

# WDWNT

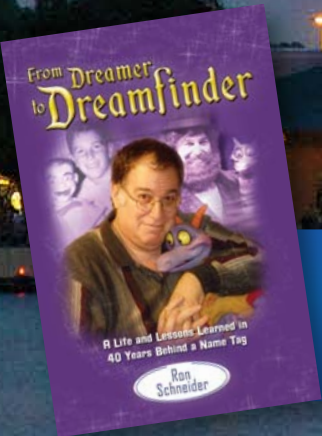
the magazine

Issue 19



**EPCOT 30 Events**  
pg 6

**In Defense of Horizons**  
pg 40



**From Dreamer  
To Dreamfinder**  
pg 26

# CELEBRATING THIRTY YEARS OF EPCOT

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# STAFF

WDWNT  
the magazine

To Our Readers,

Welcome to issue 19 of WDWNT: The Magazine. This is a different type of issue for us. In our special (and late) way, we are commemorating Epcot's 30th anniversary with a special Epcot-centric issue looking back at 30 spectacular, and controversial, years.

To start, we have an overview of WDW Celebrations Celebration 30 event this past October. As well we have a general time line that looks at the last three decades of EPCOT history. Read a review of Ron Schneider's latest book, From Dreamer to Dreamfinder. Lastly, what would be an EPCOT issue without an article on Horizons? In the pages of this magazine you will find the aforementioned articles and many more.

We hope that you will find the articles within both entertaining and educational. If you have any suggestions or feedback, we are always happy to hear from our readers. Just send an email to [WDWNTthemagazine@wdwnt.com](mailto:WDWNTthemagazine@wdwnt.com) and share your thoughts.

As a reminder, the magazine is available in digital form from our website (<http://www.wdwntthemagazine.com>) or in printed form from MagCloud (<http://www.magcloud.com>). If you like what you read here, please share it with your friends.

Publisher's Note: As we release issue 19, we want to let our readers know that this will be the last issue for the year. We are constantly looking for ways to make the magazine content more accessible to our readers, so we are using the downtime to review potential changes to our publication model. Don't worry though! We'll be back in January with the same great articles. Watch the website for more details.

Thanks,  
Editor-in-Chief, WDWNT: The Magazine

# content

6 **Celebration 30**  
a look at the WDW Celebration event

12 **The 21st Century Began in 1994**  
an examination of EPCOT 1994

20 **EPCOT A Timeline to Innovation**  
a look at the history of EPCOT

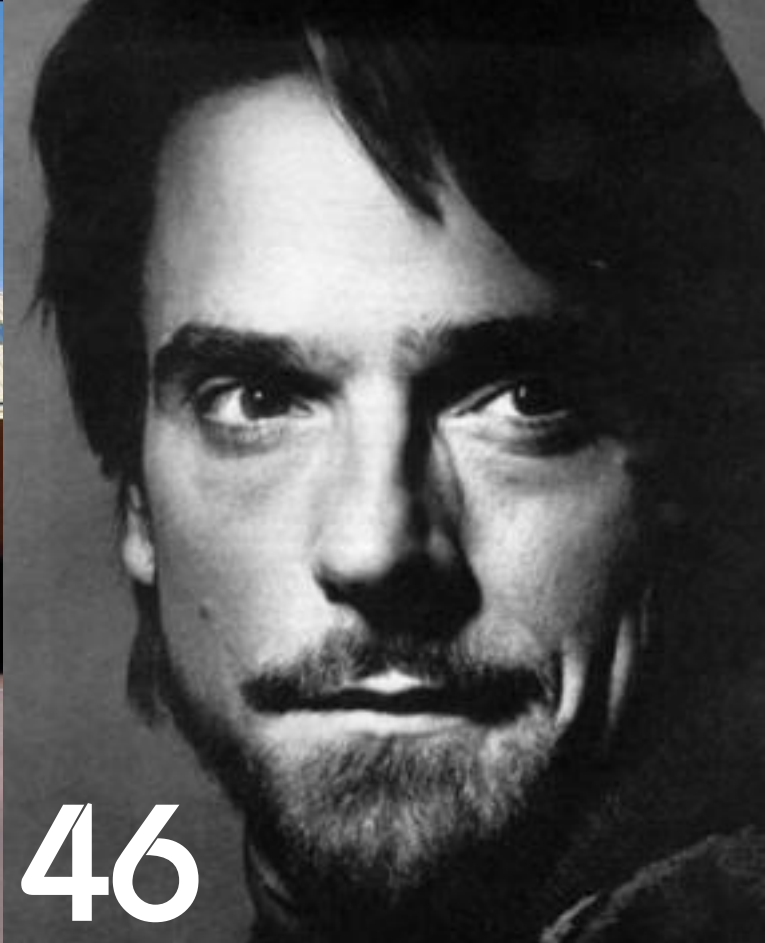
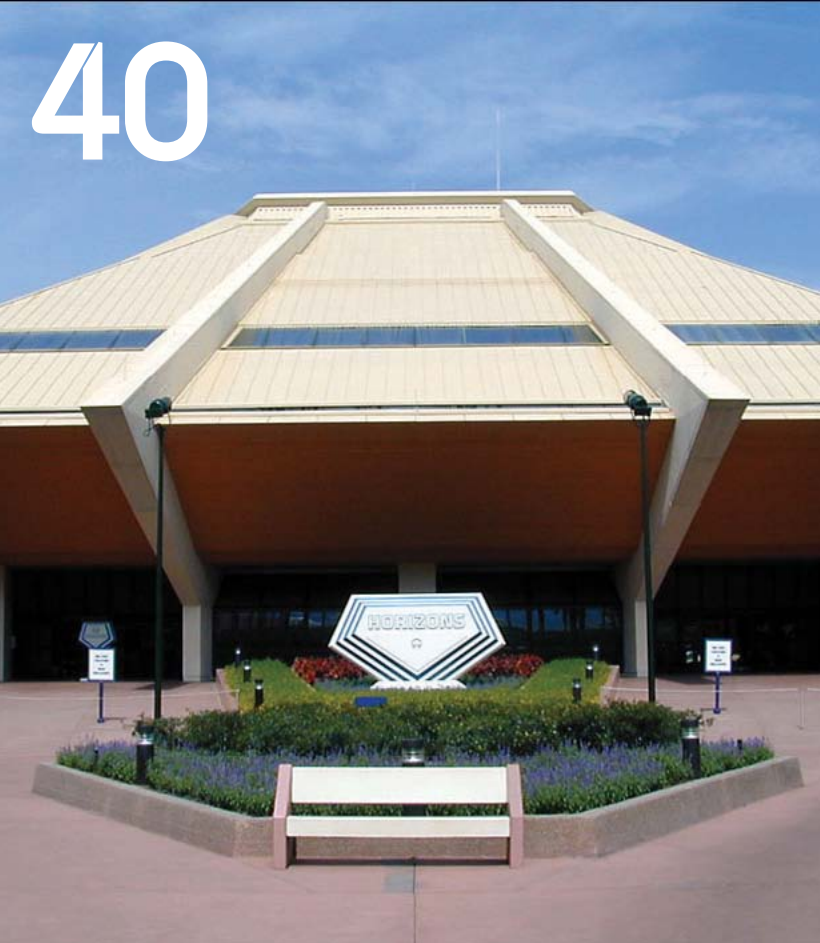
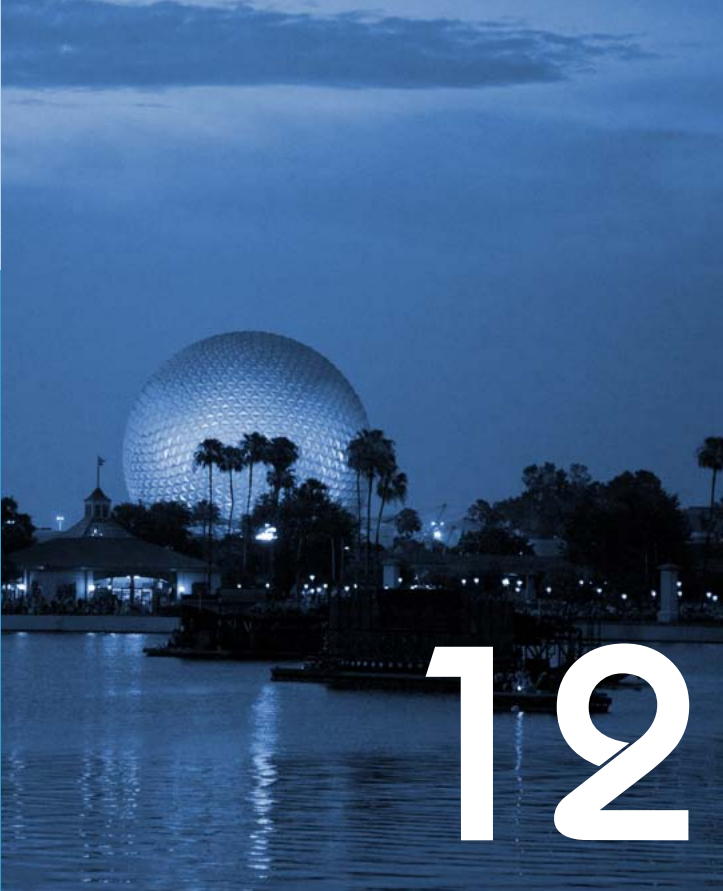
26 **From Dreamer to Dreamfiner**  
a book review

32 **Missing EPCOT**  
What is it like to not have experienced classic EPCOT

34 **EPCOT Post Shows**  
a look at classic EPCOT post shows

40 **In Defense of Horizons**  
why Horizons does not deserve a bad rap

46 **The Voices of EPCOT**  
the iconic voices of EPCOT



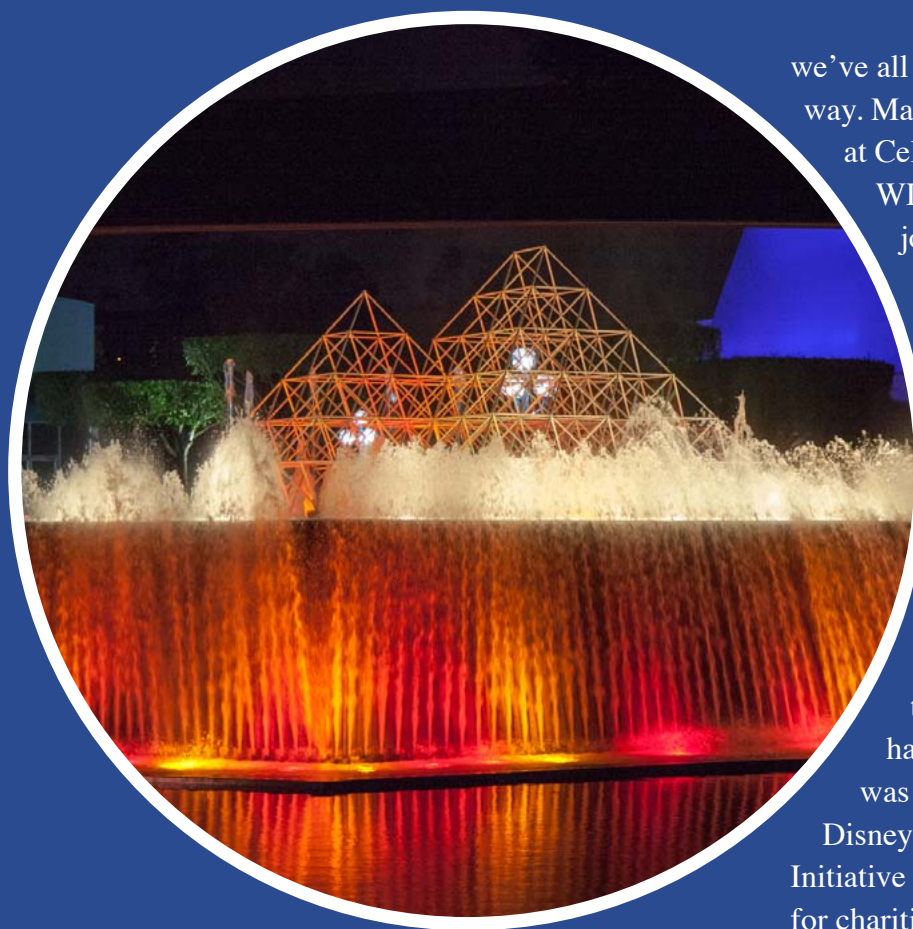
# CELEBRATION



## WDWCELEBRATIONS COMMEMORATIVE EVENT

Commemorating milestones of the  
past, present and future together!

by Adam Roth



## Celebration 30 – A Meaningful Journey

It is hard to believe that it has been over five years since the seeds of the organization that became WDWCelebrations were sown... February of 2007 was the rough start time of our swift momentum on the grassroots fan event Celebration 25 that hosted 1200 guests in commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Epcot at the Walt Disney World Resort. The success of that event spurred Jason and I to regroup merely three days later to develop WDWCelebrations, a fan organization bent on creating “unity in the community” by offering events at the Walt Disney World Resort for like-minded Disney fans.

Five years and eight events later, I am able to reflect fondly on the journey we set out on that February, not realizing how life-changing it would be for all of those involved along the way. With eight Core Team members working for our guests,

we’ve all had significant experiences along the way. Marcus D’Amelio met his future wife Marcia at Celebration 25. Tom Corless founded the WDWNT Network around the same time he joined the team. I discovered my passion for the theme park and hospitality industry as a result of my work on our events... But it isn’t just the stories from our team that speak to the meaning and power of the events we’ve hosted. Our attendees have met new friends along the way, many of which now spend time and even travel together outside of our events. Teams from our Scavenger Hunts, Future World Quests have kept in touch from around the globe. We’ve even had attendees tell us that their visit with us was the best time they’ve ever had at the Walt Disney World Resort. And as a part of our Charity Initiative we’ve raised several thousand dollars for charities of choice including the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Give Kids the World, the Children’s Hospital of Anaheim and Toys for Tots. It is truly humbling to know the impact our work has had over the years and we look forward to continuing to serve them proudly in our future events.

## Celebration 30 – The Event

In development for nearly five years, Celebration 30 was placed on our calendar as soon as WDWCelebrations was formally launched, with the intention for all events in between to lead up to our fifth anniversary celebration. From our second

event, A Wild Decade to our most recent Project XL: The World at 40, we lifted the most popular fan favorites from our previous events to celebrate our journey with our guests at Celebration 30. Returning activities included our Scavenger Hunt, many group rides and our first Illuminations Dessert Party since the one held at Celebration 25.

Our first day saw the launch of a new activity, known humorously as the EPCOT Big Interactive New Game, Oooh! (BINGO for short). Teams of Disney fans were charged with completing a complicated game of Epcot Bingo by locating WDWCelebrations Core Team Members in the hopes of gaining Bingo chips for their board by answering trivia questions, identifying locations via minimally descript photos and by performing tasks throughout the park. The game concluded with a presentation of unique prizes as well as a group photo at the Odyssey pavilion.

That evening guests had the option to join us for the Mickey’s Not-So-Scary Halloween Party, dressed in spirit of Halloween for our first ever costume contest. Costumes included a living representation of O, Canada! (the Martin Short-starring Circlevision film from Epcot), the Radok Blocks (from the former version of the Universe of Energy Pavilion), the Dapper Dans, pirates, residents of the Haunted Mansion and more! Guests were able to experience the staple Halloween offerings including Mickey’s “Boo to You” Halloween Parade and the Happy HalloWishes fireworks spectacular along with candy trails and group rides on some of the

park’s classic attractions.

The following morning launched our second day with additional group rides in the Magic Kingdom ranging from Big Thunder Mountain Railroad to a group showing of Philharmagic. Some guests even had the chance to experience a soft preview of Enchanted Tales with Belle, the new meet and greet attraction set to debut with New Fantasyland this year. After a span of free time, guests regrouped for a view of the Main Street Electrical Parade, receiving a personalized shout out from Alice, also convincing Elliott the Dragon to disappear upon group command!

Sunday offered a day of optional activities to allow guests to enjoy the Epcot International Food & Wine Festival, the D23 Epcot 30th Anniversary Celebration and more. Available during the daytime was a new puzzle game called “Now That’s Edutainment!” developed by WDWNT’s own Taylor Martina (of Taylor and the Whatnot fame). That evening participants joined together for Oktoberfirst, our first ever group meal at Biergarten. Our traditional Last Ride of Night Meet was held at Soarin’, as it had been on the Sunday evening before





Celebration 25 five years earlier.



cast appearing on the second floor of the atrium to strengthen the already beautiful notes delivered. Group rides on Journey into Imagination with Figment and Spaceship Earth capped off the evening's standard activities.



While waiting for the start of our Illuminations Dessert Party, Gene Columbus shared his experiences from the opening of EPCOT Center including teaching plumbers to manually set off the Fountain of Nations fountains during the opening ceremony as the computer control system was not yet installed.

Once inside of the Odyssey for the Dessert Party, guests enjoyed sweet treats and confections in the company of our VIP guests. Ron Schneider, one of the original walk around characters and voice of the Dreamfinder was present to entertain guests with his wealth of stories. John Henselmeier and Qunyh Kimball were also on hand to speak with the merchandise fans as well as to sign any Epcot 30 merchandise guests had purchased that day, as they had designed it all!

Moving over to the Italy Isola, guests were able to experience the incredible Illuminations Reflections of Earth once again, but this time with the addition

of an anniversary “tag” that rivaled the one seen five years previous. Set to the tunes of Epcot’s past, the sheer amount of fireworks used in the five minute addition stunned those in attendance. The finale stole the audience’s breath away as the physical force of the massive explosion of pyro shook the air. It is truly hard to describe what was experienced during the tag, but it can be said that the moment was unforgettable—possibly even more so than the one held five years ago.

Celebration 30 meant a great deal to us at WDWCelebrations and we were honored to share our experience with our 300 guests in attendance. We raised our highest donation ever in one event for Give Kids the World, donating \$1000 to this amazing charity. We hosted many familiar faces but many new ones as well. Needless to say, Celebration 30 has brought things full circle for WDWCelebrations, but the journey doesn’t end here. We look forward to continuing to host memorable events like these well into the future, starting with our upcoming Flora, Fauna & Fantasy Signature Commemorative Event taking place from April 20th-22nd, 2013, followed by Studio 25 on May 1st-4th, 2014. And who knows what we’ll have ready for our guests in five years? If our last eight events are any indication, we’ve got plenty more to show... So here we go again!

*Born and raised in Orlando, Adam has had his fingers dipped in the tourism industry since birth. In his early teens he transitioned from a fear of thrill rides to the status of a theme park enthusiast, seeking out newer, larger thrills to impress him. Following the hugely successful Celebration 25, Adam and co-founder Jason Diffendal worked to develop an organization bent on "Unity in the Community," known as WDWCelebrations LLC.*





# The 1980's EPCOT Center might be remembered fondly, but Epcot truly succeeded in the mid-1990's

## The 21st Century Began In 1994...

by Tom Corless

While many people pine for the EPCOT Center of the 1980's, it is undoubtedly a fact that more people saw and enjoyed the Epcot of 1994-1997. In fact, Epcot's highest attendance year on record is 1997. This is an Epcot that existed without the original Spaceship Earth or Universe of Energy. This is an Epcot with both Horizons and World of Motion shuttered. This is even an Epcot where Honey, I Shrunk the Audience still existed.

This 1994-1997 period saw the Disney Imagineers making a strong connection with guests through the addition of new attractions at the park. Offering a vision of what Epcot should be, and putting a spin on new offerings that gave guests a more realistic look at a not-too-distant future, made it easier for the audience to grasp the theme of the pavilions.

Many long-time guests credit the Spaceship Earth refurbishment of 1994 for giving us the best version of the attraction to date. The new version of the attraction was educational, but had the tone of an epic adventure with a

beautiful score and magnificent narration from Jeremy Irons. The great script from 1986 remained intact too (just as important to the attraction as picking the right narrator). This was also the only version of the attraction to have physical scenes in the finale portions, rather than large screens or the now infamous triangles.

The Land was the first of the pavilions to receive a top-to-bottom makeover, starting in 1994. Kraft had dropped its sponsorship of the pavilion in 1993 and now Nestle was coming in as the sponsor and was happy to invest some capital in changing the attractions in the pavilion.

"Listen to the Land" would become "Living with the Land," dropping the "Symphony of the Seed" sequence and theme song for a more serious treatment of the topic. The playful mood became more about teaching guests and learning than about "edutainment." Again, there seemed to be a real effort to remove the beat-you-over-the-head optimism and replace it with a feeling that

great things were being done now and we didn't have to wait until tomorrow to accomplish anything. Living with the Land showed all of us what we could do now with agriculture, including farming in space. Things that were a dream in 1982 were a reality by then and Epcot attractions tried to showcase that. Sure, Living with the Land might be slightly more boring than the preceding version, but at least they didn't try to pass off 1980's folk music to a fickle 1990's crowd!

Speaking of reaching 1990's audiences, Food Rocks would replace Kitchen Kabaret in 1994. To better connect with guests through comedy, parody versions of well-known songs from different genres and decades were utilized to teach the same basic lessons as the previous show. An update was necessary as the widely-known food pyramid had just been introduced in 1992 and there were new common conceptions about healthy eating that needed to be addressed. Call me "corny," but the pun performers in Food Rocks such as Pita Gabriel and

Chubby Cheddar always made me laugh. I love Kitchen Kabaret, but Food Rocks was more than a suitable substitution for the original show in my opinion.

The incredibly boring Symbiosis film would be replaced in 1995 with “Circle of Life: An Environmental Fable.” Footage was recycled from Symbiosis into the new film, but by adding animated sequences and a character-driven narrative to the film (inspired by The Lion King), Imagineers were able to touch guests with an entertaining look at how they affect their world. The 1990’s were a decade in which conservation became a hot-button topic, and Circle of Life was there to keep Epcot’s finger on the pulse, so much so that the film holds up quite well and covers environmental issues still facing us 17 years later. In a park where attractions quickly become irrelevant, 17 years is a very long time to still present a timely message to guests.

In 1994, Communicore became Innoventions. The new exhibit space focused on what might affect the everyday lives of guests at home or at work, expecting that this approach might resonate better with guests. Familiar brands such as Apple, AT&T, and SEGA had exhibit space inside, in many cases showcasing what they had in the market right now. In fact, my own family bought an Apple computer, had AT&T as a phone service provider, and owned SEGA video game consoles in the mid-1990’s. Sure, we had AT&T before the exhibit opened, but we had neither an Apple nor a SEGA system.

After all, Apple computers weren’t exactly the coolest home computer you could own at the time – this was well before the days of the iPod or the iMac, back when it was a challenge just to find computer software that actually worked on Mac. And we did not have a SEGA system at all. The exhibit did such a great job selling us on these products that we bought them. In fact, I specifically recall going to buy a SEGA Saturn system just days after getting home from a Walt Disney World trip in 1995. The Apple would soon follow.

The exhibits showed us products we could own now that could change our daily lives, and the products we tried out and liked more often than not ended up in our homes. Innoventions was a brilliant idea. While it seemed out-of-place at Disneyland, it was so well done at Epcot that Disney couldn’t wait to try it again.

In 1996, the Universe of Energy went under the knife. Prior to the closure, the attraction, sponsored by Exxon, was liked for its music, animatronic dinosaurs, and stunning pre-show featuring the spinning Radok blocks. Of these features, only the dinosaurs would survive the rehab. If you would have told me this prior to the closure, I would have thought that Disney was about to destroy a fairly good attraction. I would have been wrong.

Imagineers developed a comedic narrative that does a very good job of teaching visitors about the origin of energy and where we might obtain energy in the future.

I would dare say that Ellen’s Energy Adventure does a better job of teaching the average park visitor and offers more “edutainment” than the original attraction. The old Universe of Energy had long and fairly boring screen-based portions that were broken up by an exciting scene where guests roll through a prehistoric world filled with giant dinosaurs. The current attraction gives you a fairly comedic film along with the scene you probably fell in love with the first time you ever visited the park. That’s an improvement. Now, don’t get me wrong, I miss the original attraction music very much, but you can’t deny that the Ellen’s Energy Adventure orchestral score is pretty amazing, perhaps only topped by the score you’ll hear nightly at Illuminations: Reflections of Earth. I love the original Universe of Energy, but I can’t deny that it has been better since 1996.

In addition to all of these new and updated attractions, many great older attractions remained. Journey Into Imagination, The Living Seas, and The Wonders of Life were all still operating through all of these years and still felt relevant. I don’t think I ever thought any of these attractions were dated at the time, and I wouldn’t feel that way about The Living Seas or Wonders of Life until much later.

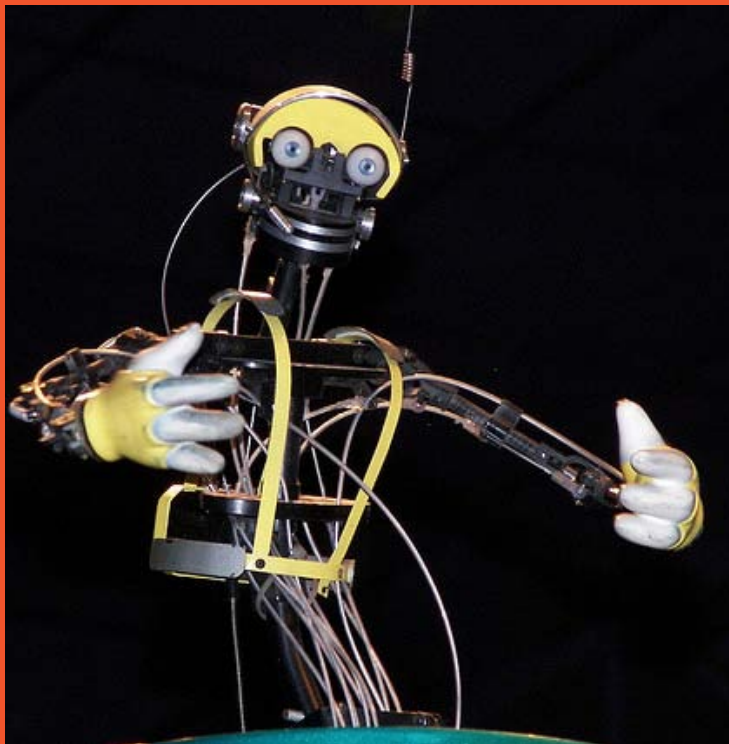
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It can be argued, but the Epcot of 1994 through 1997 was seen and experienced by more guests than any other version of the park. The more memorable and beloved of the older attractions still existed, improved versions of some of the older attractions had just been unveiled, and new exhibits and attractions were more popular amongst guests than their predecessors.

So, with all these great improvements, why did attendance slip after 1997? Attendance at Epcot stopped rising in 1998 because of the opening of Disney’s Animal Kingdom theme park. Instead of dramatically increasing the overall attendance at Walt Disney World, Animal Kingdom pulled guests away from the existing three parks initially. Even though Epcot played host to the huge Millennium celebration in 1999-2000, the new Journey Into Your Imagination attraction left a dark cloud over the festivities as it was amongst the worst-received attractions of all time. The huge decline in tourism following 9/11 then forced Epcot attendance to plummet in 2001. Returning Figment to the park in 2002 and opening Mission:Space





in 2003 only marginally helped bring guests back. Crowd levels did rise again during the “Happiest Celebration on Earth,” aided by the opening of Soarin’ in The Land. However, the brand new Mission:Space attraction had just faced horrible publicity with the unexpected deaths of a few guests and many of the Epcot attractions updated in the 1990’s were starting to feel dated.

While Epcot has yet to find another golden age, those of us who experienced the earlier generations of the park remain optimistic that a new vision will guide Imagineers and sponsors to create attractions that speak to the next generation. The 21st century may have begun on October 1, 1982, but there is a 22nd to look forward to!

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Tom has been regularly visiting the Walt Disney World® Resort from the time he was 4 months old. While he counts over 100 visits in the last 22 years, he did not become a truly active member in the Disney fan community until the summer of 2007, when he decided to launch the WDW News Today website and podcast. Tom has since founded the entire WDWNT Network and become a published author on the subject.



# EPCOT:

## A Timeline to Innovation

By Eric Lancy

“To all who come to this place of joy, hope and friendship - welcome. EPCOT is inspired by Walt Disney’s creative vision. Here, human achievements are celebrated through imagination, wonders of enterprise and concepts of a future that promises new and exciting benefits for all. May EPCOT Center entertain, inform and inspire and above all, may it instill a new sense of belief and pride in man’s ability to shape a world that offers hope to people everywhere in the world.”

— E. Cardon Walker



Although it was the final theme park personally touched by Walt Disney's vision and creativity, EPCOT, or EPCOT Center as it was known opening day October 1, 1982, is far from the master's original intention. However, Walt Disney may have wanted his dreams and projects to always evolve, never to become complacent. In fact, Walt Disney stated, "EPCOT will take its cue from the new ideas and new technologies that are emerging from the forefront of American industry. It will be a community of tomorrow that will never be completed. It will always be showcasing and testing and demonstrating new materials and new systems." Walt Disney explained to the world in his last television special that EPCOT was an acronym for Experimental Prototype Community Of Tomorrow.

Walt Disney not only envisioned his theme parks to be a new experience each time a guest entered the gate, but his dream for EPCOT was to be the "Florida Project" with

well organized, self sufficient model community. While Walt Disney secretly purchased real estate in Central Florida, he did not intend to build a Magic Kingdom; rather, he wanted to create a community that could be the prototype for cities entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Walt Disney wanted his model community to be home to twenty thousand residents; he hoped this would be a test bed for city planning and organization. Walt Disney would not be able to accomplish this in his lifetime as he could not secure the funding or permission to proceed with the Florida Project until he agreed to build the Magic Kingdom first. Walt Disney died five years before any portion of his Florida Project opened. Even though Walt Disney had a heavy hand in the concept and development of EPCOT, most of his ideas for the planned city were abandoned. Guests today can see the original architectural model of Walt Disney's concept on the Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover at the Magic Kingdom.

# 1960's



# 1960's

Walt Disney's success was not only growing in the entertainment industry but also within his family. Walt's children were having children, and he became increasingly concerned about the world his grandchildren would grow up in. Walt's belief was that modern cities were becoming unattractive due to the lack of maintenance, crime, and overall disorganization. Walt felt that he learned so much about building construction and development during the Disneyland project that his Imagineers could plan communities and cities. Walt Disney was consumed with city and urban planning so he began to read books like Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities of Tomorrow. Even though Disney had the knowledge and resources to embark on such a bold ambition, he lacked real estate in Southern California.

At the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair, Walt took a big gamble. If his four exhibits were well received on the East Coast, then America might be ready for an "East Coast Disneyland;" this would allow him to work on his EPCOT project. Walt Disney continued to push forward with the idea up to the time of his death. Legend has that even on his deathbed, Disney used the ceiling tiles in his hospital room to map out his EPCOT ideas.

# 1970's

The vision Walt Disney had for EPCOT was substantially different from what the park looked like on its opening day in 1982. However, there was not a simple or single decision made to change Disney's envisioned prototype city to the park that opened. There was a tortuous and tumultuous decade in between Walt's death and the park's opening that saw many different visions and versions of what would become EPCOT Center. Each vision of what the theme park would be had, at its core, pieces of Disney's original ambition. Of the original principles, Disney wanted Walt Disney World to provide a living laboratory for a number of innovative technologies and systems. Another of the original principles was to center on an international community and to bring various cultures together in harmony. Plans for a "World Showcase" were some of the first construction elements announced for the theme park. Another early element was to create a futuristic community that would allow guests to encounter new

technologies and ideas that might shape their lives. What was paramount to this development would be the involvement of large American corporations. Disney President E. Cardon Walker believed that American free enterprise addressed the problems facing communities and their development; the Walt Disney Company shared this belief when it developed the self-governed Reedy Creek Improvement District in Florida.

EPCOT was not intended to be a single gate or concept; it was to encompass several "centers" or "satellites" where public and private researchers could interact and meet to address the ills of society under the watchful eye of daily visitors. Ultimately, the "centers" or "satellites" concept was abandoned and replaced with a single concept—EPCOT Center. Apparently, sometime in 1976, Marty Sklar and John Hench thought it best to combine the Future World and World Showcase models into a single gate. It was not until 1977 that the vision for a single gate started to take shape.

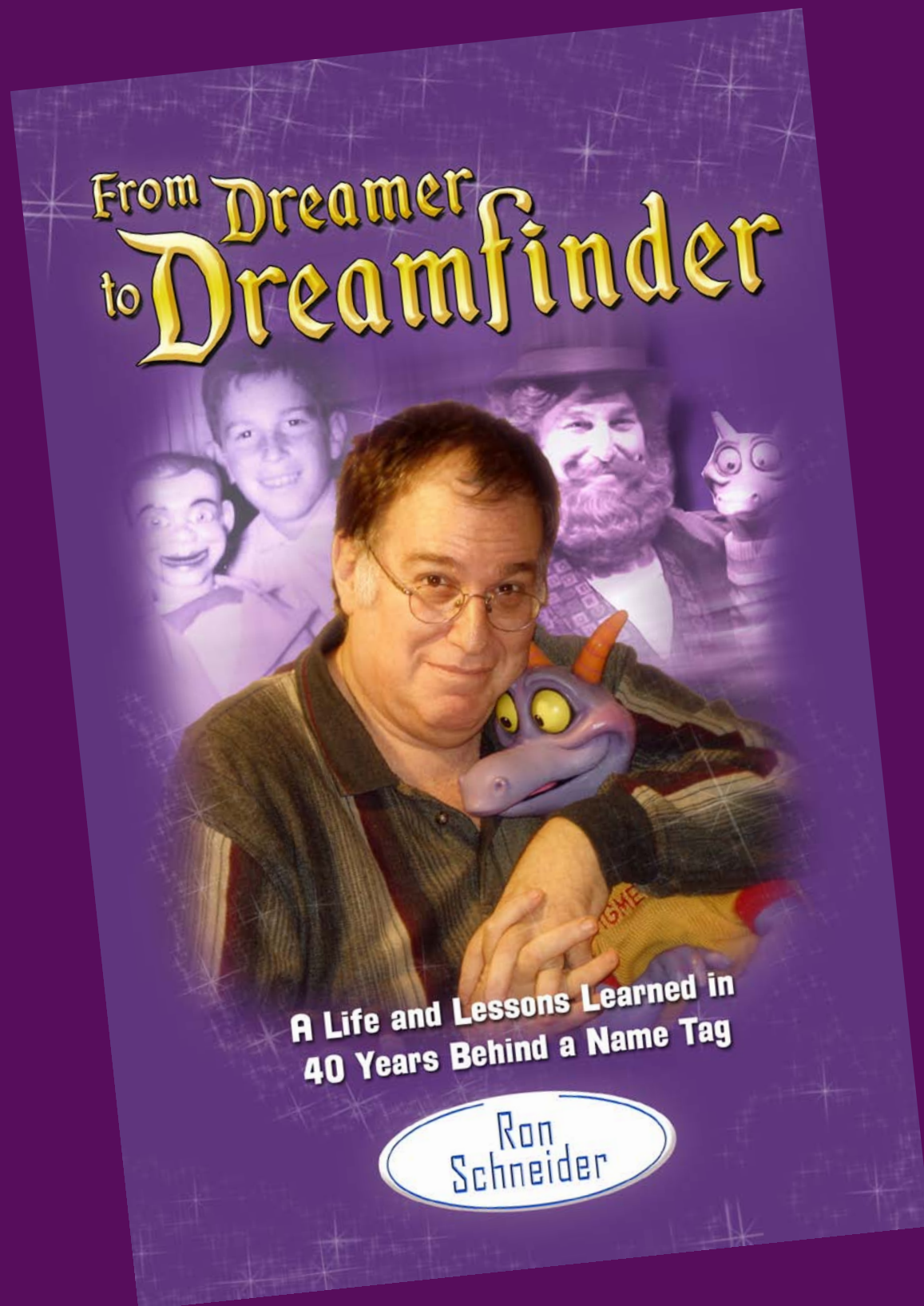
# The 21st century begins October 1, 1982

# 1980's

By 1980, the vision for EPCOT Center began to look like the park that would open two years later. Horizons arrived, but it was still known as "Future Probe." Communicore and Spaceship Earth lost their "golden" glow. In 1980, the most visible difference to Future World was the giant dome over The Living Seas. The pavilion was still in a conceptual stage, but it had been downsized because of lack of sponsorship. It looked considerably different when it opened in 1986. Not much seemed to change for World Showcase. It appeared to be almost entirely in its final form by 1980. The noticeable difference from earlier concept discussions was Equatorial Africa had been removed; it had been planned for the space between China and Germany.

Epcot went through many changes from Walt Disney's vision, to EPCOT Center that opened in 1982, to Epcot that we know today-30 years later. Walt's original vision seemed to be somewhat realized in the community of Celebration, Florida. Yet, Celebration is still quite different from Walt's vision as the community is based on concepts of "new urbanism" which is different from Disney's "modernist" and "futurist" visions. The theme park itself is radically different from the original concept. From budget and capital issues, to lack of sponsorship, Imagineers were forced to re-work their ideas. But, the ingenuity that the Walt Disney Company has become known for shined like never before when the gates opened on October 1, 1982.

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## A REVIEW

By Daniel Butcher

**W**ith the approach of Epcot's 30th anniversary, it is natural to reminisce with fondness for our favorite Disney memories. For many in the Disney fan community, an all-time favorite attraction is the original version of Journey into Imagination, which featured Figment and Dreamfinder. While the ride was not ready for guests on opening day, guests were still excited to be treated to the presence of the walk-around character, Dreamfinder, portrayed by Ron Schneider. While other actors also portrayed Dreamfinder in the park in later years, Schneider was the performer who helped build the character and image of Dreamfinder for Epcot, as most fans remember him today, and Schneider is considered the original Dreamfinder.

For years, fans and friends have encouraged Schneider to tell his story of performing at Epcot. This desire only grew as they heard of his variety of experiences beyond Disney parks. Schneider has now answered this request with his memoir, *From Dreamer to Dreamfinder: A Life and Lessons Learned in 40 Years Behind a Name Tag*. Schneider's book is part autobiography and part manual for performing within themed entertainment.

Though Schneider is best known as the original walk-around Dreamfinder at Epcot's opening in 1982, *From Dreamer to Dreamfinder* shows that this role was just one step in Schneider's vast career. The book outlines a long and diverse career in themed entertainment, including theme parks, dinner shows, and historical

reenactments.

Schneider opens the book with his childhood and his growing love of Disney. He was among those who attended the first operational day of the Disneyland Park. Ultimately, Schneider becomes what can only be called a Disney fan, collecting park memorabilia while simultaneously showing an interest in theater. In 1971, Schneider begins his first job as an in-park performer. He portrays a mountain man at Magic Mountain whose performance partner is a lion named "Major!" Schneider moves through various roles and educational experiences, improving his acting and writing skills, until in 1980 when he began to understudy legendary Disney performer Wally Boag at The Golden Horseshoe at Disneyland.

While appearing as the Comedian at The Golden Horseshoe, Schneider hears of a character being created by Imagineer Tony Baxter as part of plans for the second park at the Walt Disney World Resort, Epcot. Schneider auditions and lands the new role of the original Dreamfinder who is assigned to meet guests in the park. After several years portraying this iconic character, Schneider moves into other non-Disney roles, including freelance writing, supervising the celebrity look-alikes at Universal Studios Florida, and giving tours at Titanic: The Exhibition. Later, he makes a return to Disney as part of the opening day cast of Monsters, Inc. Laugh Floor. Schneider closes the book with five appendixes sharing his years of experience on themed entertainment.

Fans of the original Dreamfinder and his place within Epcot will not be disappointed. Schneider details the logistics of the role, including costuming, transportation, and the difficulties of finding a break room. Schneider adds his thoughts on the motivation behind Dreamfinder's character. He saw and performed Dreamfinder as someone highly curious about the world around him, a motivation Schneider found in an interaction with one small boy, a boy that Dreamfinder would find fascinating. Honestly, it is the stories of guest interaction that captured my mind and likely will do the same with most readers. While Schneider's stories of working with celebrities may be interesting, the tales of the common guest will grab the reader's attention most. These are the stories that most of us can relate with the most – who doesn't hope to have their own magical and unexpected interactions with Disney performers?

However, this book is about much more than a Disney character and the performer



who brought him to life. Schneider makes it clear that he was a Disney fan before he even became a performer, starting as a kid. And his fandom continues into the present Internet age with his participation in the Disney fan community. His experiences as a fan are relatable for many that never met Dreamfinder.

Additionally, I expected that, of this book, at least a third would be dedicated to Dreamfinder at Epcot. Instead, this is far from the focus of the book and the diversity of Schneider's career stands out in the narrative. I felt he discussed his tenure supervising look-alikes at Universal in a more in-depth fashion than his days as Dreamfinder. This makes sense when you consider he spent twice as much time in that role. I did not realize that this book would start in Disneyland and that he had experiences at Walt's original park. At one point, I found myself searching the Internet for stories and pictures of Major the Lion.

The diversity of Schneider's experiences helps highlight the range of themed entertainment experiences available to skilled actors who take up this challenge. I had not expected to read chapters – and very interesting chapters at that – on dinner shows. If I could ask for more content on any one of these roles, it would

have been his tenure with Monsters, Inc. Laugh Floor. But his lack of in-depth discussion on how the magic is made, which he alludes to but does not spell out for his reader, is likely due to the respect he is giving an active show.

Ultimately, most of the preconceptions I had coming into my reading of this book were proven wrong. I assumed Schneider would paint a very rosy picture of his days at Disney and other themed entertainment experiences. Instead, the book is realistic and forthright about what occurred. Typically, he is able to identify by name those he worked with in both positive and negative experiences. For example, he discusses Crazy Joe of the restaurant Fiascos in depth, including both compliments and criticisms of Crazy Joe's operation. There is one figure that he speaks of in code from his days at Universal, a personality that Schneider clearly did not see eye-to-eye with. And he is not above criticizing shows offered by his former employers. These flawed performances include Super-Santa-Tastic Extravaganza and the unfilled promises in the show title. Also not immune from his candor is Epcot's confusing Styleidoscope, of which Dreamfinder was a central character, though Schneider did not perform in this



show. Schneider is frank about situations in which he felt his contribution was ignored, overlooked, or credited to others. He even discusses the burnout of being a Disney cast member and character.

Overall, he is very honest as he invites the reader into his life. From Dreamer to Dreamfinder is part memoir and part textbook as Schneider shares his knowledge from performing, writing and producing so many different types of themed entertainment.

All of the guidance found in the appendixes has been learned through many, many performances. He shares his keys to great themed entertainment experiences, such as "Deliver what you promise." And he offers practical advice on working with look-alike performers, which shockingly does not include a need for exact face and body matches!

As you can probably guess, I really enjoyed this well-written memoir. Despite never meeting Dreamfinder in the park and only having trivial information about the character, I was shocked how much I connected with Ron

Schneider's From Dreamer to Dreamfinder. I thought I would find a nicely written memoir that looked fondly on professional experiences and almost exclusively within Epcot. What I found instead was refreshing and helped bring alive a period of Epcot history I never experienced personally, along with transporting me to parks I have never entered. Ron Schneider is engaging and honest as he shares his experiences from both on and off the stage. Despite the fact that, for me, the nostalgic factor was non-existent, even I still could feel the excitement on the back of my neck as I read of his return as Dreamfinder at the 2011 D23 Destination D event celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Walt Disney World Resort. Dreamfinder's, I mean Schneider's, writing made it clear that something special and emotional was going to happen even to the non super-fan. From Dreamer to Dreamfinder is a highly engaging book that provides depth to the performance aspects of theme parks, and is an essential part of any Disney fan's library.



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# MISSING OLD EPCOT

by nathan bradley

Hello Humans! Probably thought the title indicated this article would be a trip down memory lane of “Old Epcot,” didn’t you? Oh how I wish it were possible! Alas, I was born in 1997, allowing my memory to only stretch as far back as 2003. Despite biannual trips to Walt Disney World, my parents didn’t bring me to Epcot until I was 11 years old because of a misconception that the park was too educational for my enjoyment (an idea likely formed when they were kids at the original Epcot Center in the early 80s). As we approach the 30th anniversary of the park, it has dawned on me that almost all of the greatness that was classic Epcot has only been relayed to me. I associate myself so closely with this community that has sanctified the memory of the classic attractions, and yet I never did and never will experience that euphoria myself. It is a sad realization that I have only gotten to experience an inferior Epcot: 2008 until the present.

Picture 12 year old me, back in 2009, just starting to get my feet wet in the WDW community. All I knew was that I loved visiting Disney World (especially Epcot) and that there was a multitude of like-minded people on the Internet. I was reading a discussion thread on WDWMagic pitting Mission: Space against Horizons. The posts were of course heavily in favor of the latter, but I just couldn’t figure out why. “What was so great about Horizons? It doesn’t really seem like that special of an attraction,” I innocently wrote. The utter onslaught of vicious replies was astounding. I was completely blindsided by the fact there was an Epcot before my Epcot, one that was far more groundbreaking and beloved. Since then, of course, I’ve developed an immense appreciation for Horizons; not only because of its popularity, but also in its message and content. Although I may never have been on the ride, or even seen the show building, the vastness of Internet resources has aided me greatly. This goes for not just Horizons, but also the entire Wonders of Life Pavilion, World of Motion, and Journey into Imagination. Note that I’ve only experienced Journey into Imagination with Figment in person; sadly, I have never seen the famed Dreamfinder anywhere besides Youtube. To be brutally honest, I’m not fond of the current attraction and I’m not fond of Figment. Despite what merchandise sales say, the current version of Figment is only appreciated by those that knew him in his prior setting (send your hate-mail to...). I find the current installment to

be tragically lacking entertainment value, emotional moments, and a quality story. Do I likely think this is because I never experienced the original version? Absolutely!

The most depressing part about not seeing Old Epcot is never getting to ride the Walter Cronkite or Jeremy Irons versions of Spaceship Earth. The first episode of the WDWNT Podcast I ever listened to was Episode 130: The top 10 attractions in Walt Disney World. I was utterly confused by the talk of old Spaceship Earth versus the new one. I was unaware that any past, potentially superior version ever existed, let alone one that the “illustrious panel” would’ve had in their top 3 attractions. Tragically, my highly anticipated first ride inside the park’s icon had fallen far short of expectations. No matter what I did, whether listening to others talk about old versions or watching ride-through video, I will never be able to erase the sour first impression I got about this attraction in its current form. Even at age 11, I recognized that the narration in the first half of the ride was flawed and un-engaging, and the last half was, well, triangles and screens. Spaceship Earth was and still is in the bottom half of my favorite Walt Disney World attractions. I feel almost robbed of the brilliancy that pre-Dench Spaceship Earth is claimed to have been.

I genuinely hope that those of you who were lucky enough to experience Old Epcot can sympathize with my predicament. I am constantly

bombarded with reminders of a better time: an Epcot Center that housed the greatest attractions that we’ve ever known, and yet I have seen none of them. It is tragic for me as a passionate WDW enthusiast and WDWNT Podcast listener to have absolutely no connection with attractions that evoke such deep emotion in the panel. I can only hope that one day the attractions of this era will be viewed upon with equal nostalgia and love. Maybe at the Epcot 60th anniversary I will speak of Soarin’, Mission: Space, and the old Test Track with the same ardor as my fellow writers in this publication have throughout this issue. Although I feel out of touch now, I know that the day will come when it will be my turn to tell stories about the old days (and claim it was a travesty for changing it, of course). For now, I’m content with making due with what exists: our beloved 30-year culmination and celebration of technological advancement and international culture. I may have missed Old Epcot, but I won’t miss a moment of this Epcot.

Like a grand and miraculous spaceship, Epcot has sailed through the universe of time...and for a brief moment, I have been among its many passengers...

*Nathan Bradley is a high school student from the Philadelphia suburbs. He enjoys physics, mechanics, storytelling, and WDW (biannual trips and an avid disney geek). He plans on becoming an Imagineer when he's older.*

I may have missed Old Epcot, but I  
won't miss a moment of this Epcot

# EPCOT POST SHOWS

by Ron D'Anna

There were many things that made EPCOT Center stand apart from the Magic Kingdom when it opened in 1982. One aspect that has always stood out to me was the layout of the Future World pavilions. Not the geography of the land per se; Future World itself can be seen as a hub and spoke system leading off the Fountain of Nations. But the concept of pavilions as almost sub-lands onto themselves.

The Magic Kingdom has had attractions share buildings since the very beginning (If You Had Wings and the Circle Vision 360 theater), and those multiple attractions could even span multiple lands (The Enchanted Tiki Room and The Country Bear Jamboree). But those attractions weren't tied thematically as one concept. The individual pavilions of Future World were, for the most part, designed to link the multiple related attractions together to showcase more of the pavilion's theme than one ride could on its own.

At first glance, of the original pavilions (Spaceship Earth, Journey Into Imagination, The Land, Universe of Energy, Horizons, and World of Motion), only Imagination and The Land had multiple attractions housed inside the building. Upon closer inspection you find another independent element that is still largely unique

to Epcot - the post-show. Communicore itself was little more than a series of exhibits. The only Future World pavilion that never contained more than a single ride was Horizons.

The attraction post show at Walt Disney World can be linked back to Space Mountain's opening in 1975. The Imagineers put in what seems like the world's longest queue tunnel to get you from the entrance building, under the railroad tracks, and into the mountain itself. The anticipation and theming help to mask this long walk, but they needed something to keep guests entertained on the exit ramp. The RCA Home of Future Living along the sides of this path helped to entertain guests along the speed ramp. And thus the post show was born.

When EPCOT Center opened, it was fairly sparse as far as traditional attractions goes. The park had five rides, two large-scale animatronic shows, and five movies. While all these experiences were on a much greater scale than the traditional three-minute dark ride, what really seemed to fill in the time were the smaller exhibits. After many of the rides, you could linger in fairly extensive post-shows for hours of your day. While none exist today as they did in 1982, many of these post-shows are still around in some form.

## WORLD OF MOTION THE TRANSCENTER

The majority of the World of Motion ride took place on the upper floor of the great 320-foot diameter circular pavilion, leaving space for a vast 33,000 square foot post-show area originally known as The Transcenter. The Transcenter had its work cut out for it if it wanted to be a memorable post show. The grand final of the ride, spiraling around the massive model of the future city, Center Core, and passing yourself in a future car (provided via a Pepper's Ghost effect) left an impression on riders. Fortunately, The Transcenter was up to the task.

Transcenter was actually made up of six separate exhibit areas: Aerotest, The Bird and Robot Show, the Water Engine Test Theater, Concept 2000, the Dreamers Workshop and Concept to Reality. Many of these presentations are still available on YouTube.

The Aerotest exhibit was a simply a presentation on aerodynamics of vehicle design. The simple animation was reminiscent of that on the science segments on the Disneyland television series. The animation shows how resistance and drag work in a simple manner and with a variety of vehicles, including a Dumbo car.

Bird and the Robot is probably the most well known of the post show elements. It was a simple animatronic show featuring a bird (known as Bird) promoting his client, a robotic arm, called Tiger. The show highlights the

capabilities of automated assembly lines in a humorous way. It's a fun little bit, backed up with videos of the robots in action. Bird also appears to be the only animatronic I can think of who is aware that he is an animatronic.

The Water Test Engine Theater is an animated program presenting options for the engine of the future. The internal combustion engine is pitted against turbines, flywheel, linear induction and electric motors. The cast of characters presenting the different engines varies from a cowboy to a superhero to a miner to a little girl. The theater gets its name from the final engine presented, a hydrogen based engine run on water. The water engine explodes in a fireball and the cowboy presenting the internal combustion engine says that those other engines might be good in the future, but the internal combustion engine is the only option for now.

Concept 2000 and the Dreamers Workshop went hand in hand. Together they highlight design procedures and concept cars. Concept to Reality highlighted current GM models. These areas reportedly surpassed Spaceship Earth and all of Epcot to be the most photographed spot in the park.

When World of Motion reopened as Test Track, the post-show area resembled a GM sales floor more than an exhibit space, but the exhibit areas were not completely gone. It included Dream Chasers, a small simulation that also highlighted GM products. The exhibit area was also bookended by an on ride photo location and a gift shop featuring GM and car themed merchandise.

## SPACESHIP EARTH: EARTH STATION, GLOBAL NEIGHBORHOOD AND PROJECT TOMORROW

The various versions of Spaceship Earth each had their own post shows. The 1982 and 1986 versions' Earth Station served mainly as a guest relation's center. Billed by Disney as a "Futuristic City Hall," the most striking feature of this version of the post show was the World Key Kiosks. These screens were effectively videophones to guest relations hosts. Long before the days of the 180 Advance Dining Reservations window, most guests would make their dining reservations for that day at these kiosks. The kiosks also offered other information and were used to highlight Bell Systems/AT&T's new communication technology.

Not only did the 1994 renovation change the tone of the ride, particularly the final scenes, Earth Station was changed to the Global Neighborhood and became a true post show area. At the center of this version was a ride simulator, Ride the AT&T Network. Here, you ride along with a few kids who have gone rogue from a field trip and somehow got sucked into the global data network. Guest would stand in a cylindrical ride with a rocking platform following the kids' adventure through the data. There were also the vocally interactive exhibits Interactive Wonderland and You Don't Say featured voice-activated technology. Interactive Wonderland allowed guests to talk to the Cheshire Cat, while You Don't Say played with translation software. With the Storyteller Phone, guests made calls and added sound effects from exotic locales.

The Global Neighborhood became the New Global Neighborhood in 1999, but remained

largely unchanged. The only difference was the removal of Ride the AT&T Network, replaced by the Network Tree. A much less complicated, and probably safer exhibit, the Network Tree was more of a physical embodiment of the global data network and appeared as fiber-optic cables growing out of the floor. Guests had their picture taken by placing the face into holes in the tree's structure. The pictures then appeared on the screens that hung from the tree like fruit.

This picture display concept stayed when the area was radically transformed to Project Tomorrow with the 2007 refurbishment of the entire attraction. Now the centerpiece of the room is a giant screen displaying the photos of guests exiting from the ride and tagging them to the locations selected during the ride questionnaire.

Like the rest of Spaceship Earth, the post show lost its communication theme with the Siemens' sponsorship. The new exhibits are highly interactive and are more games than anything else. Inner Vision and Body Builder both focus on the human body and medical technology. Super Driver is little more than a driving video game highlighting advanced driver assist functions like night vision, head's up display and hazard detection. Power City simulates a futuristic control room for a utility company where guests reroute power to areas that need it.

## JOURNEY INTO IMAGINATION: THE IMAGEWORKS

Almost as much of an attraction as Journey into Imagination itself, The Imageworks wasn't a post-show in the truest sense, though it was conceived to be. While all these post shows

could be experienced without riding the main attraction, The Imageworks was above the main ride, and was not fed directly by the unload area of its parent attraction. The pavilion was initially intended so that the ride would exit on the second floor, dumping guests into The Imageworks, which in turn would lead guests to the Magic Eye Theater.

The Imageworks was a vast interactive playground. With several exhibits totaling nearly 20,000 square feet, it could easily take hours to get through everything. Some of the exhibits were very simple, like the Pin Screens, table sized versions of the shape holding boxes that were ubiquitous desk decorations by later in the 1980s. Some, like Rainbow Corridor, were more complex than they looked. As each guest entered the Sensor Maze they would be assigned a color and the arches would change to that color following the guest traveling through. The Lumia was a large globe that would put on a light show triggered by the sound of the guest voices. Vibrating mirrors, the Image Wrap, would then alter guests' reflections when triggered. The Digital Wall was a light sensitive plastic that would hold guest shadows when a bright flash would be projected at the wall.

Another memorable section of the Sensor Maze was the Stepping Tones. This was a series of multicolored light pools on the floor with sensors underneath. Guests stepping on each color would trigger a particular note. It acted almost like a giant game of Simon. I specifically remember one series of tones, if stepped on in a particular order, would play the note sequence from Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Many of the Sensor Maze elements would become staples of children's science museums in the years to come.

Some of the Sensor Maze elements would

change later in the 80s. The Image Wrap and Digital Wall gave way to the Mirage Room, where guests were tricked into seeing a three dimensional Figment that they could touch, but were unable to as it was only mirrors. Optical Illusion replaced the Lumia, showing how flat images can gain dimensions due to the way they were projected.

The most elaborate exhibit was probably Dreamfinder's School of Drama. Guests would stand in front of a blue screen and act out a small scene from one of three genre choices - Science fiction, Western or Fantasy. Pre-dating the Florida studio parks, this was probably most guests' first exposure to the technology. This kind of exhibit would become a premium staple at other parks later in the decade, where guest could pay to make a video of them interacting with famous actors in pre-scripted scenes.

In Light Writer, guests could draw on the wall with lasers. Bubble Music had projected lights that would play musical notes as a guest triggered them, and later Figments Coloring Book, which replaced it, allowed guests to color on the wall with projected light. The Electronic Philharmonic allowed guests to conduct an orchestra by waving their arms. Magic Palette was early touch screen technology, which used light pens to color in images related to the pavilion and ride. A giant wall mounted Kaleidoscope was yet another visual toy controlled by the guests. When the Imageworks was refurbished, Making Faces allowed guests to digitally alter pictures of themselves.

When the pavilion under went its Imagination Institute make over in 1999, the entire second floor was blocked off and abandoned. The Imageworks was shrunk to little more than updated versions of the Stepping Tones and Electronic Philharmonic and placed at the exit to

the ride. The majority of the upstairs was left in place and has been slowly dismantled over the years, though intrepid trespassers have reported that much of it is still there. The rumored reason for the abandonment of the upstairs area was that some of its structural supports were damaged in the ride refurbishment, but critics say it was just a cost savings.

## THE UNIVERSE OF ENERGY AND THE ENERGY EXCHANGE

The Universe of Energy had a fairly extensive post show, but it wasn't in the pavilion itself. Directly across the path, Exxon also sponsored the Energy Exchange in Communicore East. A massive model of an off shore drilling platform dominated the exhibit, but the Energy Exchange sought to teach guests more about multiple energy sources and where they came from. Other models showed different energy production facilities

Exhibits included demonstrations of both electrical and gasoline powered devices that could be alternatively powered by hand cranks or bicycles. These helped to show the massive amounts of energy stored in fossil fuels. Guests could try to light a 100-watt bulb this way. Other areas showed what shale looked like and where coal reserves are held. Compared to the modern day Innoventions, Communicore was more open and airy, and the exhibit had a bright feeling to it, possible essential to the demonstration of photovoltaic cells. High tech touch screens were littered about the area presenting information on many forms of energy.

The Epcot post shows were essential to the edutainment mission EPCOT Center was conceived with. While often not strong

enough to stand on their own, these were still attractions in their own rights, and allowed guests to take in as much, or as little of the education aspects as they wished. They were as integral to the feel of Future World as live entertainment is to World Showcase. They served as a perfect supplement to the more humorous or entertaining main attractions. Later pavilions like Wonders of Life and The Living Seas had large exhibit areas scattered between their main draws as part of the pavilion design, and could almost be said to be an evolution of the post show.

With the design themed re-launch of Test Track still scheduled for later this fall, the large-scale post show has an opportunity to re-emerge at Epcot. Only time will tell if Test Track and future Epcot refurbishments will reintroduce the concept to modern audiences.

*Ron has been going to WDW longer than he can remember. As a former Cast Member, he has always tried to share his love of Walt Disney World. Ron can be reached at [graceysbutler@gmail.com](mailto:graceysbutler@gmail.com).*

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# of defenses HORIZONS

By Michael Truskowski

If you want to start a fight on a Disney message board, you certainly have options. Main Street Electrical Parade vs. SpectroMagic (old fashioned!). Is Avatarland canceled (but a website said so!)? Alcohol in the Magic Kingdom (roving gangs of drunks terrorizing our children!). One of the longest running surefire flamebaits is the classic Epcot attraction Horizons.

# HORIZONS

Many, many words have been written, spoken, and shouted over this pavilion that has not existed for nearly 14 years. For many (and I include myself in this group), it remains a personal favorite. For others, it is the most overblown omnimover in the history of Edutainment. In this article, I intend to give my reasons for loving it, and my present feelings.

Horizons has always been a bit of an oddball, even for Epcot. It is counted as one of the original Epcot attractions, but it did not open until a year after the park did. It was an omnimover, but not of the variety that we are used to (using a unique “hanging” design that moved you sideways through the scenes. It had the feel of watching a 3D movie pass before you. For its first 10 years, it was sponsored by General Electric (more on that later), and was often considered (though not explicitly labeled) as a sequel to the Carousel of Progress. The Sherman brothers wrote its signature song, although that song would ultimately not be used.

Even as a kid, I loved Horizons. I may well have been in the minority of three year olds who absolutely loved Epcot (and this was the 1986 EPCOT Center, not the new, more child friendly Epcot). I was a nerd early on, so an attraction that was all about the future was very interesting to me. I always found it a little odd that many of the “Future World” attractions seemed to focus more on the past. Spaceship Earth took us back in time, as did World of Motion, and Universe of Energy. Horizons was pure futurism, beginning to end.

Horizons had a coherent story. We were

introduced to our narrators, a husband and wife team from the future, who were taking us into their amazing life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Okay, right there you see the problem. Perhaps they should have thought to set the attraction in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, given that the pavilion opened with less than 13 years to go before the time in question began. But it seemed far off, no matter what the calendar said, likely due to the fact that almost nothing in Horizons has yet been realized, at

least not on mass scale. The ride started with a “look back at the future”. This was a fairly humorous display of many of the past ideas for what the future would be like. This section was not unlike that of World of Motion next door, except that it didn’t attempt to bring us back to the past, it was about the predictions of the past.

And it was from this section of the ride that the most

famous character from the attraction made his appearance. I speak, of course, of the vacuuming robot. This character was such a symbol of Horizons that for years he appeared on the park map along with the building. Additionally, he was fully represented in the exhibit back for Epcot’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. While not anywhere near the level of a Figment, he was nonetheless a character back from the days that Epcot had few characters. He did not do much, but he is well remembered. I think in the same way that so many kids feel a connection to the droids in Star Wars, almost more than the humans, we felt something for this character, if for no other reason than ‘robots are cool.’



Perhaps the most impressive section of the attraction was the omnisphere. This theater served as the midpoint of the ride. All the set pieces and other structures of the attraction disappeared, and we were confronted with a massive movie screen that looped a video describing such amazing concepts as microprocessors and DNA. In many ways this was the great grandfather to Soarin’. Almost as much as the movie, I remember the music. This section of the score was on the level of grand symphony. It really helped drive home the message that the things you were seeing truly were remarkable.

The next section of the attraction took us into the family’s life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Again, Horizons managed to pull off being futuristic without being too technical. The star of the show was life in the future, not the future itself. There was someone that everyone could relate to in these scenes. And the scenes were some of the most memorable of all the EPCOT Center attractions. From the smell of “loranges” to the truly jaw dropping space scene, I still can vividly remember everything. And again, the score to this attraction was truly stunning. The space scene music in particular has been played at Epcot long after the attraction it came from vanished.

The ride ended with what was it’s most unique, and perhaps best remembered aspect, which was the “choose your own ending” portion. This also was the point in the ride where it took a turn for thrills, if only a minor

one. You had a choice to return the present in any of the three future scenarios you had just witnessed. This portion of the attraction could best be described as a very early attempt at an immersive simulator, but pre Body Wars / Star Tours, it was quite convincing.

In 1993, General Electric did not renew their sponsorship of Horizons. The heavily 80s inspired look at the future was already showing its age, so Disney closed the attraction. It seemed like the end, but as luck would have

it (for Horizons fans at least), the planned refurb of Universe of Energy and World of Motion ran into some snags. With both running behind schedule (I spent three entire annual vacations looking at an “Opening Soon” sign on Test Track), Horizons reopened. For the next few years, I got to take a few more rides, this time as a teenager. I still really enjoyed this attraction, although now with a little more experience in life

to appreciate new things. Despite some of the dated look of the attraction, it held up better than one might expect. This is likely due to the focus on people and not technology on a micro level.

The end came in January 1999. Horizons closed for good to make way for a new Space themed pavilion. While not the first Disney attraction I had ever seen close and be replaced, this was the first time I could remember it being done in such a destructive manor. I spent an entire trip watching a demolition crew tear the building down piece by piece. Disney’s usual care at keeping active construction sites at least partially obscured did not exist here. The entire demolition was on display for all the world to





see. It felt almost shocking. Almost as if Disney was trying to send a message that it really was obliterating the old EPCOT Center.

I miss Horizons to this day. Every time I pass Mission: SPACE I feel my nostalgia kick in and long to take a trip into the future again. Mission: SPACE has perhaps become almost as polarizing as Horizons, but for entirely different reasons. Mission: SPACE will probably not survive into the distant future, even if it has already outlasted its predecessor. But I think it will be viewed in the future as a failure for Epcot. A failed attempt at overdoing thrills.

But does all this mean I want Horizons to be rebuilt and reborn? I once thought yes, that I wanted attractions I loved from the past to come back. I thought I would love the nostalgia so much that I would sit in them all day, reliving the past. Well, we all got that chance a few years ago with the return of Captain EO. And everyone was really excited...at first. What has happened in the now years since the revival is that the same forces that doomed it the first time around are back. And just like everyone else, I now skip it on most of my visits to Epcot.

This is not to say that attractions cannot have staying power. If Haunted Mansion were to be removed, for example, I suspect I and everyone reading this magazine would storm the gates of the Magic Kingdom with pitchforks and torches in hand. Some things are classics, and will never go out of style. I don't think that happened with Horizons. It started to age. I do think it could have been fixed, however. Move

from the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the 22<sup>nd</sup> (given that almost nothing from the latter portion of the attraction came true), move out of the 80s views on future fashion, and the attraction would have fit nicely. There is a gap now in "Future World" when it comes to attractions that look out to the future.

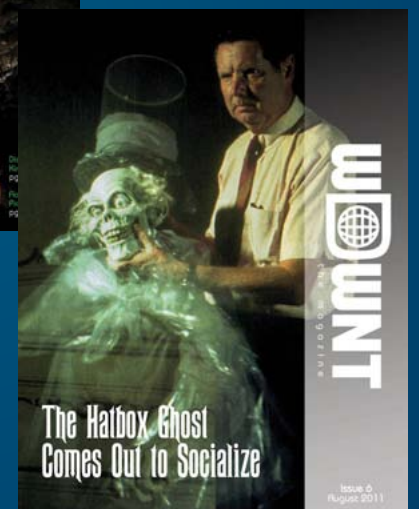
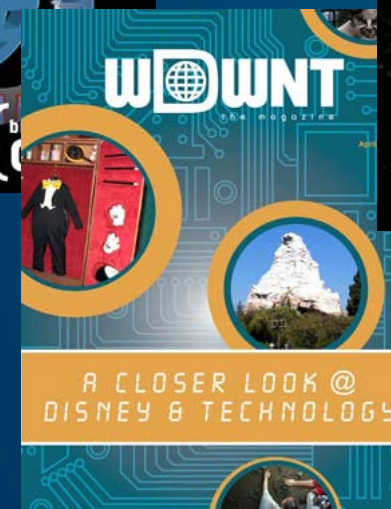
I guess I come down somewhere in the middle of the Horizons debate. I certainly would love an Epcot where it still exists, but I do not know that if it did I would be popular. Perhaps a continuation of Horizons would play well with a modern crowd—it's hard to say. I still would count it as my favorite attraction, but with the full understanding that so many factors play into that (the timing of my first visit, and my age at the time), I can understand why those with a different perspective would find that statement curious. If someone decided to rebuild Horizons, I would be first in line to ride, and I think it would have more staying power. I don't expect everyone to share this feeling, although I would recommend an open mind. If we all dropped our baggage and prejudices about this attraction, maybe we all could really appreciate it for what it was, and what it could have been.

*Michael Truskowski has been a Disney fan for over 25 years. As a technology nerd, he has always been inspired by the innovations in the parks, particularly Epcot. He has completed two Walt Disney World Marathons (including a Goofy Challenge) and counting. He currently lives in New York City. Read more at [www.michaeltruskowski.com](http://www.michaeltruskowski.com)*

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# The Voices of SPACESHIP EARTH

By Eric Lancy

“Like a grand and miraculous spaceship, our planet has sailed through the universe of time... and for a brief moment, WE have been among its many passengers...”

The structure of Spaceship Earth was designed with the help of Science Fiction writer Ray Bradbury, and Bradbury also helped develop the original storyline of the attraction. While the structure of Spaceship Earth is the park icon of Epcot, it is the iconic and sometimes infamous voices heard inside the structure that have made Spaceship Earth one of the most beloved and sometimes most maligned attractions in all of Walt Disney World.

Through the last several issues of WDWNT The Magazine, we have selected some of the most famous voices in Disney film history to share their connection to Disney projects and each other. To celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Epcot’s opening, we will focus on the voices of Spaceship Earth.



**Lawrence Dobkin (1982-1986)** – For many years, Lawrence Dobkin was never given credit as the voice of Spaceship Earth. The credit was originally given to longtime voice actor Vic Perrin. It was not until 2007 that Dobkin’s voice credit was confirmed by Marty Sklar, the International Ambassador for Walt Disney Imagineering, during Epcot’s 25th Anniversary celebration. Sklar stated during an interview that he didn’t understand why everyone has

credited Perrin as the original narrator. Lawrence Dobkin’s television career as a director and actor spanned seven decades. Dobkin was known as a dynamic performer during the golden age of radio. His voice was used to narrate films during the 1950’s and television series during both the 1950’s and 1960’s. Dobkin also enjoyed a prolific radio career beginning during his studies at Yale University. He even understudied on Broadway. His television career began in the 1940’s as an actor, director, and writer on series including The Waltons, The Munsters, and The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams. Dobkin’s film career included such notable classics like Twelve O’Clock High, The Day the Earth Stood Still, and The Ten Commandments. In his later years Dobkin directed episodes of Star Trek. In 1982, Lawrence Dobkin was selected as the original narrator of Spaceship Earth. Dobkin narrated along with a very simple orchestral composition. Lawrence Dobkin died October 28, 2002 and his ashes were scattered at sea.



### **Walter Cronkite (1986-1994)**

— Walter Cronkite was an iconic broadcast journalist and is probably most well known as the anchor of the CBS Evening News who announced to the world that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated and for setting the standard for what all broadcast and news journalists hope to aspire. Cronkite retired from the CBS Evening News in 1980 due to a company mandate that all anchors retire at age 65. However, Cronkite's career

was not limited to that of a newsman, as he appeared on the small screen as well as the silver screen. In television, Cronkite made cameo appearances on hit shows like The Mary Tyler Moore Show and Murphy Brown. In film, he appeared in the films Apollo 13 and Thirteen Days. What Disney enthusiasts love Cronkite for is his role as the narrator of Spaceship Earth and his tag at the end of the holiday version of Illuminations. When Spaceship Earth reopened in 1986 from refurbishment with Cronkite as the narrator, the finale music was also changed to Tomorrow's Child. Cronkite seemed like such a natural fit as the narrator of Spaceship Earth because of his love for the United State's Space Program. Cronkite was a finalist for NASA's Journalist in Space Program, a program similar to the Teacher in Space Project. This opportunity was suspended after NASA's Challenger disaster in 1986. Cronkite also narrated an IMAX film about the Space Shuttle called The Dream is Alive. Walter Cronkite died on July 17, 2009 at age 92.



### **Jeremy Irons (1994-2007) –**

Jeremy Irons is a classically trained, Academy Award winning actor known for his roles in films like Reversal of Fortune, The Lion King, and The Man in the Iron Mask. Irons directed the Carly Simon music video, Tired of Being Blonde. Irons is a bit of a renaissance man as in the modern era he is as well known for his voice acting as he is in his film presence. As the voice of the evil Scar in Disney's The Lion King, Irons delivered perhaps his most memorable performance. Even more so than that of a performance that won him the Academy Award for a Leading Actor in 1990's Reversal of Fortune. The role

of Scar was not Irons' first time lending his voice to the Walt Disney Company, and it certainly would not be his last. Irons voiced H.G. Wells in the attraction Timekeeper. He also narrated the Studio Tram Tour: Behind the Magic in Disneyland Paris as well as returning as the voice of Scar for Fantasmic! In 1994, Irons solidified himself as a Disney Parks favorite when Spaceship Earth opened after its second major renovation with Irons as the narrator. Not only did Spaceship Earth have a new narrator, but there were several changes noticed to the delight of the overwhelming majority of Epcot fans. The "Home Computer", "Office Computer", "Network Operations Center", and "Space Station" scenes were removed. There was a new final scene installed. Earth Station closed and was replaced by The Global Neighborhood as well as Tomorrow's Child was removed. The attraction was given a new score by Edo Guidotti. This version of Spaceship Earth is widely considered the golden age of the attraction and is the standard established for any renovation in the future. Jeremy Irons continues to act in film as well as lend his voice to projects.



### **Judy Dench (2008-Present)**

— Dame Judy Dench is an Academy Award winning actress as well as one of the most beloved stage actresses in England. After appearing in several films in the 1950's and the 1960's, Dench came to prominence in the 1960's as a stage actress. Dench maintained her presence on stage as well as the big screen through the decades. Dench garnered dozens of stage and screen awards and nominations, culminating in 1998 with the Academy Award for Supporting Actress for her role in Shakespeare in Love. In 2004, Dench starred along side Roseanne Barr and Jennifer Tilly in Disney's Home on the Range as the voice of Mrs. Caloway. For most Disney fans, Dench is somewhat infamous as

the current narrator of Spaceship Earth. When Spaceship Earth was rededicated in March, 2008, Epcot fans were excited with the possibility of the newest update to the attraction. The much maligned wand structure had been removed from the attraction, but the soon to be maligned Dench was added. While Dench is not popular with Epcot enthusiasts as the narrator, the updates from the most recent refurbishment have not been well received by fans either. Dame Judy Dench continues to act on the stage and the screen even with having macular degeneration. The condition leaves one eye "dry" and the other "wet". Ms. Dench has been treated with eye injections and she has stated that she now needs someone to read scripts to her.

**The evolution of the attraction Spaceship Earth is similar to the planet Earth itself. Each era has its high points as well as low. Some love to remember the "golden age", while others hope for a better tomorrow.**

***"From the very beginning we have always sought to reach out to one another. To reach the gaps between us. To communicate."***



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Eric Lancy is a Disney enthusiast and has been visiting the Walt Disney World resort for years. Eric enjoys visiting the parks with his wife and two children and is also a student of Walt Disney World history. Email Eric at eelkmj01@msn.com



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