

ORLANDO

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Attractions

M A G A Z I N E

Toy Story Mania!

New Ride at Hollywood Studios

PLUS Imagineering & Pixar Interviews, Ride Technology, and More

“What’re you lookin’ at, you hockey puck?”

He’s no toy. He’s a five-foot-tall animatronic spud!

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STEP RIGHT UP Toy Story Mania NOW OPEN!

By Deborah Brauser

with contributions by Ricky Brigante

Photos by Matt Roseboom



At Toy Story Mania, guests step into the world of toys.

Green Army Men and a Barrel of Monkeys hang from the rooftops and watch while everyone's favorite cowboy and cowgirl, Woody and Jessie, hang around out front with the Block Party Bash gang.

"What I love about this attraction is the way it merges classic Disney storytelling with an interactive ride-game system that's unlike anything we've done before."

**- Meg Crofton, President,
Walt Disney World Resort**





Amid the sounds of laughter and the “oohs” of wonderment for the gigantic, yet child-like props, boisterous talk about top scores, and Mr. Potato Head himself teasing guests, the voice of a 6-year-old who just realized the attraction’s main premise rings out, “Hey! It’s like we’re toys, too!”

Welcome to Disney’s Hollywood Studios’ newest attraction – the fast-paced and fun, highly addictive Toy Story Mania! Housed in the previous *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire – Play It* building, this much anticipated 4-D attraction celebrated its grand opening in May. And with no height or age restrictions and “everyone can play” attitude, this is proving to be one popular ride – offering virtual versions of classic carnival games starring the characters from the two *Toy Story* movies.

This is the first time Disney has developed an attraction for both their parks simultaneously. (California’s opening is scheduled for late June.) And it came about through a highly collaborative partnership between Walt

Disney Imagineers, Disney VR Studios (the company’s game unit), and Pixar Animation Studios. This teamwork - and a strong concept - led to an extremely quick three-year turnaround from start to finish.

In fact, Walt Disney Imagineer and ride developer Kevin Rafferty said, “I’ve been with the company for 30 years, and I’ve never seen one that went through to approval and getting built so fast. It was about six to eight weeks from the first idea to the okay to move forward. It was just so easy.”

History

That first idea started back in 2005, when Rafferty and fellow Imagineer Robert Coltrin were wandering along Paradise Pier at Disney’s California Adventure. “We just started asking ourselves which characters would lend themselves well to the theme of the midway. Since we’re both big fans of the *Toy Story* films, we went right to those characters and thought, what if the toys were hosting carnival midway games?”

They then delved into the characters’

Fun Ride Facts

- Each ride vehicle weighs as much as 8,500 Woody dolls.
- It would take 5,026 toy soldiers lined up end-to-end to make up the total track length.
- Each day, guests break more than one million virtual plates on average.
- In Andy’s room, a five-foot, six-inch person will feel about 14 inches tall.
- Each game play area has 30 seconds of point-scoring action.

personalities to figure out who should do what. “We instantly came up with ideas like Bo Peep and wouldn’t it be funny if she made little balloon animals out of her sheep? And we went through the list of characters. What would Hamm do? If he were on a farm, we could have an egg toss and call it ‘Hamm & Eggs’



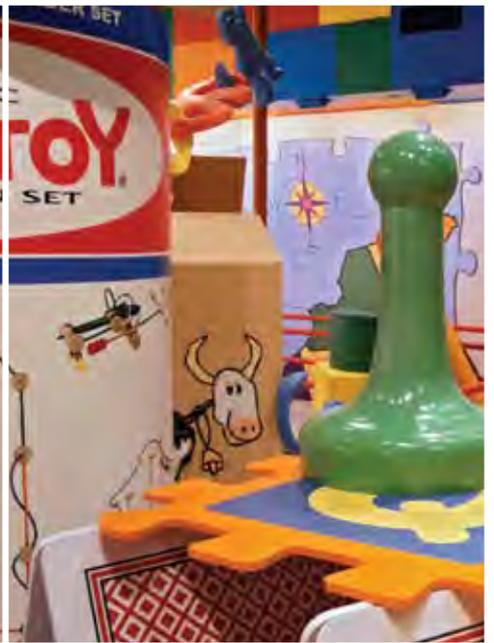
Integral Puzzle Pieces: Walt Disney Imagineers (from left to right) Lori Coltrin, Sue Bryan, and Kevin Rafferty were all instrumental in the creation of Toy Story Midway Mania. This trio of Imagineers brought art direction, technological knowhow, and clever writing to turn a former theme park soundstage into a wild trip through a carnival as a toy.



The Toy Story Mania grand opening celebration kicked off with an abridged performance of the Block Party Bash parade (above), hosted by a Green Army Man (above, right).

Mr. Potato Head, via a poster hanging on the ride's exterior (above left), lets guests know that everyone's a winner inside.

Toy Story Mania's queue (left, right, below) is constructed by toys, from toys including Tinkertoys, Disney-themed Viewmaster reels, a Barrel of Monkeys, and Lincoln Logs.



– which we did. It was just unbelievable how quickly it all came together.”

Soon, Pixar Animation Studios came on board, providing animation and creative advice. “It was such a simple concept of ‘come play with the toys.’ And we thought, of course we want to do it!” said Roger Gould, creative director for Pixar’s Theme Parks Group. “The Disney Imagineers take our characters, which we can only try and touch - but they’re stuck behind glass - and they bring them to life. And their commitment to doing it faithfully to the movie, along with their attention to detail, is so rewarding.”

That’s where Imagineer Lori Coltrin (sister of Robert) stepped in as Art Director for the attraction, tasked with the creation of the look and feel of what surrounds guests, from the exterior

through the queue and onto the ride.

The team became dedicated to building “a totally immersive experience” – as though each player isn’t just playing a game, but is actually there experiencing it. Coltrin and her team needed to create an environment in which each guest felt like they were not just showing up at any carnival, but one that was clearly being run by toys.

After extensive testing in Disney’s Glendale, Calif. facility, the attraction evolved into the first 4-D ride-through game experience. One that would appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike, as well as to kids and adults of all ages.

Details

So what can guests expect? From the moment they walk under the new

Pixar Studios archway, it’s as though giant toys have been unleashed in the area, with green Army men on the roof, a Barrel o’ Monkeys along the roof, and colorful building blocks framing the entrance.

Once inside the vast area known as “Andy’s bedroom”, there’s a feeling of being shrunk down, as boldly colorful, over-sized toys are everywhere. Huge crayons and stacks of checkers stand at attention, a large Candyland map sits on the floor, giant game boards are on the ceiling, and charming child-like drawings line the walls. Pixar’s Gould says that when the attraction was first coming to life in Orlando, he flew in from California with chief creative officer for Pixar and Disney Animation Studios (and the director of both *Toy Story* films), John Lasseter. “When we first entered the area, John wore a big smile and went, ‘Ah! I’ve never actually been in Andy’s room before!’ He was just so excited.”

Continuing through the standby line, guests get a chance to “meet” one of the most elaborate Audio-Animatronic figures ever built by Disney – the six-foot tall talking, joking, singing, and interacting Mr. Potato Head as he does his best carnival barker routine. According to Rafferty, this is the first animation-based Animatronic figure that can engage in conversation with those around him. With highly expressive eyes, a mouth that appears to actually form words, and a voice courtesy of Don Rickles, Mr. Potato Head commands attention. Whether he’s looking directly at a guest and remarking on his shirt’s color, or answering a little girl’s request to remove and then re-attach his own ear, or even calling one daydreaming man a “hockey puck” (the most famous of Rickles’ insults), this is one impressive spud.

After guests pick up their bright yellow 3-D glasses from inside a life-sized Lincoln Log cabin, they head up and then down stairs into the massive loading area under a “tent” of Tinker Toy scaffolding. By the way, this attraction

POTATO BITES

Rumored to cost almost \$1,000,000, Mr. Potato Head is one of the most elaborate Audio-Animatronics ever built. Here are a few tasty tidbits about this popular spud:

- Pixar’s Roger Gould estimates that they did six or seven sessions of 18 to 20 hours with Don Rickles to record over 750 lines and phrases. “*Don is such a showman. It was never a question of him running out of energy. It was that we finally ran out of lines.*”
- Rickles also recorded four new songs written especially for the attraction by country music group Riders in the Sky.
- At first, there was talk of having Mr. Potato Head host a ball toss game. “*But his personality just lends itself to being a barker,*” said ride developer Kevin Rafferty. “*In the movie, when the toys set up the playset, Woody gave Mr. Potato Head that role and he was great.*”
- More time was spent programming him than for any other Audio-Animatronics figure ever created by Disney’s Imagineers. Gould said, “*Don was saying that he’d like to have another one built so he can leave it at home when he’s on the road and his wife can chat with him.*”



is handicapped accessible, with a ramp to bypass the stairs, if needed, and a wheelchair accessible ride car.

Every car holds two players side-by-side and two more at their back. With two cars per ride train, this means each train carries eight guests. Easy-to-use, pull-string type shooters (that look like miniature cannons) are mounted on board, letting guests fire virtual ammunition once the games start.

The Ride

The premise of the ride is simple: when Andy is away, the toys will play. And on this particular day, the toys have set up the Mania Midway playset and are hosting the carnival's game booths.

To begin the ride, guests travel through a unique attraction entrance (below, right). Coltrin explains, "We started with the idea that [the ride] was a toy, that the toys from *Toy Story* put it all together and wanted to create their own carnival and invite other toys to play. So, if you had a toy, what would it come in? A big box! Isn't that a perfect way to begin the game experience – to be able to drive through a giant box."

The thought process proceeded from there, filling in the details, "We have stickers and little game pieces and, if you look closely as you're riding through, you'll see there are little flags overhead."

In addition to the decorative details, even the ride vehicles became part of the overall play set, "There's a little carnival tram with the spring-action shooters and it all comes in one big box."

After quickly taking off, the cars spin around as they come up to each new adventure, giving each rider a head-on view of the impressive full-scale 3-D video display screens – and the exact same gaming experience no matter where anyone sits. After an introductory pie tossing game to practice firing the shooters, the quick-paced, action-packed games (and scoring opportunities) start for real. These include "Hamm & Eggs" – with virtual eggs thrown at barnyard targets, "Bo Peep's Baaa-loon Pop" – with darts thrown at fun-shaped balloons, the "Green Army Men Shoot Camp" – with baseballs thrown at moving plates, "Buzz Lightyear's Flying Tossers" – with rings tossed over little green aliens and rockets, and Woody's Rootin' Tootin' Shootin' Gallery – where suction cup darts are shot at various targets.

4-D effects such as air blasts and slight mists of water are activated after hitting certain targets. Plus, each game has at least one "Easter egg" that can trigger the appearance of bonus high-value targets and other scene changes.

At the end of the ride, each score is posted on a wide screen as a photo

Ride Tips

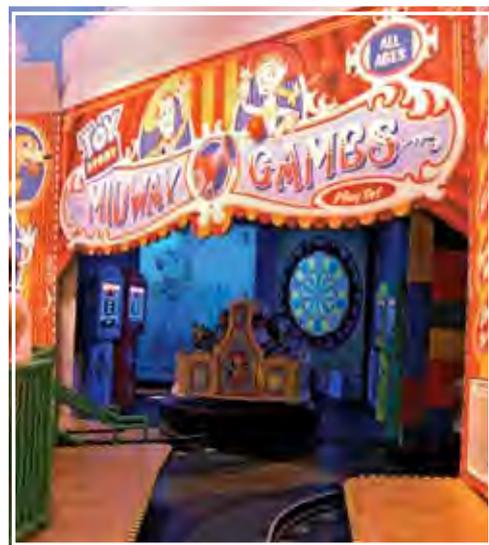
- **Pull the string all the way back on the spring-action shooter and then let it all the way back in before pulling it all the way back again for the quickest action.**

- **Go fast but also look for special extra-point items and even some "hidden" targets for more 4-D fun.**

- **At the end of the ride, there's a chance to really rack up the points. When you get there, don't think! Just pull the trigger as fast and as often as you can.**

- **Watch for loose change in the prize scene - Hamm is carrying more than \$6 in coins when his cork pops.**

- **Pull the string at the end, after you receive your virtual prize for a surprise.**



All Aboard: The loading area (above, left), carefully constructed from Tinkertoys, is located inside Andy's bedroom.



While Pixar Animation Studios is located in Emeryville, Calif., visitors to Disney's Hollywood Studios can walk under a replica, pictured above, of the real studio's signature entranceway.

Pixar isn't releasing much information on the highly anticipated film, *Toy Story 3* just yet, but here some confirmed facts:



The release date is set for June 18, 2010 when it will be released in Disney Digital 3-D format. Directing the film is Lee Unkrich, co-director of *Finding Nemo* and *Toy Story 2*, with Michael Arndt writing the screenplay. All of the original voice actors are back, except for Jim Varney who passed away in 2000. Ned Beatty will now voice Slinky Dog. Don Rickles has already recorded his first voice session.

"Toy Story 3 brings the whole toy gang back together," said Pixar's Roger Gould. "And I think people will have that same experience riding Toy Story Mania – that they get to spend time with old friends."

"prize" comes up on the car's screen. (By the way, a bunny means you're pretty fast. An armadillo? Not so much.) The top three scores of the day and the top score of the month are also posted on a large, old GameBoy-type screen.

"We have easy targets and lots of little hidden items," explains Rafferty, "so when guests return and play it again, they can discover new things they hadn't seen before. We also learned through the process of play testing that some people play just for the high score. Some people play to see how accurate they are, so they aim and use the spring-action

shooter a little more deliberately and slower. So there really is something for everyone."

High-Tech Toys

While *Toy Story Mania's* games are based on those found in a classic carnival midway, the behind-the-scenes technology that operates the attraction is lightyears ahead of its inspirational counterpart.

Imagineer Sue Bryan worked as the Game Producer and Lead Game Designer for the new attraction, though she refuses to take all the credit, "I led

the very smart team of people who made the game software itself and worked with the animation."

Bryan explains that the attraction is powered by "layers and layers and layers of technology all communicating with each other, all aware of what the one is doing while the other is doing something else, so that we can make the show be as tight as possible – as reactive to both you and your ride vehicle as possible."

Guests are tracked as they move through their potentially-high-scoring journey. "Your spring-action shooter knows where it is and where it's pointing, so we know who's sitting in a seat," Bryan emphasizes, "We know that you're pulling the string. We know where you're shooting."

While *Toy Story Mania* is set in the world of computer-animated toys, Bryan and her team used real-world science to make it work, "We spent a lot of time in the software making sure that everything in the game not only has its own physics ... but we also wanted to make sure that every element in the game could be made in real life. It wasn't a video game. We didn't use video game conventions." So when guests join the Green Army Men in a round of launching baseballs at moving plates, everything behaves as it would in real life, "Every time we



Fire At-Will: Guests equip themselves with spring-action shooters as they fire virtual baseballs into a world that comes alive courtesy of 3D glasses.

put some little mechanism in there that would make something fall over or make something spray, there's always this idea of a real life mechanism behind it."

Despite the games running on advanced technology, Bryan reminds visitors that in the end "they're classic carnival games" and that the attraction's technology quickly fades into the background because, simply put, "it's awfully fun to break plates."

Future Plans

Across the street from the attraction, the rest of Pixar Place is still under construction. Once completed, the oversized toys theme will carry over to a shop, a snack place, and a meet and greet area. Pixar's Gould teases, "It'll be a meet and greet where I promise you'll be happy waiting in line, because we've done something we've never done in any of the parks. And then we have another thing that's getting added later

that will be even more fun. It's kind of a companion to Mr. Potato Head, but I really can't say more now." When asked if it might be another Audio-Animatronic, Gould just laughs.

Other future plans being strongly considered include seasonal overlays and eventual *Toy Story 3* tie-ins for the carnival games, as well as possible tournaments. Bryan points out, "It's a computer-based platform. If we wanted to implement a new game, or if we wanted to put in holiday overlays, all of that is certainly easy."

Overall, the collaboration between Disney Imagineers, Disney VR, and Pixar has produced an extremely popular, family-friendly attraction that should have people talking (and bragging about their scores) for years to come.

Adds Gould, "Toy Story was the first of all the Pixar movies, so for John Lasseter and all of us at Pixar, this film holds a very special place in our hearts.

When John rode the ride in its nearly final form, he came off and said, "Okay, this is the happiest attraction on earth!"

MORE MANIA!

Visit our web site at attractionsmagazine.com for more photos and video of the opening ceremonies.

Also visit the Attractions Magazine blog for a personal review of the ride from this story's author.

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