

# Ellen DeGeneres Fuels ‘Ellen’s Energy Adventure’ With Fun at Epcot’s Universe of Energy

Comedy star Ellen DeGeneres brings electrifying comedy to Epcot guests daily in “Ellen’s Energy Adventure” at the Universe of Energy pavilion.

The Universe of Energy becomes an “adventure” for Walt Disney World guests with a celebrity-charged film that takes visitors on a humorous journey to the beginning of time, past colorful dinosaurs redesigned to reflect today’s scientific thinking.

Inside the pavilion’s mirrored pyramid, guests ride through one of the most technologically complex attractions at Epcot. The pavilion consists of three motion pictures and a ride-through adventure where guests encounter life-size dinosaurs.

“I think this show is by far the most complicated presentation we’ve ever done,” said Tom Fitzgerald, executive vice president of Walt Disney Imagineering and executive producer of “Ellen’s Energy Adventure.” “We have live action combined with computer-generated imagery. We have Audio-Animatronics dinosaurs. It’s astonishing how many things we’ve put together into just this one show.”

The story itself is simple enough. In a brief set-up before the main show, guests meet funny woman Ellen DeGeneres, who loves watching the popular game show “Jeopardy!”

One evening, Ellen falls asleep while watching “Jeopardy!” and dreams she’s a contestant on the show.

But her dream becomes a near-nightmare when she finds the returning champ is her former college rival Dr. Judy Peterson, played by Jamie Lee Curtis. The other challenger: Dr. Albert Einstein. Worse yet, all the categories deal with one thing she knows nothing about — energy.

Enter Bill Nye the Science Guy, Ellen’s neighbor and all-around science whiz, who guides Ellen (and Walt Disney World guests) on a “crash-course” in Energy 101.

First comes the history of the universe — in one minute — on three, 70mm screens, 157 feet wide by 32 feet tall. Next, the theater separates into six, 97-passenger vehicles that travel through primeval dioramas, complete with prehistoric flora, fauna and a terrified Ellen — cornered by a menacing elasmosaurus.

After the dioramas, guests enter into another theater, where they view a dramatic motion picture on three screens, each 30 feet tall and 74 feet wide and curved to create a 200-degree range of vision. Here, guests follow Ellen as she learns about the world’s present-day energy needs, resources and concerns.

“People can go anyplace and just see a movie,” said Robert Ginty, who directed “Ellen’s Energy Adventure.” “What

we've done here is create what is truly a one-of-a-kind theme park experience that will not only entertain people but give them the feeling they've learned something as well."

That's just the right mix.

"I think the way that most people want to learn is to be entertained," DeGeneres said. "You want to pay attention if it's fun. I tell you, I must have had fun because I learned a lot from doing this role."

For co-star Nye, the show offered a way to deliver an important message.

"I was attracted to this project because it may help make people aware of how much energy we use in our society," he said. "This show is big, it's cool and everything is done right."

Among the "big" and "cool" things in the show is Nye's "Helicopter of Science," which not only travels across wind farms in California and refineries in Alabama but also hovers underwater and takes off into outer space.

"A lot of what we did was based on thinking about what would be fun for the audience to see," said Fitzgerald. "For instance, we thought, 'How about if we're underwater and we have the Empire State Building under water with us to show how big an oil rig is?'

"Each scene has to have a little twist, a little surprise, a little magic or a little special effect that will make this subject fun and exciting for our guests."