

# TRAVEL

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## Mickey magic: 'World' turns 20

By Iris Sanderson Jones  
special writer

**WALT DISNEY WORLD** — Standing in line always irritates me a little, but it's hard not to smile as I inch toward Jim Henson's Muppet Vision 3D in the Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park.

The "How Long Is the Wait?" sign is "Another timely service of the Muppets Lab Department of Wild Guesses." Part of the Muppets Division of Line-Engineering, of course.

It's those little touches of whimsy in the middle of all these technological wonders that keeps me coming back to Walt Disney World, which celebrates its 20th birthday this month. The Muppets are my choice for the best new attraction in the World, followed by the new SpectroMagic light parade in the Magic Kingdom.

I wish I'd been there twenty-some years ago when Dick Nunis, now Chairman of Walt Disney Attractions, was first driven into the 27,400 acres of pine groves and swampland that Walt had bought in central Florida.

"We drove in a four-wheel drive over rutted trails for what seemed like hours until we stopped in the middle of nowhere," Nunis said. "The driver said, 'this is where we'll build the gate.'"

"You've gotta be kidding," I told him. I wouldn't even get out of the car!

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If Nunis could take you aboard the gigantic Cinderella Castle balloon launched Oct. 1, and practice a little of that famous Mickey magic, you

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could see the 43 square miles of the World light up at dusk in time sequence over the years.

The Cinderella Castle skyline of Magic Kingdom and a few hotels, Walt Disney Village in 1975, EPCOT in 1982. Eleven years later, an explosion of new lights with Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park and new hotels all over the property.

Soar high enough and you might see west to Tokyo Disneyland and east to EuroDisney, which opens at 9:01 a.m. April 12, 1992, in France.

Disney has sprinkled its pixie dust on several new projects this year. Hollywood's Pretty Woman, Dinosaurs Live, Honey I Shrunk the Kids Adventureland, Teen-age Mutant Ninja Turtles, Muppet Vision 3D and a new Mickey Mouse Club are already open at the Studios. Stage shows based on movies Beauty and the Beast and The Little Mermaid premiere November and January respectively.

There are two new golf courses, Fazio's Osprey Ridge and Dye's Eagle Pines; two new luxury hotels, Disney's Yacht and Beach Club Resorts; two new moderate hotels, the Port Orleans Resort and the Dixie Landings Resort which follows in January;

time-share Vacation Club condos opening in December.

All that technology, plus Minnie Moo and Grandma Duck's Farm, where a cow born with Mickey's trademark black ear marking on his white coat resides in the Magic Kingdom.

I was greatly concerned when I heard that the Main Street Electrical Parade was moving to EuroDisney. It has lighted the Magic Kingdom at night since 1977 and is one of everybody's favorite attractions.

I needn't have worried. As I stood on the street in the Kingdom at 10 p.m. one recent night, with the lights turned down and the crowd hushed, the first float came around the corner light a great ship of light, bearing life-sized characters with lighted hair.

They danced in light on rolling balls. There were dancing bass fiddles and dancing pianos, dancing peacocks and gliding fish, following be a whole procession of Cinderella's carriage changing from color to white light and back.

It was just a bigger and better electrical parade, and it was wonderful.

Spending hot days and nights in a theme park isn't everybody's idea of fun, but whenever I hesitate about going to Mickey country I remember the whimsy that is so much a part of the World.

The cow with Mickey ears, the Department of Line Engineering, the little blonde girl, with that delighted look on her face, doing an impromptu dance on the curb of the Magic Kingdom with Minnie Mouse, and Jimmy Cricket on the back of the last float of SpectroMagic shouting: "Bye now. Take care. Hope you had fun."



Photo by MICKEY JONES

Muppet Fozzie Bear and a friend pose at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla.

## 2 area performers picked for Disney's chosen few

You've seen A Chorus Line so you know the drill. More than 300 aspiring performers walk into the audition and about 25 of them walk out with a job.

In the case of Jason Bendler of Troy, Walt Disney World auditioned 1,500 instrumental players across the nation and picked 90 for the All American College Orchestra.

Dancer Michael Serapiglia of Troy had an even slimmer chance; they picked 12 dancers nationwide to perform in the Best of Disney show last year.

Both performers were picked by recruiters "like" Bob Radock, who knows what it's like to be one of the chosen few. Bob was a music student at the University of Michigan when he was chosen for the All American College Band and spent a summer playing his trombone at Disneyland.

Radock directed the band for two years at Troy High school and was in his second year as admissions director for Interlochen Arts Academy when the phone rang one day.

"We're looking for a music festival coordinator to book guest entertainers into Disneyland," the voice said.

"From the north woods to Anaheim," Bob says. He moved on to Walt Disney World in Florida as the coordinator of international festival entertainers when EPCOT opened in 1982. Now he is manager of Educational Programs for the division of Creative Entertainment at Walt Disney World.



crossroads

Iris  
Jones

At Disney he has stage managed major musical shows, such as the Court Bant Orchestra, booked international talent, helped to bring educators and work professionals together, and pursued one of his favorite goals: widening the horizons of students who come to Disney World.

Students like Michael Serapiglia and Jason Bendler.

Michael didn't start dancing until his senior year at Shrine High School in Troy. He went into the theater

program at Wayne State University, took dancing lessons from Annette and Company School of Dance in West Bloomfield and started looking toward Broadway.

"I auditioned for Disney's All American College Show last February at Marygrove College, along with 175 other contenders."

"Two and half months later they called. I spent three and half months doing five shows a day in the Magic Kingdom. I loved it."

Singers and dancers audition again Feb. 1, 1992, at Marygrove, and Michael will be there.

"It was the first job in my field and I learned a lot, including work discipline and how to work with others during 378 shows."

His advice for others who want to audition: "Be prepared with a few different songs. Be as professional as possible. Have fun. Disney wants fun people. Disney is a fun place and they want you to have fun."

Jason Bendler has been having fun with his violin since the 6th grade. "The violin chose me!" he says. As a sophomore at Western Michigan University, Bendler pays his way through school by performing for symphony orchestras in Kalamazoo, Lansing and Battle Creek. "It beats flipping burgers."

"I auditioned in Chicago last winter and won a place on the All American College Orchestra. I spent the summer at Walt Disney World and

the Orchestra was called back to play for the 20th anniversary celebrations this month.

"We performed three times a night during the week and with guest stars like John Davidson on the weekend."

Disney will audition for the orchestra, marching band and show band Feb. 1 at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and Feb. 2 at DePaul University School of Music in Chicago.

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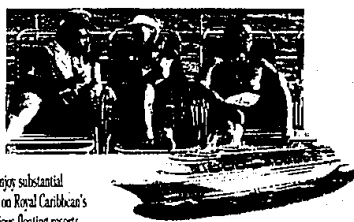
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