

# Q&A with Lisa Girolami, Walt Disney Imagineer & Senior Show Producer, The Little Mermaid ~ Ariel's Undersea Adventure

Walt Disney Imagineer Lisa Girolami is the senior show producer for The Little Mermaid ~ Ariel's Undersea Adventure, a new attraction opening June 3 at Disney California Adventure park. Lisa oversees a talented team that worked on the attraction, including the creative group responsible for the development and guest experience. Lisa shared her thoughts about the attraction and her experience getting it ready for guests.

## **Tell Us About This Attraction**

- “The Little Mermaid ~ Ariel's Undersea Adventure is a classic Disney ‘dark ride’ that takes you through classic scenes from the movie. It's a wonderful ride-through experience of the film with everyone's favorite animated characters and music.
- “This will be the first time that guests will actually be able to go under the sea with Ariel and her friends.
- ” ‘Dark rides’ are the hallmark of the Disney experience all around the world. It's a great way to immerse our guests in an environment and tell a story. I believe going under the sea with Ariel will be one of the best.”

## **Tell Us about the Guest Experience**

“One of the great things guests are going to experience is the actual sensation of going under the water. Guests will start out on the shore with Scuttle but then quickly turn, go backwards and submerge. We've got some great effects that are going to make you feel like you're going underwater. One of the effects is actually on the ride vehicle in front of you. As you start to feel yourself go under, you'll see the waterline rise up on the vehicle in front of you. I know, you're going to hold your breath in that moment. You're going to feel the cold around you, you're going to see bubbles starting to swirl, and you're going to feel that submersion.”

## **Tell us about the music**

“The music in The Little Mermaid is fantastic. The songs you hear are the original songs from the film. But we also had Danny Troob, who has been Alan Menken's arranger, write additional music for us that plays in between each of these scenes. That music is wonderful, and it's evocative of all the different songs we have in the film.” (Alan Menken composed the film score. Danny Troob, who has collaborated with Menken on many theatrical scores, arranged and orchestrated special music for the Little Mermaid attraction.)

## **Do you have a favorite scene in the attraction?**

“My favorite scene is Ursula's lair. That's the first time, in this attraction, that we actually go into black light – from white light into black light. The mood changes and you see Flotsam and Jetsam and you know Ursula is around the

corner singing that wonderful song ‘Poor Unfortunate Souls.’ She’s amazing. She’s 7 ½ feet tall and 12 feet wide and you’re right up close to her and it’s my absolute favorite.”

### **Why build the attraction in Disney California Adventure park?**

“We decided to put The Little Mermaid here in Disney California Adventure for a couple of reasons. We picked Disney California Adventure because we are bringing more and more of the Disney characters into this park and she seemed like a perfect fit. The second reason is that, here in Paradise Pier, we’ve created a seaside amusement park. So it felt right to have this under the sea adventure in this seaside environment.”

### **Why now for The Little Mermaid?**

“We’ve been working a long time to bring this story to life. It’s been more than 20 years since the film was released. And it just seemed perfect at this time because the technology we need to create and tell this story has caught up with us.”

### **What are some challenges you faced with this attraction?**

- “The number-one challenge is creating an undersea environment. For instance, when Ariel is under the sea, her hair has to animate like she’s under the sea. We actually tried to think of Ariel’s hair as an additional character. When she moves in the film, her hair reacts after she does. We actually had to do a lot of extra work there to make guests feel like ‘Yes, we’re underwater and we’re with Ariel,’ and have the hair take on its own personality.”
- “Of course the star of ‘The Little Mermaid’ is Ariel, and we wanted to make sure she was as perfect in this attraction as she is in the film. For example, her skin has to be beautiful, without wrinkles. We can’t have any funny little things ...she has to look amazing. You look at characters like those in Pirates of the Caribbean and they’re kind of scarred up, rough and tumble. But this little gal has to be beautiful, so there was an extra challenge to get her just perfect.”
- “Another challenge is making characters that are tiny – like Sebastian – come alive. The components we have to work with are rather large so we had to work with the research and development team to figure out how to make tiny little characters come to life.”

### **Is there a surprise you’d like to share?**

“Look for the Hidden Mickeys. I challenge our guests to see if they can find them all!”

### **What’s it like to lead this kind of project?**

- “Being involved in this attraction is a dream come true for me. I watched the movie when it first came out. I’ve seen the movie many, many, many times since. To be able to create Ariel’s world and bring it to our guests and then get to watch the faces of the kids as they come through here is just going to be the best thing ever.”
- “To be in this environment, with what I think are some of the best songs we’ve ever written, it’s the best job in the world.”

### **What was the process for bringing this attraction to life?**

“We start in a phase called ‘blue sky,’ where the sky is really the limit, and we think about all the things we can do to bring this movie to life. We go through a concept phase and start to do design drawings before we can bring together people who will help us build all the different pieces. As we produce the pieces, we bring everything together in the facility that will house the attraction. From there we start to put the whole experience together for the guests.”

**Media Contacts:** Disneyland Resort Public Relations  
(714) 781-4500

[www.disneylandnews.com](http://www.disneylandnews.com)

[www.disneyparks.com/blog](http://www.disneyparks.com/blog)