romance" set in a Colonial parlor tells the story of George and Martha's marriage. "Washington and Religion," in a chapel-like setting with pews and stained glass speaks to the leader's spirituality. Forensic studies were undertaken to reconstruct Washington's likeness, presented in three compelling, lifesize wax figures as a young man, in midlife and in maturity. The Revolutionary War Theater takes visitors inside the key battles of the war, and employs 4-D effects, such as crossing the Delaware with fog and snow. "A Leader's Smile" displays Washington's actual dentures and explains the sad story of this dentally challenged President. The new center is located within George Washington's Mt. Vernon Estate & Gardens, the prestigious 50-acre complex on the site of the Washingtons' former home.

### **HERITAGE CENTER**

#### **The Chain of Generations Center**, The Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel

The experience is built on two levels. The first encompasses seven scenes: "Our forefathers and the twelve tribes," "A people and its homeland," "The destruction," "Yearning for Zion," "The Holocaust," "The Resurrection," and "The Memorial wall for IDF soldiers who fell in the battle for Jerusalem." The second level is a "Hall of Light," theatrically using light beams choreographed to cause visitors to introspectively "search their inner selves," inspiring a form of meditation. Seated around "The Wall of Light" in the second level, the designers' objective is to show the audience that "we are all links in one chain," with Jerusalem itself as a concept and abstract symbol: "A Link to the Generations."

### **EXHIBIT ON A LIMITED BUDGET**

#### **Cleveland Avenue Time Machine Experience**

Troy University's Rosa Parks Museum, Montgomery, Alabama

To embark on the Cleveland Avenue Time Machine experience, museum visitors board a vehicle reminiscent of a 1950's Montgomery city bus surrounded by retro-futuristic time travel devices, lighting, audio and fog effects. The driver of the bus is a robot, Mr. Rivets, who welcomes and instructs passengers to take their seats. The multi-sensory guest experience is delivered from every direction through an enveloping seven-projector video production. The first of six "time jumps" sweeps visitors from today to a bus stop in downtown Montgomery, Alabama on the night of December 1, 1955 where they meet a charismatic African-American woman who will be their time travel guide. Then, among other things, the time travelers learn about "Jim Crow," "Dred Scott," "Harriet Tubman," the hopefulness of African Americans during Civil War Reconstruction and the failed doctrine of "Separate But Equal." The experience concludes with guests being invited into the museum proper to learn more about the impact of the bus boycott.

### **TRAVELING EXHIBIT LIMITED BUDGET**

**CSI: THE EXPERIENCE**, Fort Worth Museum of Science & History, Ft. Worth, Texas

In this 6,500 sq. ft. traveling exhibit, visitors are enlisted to investigate a crime story and apply authentic forensic science techniques, with a little help from CSI star Gil Grissom and some real forensic scientists (via cleverly integrated media) as well as live CSI cast members. State of the art computer interactives, realistic sets, and physical evidence such as hair, fiber, bullets, and insects provide a broad spectrum of elements to analyze and evaluate. At the finish, an interactive, multimedia kiosk with logic tree programming, crime scene reenactments, and thought-provoking questions simulates the real-life challenges of Crime Scene Investigators.

### **SCIENCE CENTER LIMITED BUDGET**

**Cosmos at the Castle**, Cork City, Ireland

The interactive guest experience begins with 16 animated HD presentations that are touch-sensitive and explore the key points of cosmology, astronomy and the evolution of life. Next, role-playing exhibits allow visitors to express views about space exploration, and the religious, philosophical and cultural challenges posed by the possible existence of alien life and intelligence. Guests can also access the on-site radio telescope and send multimedia impressions of life on Earth to the planet of their choice. The finale is an interactive cinema experience in which guests, as a group, monitor a deadly comet rushing towards Earth and decide how to save the planet.

### **EVENT SPECTACULAR**

**Songs of the Sea**, Sentosa Island, Singapore

A new nighttime multimedia show is the centerpiece of a new venue at Siloso Beach on Sentosa Island. The show is designed around a 120m long kelong (fishing village). The story begins with Li, a young man with a charming voice, singing by the sea with his friends when he is stunned by the sudden vision of a beautiful sleeping princess. Guided by a group of mischievous sea creatures, Li learns she is under a spell of an enchanted village. Can Li help to break the spell and set her free? Technical elements include 69 water jets to create a central 40m water screen flanked by two smaller water screens. Flames leap up to 20m, and a pyrotechnic display and lasers using the latest diode technology enhance the action. The 25-minute show runs twice nightly to an audience capacity of 2,500, in an open-air amphitheater.

### **LIVE TOURING SHOW**

**Walking with Dinosaurs**, Australia

Fifteen roaring, snarling "live" dinosaurs (actually elaborate, lifesize hydraulic puppets that are partly human-operated and partly remote-controlled) have been thrilling family audiences in this traveling arena show. With tour dates from Sydney to Las Vegas, from Portland to Little Rock, this unique show features 10 species, from the agile Utahraptor and the king of terror, Tyrannosaurus Rex, to the 45-foot tall Brachiosaurus - 75 feet from nose to tail. Computer hardware and software has been adapted from film animatronics. The skeletal structure, sculpting and skinning of the creatures is created with such precision that the dinosaurs convincingly move, contract and stretch as if they had real muscle, fat and skin.

## **EVENT SPECTACULAR**

### **Peter Pan's Neverland**, Universal Studios Japan, Osaka, Japan

This Broadway-style musical spectacle, with a cast of 37, takes place nightly on the big lagoon at Universal Studios Japan. Three enormous floating stages represent London, Neverland and Captain Hook's Ship. Based on the original J.M. Barrie works, this production features an all-new script, score and original songs. The vibrant, near-lunatic pace of this 20-minute show makes it perhaps the most marvelously bizarre version of "Peter Pan" ever, with its bouncing, leaping performers on hidden trampolines, bursting pyrotechnic, and Peter and Wendy soaring some 100 feet in the air.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **KA Floating Stage**, Cirque du Soleil, Las Vegas, Nevada

KA at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas is a gravity-defying theatrical production by Cirque du Soleil and its "performing" stages have set a new standard for theater technology that is as widely acclaimed throughout the industry as it is breathtaking to audiences. The two main stages are fully articulated, giving the sense that they are performers in the production, with their own distinct personalities and abilities. The 50' x 25' Sand Cliff Deck is actuated by a hydraulic gantry lift. It can rotate 360 degrees, tilt from flat to 100 degrees (10 degrees beyond vertical) and track the deck up and down vertically, 70 feet. All three axes of motion can function at the same time, thus creating a virtually limitless palette. The 75,000-lb. Tatami deck is an automated, animated stage 30'x 30' in size and powered by 100 Hp electric motors. It is capable of gracefully gliding up to 45 feet towards the audience.

## **THEMED TRAINING EXPERIENCE**

### **Battle Stations 21**, Navy Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois

This 12-hour training experience for Navy recruits comprises the final test in what is now the Navy's only boot camp. Aboard the USS Trayer, a simulated destroyer (essentially a soundstage with a realistic 5/8 scale exterior), recruits face 17 discreet challenges. The exterior simulation is complete down to the smells (saltwater, grease) and sounds (seagulls, dock workers, lapping waves). Within, recruits are tried by such experiences as "General Quarters" in which the ship comes under attack at 2:00 am. The floor shakes, claxons wail, lights dim and flicker, compartments flood, fire and smoke break out, electrical wires spark, water pipes spray, wounded sailors moan (actually dummies with MP3 players inside) and a torpedo destroys one floor which has collapsed down onto another. This outstanding application of the Experience Industry's expertise, in addition to being a remarkable accomplishment has opened the door to a new and potentially high-volume business sector.

## **INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE**

### **Kim Possible World Showcase Adventure Playtest**

Epcot, Walt Disney World, Orlando Florida

This interactive adventure game developed by Disney Imagineering's R&D Team was successfully tested in some of the international pavilions at Epcot. Using wireless, cellphone-like "Kimmunicator" handsets, guests controlled special media installations to defeat super-villains from the "Kim Possible" television series. The Kimmunicator interfaced with concealed games, special effects, secret panels, etc. With minimal investment and without altering the appearance of the pavilions, Kim Possible achieved an intense additional dimension of interest that appealed greatly to children and families, and suggests new possibilities for rejuvenating existing attractions.