

IMMERSIVE CAR PARKS

NEWSLETTER

Europe & Middle East Division

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IMMERSIVE CAR PARKS... BY JONATHAN BONNER

Following the IAAPA expo I took some time out to visit Walt Disney World (I call it 'research' – whether you believe me or not is up to you) and whilst visiting the stunning Animal Kingdom theme park, I spent some time in Dinoland at 'Chester & Hester's Dinorama'. For those of you who haven't visited, this area is themed to a cheap desert roadside dinosaur attraction and contains some standard off the shelf rides and midway style games. - All covering a faux car park (complete with white lines and cracks in the concrete).

Based upon Walt Disney's rule that everything within a Disney Park should revolve around story – there actually is a backstory to this area, and it is actually quite a detailed one. I won't explain it here but a quick Google search will come up with many blogs on the subject. This is an area of Walt Disney World that seems to polarize people.

Because the area is essentially themed to be a cheap roadside attraction and Disney has done such a good job in putting it across with the theming, a fair few guests actually consider it a relatively poor addition to the theme park, especially compared with the incredibly impressive and imposing 'Expedition Everest' attraction (a favourite of mine) which sits very close by in the park.

More often than not, theming is designed to transport guests to a place they would never normally get the chance to visit. Even those environments themed to fairly normal places are given a fictional hook – For example The Daily Bugle offices in the Spider-man ride queue are made special because guests get to walk through the place where Peter Parker 'actually'



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works in the Marvel comic books. 'Chester and Hester's Dinorama' is an interesting one for me, as it is purposefully designed to be cheesy, tacky and a 'rip off' (and of course, nostalgic) - the kind of place that someone would normally not wish to visit on vacation.

It could be argued that Disney has simply used 'backstory' as an excuse to dress up a range of off-the-shelf rides & fairground style attractions in an empty space at relatively low cost, to then wink and say 'it is supposed to be bad'. Or is this just a case of the theming being so convincing, and the backstory being just a bit too subtle for the average guest that people actually feel like they are at a tacky roadside attraction, when they are expecting 'Disney'. I'll let you decide.

Personally, I quite like it and can't help but be impressed with some of the detail that has actually gone into the more-subtle theming to make it genuinely seem like a run-down amusement attraction of old.

Plus, it is probably the most highly themed car park I've ever visited...

