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POSTMASTER: Dated material.
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Mailed Tuesday, September 2, 2008

GOLDEN TICKET
BONUS ISSUE

AMUSEMENT TODAY

www.AmusementToday.com

Vol. 12, Issue 6.2

SEPTEMBER 2008

\$5.00

Amusement Today's 2008 Golden Ticket Awards

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

The presentation of *Amusement Today's* Golden Ticket Awards is an annual tradition to celebrate the "Best of the Best."

While economies and cultures are changing globally, it is here at home in the United States where the industry is hard hit with facing the challenges of high gas prices and families having reduced budgets for recreational spending. Our industry faces numerous concerns like never before.

In times of crisis and less-than-favorable odds, the human spirit has risen to face hardship and to seek out new solutions for problems, often in ways that are for the greater good. The Golden Ticket Awards continue to recognize those parks and folks that have continued to strive for excellence, creativity, and a quality product for each of their guests. The winners on our charts are the painted colors on a canvas of the industry's winning formulas. It's a time to celebrate.

Each year hundreds participate on our panel to tell us where the industry is excelling. *Amusement Today* asks them the difficult task of narrowing



Host Park
2008 Golden Ticket Awards
September 3, 2008

down the many worthy parks into a single choice. Together, they speak volumes.

The Golden Tickets cel-

brate a tenth anniversary this year and will honor awards to parks for the eleventh time. It all started so simply in 1998,



PHOTO COURTESY SEAWORLD ORLANDO

SeaWorld Orlando's win for Best Marine Life Park had the biggest percentage of any category.

but has since grown into an industry accomplishment. Congratulations to all the winners on our charts for 2008 and

to all parks around the world that continue to improve and grow. May you continue to move our industry forward.

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WOOD COASTERS

SEE PAGE 39



AMUSEMENT TODAY

All about the **BUSINESS** of FUN!

Gary Slade

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief
gslade@amusementtoday.com



EDITORIAL

Thanks to GKTW Village!

The entire staff at *Amusement Today* would like to send out a big "Thank You" to all the staff at **Give Kids The World Village** for their hospitality in hosting the 2008 Golden Ticket Awards. When we were first approached by the Village about hosting a future awards program on property, we were more than glad to accept. We would also like to especially thank industry veteran **Susie Storey** and her staff for their countless hours behind the scenes at the Village in helping to make this event possible.

We hope that our efforts to bring the Golden Ticket Awards to the Village has provided those not familiar with Give Kids The World a look into all the good that this special place has to offer. We also hope you take the time to read the story on page 3 provided to us by Susie about the Village and one letter written by a former child who stayed at the Village.

Amusement Today could not have done this year's awards event without the help of some key industry leaders who went above and beyond the call of duty.

They are:

- **Glenda Cook, Bob's Space Racers**, for donating the Whac-A-Mole home version game as a prize for the GKTW fund-raiser held by *AT*;
- **Evan Andrews, Montgomery Inn**, for donating the ribs and chicken at the Golden Ticket ceremony luncheon;
- **Tim Timco, National Ticket Company**, for donating the printing of the raffle tickets;
- **John Arie, Fun Spot USA**, for his assistance in hosting the Tuesday night reception site; and the
- **Gaylord Palms** for their generous discounted rooms for Golden Ticket attendees.

—Gary Slade



Tim Baldwin

A warm fuzzy

Working with publications is always a crazy time as deadlines approach. The monthly grind of getting things off to press is a continual task that starts up once again on the heels of the previous issue.

The Golden Ticket Awards work the same, but also differently. Having to squeeze this bonus issue between monthly publications seems to give everyone involved at *Amusement Today* an extra helping of time crunch. At the same time, it is an event of celebration and congratulations. It is the opportunity to tell people that they've done a good job. The human soul so often needs to hear words of kindness and appreciation for efforts put forth. It is rewarding that the Golden Tickets can do just that. It's one big warm fuzzy.

Our experienced panel of amusement park experts have a chance to feel it, too. It is their time and hard-earned dollars that give *Amusement Today* a collective voice of expertise. As I travel the globe visiting parks far and wide, I see banners and brochures proudly displaying the Golden Ticket logo. I



Baldwin

see specials on the *Travel Channel*, the *Discovery Channel*, and of all things, the *Food Network!* All of these broadcasts help celebrate the fine work witnessed in the industry, all due to the Golden Ticket Awards. These well-travelled enthusiasts are able to join with *Amusement Today* and say "I helped make that happen!"

Perhaps it is the continued prevalence of the celebration of the Golden Ticket Awards in print and media that has caused us to have our best response ever.

As I tabulate every point and collect the data over the weeks of summer, I continue to be amazed at the expertise of the many people who have traveled so far to experience the many great things the industry is doing. The exposure of lands from distant places is truly mind-boggling, even as they try to be seen and to make their mark on our charts. It just goes to show that great things are happening everywhere. It's a special industry, and park operators and avid fans know it. We're all in this together.

Group hug everybody.

AMUSEMENT TODAY STAFF

ADVERTISING

Bill Rea

(254) 675-8722

201 S. College Hill Dr., Apt. #E53
Clifton, Texas 76634

brea@amusementtoday.com

Sue Nichols

(615) 662-0252

P.O. Box 238

Pegram, Tenn. 37143

snichols@amusementtoday.com

Beth Jenkins

(615) 794-7288

2040 Belmont Circle

Franklin, Tenn. 37069

bjenkins@amusementtoday.com



AWARD WINNER

1997 • 1999 • 2000 • 2002 • 2004

Sammy Piccola

Accounting / Circulation

spiccola@amusementtoday.com

Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Emilie Justman/Corporate Graphics

Graphic Artist

at@c-graphics.com

Terry Lind/TLCreative Design

Website Manager

terrance@tlcreative.com

EDITORIAL

Scott Rutherford

srutherford@amusementtoday.com

Pam Sherborne

(615) 221-5149

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Bubba Flint

Cartoonist

bflint@amusementtoday.com

Contributors

Justin Garvanovic, S. Madonna Horcher, Dave Jackson, Jason Knutson, David Lipnick, Bobby Nagy, Allan Reid, Mark Rosenzweig, Mac Rush, Jeffrey Seifert, B. Derek Shaw, Susie Storey – Give Kids The World Joel Styer, Janice Witherow

ADDRESS, SUBSCRIPTION, POSTMASTER INFORMATION

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 5427

Arlington, Texas 76005-5427

(817) 460-7220

Fax (817) 265-NEWS (6397)

Deliveries

2012 E. Randol Mill Rd, Suite 203

Arlington, Texas 76011

Member of:

IAAPA, AIMS International, PAPA, NEAAPA, NJAA, OABA, WWA and IALEI

Subscription rates are: 1 year (14 issues) \$50 in the USA; \$70 elsewhere; 2 years (28 issues) \$90/\$130; 3 years (42 issues) \$130/\$190. Send check or money order (U.S. funds only, drawn on a U.S. bank) to *Amusement Today*, P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005-5427. Your cancelled check is your receipt. Please allow up to six weeks for your subscription request to be processed and the first issue mailed.

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Give Kids The World: Where happiness inspires hope

Susie Storey

Give Kids The World Village

Since 1986, Give Kids The World (GKTW), the Kissimmee, Florida based non-profit organization has made dreams come true for children with life-threatening illnesses. Every day of the year, these special children and their families arrive from around the world for a week-long, cost-free fantasy vacation filled with happiness and hope.

Wish children and their families stay at the whimsical GKTW Village. This 70-acre resort is unlike any other in the world. Families stay in their own villa – complete with two bedrooms and two bathrooms – and so much more. Mayor Clayton, GKTW's six-foot tall bunny mascot, tucks children into bed each night, pizza is delivered right to the doorstep, and each villa is stocked with favorite snacks and all of the comforts of home. During their stay, the "Gift-giving Fairy" visits the family villas, leaving behind a special gift for each child. This experience quickly becomes a treasured tradition as each day the children race into their villa to see what special surprise awaits them. GKTW gives away 18,000 gifts annually to support this small part of the magical Village experience.

A GKTW Wish vacation includes a week of non-stop fun and laughter. Families receive donated tickets to the world-famous attractions Walt Disney World, SeaWorld Orlando and Universal Orlando. In addition, each park's most popular characters visit the Village for personal photo opportunities, autographs and lots of hugs.

The Village itself is a child's dream come to life. Families dine in the Gingerbread House Restaurant, explore the interactive Marc's Dino Putt miniature golf course, and explore the magical Castle of Miracles. The stunning building features a forest to explore, a game room, a talking Wishing Well and the beautiful, one-of-a-kind, fully wheelchair accessible carousel, which has no limits to the number of times young guests may take a magical ride.

To date, more than 90,000 children from all 50 states and



PHOTOS COURTESY GIVE KIDS THE WORLD VILLAGE

Mayor Clayton and Mrs. Merry, left, mascots for Give Kids The World Village in Kissimmee, Fla. welcome guests to the facility's new villas which began housing families on Sept 1. Kids now enjoy Matthew's Boundless Playground, right, where the characters from the beloved children's game Candy Land are now life sized. The scenic pieces were designed by ITEC Entertainment and created by Pizzazz Scenic.



At Give Kids The World, guests have the opportunity to take a ride on this beautiful hand-carved carousel from Vekoma, left. The carousel features various animal themes and is fully wheelchair accessible. Pam Landwirth, GKTW President and Miranda McGowan take the first slide together on July 14 at the grand opening of Matthew's Boundless Playground, right, the first and only Candy Land-themed playground.

more than 65 countries have seen their dreams come true at GKTW. Since the very beginning, GKTW has pledged to never turn away a child in need – and it never has. A GKTW Wish can be organized in as little as 24 hours. Currently, the Village can provide accommodations for 100 families each night – but 70 percent of the year, the need exceeds that number, and families booked for a GKTW Wish must stay off-site at a nearby hotel.

To ensure that all families are given the opportunity to experience the full Village vacation, GKTW began an amazing expansion project three years ago.

The Fairy Tale Forest is the newest part of GKTW. Once completed, 42 new villas will provide accommodations for GKTW guests. Earlier this

summer, GKTW celebrated the grand opening of the first two new villas – a brightly colored purple castle and a charming cottage. Both look like they came straight out of a fairy tale.

The centerpiece of the expansion is Matthew's Boundless Playground, the world's only life-sized Candy Land game. Complete with a colorful trail that leads through Gumdrop Pass and the Lollipop Forest to the Candy Castle, Matthew's Boundless Playground also includes models of classic Candy Land characters King Kandy, Princess Frostine and Gloppy, as well as playground equipment designed for children with disabilities. Donated by Hasbro, Inc., Matthew's Boundless Playground welcomes GKTW guests to enjoy the colorful and "sweet" play-

land, created just for them.

Of course, it is all about the children of GKTW, and every day, the Village receives letters from Wish families, describing their wonderful week and how it inspired them to face their brave battles once they returned home.

One of the most treasured letters to the Village came from Alyssa Petruska, who visited the Village when she was three. She wrote:

"Dear GKTW: I am a cancer survivor and a former Give Kids The World Wish child. I had kidney cancer and I got so sick mommy and the doctors got very scared. Then I went to GKTW where I could be happy again. I believe that being at GKTW made me better. I told all my doctors and nurses to send all the sick kids there.

Mommy says that GKTW

made me strong and happy again. When you are little, sick, tired, and scared being lucky enough to go somewhere where no one hurts you and mommies don't cry is the most special gift in the world!"

Today, Alyssa is a happy, healthy 10 year old, who still visits the Village and tells everyone about the magical place that helped her feel better.

GKTW could not do all that it does without the support, love and dedication of thousands of generous individuals and corporations worldwide. As the Village grows, everyone at GKTW understands that only through this ongoing support can it continue to make dreams come true for children who need it most.

For more information call (800) 995-KIDS or visit: www.gktw.org.

2008 park winners showcase the Best of the Best

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island makes a major splash as Best Indoor Waterpark

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

Like an unstoppable freight train, Cedar Point and Schlitterbahn continue to run with Best Park and Best Waterpark categories. For 11 straight years these two parks have enthralled guests and our voters.

John Hildebrandt, general manager of Cedar Point, says the park's numerous awards have been scattered around the park, from the Town Hall Museum to the various offices. "We will rotate the 2008 Best Park Award, passing it from office to office - a little like the Stanley Cup in Hockey." When asked how he feels once the season winds down, Hildebrandt responds, "It's bittersweet. It's a long season, and you look forward to more time with your family. At the same time you know you will miss the excitement of the park, all the people, the sights and sounds. November and December we rest. Bust shortly after the first of the year I am thinking about summer."

The Best Park category sees Busch Gardens Europe rising to place second this year, followed by



Knoebels in third and Disneyland in fourth. Tying for fifth is Islands of Adventure and Pleasure Beach Blackpool. Each of these parks is known for a critical component and a right mix of ingredients that isolates them above the rest. Along with the remainder of the top 10, each visiting patron is bound to have an outstanding day at these parks.

For waterparks, it is hard to follow Schlitterbahn's 53 percent take of the vote. Placing second is Splashin' Safari, Holiday World's waterpark, which has grown from humble beginnings to a huge complex of heavy

capacity waterslides and attractions. Completing the top five are Blizzard Beach in Orlando, Noah's Ark in Wisconsin Dells, and Typhoon Lagoon, also at the Walt Disney World resort in Orlando.

Amusement Today is making Best Indoor Waterpark an annual category. This year, top prize goes to Schlitterbahn Galveston Island. With its innovative quick-change roof, the original phase of the Galveston property can operate year round. Stocked with an indoor Torrent river, children's area, neighboring speed slides, a surfing machine and exhilarating family slides with fun banking, the park offers a lot from mild to wild.

"Schlitterbahn Galveston Island has been a huge hit not only for the guests who are coming to us, but it has also been a tourism economic engine for the city as well," says Jeffrey Siebert, director of communications for Schlitterbahn. "People are coming and staying overnight. It's bringing people down and is really becoming Houston's playground."

Other finalists in this category are World
▶ See PARKS, page 12



Park and Ride Winners



Ranked by percentage of votes cast

BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2008 (Amusement Park)

Ravine Flyer II	Waldameer Park	53%
Boardwalk Bullet	Kemah Boardwalk	11%
Behemoth	Canada's Wonderland	10%
Led Zeppelin The Ride	Hard Rock Park	6%
Evel Knievel	Six Flags St. Louis	5.5%

BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2008 (Waterpark)

Dragon's Revenge	Schlitterbahn	52%
Dolphin Plunge	Aquatica	23%
Black Hole: The Next Generation	Wet'n Wild Orlando	11%
Rock & Roll Island	Water Country USA	8%
Taumata Racer	Aquatica	5%

BEST PARK

Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	26%
Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	16%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	7%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	6.5%
Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	6% (tie)
Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	6% (tie)
Europa Park	Rust, Germany	5.5% (tie)
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	5.5% (tie)
Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	5%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	4.8%

BEST SEASIDE PARK

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	46%
Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	30%
Morey's Piers	Wildwood, N.J.	15%
Kemah Boardwalk	Kemah, Texas	4%

BEST WATERPARK

Schlitterbahn	New Braunfels, Texas	53%
Splashin' Safari	Santa Claus, Ind.	15%
Blizzard Beach	Orlando, Fla.	9%
Noah's Ark	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	8%
Typhoon Lagoon	Orlando, Fla.	6%

BEST INDOOR WATERPARK

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island	Galveston, Texas	25%
World Waterpark	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	18%
Kalahari Resort	Sandusky, Ohio	15%
Kalahari Resort	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	12%
Castaway Bay	Sandusky, Ohio	11%

FRIENDLIEST PARK

Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	32%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	27%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	13%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	6%
Beech Bend	Bowling Green, Ky.	4%

BEST CHILDREN'S PARK

Legoland California	Carlsbad, Calif.	41%
Idlewild	Ligonier, Pa.	27%
Farup Sommerland	Saltum, Denmark	10%
Dutch Wonderland	Lancaster, Pa.	6%
Memphis Kiddie Park	Cleveland, Ohio	5% (tie)
Sesame Place	Langhorne, Pa.	5% (tie)

CLEANEST PARK

Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	35%
Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	16%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	11% (tie)
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	11% (tie)
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	9%

BEST MARINE LIFE PARK

SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	56%
SeaWorld San Antonio	San Antonio, Texas	14%
SeaWorld San Diego	San Diego, Calif.	10%
Discovery Cove	Orlando, Fla.	8% (tie)
Six Flags Discovery Kingdom	Vallejo, Calif.	8% (tie)

BEST SHOWS

Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	27%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	24%
Disney's Hollywood Studios	Orlando, Fla.	12%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	10%
Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	8%



Cedar Point, rated Best Park for the 11th straight year, has more rides than any other park in the world.



AT PHOTOS/TIM BALDWIN

Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels has carried the Best Waterpark category since 1998.



Park and Ride Winners

Ranked by percentage of votes cast



BEST FOOD

Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	28%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	19%
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	18%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	13%
Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	8%

BEST WATER RIDE (PARK)

Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls	Islands of Adventure	34%
Valhalla	Pleasure Beach Blackpool	22%
Splash Mountain	Magic Kingdom	13%
Popeye and Bluto's Bilge-rat Barges	Islands of Adventure	9%
Journey to Atlantis	SeaWorld Orlando	8%

BEST WATERPARK RIDE

Master Blaster	Schlitterbahn	25%
Zoombabwe	Holiday World	20%
Deluge	Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom	14%
Dragon's Revenge	Schlitterbahn	12%
Black Anaconda	Noah's Ark	7%

BEST KID'S AREA

Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	38%
Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	21%
Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	8%
Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	7.5% (tie)
Nickelodeon Universe	Bloomington, Minn.	7.5% (tie)

BEST LANDSCAPING

Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	38%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, The Netherlands	25%
Gilroy Gardens	Gilroy Gardens	18%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	7%
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	5%

BEST OUTDOOR SHOW PRODUCTION

Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	38%
Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	22%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	13%
Hard Rock Park	Myrtle Beach, S.C.	10%
Disney's Hollywood Studios	Orlando, Fla.	8%

BEST DARK RIDE

Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man	Islands of Adventure	36%
Twilight Zone Tower of Terror	Disney's Hollywood Studios	17%
Haunted Mansion	Knoebels Amusement Resort	13%
Nights in White Satin: The Trip	Hard Rock Park	12%
Pirates of the Caribbean	Disneyland	7%

BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT

Universal Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	29%
Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	22%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	16%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	12%
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	6%

BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT

Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	38%
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	17%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	14%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	10%
Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	7%

BEST CAROUSEL

Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	48%
Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	21%
Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga	9%
Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	7%
Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	6%

BEST INDOOR COASTER

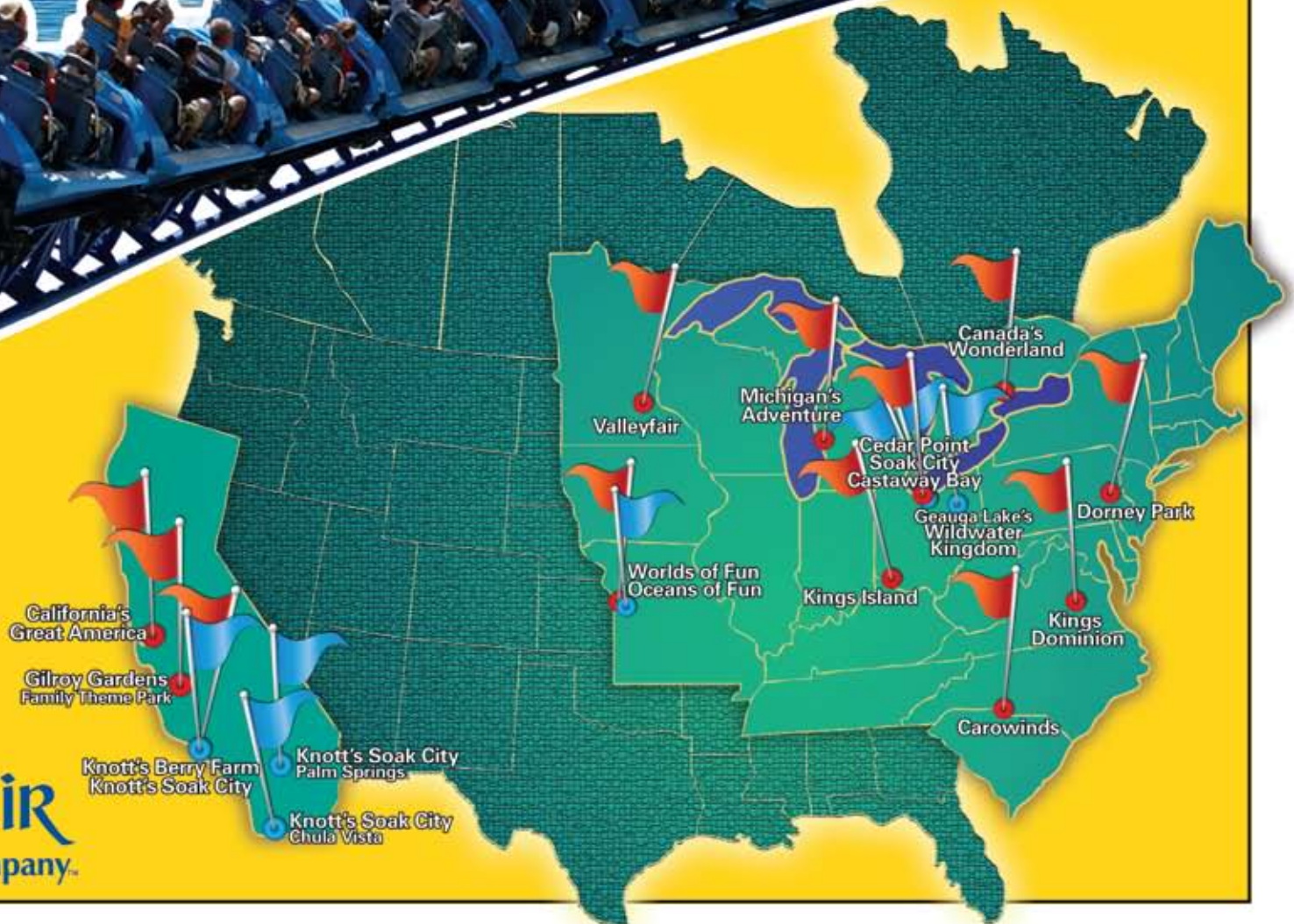
Revenge of the Mummy	Universal Studios Orlando	28%
Rock 'N Roller Coaster	Disney's Hollywood Studios	15%
Space Mountain	Disneyland	14%
Mindbender	Galaxyland	11%
Exterminator	Kennywood	10%

BEST FUNHOUSE/WALKTHROUGH ATTRACTION

Frankenstein's Castle	Indiana Beach	36%
Noah's Ark	Kennywood	33%
Hotel Gasten	Liseberg	10% (tie)
Lustiga Huset	Grona Lund	10% (tie)



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TOP Steel Roller Coasters



2 Millennium Force[®] Cedar Point



12 Maverick[™] Cedar Point



7 Magnum Cedar Point



18 Steel Force Dorney Park



9 Top Thrill Dragster[™] Cedar Point



22 Raptor[®] Cedar Point

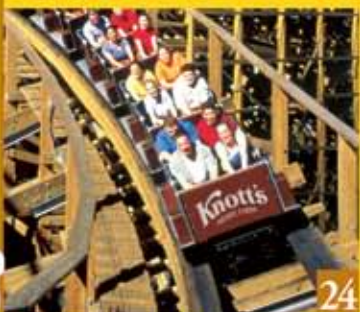
TOP Wooden Roller Coasters



7 Shivering Timbers Michigan's Adventure



8 Beast Kings Island



24 GhostRider Knott's Berry Farm

BEST Indoor Waterpark



5 Castaway Bay

BEST Halloween Event



2 Halloween Haunt Knott's Berry Farm

BEST New Ride



3 Behemoth Canada's Wonderland

BEST Landscaping



3 Gilroy Gardens

BEST Kid's Area



3 Knott's Berry Farm



4 Kings Dominion



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Charlotte, NC • carowinds.com

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IS WINNING
THE GOLDEN TICKET.



Thanks to Amusement Today for naming us the #1 Kids Park for the fifth year in a row.
And we're proud to host the awards next year.

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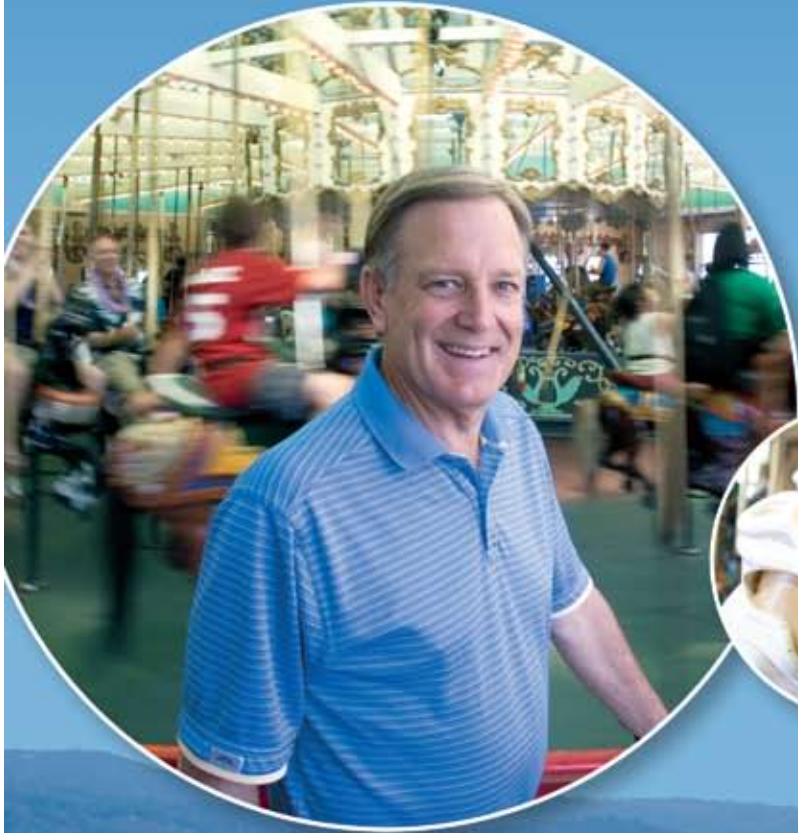




We're Really Enjoying Our "Golden" Years

Thank you for naming us the Best Seaside Amusement Park, two years in a row!

— Charles Canfield and the entire staff of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk



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Many thanks for naming
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in the world!*



WORLD'S BEST INDOOR WATERPARK 2008

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#2 Best Children's Park



Idlewild
and
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Thank you Amusement Today for your Golden Ticket Votes!

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► **PARKS**

Continued from page 4

Waterpark inside the mammoth West Edmonton Mall in second, and the pair of **Kalahari Resorts** coming in third and fourth, Ohio and Wisconsin respectively. The two Kalahari properties are the two largest indoor waterparks in the United States. Sandusky's **Castaway Bay** rounds out the top five.

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk returns for a second year win with a solid 46 percent of the vote for Best Seaside Park. The west coast landmark has thrilled patrons for over 100 years.

Pleasure Beach Blackpool places second with 30 percent. **Morey's Piers** on the east coast comes in third, and **Kemah Boardwalk** represents the south with a fourth place nab.

Legoland California seems to maintain its hold on the Best Children's Park category with its mix of beautiful landscaping, fun rides meant for families to share together, and a vast array of ever-so-cool Lego sculptures.

Idlewild in Pennsylvania captures the imagination of younger guests with its rides, waterpark, and interactive

climbing structures. Idlewild ranks second on the chart once again. **Farup Sommerland** in far off Denmark has entertained numerous members of our panel. The park is loaded with family rides and coasters, and a seemingly endless string of activities to jump, climb and bounce, many of which American parks would shy away from. **Dutch Wonderland**, also in Pennsylvania, places fourth, and a tie for fifth is shared between **Memphis Kiddie Park** outside Cleveland, Ohio and **Sesame Place**, also once again, in Pennsylvania.

There's nothing fishy about the lock on Best Marine Life Park. Busch's family of SeaWorld parks control this category. **SeaWorld Orlando's** 56 percent of the vote make it the biggest pie piece on any of our charts. With the innovative new Manta coaster sailing in to the park in 2009, it wouldn't appear the Orlando property is about to lose grasp on the Golden Ticket any time soon.

Sister parks in **San Antonio** and **San Diego** come in at respective second and third place slots. Unlike the other two properties, **SeaWorld San Antonio** also offers an included waterpark for visitors, as well as an assortment of coasters and water rides for the whole family. A tie for fourth is shared between **Discovery Cove** in Orlando and **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom** in Vallejo, California.



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island takes over the title as Best Indoor Waterpark. It opened in 2006 and features a retractable roof.



AT PHOTO/JEFFREY SEIFERT

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk returns for a second year win for Best Seaside Park, thanks to its selection of rides and the historic Giant Dipper wooden coaster.



PHOTO COURTESY IDLEWILD PARK

Idlewild Park, in Ligonier, Pa, continues to gain in popularity, placing second for Best Children's Park.



PHOTO COURTESY LEGOLAND

Kids and their families enjoy their time together at the always expanding **Legoland California**, voted Best Children's Park.



2008 WINNERS

- BUSCH GARDENS EUROPE**
- CEDAR POINT**
- DOLLYWOOD**
- EPCOT**
- HOLIDAY WORLD & SPLASHIN' SAFARI**
- INDIANA BEACH**
- KINGS ISLAND**
- KNOEBELS AMUSEMENT RESORT**
- LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA**
- PAUL NELSON**
- SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK**
- SCHLITTERBAHN**
- SCHLITTERBAHN GALVESTON ISLAND**
- SEAWORLD ORLANDO**
- SIX FLAGS FIESTA TEXAS**
- SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND**
- UNIVERSAL'S ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE**
- UNIVERSAL STUDIOS ORLANDO**
- WALDAMEER PARK**
- XOCOMIL WATERPARK**
- ZAMPERLA**

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Courteous staff, landscaping and food add to guest experience

Holiday World, Busch Gardens Europe and Knoebels all repeat winners

John Chidester, director of marketing for Holiday World and Splashin' Safari, knows the guest experience is something special. The park has built a legendary reputation for cleanliness and friendliness. Chidester credits the hospitality training that all the employees go through. "They also learn by example," he says. "They see Will and Mrs. Koch cleaning and talking to people. We like to engage our guests and be a part of the guest experience."

This winning philosophy sees **Holiday World** once again taking the Golden Ticket for two categories — Friendliest Employees and Cleanest Park.

In the Friendliest category, **Dollywood** boasts a strong second with 27 percent of the vote behind Holiday World's 32 percent. Other finalists are **Knoebels**, **Silver Dollar City**, and **Beech Bend Amusement Park**.

Earning their place in the top five for Cleanest Park are **Busch Gardens Europe** in second place, **Dollywood** and **Magic Kingdom** in a third place tie, and **Disneyland** finishing up the top five.

Eating at a park can elicit different responses from park

guests. Slow lines and expensive food make it a drudgery at some places. Others have captured the secret to making visitors look forward to eating at the park during their visit. Topping our list for Best Food is once again **Knoebels Amusement Resort**. Their knack for delicious meals and treats at family friendly prices make it a pleasure to "dine in" while at the park.

Other finalists are **Dollywood** for their captivating array of country deliciousness around every turn, **Epcot's** diverse around-the-world cuisine, **Silver Dollar City's** down home cookin', and the international choices at **Busch Gardens Europe**.

Beautiful landscaping can make such an impact on many visitors. Colorful surroundings enhance any park. **Busch Gardens Europe** takes top bill for Best Landscaping once again.

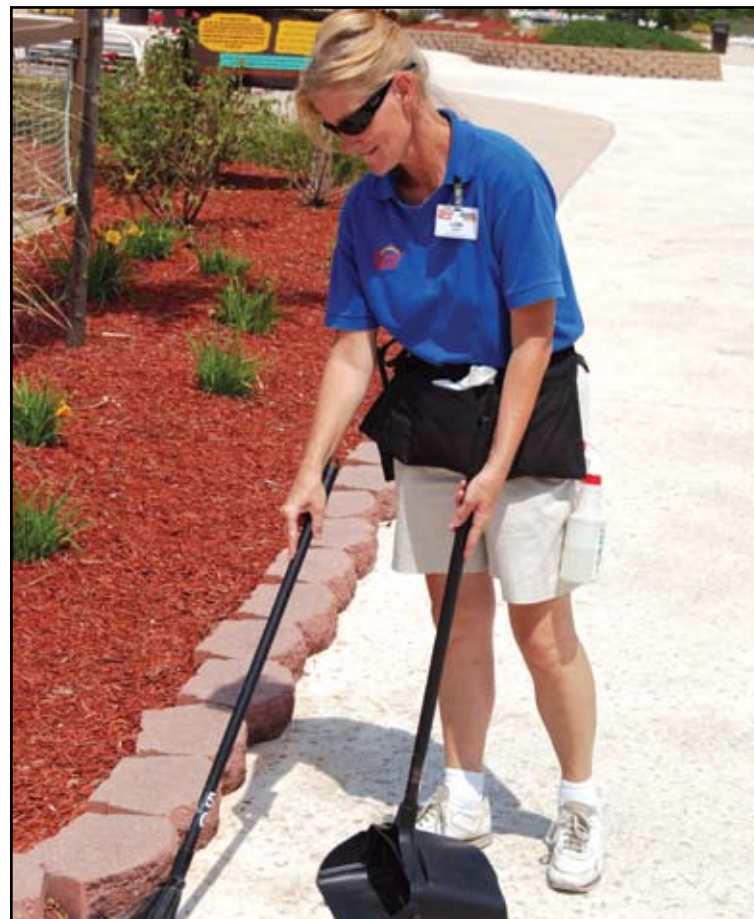
Grabbing big recognition for a strong second place ranking is **Efteling** in The Netherlands for their lush landscaping. Rounding out the category is **Gilroy Gardens**, **Dollywood**, and **Epcot**.

—Tim Baldwin



Above, Busch Gardens Europe continues to be legendary with their overall park landscaping. At right, Knoebels has tasty food from numerous outlets that all guests are sure to enjoy devouring.

PHOTOS COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS AND KNOEBELS



PHOTOS COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD

Holiday World & Splashin' Safari in Santa Claus, Indiana scores high with voters and families for their clean and friendly atmosphere.

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Shows, seasonal events gives guests a break from rides

Six Flags Fiesta Texas takes Best Show category; Epcot's Illumination wins Best Outdoor Show Production; Universal Orlando takes back Halloween and Dollywood celebrates win for Best Christmas Event

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

A hot afternoon or a sudden rain shower are good reasons to duck into a show while at a park. But sometimes the shows alone are reason to go.

Six Flags Fiesta Texas makes it 10 straight years of Best Shows. New for 2008 was Blast Fever, a modified version of the touring band production, and a 70s version of Rockville. Director of Entertainment Ben McTyre says, "The Golden Tickets have a very positive impact on the performers, the

rest of the department, and the park as a whole." McTyre adds, "The performers love being in front of an audience. It's great to be recognized as being the best at what you do."

Fast on their heels is **Dollywood** with its top-notch show entertainment. Rounding out the five finalists are **Disney's Hollywood Studios**, **Silver Dollar City**, and **Busch Gardens Europe**.

Epcot, **Fiesta Texas**, and **Disneyland** hang on to their respective first, second, and third place wins in Best Outdoor (Night) Production they gar-



nered on the charts last year. A new player to this category is **Hard Rock Park** with their Bohemian Rhapsody inspired finale taking fourth. **Disney's Hollywood Studios'** Fantasmic comes in fifth.

The competition for first place can sometimes be scary. **Universal Orlando** wraps their nails around the Golden Ticket

for Best Halloween Event, taking it from previous holder **Knott's Berry Farm**. Knott's places second in 2008. **Knoebels**, **Kennywood**, and **Cedar Point** take respective third, fourth, and fifth rankings to complete the finalists.

New for this year is Best Christmas Event. It's amazing how many parks capture the magic of the holidays, with new parks adding such festivals each year. Dominating this new category is **Dollywood** with 38 percent of the vote. Being finalists in more categories (eight) than any other park, Dollywood takes the

gold for Christmas Event.

"The shows, the millions of lights and all that great holiday food really get families in the mood for the holidays," says Pete Owens, public relations manager for Dollywood. "This year's addition of the Polar Express 4D to the festival mix will just add another reason for families to visit."

Placing second in this new event is **Magic Kingdom** at Walt Disney World. Sister park **Disneyland** follows closely at third, with **Silver Dollar City** and **Hersheypark** rounding out the top five.



PHOTO COURTESY JASON KNUTSON

Monster Mash Bash at Six Flags Fiesta Texas has been a Halloween show superhit.



PHOTO COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD EPCOT

Epcot's Illuminations: Reflections of Earth is a lasting memory for Walt Disney World guests.



PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

Universal Orlando has taken back the gold for Best Halloween Event, a title it once claimed in 2006. It's frightening!



PHOTO COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

Dollywood is merry over their win as Best Christmas Event, a new category introduced to the Golden Ticket Awards.

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Go for a ride!

Perennial favorites maintain awards in several categories; New walk-through attraction category added for 2008

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

New for the Golden Tickets this year is a category that doesn't necessarily count as a "ride" but more of an attraction. Funhouses and walk-through attractions (usually scary) carry a flavor all their own. It's a matter of interaction with one's self, whether it be a sense of humor or sense of fear. It's all in good fun.

Such attractions aren't as easy to find within the U.S. anymore. While once staples at any amusement park, litigious times have taken their toll on such whimsical fun and most parks have removed these classic experiences. Europe seems to have more of them than their North American counterparts. We asked our panel what fun could still be found.

Frankenstein Castle's at **Indiana Beach** is the American favorite by gathering 36 percent of the vote. This spooky, multi-level walk-through has numerous sight gags and tricks to make one gasp, scream and laugh. Close behind is **Kennywood's** Noah's Ark with 33 percent of the vote. This tilting, rocking fun house like attraction has many fun moments that test the guest's skill at walking while enjoying whimsical scenes along the way. While some was updated in relatively recent times, Noah's Ark dates back to 1936.

The Europeans are also in on the fun. Noted for their elaborate examples of both genres, Hotel Gasten at **Liseberg** in Sweden delivers one of the scariest and detailed haunted walk-throughs in a theme park, while **Grona Lund's** Lustiga Huset is a huge fun-house full of mirrors, slides, gags, and seemingly endless pratfalls. Both of these attractions tie for third, and many U.S. enthusiasts are envious that such fun is difficult to find in their own neck of the woods.

In the Best Carousel category, both the top two finalists allow their guests to reach for the brass ring while rid-



ing, another throwback to yesteryear that's nice to see still around. **Knoebels** takes top honors with 48 percent of the vote. **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** lands 21 percent.

Roland Hopkins, editor of *Carousel News and Trader*, says that Knoebels' carousel goes beyond the brass ring. "Charles Carmell carved extremely expressive and elaborately decorated horses," says Hopkins. "Knoebels has done a very nice job to maintain and retain the integrity of the historic 95-year old

machine which makes it very rare."

Six Flags Over Georgia celebrates 100 years of the Riverview Carousel at their park this season. The ride comes in third. Rounding out the top five is **Islands of Adventure's** whimsical Car-Seuss-el and **Six Flags Great America's** double decker work of beauty.

Best Water Ride in an amusement park once again goes to **Islands of Adventure's** Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls. Valhalla at **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** comes in second with its combination water ride/dark ride. Splash Mountain at **Disneyland**,

▶ See RIDES, page 23



PHOTO COURTESY KNOEBELS

Grabbing the brass ring is one of the many charms of Knoebels' carousel.



PHOTO COURTESY ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE

Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man at Islands of Adventure is an elaborately high tech dark ride.



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN

Frankenstein's Castle at Indiana Beach scared up the winning votes for Best Funhouse/Walk-Through Attraction, a new Golden Ticket category.



PHOTO COURTESY DAVE JACKSON

Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls wins as Best Water Ride for a fourth year in a row and six wins overall.



PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS ORLANDO

Universal Orlando is a new winner for Best Indoor Coaster with their exhilarating Revenge of the Mummy.



►RIDES

Continued from page 22

Popeye and Bluto's Bilge-rat Barges at IOA, and Journey to Atlantis at SeaWorld Orlando all take third through fifth, respectively.

Going over to the dark side, Islands of Adventures scoops the Best Dark Ride category with 36 percent of the vote. Climbing a notch this year is Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at Disney's Hollywood Studios. Knoebels' ever-popular Haunted Mansion takes third. New to the category is Hard Rock Park's very trippy Nights in White Satin which comes in fourth. Disneyland's classic Pirates of the Caribbean rounds out the category.

A new contender has taken over the Golden Ticket for Best Indoor Roller Coaster. Universal Orlando has frightened the daylight out of many riders with Revenge of the Mummy, and our panel



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN

Master Blaster has won the Golden Tickets' Best Waterpark Ride ten out of eleven years.

has loved it, with voting at 28 percent. The high tech coaster lets guests experience all the suspense, drama, and even a little humor of the blockbuster movies. The highly-themed queue line allows explorers to stumble across artifacts and sometimes someone just waiting around the corner. The immersive roller coaster incorporates many animated figures, audio, fog, fire, and even creep scarabs crawling all around you. A "fake out" ending is also a hoot. The cat-

egory's previous winner, Rock 'N Roller Coaster at Disney's Hollywood Studios, places second. Disneyland's famous Space Mountain voyages into third place. West Edmonton Mall's massive Mindbender and Kennywood's clever Exterminator complete the top five.

Master Blaster at Schlitterbahn retains its lock on Best Waterpark Ride. Sneaking up close behind is Splashin' Safari's multi-passenger Zoombabwe coming



PHOTO COURTESY KINGS ISLAND

The rides and activities for families and kids are seemingly endless at Kings Island, winner of Best Kids' Area.

in at second. The innovative, electromagnetic uphill water-coaster Deluge finds Kentucky Kingdom rounding out our top three. Schlitterbahn's brand new Dragon's Revenge and Black Anaconda at Noah's Ark are the other finalists. Of note, four of the five finalists are uphill waterslide attractions.

Kings Island also keeps its long-running hold on Best Kids Area. While the Paramount movie themes have been dropped from the property,

Cedar Fair has retained rights to the Nickelodeon branding. Three children's coasters, numerous children's rides, waterplay areas, a haunted interactive dark ride, and a family flume complement the area.

Other finalists in this category are Islands of Adventure's Seuss Landing, Knott's Berry Farm's Camp Snoopy. Finishing the top five are Kings Dominion and Nickelodeon Universe at the Mall of America.



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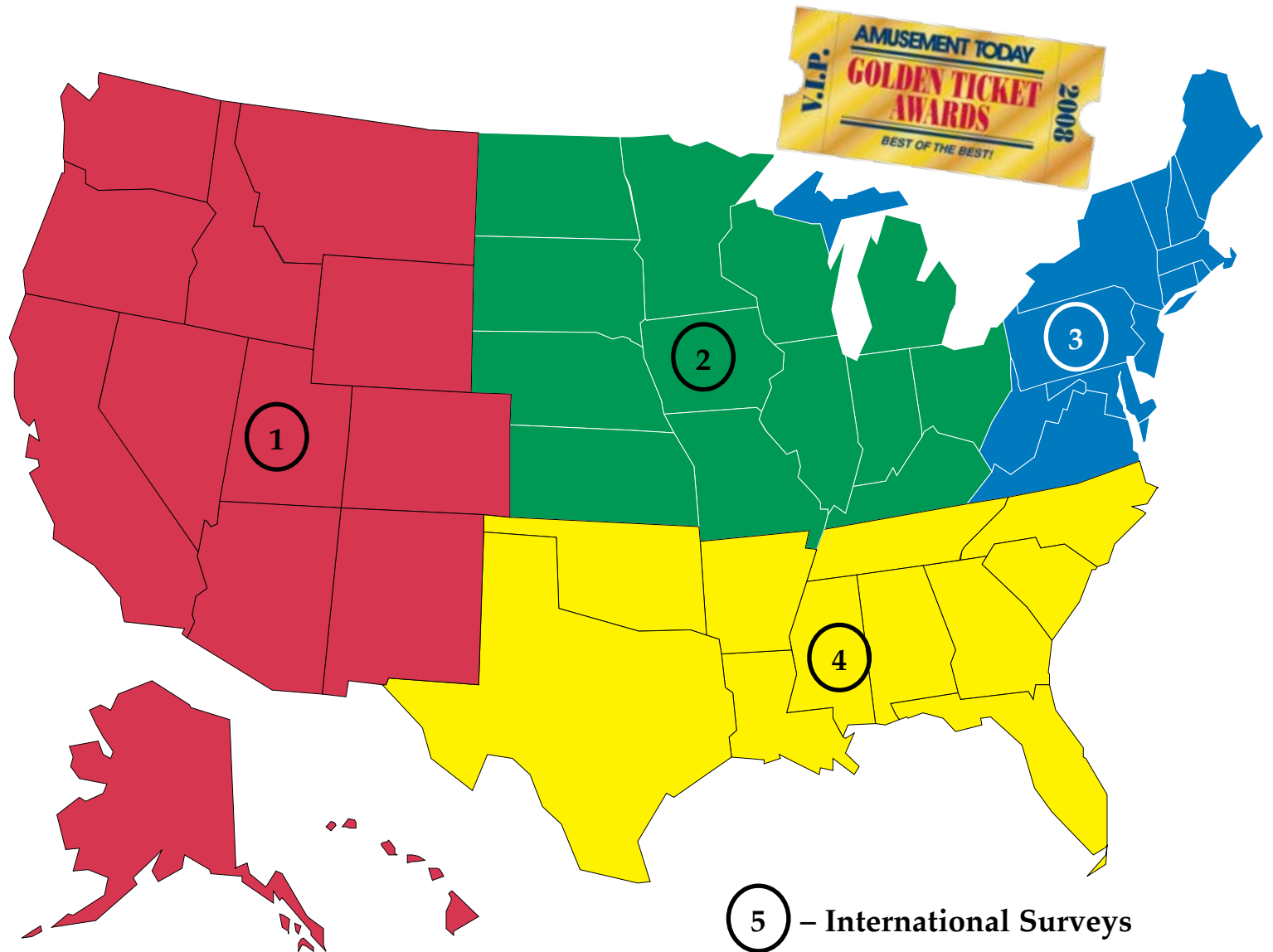
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Our panel of experts




Since the beginning of the Golden Ticket Awards in 1998, *Amusement Today* has sought out the most experienced and well-travelled amusement park enthusiasts. Using a fair and balanced protocol of dividing ballots equally among four regions of the United States and another portion for international voters, *AT* receives representation from all around the world.

But who are these people and what are they like? More than 84 percent of them have been to 50 or more parks, and 88 percent of them have visited parks outside their home country. 92 percent of them own at least one season pass, and 60 percent own two or more. On average, 39 percent report they visit 10-20 parks each year, and 26 percent state they visit more than 20. 47 percent boast that they have been on more than 500 roller coasters, with 41 percent claiming a range between 250-500.

Kudos to this great group of experts!







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2008 Best New Rides go to Waldameer and Schlitterbahn



Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

Paul Nelson didn't give up. For over a decade he knew what he wanted.

Standing next to the station of Ravine Flyer II is a picnic shelter. It was originally the station house of the Ravine Flyer, a wooden coaster built in the 1920s.

Any other park operator would have just built a new coaster down the center or along the edge of the park. But Nelson knew he wanted to utilize the ravine just as the original did. It took him more than 15 years of work, but he got what he wanted. Park fans have now given him something extra.

Ravine Flyer II unquestionably won the category of Best New Ride in a Park. With 52 percent of participants casting their vote for this magnificent new wooden coaster by The Gravity Group, Paul Nelson really knows he has a signature ride that puts Waldameer Park on the map. Quite simply, it is what every park owner dreams of having. With a bridge that lets coast-



AT PHOTO/GARY SLADE

Ravine Flyer II at Waldameer, featuring a bridge that crosses a highway, was a clear favorite easily taking the category of Best New Ride in a Park.

er trains fly *over* the adjacent highway, Waldameer has a new attraction like no other. With such a stunt it almost makes billboards seem passe'.

This is the third win for The Gravity Group for Best New Ride following their successes with Hades in 2005 and Voyage in 2006. Their fourth project, **Boardwalk Bullet**, came in second behind Ravine Flyer II. Although the Kemah Boardwalk coaster opened last year, it made its debut after last year's balloting had been counted, thus pushing it into this voting term.

Also in the top five are B&M's massive **Behemoth** at Canada's Wonderland and

Led Zeppelin The Ride at Hard Rock Park. **Evel Knievel** at Six Flags St. Louis, even with a late start out of the gate, managed to roar into the top five. It is the latest creation by Great Coasters International, Inc.

What's old is new again. Or at least that is how it seems when looking at new waterpark attractions. Two of our finalists took existing attractions and re-invented them.

Taking Best New Ride in a Waterpark for 2008 is Schlitterbahn and its inventive new **Dragon's Revenge**. In 1994, the park premiered Dragon Blaster, the first uphill water coaster. Having taken the concept bigger, taller, and



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN

Schlitterbahn introduced Dragon's Revenge, a make-over of an uphill water coaster that incorporated an abundance of brand new effects.

faster with Master Blaster, the park did an extreme makeover with theming and effects. The attraction now features fog, an original soundtrack, faux fire, fiber optics, a spinning tunnel, and video projection, all during an up-and-down waterslide adventure.

"My favorite part of the ride is the cool fog effect," says Darren Hill, general manager for Schlitterbahn. "And the music. And the fiber optics and the encounter with the dragon...I love the whole thing!" Hill adds, "From concept to completion, to guest satisfaction, our new ride has been a homerun."

Schlitterbahn isn't the

only park to be thinking outside the box. SeaWorld's brand new Aquatica received high marks for its clever use of incorporating riders with Commerson's dolphins on its **Dolphin Plunge** ride by using clear tubes that slide through their domain. Likewise, creative thinking also was shown at Wet'n Wild Orlando with the re-launch of their **Black Hole: the Next Generation** attraction. New lighting, color, and effects made for a whole new experience as passengers slide down darkened tubes now illuminated with cosmic wizardry.

Coming in fourth is Water Country USA's **Rock & Roll Island**. This new addition features a slide tower named after classic 50s dances, a children's area, and a lazy river that creates "the island." Aquatica also places once again in fifth for their eight-lane, eye-popping **Taumata Racer** from Whitewater West.



Boardwalk Bullet at the Kemah Boardwalk (top left) and Behemoth at Canada's Wonderland (top right) scored second and third for Best New Ride in a Park. Aquatica's Dolphin Plunge (lower left) and Wet'n Wild Orlando's Black Hole: The Next Generation (lower right) makeover ranked second and third for Best New Ride in a Waterpark.

AT PHOTOS; BLACK HOLE COURTESY WET 'N WILD

Park, individual, supplier each recipients of 2008 Publisher's Pick



AT PHOTO/GARY SLADE

One of the most beautiful waterparks in the world is the Xocomil waterpark, in Guatemala. The park opened in 1997 with huge success.

Xocomil waterpark a free sight to behold in Guatemala

Quality.

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For Ricardo Castillo, quality was the number one goal when he set out to build a theme park resort outside of Guatemala City, Guatemala.



Xocomil

He pulled together 33,000 independent companies (representing more than 400,000 employees) and asked if they would contribute one-percent of their total payroll each month to help fund the construction of a themed resort. The catch, admission to the theme parks would be free to the workers who contribute to the fund. Eighty-nine percent of all money collected would go toward the construction of the resort, with the remaining 11 percent going towards administrative fees.

The resort began with a simple hotel. Pools, cabins and restaurants would soon follow. In Nov. 1997 the Xocomil waterpark opened to guests.

Designed by Canada's Whitewater, this heavily themed and landscaped park features 11 Whitewater attractions to choose from. After entertaining more than 1 million guests in its opening year, the park became a spring board for the resort to build the Xetulul theme park as well as more hotels and other amenities on the property.

Thanks to the ground work laid by Xocomil, the IRTRA Resort now employs 3,000 workers and has entertained more than 38 million visitors to date.

As the numbers will tell you, Xocomil is quality, Disney quality and AT's pick for Park of the Year.



AT PHOTO/SCOTT RUTHERFORD

Paul Nelson began his career at Waldameer Park at age 11. Now after a 15-year wait, he has his Ravine Flyer II to thrill guests.

Paul Nelson made Waldameer a career and success story

Paul Nelson had the best of both worlds.

At the young age of 11, he began work at Waldameer Park in Erie, Pa. Little did he know that a friendship his mother had with the parks owners would result in him having two sets of parents and a career at the park.



Paul Nelson

At that young age of 11 he made a promise to the then owner of Waldameer, Alex Moeller, that he would take care of his wife, Ruth, should he die before her. The Moeller's had no children and he wanted to make sure the park would be secured for the future. To do that, the Moeller's adopted Paul, with the blessings of Paul's mom. He honored that promise taking care of Ruth and his mom until their deaths, all the while inheriting and running a park.

During his 51 year tenure, he knew the park needed its famous and signature Ravine Flyer wooden roller coaster brought back to life. What he didn't know is that would take 15 years to get the coaster approved to be built.

But like every other challenge he has met in life, Paul met the coaster challenges with open arms. He resolved issues with neighbors, the state, wetlands and more. He endured three different coaster companies, but kept the same designer, Larry Bill. Finally his building permit was granted. Eighteen months later the Ravine Flyer II made its debut.

With a daughter and son-in-law working in the park, Waldameer's future has never been brighter. *Amusement Today* is honored to name Paul Nelson as our 2008 Person of the Year.



AT PHOTO/GARY SLADE

Zamperla, best known for its fine selection of kiddie rides, is now building bigger rides including roller coasters, like the Pony Express.

Zamperla delivers 180+ rides per year, coasters newest hit

For Italy-based Zamperla, one has to go back to the mid-1800's to trace its very beginnings when Giovanni Zamperla started a traveling equestrian circus to entertain at special events in towns and villages.



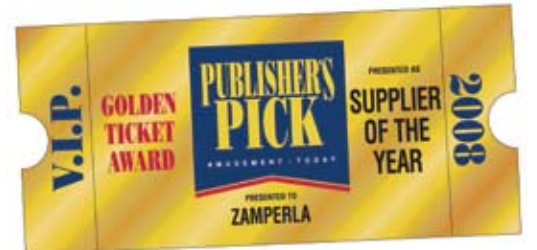
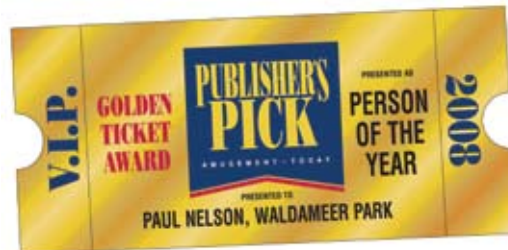
The second generation, Antonio Zamperla, took 'amusement' to a new level in the 1960's when he started the concept of building amusement rides.

Under the Zamperla brand, the company would give birth to many must-have kiddie rides like the Mini Airplane, the Convoy and the Balloon Race. Zamperla would build a reputation for its creative theming ideas, brightly painted fiberglass decorations and affordable pricing.

Now led by the third generation, Alberto Zamperla, the company has improved its quality and led the industry in creativity that has allowed the company to experience unprecedented growth. Zamperla now produces more than 180 rides each year and has a product catalog in excess of 60 different rides. It has expanded to the United States and beyond to employ a global workforce of 450 associates.

From the early day kiddie rides to major thrill rides, Zamperla has built for every size of park imaginable. Most recently, the company has launched entire roller coaster and water ride divisions.

The next time you are in a park and you hear the laughter and screams of a child or a family on a ride, it's a good bet they are on a Zamperla ride. *AT* salutes Zamperla as our 2008 Supplier of the Year for its longevity and creativity.



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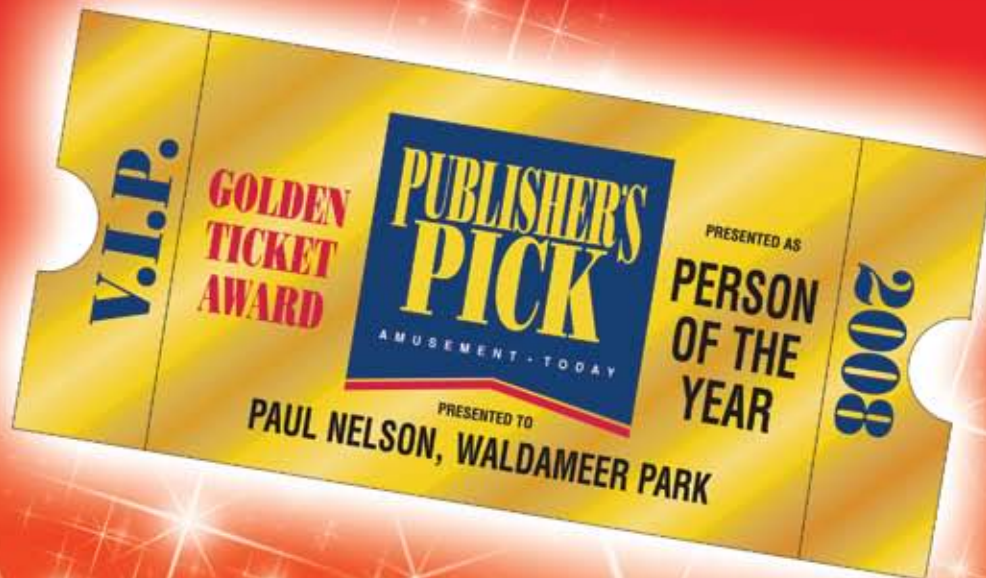


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The Speed of Steel!

Six Flags New England's Superman flies high as Best Steel Coaster



PHOTO COURTESY ALLAN REID

Superman Ride of Steel at Six Flags New England set a new Golden Ticket record for the most points cast for a roller coaster – 1363!

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

Six Flags New England proudly boasts the "#1 Steel Coaster" on banners outside of **Superman Ride of Steel's** station and on the inside as well. Cleverly, they've saved room for another. For a fourth time, the Intamin mega coaster built in 2000 has flown off with the top prize.

Jeffrey Seifert, roller coaster census director for American Coaster Enthusiasts, agrees with the fanfare. "It is simply the best coaster in the world!" Seifert continues, "This particular layout is such a signature piece for the park; you won't find a duplicate anywhere or anything close to it." Coaster enthusiasts have praised the ride for its amazing abundance of airtime. "Even after eight years it still manages to deliver like no other coaster can," adds Seifert.

For the first time in Golden Ticket history, point totals for a roller coaster have burst through the 1300 barrier. Superman has done it in a big way. Or would that be a "super" way?

Turn back the calendar to 1998 when the Golden Ticket



Awards were first initiated. At that time, 10 years ago, *Amusement Today's* simple survey garnered enough points for the number one steel coaster to boast 466 points. (A voter's top coaster gets ten points, their tenth choice gets one point.)

Looking at today's charts, one not only sees higher totals as support for the Golden Tickets has surged ever higher, but also how things actually are in a flow of continuous change. Only two of the top 10 coasters this year would have been eligible in 1998, as all others have been built since *AT* introduced its original survey. Certainly, newer and more exciting coasters are always being created.

B&M and Intamin appear to dominate the charts of fan favorites, but vintage designs from Arrow and Schwarzkopf, as well as a scattering of other newer suppliers make it a steel coaster smorgasbord. Intamin has provided the top

two coasters on the chart, both built in 2000, as well as Europe's highest rated coaster, **Expedition GeForce**. B&M boasts the most designs on the chart, claiming 20 of the top 50.

Two new-for-2008 rides debuted on the charts this year. Toronto's **Behemoth** (No. 29) at Canada's Wonderland opened to rave reviews with its newer style of trains. Hersheypark also introduced **Fahrenheit** (No. 46), perhaps the most clever and creative name for a coaster this season (a year that has been marred with several naming missteps). **Dominator's** change of location didn't keep it off the lists as it moved from Geauga Lake to Kings Dominion. It saw a return to the charts at No. 43.

Six Flags Over Georgia has seen its towering **Goliath** rise each season. Its jump from eighth place up to sixth was due to an increase of more than 250 points over its previous total.

Unlike wood, tubular steel coasters are less than half a century old. The rides with the most age under their

► **See STEEL, page 38**



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN



PHOTO COURTESY S. MADONNA HORCHER



PHOTO COURTESY BOBBY NAGY

The remainder of the top five features Millennium Force (No. 2) at Cedar Point, Nitro (No. 3) at Six Flags Great Adventure, Apollo's Chariot (No. 4) at Busch Gardens Europe, and Expedition GeForce (No. 5) at Holiday Park. Intamin and B&M make the entire selection of coasters in the Top 5.

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Thank you *Amusement Today* for honoring **SUPERMAN Ride Of Steel** as the best steel coaster for the 3rd year in a row!



The List

2008 TOP 50 STEEL ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
1	Superman Ride of Steel	Six Flags New England	Agawam, Mass.	2000	Intamin	1363
2	Millennium Force	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2000	Intamin	1107
3	Nitro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2001	B & M	838
4	Apollo's Chariot	Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	1999	B & M	718
5	Expedition GeForce	Holiday Park	Hassloch, Germany	2001	Intamin	651
6	Goliath	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	2006	B & M	646
7	Magnum XL-200	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	1989	Arrow	518
8	Phantom's Revenge	Kennywod	West Mifflin, Pa.	2001	Morgan/Arrow	428
9	Top Thrill Dragster	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2003	Intamin	366
10	Montu	Busch Gardens Africa	Tampa, Fla.	1996	B & M	343
11	Raging Bull	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	1999	B & M	278
12	Maverick	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2007	Intamin	254
13	Nemesis	Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	1994	B & M	246
14	Dueling Dragons	Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	1999	B & M	239
15	Mind Bender	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	1978	Schwarzkopf	232
16	X2	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2002	Arrow	227
17	Ride of Steel	Darien Lake	Darien Center, N.Y.	1999	Intamin	205
18	Steel Force	Dorney Park	Allentown, Pa.	1997	Morgan	186
19	SheiKra	Busch Gardens Africa	Tampa, Fla.	2005	B & M	170
20	Griffon	Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	2007	B & M	174
21	Superman Ride of Steel	Six Flags America	Largo, Md.	2000	Intamin	169
22 (tie)	Alpengeist	Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	1997	B & M	161
22 (tie)	Raptor	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	1994	B & M	161
24	Titan	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	2001	Giovanola	149
25	Kingda Ka	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2005	Intamin	143

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The List



2008 TOP 50 STEEL ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
26	Incredible Hulk Coaster	Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	1999	B & M	141
27	Kumba	Busch Gardens Africa	Tampa, Fla.	1993	B & M	139
28	Goliath	La Ronde	Montreal, Quebec, Canada	2006	B & M	133
29	Behemoth	Canada's Wonderland	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	2008	B & M	123
30	Goliath	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2000	Giovanola	110
31	Shock Wave	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	1978	Schwarzkopf	102
32	Goliath	Walabi World	Biddinghuizen, The Netherlands	2002	Intamin	100
33	Volcano	King's Dominion	Doswell, Va.	1998	Intamin	96
34	Big Bad Wolf	Busch Gardens Europe	Williamsburg, Va.	1984	Arrow	87
35	Expedition Everest	Disney's Animal Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	2006	Vekoma/WED Imag.	85
36	Tatsu	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2006	B & M	82
37	Xcelerator	Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	2002	Intamin	73
38	Storm Runner	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	2004	Intamin	66
39	Afterburn	Carowinds	Charlotte, N.C.	1999	B & M	64
40 (tie)	Euro Mir	Europa Park	Rust, Germany	1998	Mack	63
40 (tie)	Mamba	Worlds of Fun	Kansas City, Mo.	1998	Morgan	63
42	Kraken	SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	2000	B & M	59
43 (tie)	Dominator	Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	2008	B & M	57
43 (tie)	Mindbender	Galaxyland	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	1985	Schwarzkopf	57
45	Whizzer	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	1976	Schwarzkopf	55
46	Fahrenheit	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	2008	Intamin	52
47 (tie)	The Big One	Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	1994	Arrow	51
47 (tie)	Mystery Mine	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	2007	Gerstlauer/Forrec	51
49	PowderKeg	Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	2005	S & S	50
50	Superman Krypton Coaster	Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	2000	B & M	46



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► **STEEL**

Continued from page 34

belts are classics from master designer Anton Schwarzkopf. **Whizzer** (No. 45) at Six Flags Great America gets some face time on the charts this year, and two vintage classics, **Mind Bender** (No. 15) at Six Flags Over Georgia and **Shock Wave** (No. 31) at Six Flags Over Texas, performed better on the charts in 2008 over last year. Thanks to track work and other off-season rehab efforts, both are operating in top condition.

Another success story is Cedar Point's **Magnum**. While other taller and faster coasters have come along (at its very own park, in fact) **Magnum XL-200** still rides proudly in the top 10. It was the first

coaster to break the 200-foot barrier and started parks everywhere to try and push the envelope. These mega coasters have surfaced around the globe, typically being the top draw at each park.

Eight coasters from outside the U.S. appear in the rankings. West Edmonton Mall's **Mindbender** (No. 43) is the largest indoor coaster in the world, and Europa Park's **Euro Mir** (No. 40) offers one of the most one-of-a-kind coaster experiences on the planet.

According to ACE's online census, there are 2,074 coasters in the world, obviously making for heavy competition. Kings Island appears to be gearing up for a big 2009 debut. Next year's Golden Ticket panel will decide if it upsets the top 10.

Clockwise from top left: Shock Wave at Six Flags Over Texas is running well after receiving some off-season trackwork; Whizzer at Six Flags Great America is the oldest steel coaster on the charts; Goliath at Six Flags Over Georgia climbed higher in the rankings with more than a 250 point increase from last year's totals.



AT PHOTOS/TIM BALDWIN; WHIZZER COURTESY S. MADONNA HORCHER



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Wooden Wonders!

Holiday World's Voyage repeats as the Best Wooden Coaster

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

The wooden charts bear some insightful investigation. Since the Golden Tickets began in 1998, the top woodie has had a brief stint in the spotlight and then a younger challenger comes up to replace it. Holiday World's Raven held the position the longest for four seasons, while others have snagged the prize for shorter periods. It's a hard battle to remain in the top ranks, and some see their glory fade a bit.

The Voyage enjoys its second year in the top spot with a comfortable lead. Of note, however, is the clear fight for second place, a blitzkrieg that could happen at any moment. All contenders in places two through five saw a significant jump of more than a hundred points over last year's poll. The point spread between these spots are tight with just barely more than 50 points separating second place from fourth.

The most significant jump on the charts was Great Adventure's **El Toro**. In its three years it has hopped from its debut spot at No. 13 to a



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN

The Voyage at Holiday World scores a second year victory as Best Wooden Coaster.

top 10 position in 2007 by doubling its points, rising to No. 9. This season it doubles its points once again launching it up to fourth place and upsetting the ranks in the middle of the top 10 pack. Could it be the one to tumble The Voyage off its perch in the years ahead?

A story even more exciting

is the cut-off margin for the top 10. Waldameer's new-for-2008 **Ravine Flyer II** missed out of bursting into the upper echelon by one point. Holiday World's **Raven** hung on to the No. 10 spot with a single tally over the new Gravity Group hit coaster, which took Best New Ride this year. Ravine

Flyer II, as it gathers more and more fans, should effortlessly climb into the top 10 next year.

Other new coasters are jumping onto the charts. GCII's massive **Troy**, which opened in the The Netherlands last season, debuts this year with a significant No. 26 placement.



Kemah's **Boardwalk Bullet**, which debuted late in 2007 lands at No. 39. Also new in 2008 is St. Louis' **Evel Knievel**. Even with a late June opening, it jumps on the charts at No. 44, just slightly above its two St. Louis brethren. Look for a stronger charge up the list next season.

Three racing coasters land on the charts this year. Hersheypark's **Lightning Racer** continues its accolade of being the top racing coaster on the planet. Kennywood's **Racer** (No. 47) and Blackpool's **Grand National** (No. 27) racing coasters share a common bond as both of those courses have riders departing on one side of the station and returning on the other. Only three such coasters exist in the world.

The oldest coaster in our top 50 is Kennywood's venerable **Jack Rabbit** (1921). Even with its demure size, it has legions of fans with its famed

▶ See **WOOD**, page 44



AT PHOTO/JOEL STYER



PHOTO COURTESY KNOEBELS



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN



AT PHOTO/TIM BALDWIN

Ranking in the top five best wooden coasters are **Thunderhead**, (No. 2) at Dollywood, **Phoenix**, (No. 3) at Knoebels, **El Toro**, (No. 4) at Six Flags Great Adventure, and **Boulder Dash**, (No. 5) at Lake Compounce.

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We are **THRILLED** that the readers of *Amusement Today* have named the Voyage as the Best Wooden Roller Coaster in the World for the second year in a row! We are honored to have been voted the #9 Best Overall Park. We are also proud that you voted us the Friendliest Park Staff for the eleventh consecutive year, and the Cleanest Park for the ninth consecutive year. We could not have accomplished all this without our wonderful employees. They are the heart and soul of this business, and without them we would not be able to say we're #1 for Family Fun!



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The List

2008 TOP 50 WOODEN ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
1	The Voyage	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	2006	Gravity Group	1225
2	Thunderhead	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	2004	GCI	1047
3	Phoenix	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	1985	Dinn/PTC-Schmeck	1029
4	El Toro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2006	Intamin	993
5	Boulder Dash	Lake Compounce	Bristol, Conn.	2000	CCI	861
6	Hades	Mt. Olympus Theme Park	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	2005	Gravity Group	677
7	Shivering Timbers	Michigan's Adventure	Muskegon, Mich.	1998	CCI	523
8	The Beast	Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	1979	KECO	471
9	Lightning Racer	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	2000	GCI	447
10	The Raven	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	1995	CCI	428
11	Ravine Flyer II	Waldameer Park	Erie, Pa.	2008	Gravity Group	427
12	Avalanche	Timber Falls	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	2004	S & S	287
13	Kentucky Rumbler	Beech Bend	Bowling Green, Ky.	2006	GCI	272
14	The Legend	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	2000	CCI	249
15	Balder	Liseberg	Stockholm, Sweden	2003	Intamin	237
16	Cyclone	Astroland	Brooklyn, N.Y.	1927	Keenan/Baker	227
17	Tremors	Silverwood	Athol, Idaho	1999	CCI	218
18	Colossos	Heide Park	Soltau, Germany	2001	Intamin	187
19	Thunderbolt	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	1968	Vettel/Miller	186
20 (tie)	Ozark Wildcat	Celebration City	Branson, Mo.	2003	GCI	182
20 (tie)	Rampage	Alabama Adventure	Bessemer, Ala.	1998	CCI	182
22	Megafobia	Oakwood	Pembrokeshire, Wales	1996	CCI	177
23	Giant Dipper	Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	1924	Prior & Church/Looff	170
24	Ghost Rider	Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	1998	CCI	163
25	Cornball Express	Indiana Beach	Monticello, Ind.	2001	CCI	156

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The List



2008 TOP 50 WOODEN ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
26	Troy	Toverland	Sevenum, The Netherlands	2007	GCII	148
27	Grand National	Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	1935	Paige	139
28	Texas Giant	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	1990	Dinn/Summers	134
29	Comet	The Great Escape	Lake George, N.Y.	1994	PTC-Schmeck	131
30	Viper	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	1995	Starkey/Six Flags	128
31	Coaster	PNE Playland	Vancouver, B.C., Canada	1958	Phare	118
32	Twister	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	1999	Fetterman/Knoebels	96
33	Tonnerre de Zeus	Parc Asterix	Plailly, France	1997	CCI	93
34	Jack Rabbit	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	1921	PTC-Miller	88
35 (tie)	Renegade	Valleyfair!	Shakopee, Minn.	2007	GCII	81
35 (tie)	Thunderbird	PowerPark	Alaharma, Finland	2006	GCII	81
37	Hurricane	Boomers	Dania Beach, Fla.	2000	Coaster Works	78
38	Aska	Nara Dreamland	Nara, Japan	1998	Intamin	73
39	Boardwalk Bullet	Kemah Boardwalk	Kemah, Texas	2007	Gravity Group	66
40 (tie)	Georgia Cyclone	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	1990	Dinn/Summers	63
40 (tie)	Blue Streak	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	1964	PTC-Hoover	58
42	Grizzly	Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	1982	KECO	55
43	Timber Terror	Silverwood	Athol, Idaho	1996	CCI	51
44	Evel Knievel	Six Flags St. Louis	Eureka, Mo	2008	GCII	50
45	Wildcat	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	1996	GCII	44
46	The Boss	Six Flags St. Louis	Eureka, Mo.	2000	CCI	43
47	Racer	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	1927	PTC-Miller	42
48	Screamin' Eagle	Six Flags St. Louis	Eureka, Mo.	1976	PTC-Allen	40
49 (tie)	Great American Scream Machine	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	1973	PTC-Allen	35
49 (tie)	New Mexico Rattler	Cliff's Amusement Park	Albuquerque, N.M.	2002	Cliff's	35

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►WOOD

Continued from page 39

double dip. The oldest coaster in the top 25 is Coney Island's landmark **Cyclone** (1927), often considered the measuring stick to all other coasters. It holds strong at No. 16.

Nine coasters on the lists operate outside the U.S., the highest ranking being Liseberg's **Balder** (No. 15). **Coaster** (No. 31) at Playland in Canada celebrates a 50th anniversary this season.

New competition for 2009 is already underway. Our panel of riders are sure to juggle their own lists next year.

John Chidester, Holiday World's marketing director, beams, "The fact that Voyage remains number one is truly an honor. We're tickled! We are very thankful to our riders."

Can The Voyage remain on top? Or will any of the top five poised to take over grab the gold next season? Stay tuned.



PHOTOS COURTESY B. DEREK SHAW, TIM BALDWIN AND MAC RUSH

Troy, top left, at Toverland is another masterpiece from Great Coasters; Kennywood's Jack Rabbit, left, is the oldest wooden coaster on the chart, having opened in 1921. Above, the Coaster at Playland Park in Canada will celebrate its 50th anniversary this season.

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**TOP 10 STEEL
COASTERS**

**NITRO
VOTED
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International parks and coasters making impact on survey

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

Amusement Today is the first to admit that the majority of our panel of experts reside in the United States, giving somewhat of an edge for exposure to American parks. However, our well-traveled park fans have whisked off to many far away lands. An impressive 88 percent of our panel reported they had visited parks outside of their home country.

On our charts, 10 countries other than the U.S. are represented.

Pleasure Beach Blackpool, England, appears in five categories — Best Park, Best Seaside Park, Water Ride, Steel Coaster, and Wooden Coaster.

Europa Park of Germany landed on the

lists for Best Park and Steel Coaster.

Galaxyland and **World Waterpark** located in West Edmonton Mall appear on the Steel Coaster list and Indoor Coaster, along with best Indoor Waterpark.

Also in Canada, **La Ronde** and **Canada's Wonderland** have coasters on the Steel chart and **Playland** has a Wooden Coaster finalist.

Liseberg and **Grona Lund** of Sweden both appear on the Best Funhouse/Walk-Through Attraction list and Liseberg has the top rated international Wooden Coaster.

Efteling, **Toverland**, and **Walabi World** of The Netherlands appear on either the Landscaping, Wooden Coaster, or Steel Coaster charts.

Farup Sommerland of Denmark places in Best Children's Park.



AT PHOTO/GARY SLADE

B&M hit it big with Behemoth at Canada's Wonderland. The new mega-coaster is the latest signature ride at the theme park just north of Toronto.

Other parks appearing for their roller coasters are **Nara Dreamland** (Japan), **Parc Asterix** (France), **Heide Park** (Germany), **PowerPark** (Finland), and **Alton Towers** (England), **Holiday Park** (Germany), **Oakwood** (Wales).



EUROPA PARK/ GARY SLADE; FARUP/TIM BALDWIN; BLACKPOOL/MARK ROSENZWEIG

Europa Park (left) is one of the finalists in our Best Park category. **Farup Sommerland** has numerous kids activities in which many parents like to join in on the fun. **Pleasure Beach Blackpool** (right) appeared in several of AT's Golden Tickets categories.



OAKWOOD/GARY SLADE; EFTELING/TIM BALDWIN; NEMESIS/JUSTIN GARVANOVIC

Megafobia (left) brought **Oakwood Leisure Park** in Wales into an international spotlight. **Efteling** is known for its colorful landscaping and diversity of attractions. **Alton Tower's Nemesis** (right) is a thematic masterpiece.

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