



Photos by MICKY JONES

Instead of Main Street, you see a reincarnation of Hollywood Boulevard; the skyline at the end of the street is the Chinese Theater instead of Cinderella's Castle at Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park in Orlando, Fla.

YOU CAN BE A STAR

By Iris Sanderson Jones
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It's a movie, you're the star. The setting is a new theme park on the grounds of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla. The script is only partly written; you can decide whether you will star in a television program, make your own movie, watch the animators at work, do the Great Movie Ride or watch Indiana Jones blow something up.

A voice-over (where have I heard that voice before?) says "When Walt Disney took his friends behind the scenes to see how movies were made, they became like children. It didn't matter how sophisticated his friends were, they were all excited kids on a backstage tour."

The voice is Michael Eisner, chairman and CEO of The Walt Disney Co. I've seen him introducing the NBC Disney Movie on Sunday nights. On this occasion, he was into something a little more spectacular — introducing a third major theme park in Walt Disney World.

They call it Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park, but if you catch the bus from the Magic Kingdom or the Epcot Center, it just says "STUDIO."

Eisner looks like a kid himself, but he gets into heavy stuff when he talks about making Walt Disney's dream come true at last. Almost as heavy as the \$29 one-day charge for getting into any WDW theme park or the \$97 four-day charge that includes admission to all three.

THE RISING prices probably won't keep anybody out. I was in Florida for the official opening day of the Studios May 1 and the lines were so long they closed the gates at 10 a.m.

If you have visited the Magic Kingdom, you will get a slight feeling of "deja vu" when you enter the Studio gates. Instead of Main Street, you see a reincarnation of Hollywood Boulevard; the skyline at the end of the street is the Chinese Theater instead of Cinderella's Castle.

The buildings have been aged just enough to make the art deco fronts look realistic, and the street life has enough hard-boiled '30s and '40s characters to give it the traditional Disney comic relief — a street cop, an autograph hound, a taxi driver.

"Sure, sure, I drive a yellow cab, but can I drive it when you're walking down the middle of the street? Okay, so you're a star, but I gotta make a living!"

I kept my eyes closed and my wallet zipped when I walked past the Mickey Mouse stores and the shops selling movie, classic car and Hollywood trivia. The eye-opener was a voice from Pacific Electric Pictures.

"Come on, in, make your own movie!"
Well, that's more like it. Let's

see, should I pick a set from the Wild West or a space ship. I guess I feel like "Star Wars" today.

"Okay, stand right there. Put this costume on over your clothes. There's cue cards for you to read. Hey, you look great. Okay . . . action!"

And there I was caught for posterity on video film, which would be erased by the next movie star that came along unless I bought the

video for \$24.95 and took it home for succeeding generations.

SMART TRAVELERS make reservations for lunch at the Brown Derby or the Prime Time, but I decided to stand in line for the cafeteria at Hollywood and Vine, or the Soundstage Restaurant, so the obvious next stop was to see the handprints that famous movie stars left behind in concrete at the Chinese

Theater, and to take the Great Movie Ride.

The ride is not for coaster maniacs. There are two sets of cars that take you past the singing, dancing, dramatizing audio-animatronic figures of Indiana Jones, Mary Poppins, Roger Rabbit, and monsters from "The Aliens." We went down the underworld streets of the old gangster movies, down the yellow brick road to the land of Oz,

through smoke and slime and Munchkins.

There are two sets of trams. In one, you get highjacked by Public Enemy No. 1 and in the other, you get attacked by a wild pair of cowboys.

The theater is realistic enough. I heard a man say: "I used to live in California and go to Graumann's Chinese Theater, and the ushers dress just like the ushers here."

The Great Movie Ride is great fun, but the two-hour Backstage Tour is probably the most important attraction for movie buffs. The first half is on a tram that winds through the backlots — past the house where they film the Golden Girls, past Roger Rabbit's tram, on a realistic New York City street, through Catastrophe Canyon, where the tram is hit by explosions, fire and floods.

The second half of the tour is on foot, past a pond where they demonstrate special effects by blowing up ships, and filming storms, and on into the production studios where real films are made.

THEY WARM you up with a room full of props from movies you love, and by letting you star in a video while riding a giant bee from the upcoming movie "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids!"

The format is fairly standard, although the background changes — the real world of movie making is interspersed with video displays that show you the on-screen results.

Guides walk you through viewing rooms where you can see down through glass walls to real moviemaking activities — a rehearsal for a "Conversation with George Burns," a filming of the new Mickey Mouse Club, or a scene from the latest Disney picture. Bette Midler shot a special 3½-minute film, called "The Lottery" for the tour.

You see it on video, and then walk through the sets used to make it. This same format is used in the Animation Tour. You watch real artists at work behind glass, while a video screen describes the process.

If you really want to be in the movies, line up for the Supertar Television by Sony and wave your hand like mad when they ask for cast members.

THEY CHOOSE about 30 stars from the audience, so you've got a good chance. Your traveling companion can sit with the rest of the audience and applaud while the stage hands race from one changing set to another and you have your moment of televised glory.

For example, remember this famous scene from an "I Love Lucy" show. Lucy and Ethel work in a chocolate factory, but can't wrap the chocolates fast enough. The "supertar" who plays Ethel does the role on the stage and is fitted in right next to Lucille Ball in the real scene on a monitor above the stage.



At Pacific Electric Pictures, you can make your own movie, choosing a set from the wild west

or a space ship and take the video home with you for \$29.95.

Getting to Tomorrowland

Delta Airlines is the official airline of Disney World. It has a huge L-1011 jumbo jet mock-up created as a movie set visible on the Backstage Tour at the Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park. Delta's fly-through adventure DreamFlight will open in Tomorrowland, part of the Magic Kingdom, this summer.

Its alliance with Disney may give you the best package, although you should always shop around. Delta has approximately a dozen flights a day from Detroit to Orlando. They connect through either Cincinnati or Atlanta, except for one non-stop to Orlando at 8:30 a.m. and one back to Detroit at 7:30 p.m.

The most economical rate is \$240 round-trip. If you leave Detroit Sunday through Wednesday and return Tuesday through Friday, and stay over a Saturday night. Other days add \$40, and after May 21, reserve 14 days ahead.

Call the tour desk at (800) 872-7788 for packages, but be prepared with several dates because they sell out months ahead for hotels on Disney property.

FOUR DAYS for two people sharing a room at Disney's new budget Caribbean Beach Resort, five villages of two-story hotels and gardens and pools, is approximately \$1,350 including air transportation, four-day Disney passes, three-day rental car and taxes. Stay off property at a place like the Quality Inn and it

costs \$1,075 mid-week, but doesn't include Disney passes (a four-day pass, good at any WDW park, costs \$97 each). Northwest offers the same \$240 fare, same limitations. If you buy tickets before May 26, children ages 2 to 17 years can fly with you for \$1 round-trip, if you fly Tuesday or Wednesday.

A sample August reservation for four days at the Caribbean Beach resort, plus four-day rental car and one-day Disney pass is \$207 per adult, children 2 to 17 free in the room. Add air fare.

SEVERAL OTHER airlines, including American, have this \$240 fare and some kind of special fare for children. American will fly children 2 to 17 years old free, if you fly Tuesday or Wednesday.

Free transportation runs regularly between the Magic Kingdom, EPCOT, the Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park and other attractions. The Studios Theme Park is not as complex as EPCOT, so you can skim it in one day. With a multi-day pass you can go back and forth between the various parks.

Two important new attractions open in June — a water park called Typhoon Lagoons and a restaurant-night club area called Pizazz on Pizazz Island. I'll bring you more about them when they are in full operation in June.

Meantime, contact a travel agent, an airline or Disney (407-W-DISNEY).