Industry Inversion

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

THRILL

THEMED RIDES INDUSTRY LEADERS OF LOUISVILLE

WELCOME TO INDUSTRY INVERSION

Welcome to Industry Inversion, a student-led newsletter run by the Themed Rides Industry Leaders of Louisville (THRILL@UofL). Students with THRILL at the University of Louisville contribute articles on industry events, announcements, park reviews, engineering deep dives, and more. THRILL is a nonprofit registered student organization (RSO) at the University of Louisville focused on the amusement industry, roller coasters, engineering, and everything in between.

KEEP IN TOUCH!

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CoasterVille: THRILL's Biggest Event Yet!

Introduction by Gracie Egner, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major

This month, THRILL brought the world of roller coasters to the Ville! At this event, passionate members of THRILL presented topics regarding a large range of topics regarding roller coasters. THRILL collaborated on this event with the J.B. Speed School of Engineering, utilizing their new Engineering Student Success & Research Building (ESSRB), and with the University of Louisville Honors program, who generously provided free food for all event presenters and attendees. This event was THRILL's biggest to date and had over 100 students, both inside Speed School and across other majors, attending in hopes of learning more about roller coasters.



History of Roller Coasters

Presented by Gracie Egner, Mason Dunwoody, Sofia Brumm, Tessa Blain, and Vaishnavi Sai Bommalata
Written by Gracie Egner

Our presentation covered the basic history of roller coasters, beginning in 17th century Russia with ice slides, and expanding all the way to modern day roller coasters. Along the way, improvements in construction, like using steel to make for a smoother ride, have helped bring roller coasters to where they are today.

Additionally, we discussed how computer-aided design (CAD) and other modern engineering tools have streamlined the process of designing roller coasters. These new technologies have made other improvements, such as new forms of launch systems, easier to design and develop. Our presentation's purpose was to shed light on the eventful history of roller coasters and to explore the major milestones that have changed the roller coaster industry throughout history.

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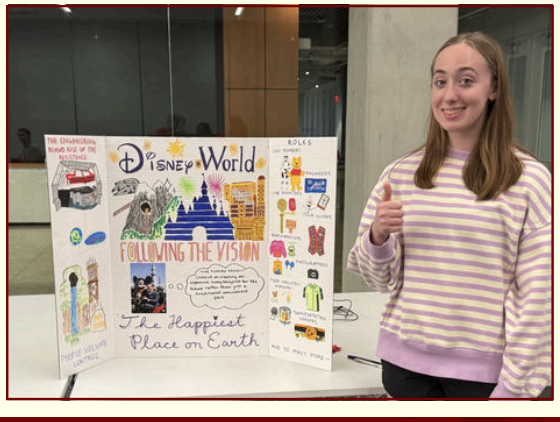
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Disney World Operations

Presented and Written by Lola Gerlach

When Walt Disney was laying the foundation for Disneyland in the 50s, critics thought he was crazy thinking that his cartoon theme park would get anywhere. Now, the Disney theme parks are the most successful in the industry, fulfilling Disney's vision of becoming the blueprint for amusement parks in the future. Still, a lot goes into making sure "The Happiest Place on Earth" is running smoothly. Workers of all kinds of backgrounds are needed, like: cast members to interact with the guests, imagineers to make sure everything is safe, ride operators, food and merchandising staff, and so much more. Additionally, population control is a huge part of the success at the Disney Parks. Rides or experiences that have the capacity for lots of riders, along with a long wait for these rides are used strategically to help maintain population control in Disney. Experiences like the Monsters Inc. Laugh Floor has the capacity for lots of guests, making walkways near this attraction easier to navigate. Lastly, you need fun attractions to keep the guests coming back. Rise of the Resistance, for example, is a fan favorite, and also happens to have the most concrete poured for a Disney ride, AND is a trackless thrill ride, giving riders a smoother experience.







Launch Coasters

Presented and Written by AJ Wyckoff

Launch coasters are some of the most exciting and gut-punching roller coasters out there. They date back to 1977 when the Screamin' Demon and King Cobra opened at Kings Island and Kings Dominion and have evolved so much over the years. From just a simple counterweight to the power of the hydraulic launch in the early 2000s, to the modern day standard LSM launch coaster, launch coasters have been improved upon and engineers from manufacturers across the world still look to develop launches that take guests' breath away every year!

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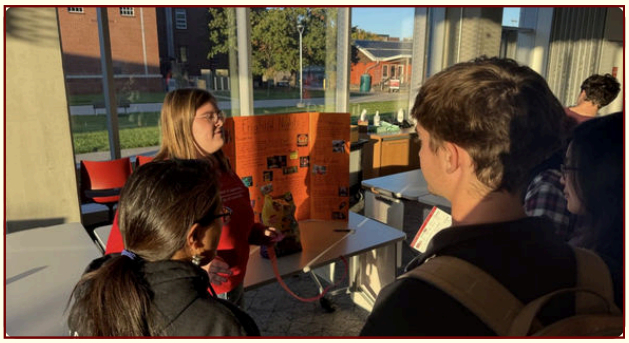
Seasonal Haunt Events

Presented and Written by Ellie Rue

During CoasterVille, I hosted a booth about seasonal theme park haunt events such as Universal Studios' Halloween Horror Nights, Six Flags' Fright Fest, and Hersheypark's Dark Nights. These events take place starting in late August or mid-September and run until early November. At the center of these events are several different haunted houses and scare zones, each with their own theming. Theming is often based on pop culture horror icons, common fears and phobias, or folklore monsters.

One of my favorite topics that I got to share with CoasterVille attendees was the art of scare acting and the considerations that designers and engineers take to keep them safe. Anyone can audition to be a scare actor, and since actors are primarily cast based on height, body type, and experience, the audition process is very simple. I asked three volunteers from each group to tell me their name, age, and height, spin slowly to give a full view of their body type, and then state their favorite scary movie. That is a very common audition structure, even for massively popular events.

Several precautions are taken in the process of constructing haunted houses in order to keep these actors from getting hit by guests who can't control their fear reaction well. Actors will often perform scares from behind walls or screens, on top of stages, or within fenced off areas. Actors are also usually taught to perform their jump scare very quickly and remove themself as soon as they're finished. This can keep them from being the victim of a physically violent guest. These safeguards are not always foolproof though, especially for a roaming actor in a scare zone. More effective solutions for actor safety are still developing within the industry.





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Roller Coaster Trains

Presented by Logan Hancock and Preston Koeninger
Written by Logan Hancock

At CoasterVille, I gave a presentation on coaster trains. It covered the different types of trains, the restraints that keep riders in their seats, and the safety mechanisms working behind the scenes. Those include ratchet and hydraulic locks, anti-rollback dogs on the lift hill, and sensors that confirm every restraint is locked before a train can leave the station. It was a lot of fun showing people just how many layers of protection go into a roller coaster, especially with all of the recent horrific events in the news.

That mattered to me because incidents at theme parks are actually really rare, and I wanted people to leave understanding that. When you see how many backups exist for the backups, it's a lot easier to feel safe on a ride. This topic was extremely important to me because I love roller coasters so much. These machines are built for riders' enjoyment, and I hate the idea that anyone would feel unsafe on them.

Sculpting the Future of Ride Engineering Competition

Written by Sofia Brumm, Freshman Middle/Secondary Education Teacher (History Track)

Architecture is well known for making beautifully meticulous models of their buildings and the space around them. Often with makeshift material (in the cases of architecture students) like cardboard, paper, Styrofoam, and much more. On the THRILL theming team, we heavily take inspiration from this, by looking at the architectural models people have made, we can figure out what materials to use for the landscape and environment around the coaster. We have been making models of trees with clay, and we just began to make leaves with Styrofoam. Models make the product (i.e. the building, in this case: the coaster) seem cohesive with the environment and offers context and atmosphere. We are doing this in THRILL with making our environment inspired by a local urban legend, the Pope Lick. We are making the environment normal at first, but progressively more unsettling and immersive in the story, starting with the gas station. It may seem normal at first, but soon riders will see missing posters and feel the environment change to be eerie. Like in architecture, we are taking heavy inspiration from the site of Pope Lick itself, the gas station, the creek, the bridge. We are learning from the architecture around Louisville and hope to make a theme around the coaster that does the site and story justice.

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Image source: Attractions Magazine, "Attractions Experts Q&A: Dennis Speigel,"

Speaking with Speigel: An Expert in the Field

Written by Gracie Egner, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major

This month, THRILL had the honor of hosting guest speaker, Dennis Speigel. As the founder and CEO of International Theme Park Services (ITPS), Dennis has spent more than 50 years impacting on the attraction industry for the better. His career began at just 13 years old as a ticket taker at Coney Island in Cincinnati, Ohio, and eventually grew into a leadership role in the development and management of theme parks around the world.

In 1983, Speigel founded the consulting firm ITPS. Over his career, Speigel has worked on more than 500 projects in over 55 countries and has contributed to the development and success of numerous attractions, including Kings Island and Kings Dominion. He has also served as chairman of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), one of the leading organizations in the global attractions industry. In recognition of his contributions, Dennis was inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame in 2022.

During his visit, THRILL members had the opportunity to hear about Speigel's extensive industry experience and learn more about how to have a career in the theme park industry. He advised that the best place to get started is simply wherever you can. He noted that something as small as taking tickets, like he did, could be the start to a successful career in this industry.

We are incredibly grateful to Dennis Speigel for taking the time to speak with THRILL and share his knowledge with our members. His experiences offered us insight into how everything within a theme park, from the hospitality to the rides themselves, is intertwined and work together to create the experience that guests have when they visit a park. From all the members at THRILL, we want to thank Dennis Speigel for being part of our journey as a student organization and for showing our members a real industry leader who is continuing to shape the entertainment industry today!



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THRILL Member Spotlight

Written by AJ Wyckoff, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major

My name is AJ Wyckoff, and I am vice president of THRILL. My love for the industry dates back to 2018 when I went to Kings Island with my family and they took me on Mystic Timbers. The rest is history. I spent the rest of that summer I spent researching and looking up as many theme parks as I could, and I could not get enough of them. 3 years later, I got to go to Cedar Point with my family and from that day on I knew the combination of my love for math and roller coasters destined me to pursue mechanical engineering, which led me to the University of Louisville. I met Preston at Leadership Advantage, a pre-semester summer camp for incoming Speed School freshman, and he introduced this idea that would eventually become THRILL.



AJ WYCKOFF

The best thing about THRILL is that it is such a young and new RSO which means the precedent hasn't been set. All officers and members of THRILL can be as ambitious as we please because we are paving our own tracks for this club, and the sky's the limit. My plans and goals for THRILL are to expand past just the engineering aspect of THRILL. I feel as of now that most of our members are engineers, which is fantastic, but there's so much more to the industry. There's marketing, sales, and management, which I believe there are students on campus who would benefit and love to be a part of those aspects of the industry.

October in Review: What Comes Next?

Written by Gracie Egner, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major

As the month of October ends, THRILL recaps a wonderful third month of the fall semester.

This month, THRILL hosted guest speaker Dennis Speigel. From Speigel, members of THRILL received information on the details of the roller coaster and theme park industry, along with his own experiences across his extensive career.

Additionally, THRILL hosted its CoasterVille event in the new Engineering Student Success and Research Building (ESSRB). With over 100 UofL students attending this event, THRILL was able to educate the student body on how roller coasters work, the progress that has been made throughout history, and much more!

NOVEMBER EVENTS

- THRILL-Giving (THRILL Thanksgiving Celebration)- November 19 at 6:00-7:00 P.M.
- International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Conference- November 16-19.



