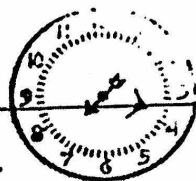


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**PUBLIC RELATIONS
PROGRAMS**

November 2, 1964

To: Mr. W. J. Mitchel, Jr.

cc: Mr. J. G. Mullaly

Subject: Narration for World's Fair Exhibit

It seemed to me when I listened to both the original and the revised narration for the Magic Skway ride that one fundamental change we might consider is in the tone of the narration. This thought was confirmed when I heard the narrations at the General Motors and General Electric exhibits and the sound track of the Johnson's wax film.

What we have now in both versions is an impersonal, formal, rather dignified and perhaps somewhat heavy and even "poetic" kind of narration. Yet the ride itself is intimate and personal -- and the Disney creations are, for the most part, cheerful, humorous (dinosaurs with typical Disney personalities) and quite realistic -- at least up to the transition into the "Space City." (It's a kind of shock to pass from the down-to-earth realistic, animated dinosaurs and cave people to the abstractions of the world of tomorrow. But more of that later.)

The narration at General Motors is equally impersonal and dignified but it seems in keeping with the "picture window" display. We feel there that we are travelling in a bus or train type of conveyance looking first to the right and then to the left as the anonymous guide describes the sights and provides us with a bit of education about the future. There is no attempt at humor in the displays -- all is exactitude and versimilitude -- and the remote, God-like voice is appropriate to this studied, scientific display.

At General Electric the frankly commercial narration is softened by the life-like figures who speak in a "first person" way and call our attention to the marvels of labor-saving devices at each stop on the route. The audience smiles and seems entertained -- partly because of the effects of nostalgia (the middle-aged and older remembering such items as the drip pan under the ice box) and partly because of feeling superior, knowing that we live in a better world. (I think the weak part of the GE show is the final tableau where the modern family sits in that materialistic Christmas scene, deluged in packages and appliances, looking like a "House Beautiful" cover. We expect to see a hint of the future and feel let down because all we get is the kind of gift-suggestion we see in every department store window at Christmas time.)

At the furthest extreme from the Magic Skyway narration is the Johnson's wax film with the completely warm, intimate, friendly narration which, like all good film narration, works on the oblique, not over-stating what we are seeing, but providing a personal comment now and then that serves as an extension but not a description of what we see on the screen. We are moved by the universality of what we see; the voices do not attempt to lecture us; there is no need for this.

Coming back, then, to the Magic Skway, I suggest that we attempt, in a revision of the narration, to give it a warm, personal, friendly tone -- as if the narrator were sitting in the car beside us, enjoying the ride along with us, nudging us now and then to take note of what we see. The narrator is our personal escort, not a distant, Olympian "announcer" or "narrator."

The physical elements of the ride all seem to point in this direction: the small groups in the cars; the intimacy of riding together in the darkness; the excitement and surprise at what we see; the anticipation of what's just ahead or around the next corner; and, of course, the very personal character of the dinosaurs and cave people.

There are two ways we can work to achieve this kind of a narration:

- softening and personalizing the description to avoid the history-lecture tone and the remote somewhat heavy objectivity and
- using an actor instead of an announcer or narrator so that the voice tends to re-act with us as we take the trip.

In fact, I would suggest that a well-known actor be employed for this purpose. No particular person comes to mind but as an indication of what I mean, consider how the narration would sound if it were given by a Henry Fonda or a Jimmy Stewart -- or even a Raymond Massey.

This actor would identify himself right after the welcome by Mr. Ford as the ride begins:

"Hello, I'm Jimmy Stewart -- riding along with you to point out some of the exciting things you're going to see on our Magic Skyway. You know, you've always got a front-row seat when you travel in a Ford Motor Company car. Now just relax -- stay in your seats at all times -- keep your hands and arms inside the car and no smoking, please. Take a last look at the world outside. We're moving back in time. Our modern car has been changed, by a bit of magic, into a time machine ... hold your breath and here we go!"

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I won't go into details on the narration but it might be helpful, for instance, if we used an echo mike effect as the car goes through the time tunnel and then later in the speed-up into the "Space City" segment. Also, we might get more specific in "Space City" and mention roto-copters, a rocket flashing past, the tubes that are really highways in the sky and the elevators that rise miles above the surface of the earth -- giving more definition to the abstractions we see.

There is only one element of added cost in this change in approach to the narration and that, of course, is the fee for a recognized actor. I can't believe that this would exceed \$2,000 -- maybe less in view of the fact that many millions of people would hear him during the 1965 season.

Other Suggestions

As I toured the building, a couple of thoughts came to mind:

1. Since it seems likely that you will continue to have a long waiting line next season, is there something we could provide to help occupy their time? Perhaps a simple brochure could be printed and handed to those waiting in line. The copy might tell about some of the things they are going to see -- without giving everything away -- emphasizing the display elements that are not on the ride and that most people seem to swarm right by in their haste to get to the ride or out the building at the end of the ride. If a brochure seemed too expensive (and there might be a litter problem, too!), the same effect could be accomplished by setting up easels along the waiting line and giving the same kind of information on a series of panels printed in fairly large type. Also, would it be possible to display more cars outside?
2. The handling of such large crowds is obviously a problem and it's only natural that the staff would have a tough time maintaining a polite, smiling atmosphere. Is there any way to provide a welcome earlier than Mr. Ford's words at the beginning of the ride? This should be retained, of course, but what about a sign or special greeter somewhere along the waiting line -- or even at the door?
3. The "Performance" song does not seem to do anything. It's hard to hear as you hurry through the corridor to the ride and seems to be in conflict with the displays along the walls. I can't see any reason for keeping it.

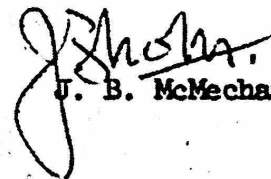
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4. The give-away with state names does not seem to come off because it's hard to know that the badge is designed to glow in the dark. Might it be better to have a state name badge designed for visibility in the daytime. More people might wear them then.
5. I realize the need to keep people moving through the product area but it would be helpful if it were not quite so static -- if there could be more products like the futuristic station wagon with a narrator describing features.

These are the more obvious things that occurred to me. Most important, of course, is the narration and I will wait to hear your reactions before I go any further on the actual re-write. I'm leaving on vacation this week and will be back on November 20.


J. B. McMechan

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