Walt Disney World News

Fantasy, Intrigue, Adventure Await Guests Who Take Ride Through Films' Greatest Moments

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Experiencing The Great Movie Ride is like holding a visitor's pass to some of the most famous film shoots in silver screen history.

The ride-through attraction at Disney's Hollywood Studios takes Walt Disney World Resort guests on a "soundstage tour" of such famous film settings as the "Casablanca" airport farewell, the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City from "Wizard of Oz," the "Raiders of the Lost Ark" Well of Souls and many more.

As theme park guests stroll down Hollywood Boulevard, their attention is drawn to the magnificent Great Movie Ride building. Its exterior, a full-scale reproduction of Hollywood's world-famous Chinese Theater, captures the eye and the imagination, bringing to mind images of the many legendary stars who left their handprints or footprints in the theater's concrete courtyard.

Guests queue through the theater's precisely reproduced lobby that leads them to the heart and soul of filmmaking.

As they board ride vehicles, the glamour of Hollywood emerges in a giant cyclorama of the Hollywood hills. Several tiers of show sets including the vintage "Hollywoodland" sign blend with a California sunset. Show lights dim and make-believe seems real as the cars pass under an old-fashioned theater marquee and into the Hollywood musical.

More than 60 "dancers" atop a large tiered, revolving "cake" greet them, a replay of the "By a Waterfall" scene from the Busby Berkeley musical, "Footlight Parade." One of Gene Kelly's most memorable screen performances, the scene in which he sings the title song from "Singin' in the Rain," happens next for the guests. Rain appears to drench the soundstage but, as before, doesn't dampen the spirits of an Audio-Animatronics Kelly as he holds on to the lamppost and sings the memorable song.

The third musical moment is from Disney's "Mary Poppins." With Bert on a rooftop and Mary descending via her magical umbrella, the duet sings "Chim Chim Cher-ee." Guests feel part of the scene with Dick Van Dyke and Julie Andrews.

Edge-of-the-seat adventure takes over next. The sight of James Cagney in his role from the film "Public Enemy" greets guests as they enter Gangster Alley — a street as dark and sinister as the previous one was bright and musical. Film fans who recognize such a setting as the perfect spot for an ambush are right on the money.

The visitors quickly find themselves in the middle of a Prohibition-style mob shoot-out.

Escape from the armed thugs doesn't guarantee safe passage. A trip to Western Town proves just as perilous — though first impressions may cause some guests to think otherwise.

John Wayne waits nearby on horseback — what kind of varmint would start trouble with this film hero in the vicinity?

But in the movies, anything can happen. That's why the bank robbers at the end of the street no doubt think they can get away with a broad-daylight stickup. When they blow the safe and flames pour out of the building, guests once again find themselves in the midst of movie mayhem.

Escape only puts them in jeopardy again. Finally off the streets, they find themselves in the depths of the spaceship *Nostromo* from the film "Alien" where an apprehensive Officer Ripley guards the corridor against intruders. Will she think the visitors a threat? Or are there other dangers, even worse ones, lurking nearby? Visitors leave the *Nostromo* perhaps shaken, but with answers, nonetheless.

What good are space-age answers in the ancient Well of Souls? With dozens of wriggling snakes covering the floor of the subterranean vault from "Raiders of the Lost Ark," guests come upon famous adventurers — Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones and John Rhys-Davies as his sidekick, Sallah, struggling to remove the ancient ark from its sepulcher.

As the ride vehicles roll into the next scene, visitors get to see the type of movie action — the stuff of serials — that inspired "Raiders of the Lost Ark." A high priest worships at an enormous altar before a statue of Anubis, god of passage through the underworld. The glow of a brilliant scarab mounted on the idol beckons the evil-doer. The villains of Saturday serials couldn't resist such riches. It's no different here, and when the gods are angered by such thievery, they strike back with fury. In a land of the mummies and curses, such fury can be terrifying.

Guests just make it to safety from the ancient temple and finally move off the edges of their seats and into less harrowing fantasy.

They are in the jungle and the familiar cry of Tarzan fills the air as he swings through the air on a vine. Jane is seated atop an elephant, and Cheetah, a prisoner of typecasting, screeches and jumps up and down.

Then it's nighttime, and the subjects are legendary. As an airplane engine sputters and finally catches, Rick and Ilsa say their good-byes in the timeless scene from "Casablanca."

Next stop, Munchkinland. Swirling winds between scenes suggest a tornado. As they pass into the scene, guests see the winds' results: two legs stick out from below a house. The city's

residents are celebrating their good fortune. A surprise visit by the Wicked Witch of the West as portrayed by Margaret Hamilton restores the tension.

Film fans know how hard she tried to avenge her sister's death. They also know the route the film takes to reach its happy ending. The final scene is one of Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow and Toto on the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City of Oz.

A grand finale film montage reminds guests that the number of memorable scenes from great films is limitless.

Disney's Hollywood Studios immerses guests in the glamour of show business 365 days a year with thrilling attractions, incredible Broadway-style shows, world-class atmosphere entertainment and interactive film, television and radio production facilities. The theme park is part of the 25,000-acre Walt Disney World Resort near Orlando, Fla.

For more information, call 407/824-4321 or visit disneyworld.com.

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