

Special Effects: Little Mermaid Characters Come to Life with Classic Storytelling and Innovative Technology

ANAHEIM, Calif., June 3, 2011 – The Little Mermaid ~ Ariel's Undersea Adventure, a new attraction at Disney California Adventure park, advances the great tradition of the “dark ride” – an amusement park classic that transports riders in guided vehicles through specially lit scenes often featuring animation sound, music, and special effects. Examples include such classic Disney theme park attractions as Peter Pan's Flight and Mr. Toad's Wild Ride.

That said, the Little Mermaid attraction incorporates several decades of advanced technology that has come into being since the original Fantasyland dark rides. With help from the attraction's special effects, guests feel as if they've been taken underwater as they encounter characters from “The Little Mermaid” in amazing three-dimensional forms.

Technical and design highlights of the experience begin with the building housing the attraction. The architecture itself was designed using new digital 3-D modeling technology and the building, in its finished form, features the fanciful ornamentation and carvings typical of the pavilions that housed amusement rides along turn-of-the-20th-century beachside boardwalks in places like Venice or Santa Cruz, California.

Guests ride through the attraction on board an Omnimover system familiar to fans of the Haunted Mansion. The Omnimover vehicles, which are designed to move and turn so they can direct riders' attention to particular views and scenes, have been informally known as “clamshells” for years. In The Little Mermaid attraction, they actually *are* clamshells. These shells were created out of high-temperature plastic which incorporates the color and texture into the vehicle itself, requiring less painting and maintenance.

Although Disney theme park attractions often make ingenious use of modern special effects technology, technology is never an end in itself. For Walt Disney Imagineers, technology serves to enhance the magic and fun of the attraction's story.

- Special lighting and projections are used to create the illusion of gradual submersion as guests travel “under the sea” for Ariel's adventure.
- Special “skin technology” is used in the creation of Ariel, King Triton and Ursula, because they have so much skin exposed. (Imagineers were especially challenged to replicate the unblemished youthful smoothness of Ariel's skin.)
- Ariel's hair is animated to look like it is always in motion underwater. Imagineers consulted with Glen Keane, who animated Ariel in the film, and Keane recommended that her hair be treated as its own element, practically a character in itself.
- The Little Mermaid ~ Ariel's Undersea Adventure features more than 180 *Audio-Animatronics* figures, ranging from simple to extremely complex.
- Among the more complex characters: Ursula the Sea Witch. She is the largest *Audio-Animatronics* character in the show – 12 feet wide and seven-and-a-half feet tall. She has been fitted with a torso that can stretch and squash as she sings “Poor Unfortunate Souls,” just as Ursula's body does in the motion picture.
- Keep your eye on the eyes. Sebastian the crab, Ariel's would-be guardian, is particularly expressive thanks to some digital technology used to animate his eye movements.

About the Disneyland Resort

The Disneyland Resort features two spectacular theme parks – Disneyland (the original Disney theme park) and Disney California Adventure park – plus the Downtown Disney District comprised of unique dining, entertainment and shopping experiences. The Resort’s three hotels are the luxurious, 948-room Disney’s Grand Californian Hotel & Spa, which also features 50 two-bedroom equivalent DVC units; the magical 969-room Disneyland Hotel and the 481-room Disney’s Paradise Pier Hotel with its “day-at-the-beach” fun. For information on new attractions and vacations at Disneyland Resort visit www.disneyland.com, call (866) 60-DISNEY or contact local travel agents.

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