



## TEA names 27th Annual Thea Awards recipients

BURBANK, California USA, Nov 19, 2020 -- The Themed Entertainment Association ([TEA](#)) announced the new slate of TEA Thea Awards recipients – The prestigious TEA Thea Award is considered one of the attractions industry's greatest honors. A full press release with descriptions and photos has been posted at [www.teaconnect.org](http://www.teaconnect.org). #TEAtheas

The slate of 27<sup>th</sup> annual award recipients announced in November 2020 will be celebrated with a series of Thea Awards Digital Case Studies rolling out from July - December 2021. The recipients will also be documented in TEA's official Thea Awards Program with project descriptions, photos and comprehensive project credits.

The Thea Awards were founded in 1994 by TEA, a global nonprofit serving the visitor attractions industry.

Although unable in 2020 and 2021 to hold its traditional black-tie Thea Awards Gala and TEA Summit conference which draw some 1,000 professionals to the LA area each year for networking, celebration and professional development, TEA opted to continue its annual Thea Awards cycle and honor the recipients and the project teams with a series of online case studies and its elegant published program.

The themed entertainment industry touches all genres of visitor attractions, internationally - including destination theme parks and waterparks, regional theme parks, museums, visitor centers, resorts, parades, immersive experiences and spectacles. The industry has exploded globally in the last decade and is significant to international business in terms of travel, tourism, land development, hospitality, retail, entertainment, education, IP and branding, design, architecture and technology.

From hundreds of nominations received each year, the Thea Awards Committee deliberates at length to produce the annual slate of recipients, which is submitted to the TEA International Board of Directors for approval. Chair of the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual TEA Thea Awards Committee is David Cobb.

Visit [www.teaconnect.org](http://www.teaconnect.org). #TEAtheas

- [About the Thea Awards](#)
- [Official blog: TEA Thea Awards & Summit](#)
- [About the Themed Entertainment Association \(TEA\)](#)
- Press inquiries: Contact [Judith Rubin](#)

## 27th Annual TEA Thea Awards Recipients

*Descriptions provided by the TEA Thea Awards Committee*

### The Buzz Price Thea Award – Recognizing a Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements



## **Bob Weis**

As president of Walt Disney Imagineering, Bob Weis leads talented Imagineers around the world to advance the quality of immersive experiences to achieve extraordinary results across theme park resorts and cruise ships - with a focus on quality, storytelling, and collaboration. His portfolio of work is unparalleled and recognized by the industry, his peers and the tens of millions of visitors as among the best. The admiration he has earned from our community over the decades is rooted in his authentic leadership style - that of a world-class visionary who is sincerely modest, selfless and kind.

His early achievements include being part of Disney's first international theme park development, Tokyo Disneyland and subsequently Tokyo DisneySea. At Walt Disney World Resort, Weis worked on the creation of Disney's Hollywood Studios (then called Disney-MGM Studios) and continues to oversee the transformation of that park. He provided overall creative leadership of the major transformation of Disney California Adventure. Currently Weis oversees large teams transforming EPCOT as well as Walt Disney Studios Park at Disneyland Paris.

The Shanghai Disney Resort also showcases his thoughtful leadership in the effort to develop a deep understanding of the Chinese audience and culture. Our industry is a key facilitator in today's world of global outreach and multi-cultural connections and experiences, and Bob Weis has shown that he can integrate the experiences and perspectives of many viewpoints into a winning project, inclusive of all participants, and enjoyed by all who visit over several decades.

## **Thea Classic**

### **Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Blackpool, United Kingdom**

As Blackpool Pleasure Beach turns 125 years old next year, it stands among few comparables in the world of themed entertainment, connecting the industry's past and future by thriving through more than a century of cultural, social and technological change.

Blackpool Pleasure Beach was founded in 1896 by A.W.G. Bean and his partner John Outhwaite, and soon became known for its innovative thrills as the site became packed with all sorts of unique attractions over decades of expansion. Today, the overall footprint of the development occupies 42 acres with 38 rides that span thrills, coasters, dark rides and family rides, not to mention a collection of shows and unique walk-through attractions. Most notable is the park's surviving collection of vintage rides, some of these are the last remaining types of their kind in the world. Their additions in the modern era have been equally impressive.

As one of the world's first and most iconic amusement parks, it has survived two world wars and the harsh environment of its seaside location while continually providing family fun and thrills for generations while remarkably also being a family-owned and -operated business since its inception, currently under the care of the fourth generation of Blackpool lineage.

## **Thea Awards for Outstanding Achievement (AOA) - recipient name, location (AOA category)**

### **Entrance Experience, St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station, St.Louis Missouri, USA**

(Entrance Experience Limited Budget)

Thanks to the utilization of immersive projection mapping, original music and a simulated train ride that transports guests from past to present, this incredible new aquarium entrance experience



crosses the threshold into entertainment design in new and unexpected ways. The experience creates a unique transition from the Train Shed's history to the arrival at the new Aquarium; it's difficult to know where reality ends and fantasy begins. The Entrance Experience at St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station represents a new generation of aquarium design.

### **Sesame Street: Street Mission, PortAventura World, Tarragona, Spain** (Attraction)

With a combination of amazing, lifelike characters; a simple, fun, and engaging storyline; a highly approachable gaming system; and an age-appropriate ride experience; Sesame Street: Street Mission creates a unique family attraction worthy of recognition. It powerfully illustrates how major IP-based attractions can be executed with excellence at theme parks anywhere in the world. After years of wondering exactly 'how to get to Sesame Street,' we now know it's at PortAventura.

### **Qu Yuan, Jingzhou Oriental Heritage Park, Hubei China** (Live Show Spectacular)

This latest of Fantawild's Oriental Heritage Park brand focuses on the culture of Jingzhou and the ancient Chu state (present-day Hubei province). Using the best of 21<sup>st</sup> century immersive experience technology, this live event spectacular tells the 2000-year-old story of Qu Yuan, regarded as the father of Chinese poetry. It blends live performers in architectural space with a moving stage, real-time tracking technology, projection and augmented reality to set a new bar for experience design and make history and culture breathe for today's audience.

### **The Twilight Saga: Midnight Ride, Lionsgate Entertainment World, Zhuhai, China** (Attraction)

One of the anchor attractions at the new Lionsgate Entertainment World, The Twilight Saga: Midnight Ride is a fantastic adventure that is also a multi-rider, multisensory, interactive virtual reality experience - and a major theme park attraction. Guests climb aboard their own motorbikes, each with its own multi-axis motion platform and lightweight, sanitary VR headset. Riders are greeted by Jacob, who introduces them to their mission: to ride out with the wolf pack to combat the vampire newborns prowling the forest. They race off, with each rider in control of their speed and direction, and able to see other riders. All the elements come together in a truly cohesive, compelling and exceptional experience, a shining example of excellence in our industry.

### **Snorri Touren, Europa-Park, Rust, Germany** (Attraction Limited Budget)

The Snorri character, developed for the new water park Rulantica, connects the youngest of guests with ancient Nordic stories in a beautifully lighthearted way, and this new dark ride is a wonderful update and evolution to the classic character-driven family dark ride. The immersive quality of the ride's highly stylized scenery, combined with its intimate sense of scale, make this an extremely charming and engaging experience. The timeframe to deliver this high-quality attraction is also worthy of recognition; design, fabrication and installation in just over a year's time is a staggering accomplishment.

### **ARGUS LED Dome System** (Technical Innovation)

The ARGUS LED Dome technology is patented and manufactured by Lupo (based in China) and produced in four standardized dimensions, with diameters of 15m, 18m, 20m, and 23m. The system can also be customized to meet a project's specific needs. The system can deliver high quality video resolution of 4K, 6K, 8K, and more. Further, the ARGUS LED technology has adjustable brightness from 100-300nit, a sequential contrast ratio of 10,000:1 and intra-frame contrast ratio of 100:1. This means the system displays true black and a much finer greyscale. This revolutionary viewing experience supports immersive storytelling in large dome applications



and suggests significant potential for new applications. Ultimately, this technology is a new tool for immersive experience design.

### **Amazing Pollinators** (Touring Exhibition, Limited Budget)

This cleverly conceived exhibit sparks interest in the natural world and spurs at-home observation of plants and pollinators. Amazing Pollinators provides an astounding magnitude of science and nature education in a cohesive, fun exhibit that engages all ages to play the game, score points, and learn. The analog-style interactive technique is a welcome counterpoint to the media and digital technology that dominate our world.

### **The Bourne Stuntacular, Universal Studios Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA** (Live Attraction Spectacular)

This show exemplifies sophistication, imagination, technical achievement and creative application. The creative staging, and the dynamic way in which elements are combined - live performers, digital backgrounds, special effects - results in one 'wow' moment after another. The synchronous movement of the show action set pieces, and particularly the physical vehicles, is impressive, with unprecedented speed and accuracy in this context. The Bourne Stuntacular raises the bar on the traditional stunt spectacular.

### **The Nest, Los Angeles, CA, USA** (Connected/Immersive Storytelling)

The future of themed entertainment is intimately linked to the demand for a more immersive, entertaining and authentic dialogue between storyteller and guest, and The Nest delivers. This unique, one-or two-person experience is a theatrical takeover of a large warehouse storage unit, scenically propped and dressed into an exploratory narrative of increasingly mysterious and dream-like hidden rooms, where guests rummage through the personal belongings of the protagonist as they unlock her beautiful, wistful, and powerful story. The Nest combines tenets of a puzzle/escape room with the immersion of an attraction, the emotion of an intimate theatrical performance and the personal agency of an alternate-reality game.

### **Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway, Disney's Hollywood Studios, Orlando, Florida, USA** (Attraction)

This new, 21<sup>st</sup> century attraction is both surprising and mind-blowing; it keeps one engaged and delighted throughout the ride, making all guests feel as if they have literally stepped into an animated world in ways never imagined before. With a combination of physical sets, Audio-Animatronics figures, animated media and projection-mapping techniques, all syncing in time with trackless vehicles and a catchy original song and musical score, it turns a two-dimensional cartoon world into an immersive, eye-popping experience. Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway raises the bar for all dark rides to come.

### **D.R.E.A.M. Centre, Chailey Heritage Foundation, Lewes, UK** (Immersive Design for Special Needs Guests)

This high-touch, virtual interactive experience is specifically designed to cater to children of very limited abilities. This includes people with profound mental and physical conditions who cannot move on their own, nor be left on their own - an audience often underserved in more standard environments. Here, through this relatively simple application of adaptable screen technology and projection, they are given specific, careful, loving attention as they are taken through virtual experiences which they clearly find profound, entertaining, and moving. And that is the highest standard we have.



**“Becoming Jane: The Evolution of Dr. Jane Goodall,” National Geographic Museum, Washington DC, USA** (Museum Exhibit Design, Limited Budget)

“Becoming Jane” is an emotionally moving exhibit, an insight into the extraordinary life and accomplishments of Dr. Jane Goodall, visionary primatologist and anthropologist. The real strength of the design is in the sense of immediacy and emotional engagement engendered by the experience. It is not only a story about how Jane became Jane...it calls upon each guest to be involved and to care - and in that sense, each person is 'becoming Jane.' It is altogether a very rewarding and inspirational experience, delivered with taste and restraint.

**Les Quais de Lutèce Hotel, Parc Astérix, France** (Themed Hotel)

To stay at Les Quais de Lutèce hotel is to travel 2,000 years back in history. It is a way to walk, shop, dine, and sleep in a detailed replica of a Gaulish village, an immersive experience in the world of Asterix and Obelix. All the architecture is characterized by a high level of concern for detail. On top of the quality and detail of the design, the management of Asterix has given careful attention to the sustainability aspect of the project.

**Tait Navigator Automation and Show Control Platform** (Technological Innovation of Industry Significance)

TAIT Navigator’s technical breakthroughs of single-millisecond precision, flexible architecture, and sophisticated programming tools have pushed the boundaries of control systems and delivered extraordinary experiences worldwide, over the last several years. The TAIT Navigator is a premium control system that has the potential to grow in popularity and significance within the themed entertainment industry.

**Jewel Changi Airport, Singapore** (Airport Destination Experience)

Jewel Changi Airport has brought a new travel and leisure experience to passengers of Singapore Changi Airport and to local Singaporeans. The Jewel demonstrates excellence, creativity and innovation in the application of a themed natural environment as part of an airport experience. It actively engages the visitor to become a participant. The multi-sensory experiential arrival, quality of the integration of the natural and nature-themed environments and the family-entertainment aspects create a unique, new destination where the guest wants to stay to explore, relax and connect.

**Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance, Disney’s Hollywood Studios, FL and Disneyland Park, CA, USA** (Attraction)

The mind-blowing Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance is simply the most technologically advanced theme park attraction in existence today. This attraction combines 60 years’ worth of WDI attraction design magic into one seamless, story-driven experience. The level of complexity and engineering are unparalleled and the experience integrates several completely unique ride systems. Dozens of individually complex systems are choreographed seamlessly to produce high capacity and redefine what a major marquee attraction can be. Rise of the Resistance demonstrates how a detailed and legendary IP story can be told not just on a ride, but through a complete system of experiences that add up to much more than just the ride itself. The entire attraction, from front to back, is one massive magic trick that leaves riders gobsmacked and represents the absolute pinnacle of how our industry can entertain an audience at a theme park.



**TEA Peter Chernack Distinguished Service Award** (recognizing exceptional volunteer service to the Association)

**Dale Sprague – Canyon Creative**

The TEA Peter Chernack Distinguished Service Award honors exceptional service to the organization, above and beyond the norm. Giving back in this manner is the lifeblood of an association such as TEA that relies in great part on a dedicated community of volunteers. Dale Sprague truly embodies the spirit of service and the legacy of Peter Chernack. Whenever possible, he has shown up and contributed his time, talents, voice and perspective. His many years as a volunteer leader within TEA include six years' service on the International Board of Directors. Dale and his team at Canyon Creative, a creative services agency, produced several social media campaigns to communicate with TEA members, and have contributed numerous design templates for TEA marketing and publications. TEA has benefited greatly from the corporate marketing expertise that Dale and his company have brought to help TEA assume a more consistent, professional face and brand identity.

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