

Theming gives New Texas Giant a different vibe

Editor's note: In our previous issue of Amusement Today, many aspects of Six Flags' New Texas Giant were covered. Due to space limitation, AT completes coverage of this innovative new project this issue with a look at the in-house effort to give the ride a unique theme.

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ARLINGTON, Texas—In an era of misnamed rides, Six Flags Over Texas says they didn't have to fight to keep the name Texas Giant (albeit inserting "New"). Management feels strongly about Texas ties, and clearly received the support of the corporate powers that be. "We wanted to be sure to project to people that this is a different ride, different look and different feel," says Martindale, Six Flags Over Texas park president.

Close fans to the original Giant will feel a familiarity in regard to the ride, but will notice a lot of changes. While the layout and ride experience is dramatically different, theming to the ride is apparent all over the attraction. A new painted and gussied-up station, exit ramp, and gift shop will make locals take notice. Signage is in full Texas mode with state flags and longhorns in various places. The station has been re-worked into a garage feel, complete with a control panel made from a Snap-On tool cabinet. The front of a Chevy signals the dispatch of each train with honking fanfare and flashing headlights. Deciding not to ride? Six Flags has a clever waiting area called the Chicken Coop complete with chicken wire and rubber chickens adorning the escape. Be aware, going into the coop sets off a chicken sound as each coward enters the gate.

The original Giant had a sign at the top of the lift with Wyle E. Coyote clutching a board saying "Wait! Let's Dis-



Clockwise from top left: Theming efforts on the New Texas Giant include a updated sign atop the lift hill, a tribute to park founder Angus Wynne, Jr. with this newly built oil derrick and tunnel names, LED lighting in three tunnels, and a car repair/garage theme for the ride's station area. AT PHOTOS/GARY SLADE; LED PHOTO COURTESY CROSSROADS LED

uss This." The new version has updated the portal to a newer western feel, beefing up the entrance into the initial plunge with the same words, but in a larger way with a huge cow skull adorning the left and a new three-dimensional Wyle E. Coyote still clutching the structure on the right.

After the exhilarating first half, riders exit the block brake into a twisting dive not far from a newly built oil well. Large letters on the side spell Angus Oil, giving a tip of the hat to Six Flags' founder Angus Wynne, Jr. A fiery explosion bursts from the well as riders drop to the ground, catching the attention of guests in the queue, building anticipation for those about to ride.

The finale to the ride is a plunge into three tunnels on the home stretch. When asked why not do just one long tunnel, Mike Sossamon, director

of maintenance and construction, answers, "First, it was just to interrupt the senses. Going from daylight to dark makes it feel longer and faster. The sensations at each point...I just can't say enough about it. It's very effective."

Misty fog accents the tunnels. The first tunnel has signage indicating a mine shaft. "In the first tunnel, the fog started out light in the beginning and then got thicker as you travelled through it," says David Lipnicky, public relations director for American Coaster Enthusiasts. "The way they do the lights in the second tunnel really grabs your attention. It's a party atmosphere." Humorously, as you enter the tunnel, it clearly says Honky Tonk before the train dives in. The final tunnel simply states Adios.

LED lighting helps accentuate the first two tunnels. Lit

from below in the Mine Shaft, the lighting is more subtle than the Honky Tonk. There, changing colors surge overhead really capturing the attention of the rider.

"There are 2,400 red, green, and blue LED's mounted to the ceiling of the tunnel," says Buddy Stefanof of Crossroads LED, LLC. "The LED's are generating approximately 45,000 lumens while consuming only 600 watts of power. The system is fully programmable and can generate a variety of flashing, chasing, and fading effects."

AT asked Stefanof whether the idea of fog came first, or the inclusion of LED lighting. He replied, "During our initial meetings with Six Flags, the topic of combining a water-based fog effect with LED lighting was discussed. As our discussions continued, the LED lighting and the fog effect

were combined to generate the effects.

"Six Flags was very pleased with both the amount of light that was generated in the tunnel and with the interaction of the LED effects and the fog," adds Stefanof. "Crossroads LED will be demonstrating our latest product — the Infinity Series — to Six Flags for another upcoming project. The Infinity Series is the first high-output LED system to utilize a full authority, non-addressable, computer control system. The advantage this system offers over DMX-based lighting packages is that our system provides high speed advanced lighting effects and features without the cumbersome and antiquated physical addresses DMX-controlled lighting requires. The Infinity series is the first true 'plug and play' system for amusement parks and carnivals."

Once the ride ends, guests exit the train and head to the rear of the station. There they see the back end of a Cadillac car heading out of a garage door and off onto the open road. They, however, are more likely be off to check out their on-board photo and then head back in line for another go.

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