

Ratatouille

L'Aventure



Combining Disney storytelling savoir-faire with original 3D media content, real-life props and a ride system used only once before anywhere else in the world, *Ratatouille*:

L'Aventure Totalement Toquée de Rémy shrinks passengers to the size of a rat and whisks them off on a crazy, culinary-themed adventure. This unique attraction celebrates one of the biggest stars of the Disney-Pixar animated movie *Ratatouille* – Paris. So where better to find it than at Walt Disney Studios Park, Disneyland Paris? And what a perfect attraction to kick off *Park World*'s annual dark ride review. Here Disney Imagineer and show design/production manager **Björn Heerwagen** tells us more about this elaborate, action-packed attraction which – unless you've ridden it 72 times – is never quite the same

The Disney dark ride with a uniquely French flavour

Ratatouille *L'Aventure* is an e-ticket attraction but it's not a thrill attraction; it's a family e-ticket. However the quality of the show is up there with Walt Disney Studios Park favourites like Rock 'n' Roller Coaster or Tower of Terror. Its opening last month is in line with the ongoing development of the second park in Paris over the past few years and the tie-in with Pixar we already have there with *Toy Story Playland*.

As the *Ratatouille* movie is such a love letter to Paris it seemed only natural that we would wish to create this attraction here. We have got the real Paris just 40 minutes down the road, however we are not trying to

reproduce that; we are recreating the vitality of the film which, after all, is an animated movie. The building facades and the whole of Place de Rémy are therefore a wink to Paris. For the guests, one third of whom the city while they are at Disneyland Paris, it's very authentic in relation to the film.

We never really thought about making the attraction interactive. Interactive attractions are more participatory, but not necessarily more immersive. It all depends on what you are trying to accomplish for your guests. If you look at *Toy Story Mania*, for example, the game play is part of the attraction but



RIGHT: *La Place de Rémy*, with *Bistro Chez Rémy* to the left



The cold room scene features oversized real-life props, whereas many of the other scenes use animated 3D media

here the intention was take people on an adventure.

Originally it was going to be a highly animated show, with animated props, but it became too kitschy. So we decided that we should try it with 3D media, knitting together static décor with new, original animation by Pixar Animation Studios. To not be able to see the points where you sew together two together was the biggest challenge, but I think we have achieved a seamless experience. Wearing the 3D glasses helps to blur the lines, however I've also experienced it in 2D. We would never present it to our guests in 2D, but I can tell you it is still an exceptional show.

The creative intent was to maintain the look of the film as you pass over the Parisian roof tops, before we shrink you down to the size of a rat – a scale of +18/+20. You then see everything through the rat's eye. The ride's storyline is a natural progression from the scene towards the end of the *Ratatouille* film where Rémy and all those guys are sitting above the restaurant, only you experience it from a slightly different perspective each time because we have programmed 72 different routes into the trackless 'ratmobile' ride vehicles.

Above the rooftops

In the pre-show, which is based in human scale, you hear people singing, arguing, dogs barking, a musician playing. It's all there to give you that night-time ambience you feel in the smaller streets in Paris, where people are living their lives. Gusteau welcomes the guests and tells them what they are going to

LEFT TO RIGHT: Walt Disney Company chairman and CEO Robert Iger, Rémy the rat, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts chairman Tom Staggs and Philippe Gas, outgoing CEO of Disneyland Paris operator Euro Disney

experience and then, if you remember in the film, the reason Gusteau died is because of the shock of losing Michelin stars, so we have this little gag where he hits the restaurant sign with his pan and the stars flicker back on. You then transition through into the load area, scene one, which is also set among the rooftops.

You continue over the rooftops in scenes two and three, where you encounter Rémy and the ghost of chef Gusteau as they discuss the special meal Rémy wants to prepare in guests' honour. Moments later, Rémy's excitement leads to him and the ratmobiles plummeting down to the kitchen floor of the restaurant. Being rats in a human world is fraught with danger, and you get chased around in the kitchen before moving into scene four which is the cold room with its giant real life décor and the refrigerator down the bottom end, where you see Rémy and his brother eating the grapes. Scene five take you into the kitchen, where you scurry under the oven. You get spun around and pushed out from underneath the oven and under the table cloth that is covering a dining cart.

In scene six, the dining cart travels through the restaurant, and you can see the feet and legs of humans dining above. In scene seven each vehicle splits into its own projection dome as you get chased by Skinner into the walls and out onto the street. The curvature of the domes we use is much higher than IMAX and really allows us to immerse the guests in the action.

Scene eight is set in Rémy's kitchen, where you join all the rats that are cooking. Three rats are playing with a champagne bottle down the end, they pop the cork, and we pop you out of scene eight into scene nine, which is where the rats have their own restaurant, completely covered in geranium and ivy leaves. The rats can be seen sitting at ramekin tables, with jam jar tops and cork chairs, with the band playing and lights and fireworks over the Parisian skyline. From scene 10 you exit into the unload corridor and past the large bay window of the

Ratatouille The Movie

Released in 2007, *Ratatouille* is an Oscar Award-winning film by Disney's celebrated CGI subsidiary Pixar. A little less zany and high energy than some of the studios' other animated productions, it nevertheless has a far-fetched storyline, but one that is redeemed by its charming execution. Rémy is a young rat who dreams of becoming a great French chef. Neither the opposition of his family nor the fact that he is a rodent can hold him back. Living in a sewer beneath the Paris restaurant of top chef Auguste Gusteau gives him just the chance he needs, and he indulges his passion by helping young cook Linguni in the kitchen, hiding beneath his hat whenever the intimidating Chef Skinner enters the room. But what happens when Skinner finds out there is a rat in the kitchen? Riders on *Ratatouille: L'Aventure Totalement Toquée de Rémy* are about to find out!





Gusteau's restaurant sign is visible in this rooftop view from the pre-show

Behind the scenes

Officially opened on 10 July after more than six years in development, Ratatouille: L'Aventure Totalement Toquée de Rémy is the 60th attraction at Disneyland Paris. The multi-million euro dark ride is sited just beyond Walt Disney Studios' Toy Story Playland in a new themed area called La Place de Rémy, where it is complemented by the table-service restaurant Bistrot Chez Rémy and, opening in the autumn, Chez Marianne – Souvenirs of Paris. Like the Ratatouille ride itself, the 370-cover restaurant offers a rat's eye view of the world with its oversized tables, chairs and fun themed elements. A three-course meal will set you back €39.99 (\$53.69). See the menu at bit.ly/1px4Np5

The Paris of *Ratatouille* draws inspiration from several well-known neighbourhoods in the French capital. The fountain in La Place de Rémy at Walt Disney Studios Park was modelled on that in Place des Vosges, with finishing touches by designer Harley Jessup, who worked on the *Ratatouille* film, including gourmet rats holding up bottles of flowing champagne. Look too for little touches like the chefs' hats adorning the handrails in the square. The colours of the building façades are purposefully more intense than real-life Paris, in keeping with the animated movie.

The ride's 36 six-seater ride vehicles were built in the United States, but otherwise the attraction was fabricated entirely in Europe, with Walt Disney Imagineering working alongside up to 40 other departments and a trusted team of vendors including UK Loco, P&P Projects, TAA Industries and many more.

restaurant, where you see the continuation of the leaves and the lights from the ride's finale. The complete experience lasts around five minutes.

Bistrot Chez Rémy, the restaurant, is heavily themed. It's a fantastic looking area with giant plates, ramekin tables, champagne cork chairs and so forth. We had over 2,000 leaves hand turned for this attraction! The restaurant is already doing really well, from lunch through to dinner, and we have extended the park hours from 1900 to 2100 in line with the opening of Ratatouille. It was always intended to be table service restaurant, never a fast food outlet, and obviously because of the French theme you have to go for high end gastronomy.

I am proud of the fact that 90% of this attraction was built in Europe, with only the ride vehicles developed in the States. I work for a European theme park and build practically everything in Europe; it's a fact. We do go out and bid in the US, absolutely we do, but on this job that's just how it worked out. You have to use the best experience of everybody, and I think the creative side of the industry is very strong now in Europe.

Extra portions?

This is the only existing Ratatouille attraction in the world, but I definitely think it's exportable to other parks. Some people may disagree, because they want to keep it unique to Paris, but I personally do not think its appeal is about it being a French product; it's about it being a great Disney product.

The ride system is the same as that on Mystic Manor at Hong Kong Disneyland. The two attractions were built around the same time, only ours is more advanced because of the number or ride paths and the fact the vehicles also tilt and turn. It's important to be as open to new ideas as possible and the starting point for our technology actually came from automated warehousing systems.

Obviously we require a certain throughout from the attraction for our visitors, which the ride system helps us achieve, but the different pathways are also important to the show. Rats do not run in a straight line, they interweave with one another, so the movements go hand in hand with that.

We can do quite a lot of things with the ride vehicles and the choice of so many different routes



Exit through the restaurant: Bistrot Chez Rémy is heavily themed

through the attraction makes it a more interesting show, one that people will want to return to again and again. It's a bit like riding a rollercoaster, where you get a completely different experience in the front seat to the back, only here we have 72 options. I've heard comments from guests like, "Yesterday I went on this vehicle and it was completely differently and didn't come out first like last time." They love it!

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Björn Heerwagen was in conversation with Owen Ralph following his presentation to the TEA's (Themed Entertainment Association) SATE Academy Day at Disneyland Paris in June. For details of future SATE Academy Days in Europe and the Middle East see teacconnect.org/tea-blog



The full size of the show building is evident in this aerial view