

Voilà



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

ORLANDO!

**The Fourth Unofficial Gathering Of
Cirque du Soleil Passionates!**

August 9th to 12th, 2007

WALT DISNEY WORLD, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Guide De Programme

Live Passionately!
Vivez Passionnément!

CirqueCon 2007: Orlando

Introduction

Welcome, Passionate, to *CirqueCon 2007*.

For the fourth time we gather, this year in the heart of the “Sunshine State” – Orlando, Florida, USA. You are but one of the untold thousands upon thousands of visitors that inundate this city every day to visit Florida’s beaches, its theme parks and to enjoy the state’s iconic weather. So let me, a resident of this fantastic state, and one of the thousand thousands that live here, be the first to welcome you to my home and playground.

We chose Orlando as the location of this year’s event due to its designation as a world-class destination, for its world-renown theme parks (especially Walt Disney World,) its warm weather, and because it’s the only place you can find Cirque du Soleil’s only other resident show (at present) outside of Las Vegas -- **La Nouba**. We felt that by merging the playful atmosphere of a world-class theme park and our passions for Cirque du Soleil, everyone could have a Zippity-du-Soleil time. We hope to live up to your expectations!

CirqueCon 2006: Las Vegas was by and large an enormous success from both a planning and an execution standpoint. We had a total number of 162 paid member households join us in the desert, giving us a grand total of 190 attendees. Cirque du Soleil was also inundated with 600 plus ticket purchase requests amongst the five shows: 154 for ***LOVE***, 140 for ***Mystère***, 136 for ***KÀ***, 124 for ***«O»***, and 89 for ***ZUMANITY***. These numbers, by far, are our largest yet and we have you, our passionate members, to thank for placing your faith with us.

Duplicating the success and surpassing the achievements of such an event would be a monumental undertaking, to say the least. Who could forget the once-in-a-lifetime activities and special treatment granted to us before, during, and after each of the five amazing shows? But once again our friends at Cirque du Soleil have gone above and beyond our expectations and have provided us extraordinary access to their theater, their people and their artists.

In the pages that follow you will find a schedule of our weekend activities, extensive information about La Nouba (its acts, its theater and its secrets,) some of our personal experiences with the show, a brief summary of our history and more.

The Walt Disney World Resort is a wonderful location in which to host a CirqueCon event. Here exists the available synergy between Cirque du Soleil’s La Nouba coupled with the playful excitement of Disney World. In order to bridge the gap between the once-in-a-lifetime Las Vegas event and our 2008 event in Tokyo, we give you *CirqueCon 2007: Orlando* – where families and passionates alike can come together as one!

invoke provoke Evoke

CirqueCon 2007: Orlando

Your CirqueCon Team

Ricky “Richasi” Russo – Event Chairman

Ricky is familiar with, and has extensive knowledge and experience therein of the Cirque du Soleil fandom through his many online projects, which include but are not limited to: Le Grand Chapiteau, the “Fascination! Newsletter,” and the CirqueFAQ. Richard Russo is also a founding member of the CirqueCon organization and was instrumental in constructing the partnership between CirqueCon and Cirque du Soleil for CirqueCon’s first event. Ricky has been a hard-core Cirque du Soleil fan since 1999 after being introduced to *La Nouba*.

Besides handling all the duties of “the one in charge,” Ricky built, redesigned and maintained CirqueCon’s website, administered the CirqueCon forum, wrote member communication emails, handled the membership database, facilitated the budget, was Cirque du Soleil liaison between CirqueCon and La Nouba and helped coordinate this year’s social events.

Rich Alford – Event Co-Chairman

Rich has been the publications designer and producer since our 2005 event in Montréal. In addition to the Program Book and Name Badge, he has designed and produced alumnus buttons for each event since inception along with individual event souvenir pins for the Las Vegas convention. Rich has also been a Cirque fan since 1993 when he first saw *Mystère* in Las Vegas.

Once again Rich was our “Graphics Guy;” using his talents to bring you this wonderful Program Book design, our badges, lanyards, posters and other graphic elements for our event. You will also find his design sense on many of the Collectibles created specifically for this event!

Keith Johnson – Treasurer & Hotel Co-coordinator

Keith has worked in science fiction convention fandom since 1984 in numerous capacities, from Special Events Coordinator, to Secretary, to Chairman. He also led the team for *CirqueCon 2005: Montreal*, and Chaired our *CirqueCon 2006: Las Vegas* event. He is a founding member of CirqueCon.

This year Keith was our Treasurer; he was there behind the scenes handling all the membership payments sent to us via check and Paypal. Keith was also very instrumental in securing the fabulous rooms at Disney’s Port Orleans: French Quarter for us.

LouAnna Valentine – Trademark, Copyright & Legal

LouAnna also comes from a science fiction fandom background, having worked on conventions since 1982, with many levels of responsibility from children’s activities and coordinating convention events to creating spectacular production numbers. She has pioneered our “Meet & Greets,” providing great spreads of food and drink for our members, and came up with several inspired ideas, including our motto, “Live Passionately!” She is a founding member of CirqueCon.

LouAnna has helped us this year with trademark, copyright and legal concerns, utilizing her long experience in the legal field.

CirqueCon 2007: Orlando

Thank You's and Legal

On the behalf of everyone here behind the scenes at CirqueCon 2007: Orlando, we wish to take this moment to express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to these following individuals who have helped us greatly to put on our event this year. They are...

at Cirque du Soleil:

- *Richard Dennison* – Director of Disney Project Development & Company Manager, La Nouba
- *Meredith Delay* – Sales & Ticketing Manager, Resident Shows Las Vegas.
- *Anne-Josée Dionne & Lisa Willet* – CirqueClub Ringmistresses.

at Disney Destinations & Events:

- *Christina Bantug* – Disney Park Events, Group Sales Manager.
- *Shannon N. Turner* – Catering & Convention Services Manager, Walt Disney World Resort.
- *Merry L. Bishop* – Catering & Convention Services Assistant, Walt Disney World Resort.

at Home, Our Friends:

- *Rodolfo Elizondo* – Mexican Fan Extraordinaire, for his passion and charisma.
- *Nicole Bouchard* – My girlfriend, for putting up with my endless banter about CirqueCon.
- *Steve Long* – For his enthusiasm and support for 2007 & 2008.
- *Doug Metzger* – For his zeal and encouragement on the Epcot Dessert Party.
- *Kristi Piet* – For her whimsical illustrations on our Epcot Adventure Passport.

Thank you!

LEGAL AND OTHER NECESSARY STUFF:

Limitation of Liability: Each CirqueCon 2007: Orlando! Member, or attendee, assumes the entire responsibility and liability for losses, damages, and claims arriving out of injury or damage to themselves, members of their party, belongings, or other property occurring during CirqueCon 2007: Orlando!, and shall indemnify and hold harmless CirqueCon, its agents, Committee, service providers, and employees from any and all such losses, damages and claims.

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CirqueCon 2007: Orlando

Event Schedule

THURSDAY, AUGUST 9

Time	Location	Activity
6:00pm - 8:00pm	Hotel	CirqueCon Registration Open Join Rich and I in room 4234 at our official HQ hotel - Disney's Port Orleans: French Quarter – to pick up your programme packet, Epcot Dessert Party tickets, House of Blues Group Meal ticket and your La Nouba show ticket! Or, just come say “hello!”
8:00pm - 12:00am	Downtown Disney	A Little Early Disney Magic We're kicking off our celebration with a little early Disney Magic. After you've checked in and settled, we're packing up the registration items and heading out to Downtown Disney West Side for a sneak peek at the La Nouba theater, grab a bite to eat and wander the shops of Downtown Disney... We don't have anything scheduled or planned, so enjoy the night!

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10

Time	Location	Activity
9:00am – 10:30am	Hotel	CirqueCon Registration Area Open Join us for open registration in the shaded courtyard just outside our building (#4) at Port Orleans: French Quarter. There's plenty of room to spread out and chat, benches to sit upon and the wonderful ambiance of the resort to enjoy. Come on by!
10:30am – 8:30pm	WDW	Disney Magic! After we close our impromptu registration area within our rooms for the day, we're off to partake in the magic of the Walt Disney World resort! Relax. Park Hop. Enjoy the Hotel. Go Swimming. Take a walk on the Boardwalk. Get a sundae at Ghiradelli's. See a movie at AMC 24. Splash at Typhoon Lagoon. Putt on one of several Disney golf courses. Whatever. You name it! The day is yours! Carpe Diem!
8:30pm - 9:30pm	WDW	Epcot Dessert Party SPECIAL “D-TICKET” REQUIRED Good Evening and Welcome. Our Dessert Party begins at the United Kingdom Pavilion, Lower Terrace at EPCOT World Showcase. A “group only” area has been reserved just for us to mingle with our fellow Passionate, with desserts and drinks to sample, as the spark of a thousand fireworks cast their brilliance over the waters of the World Showcase Lagoon. Epcot's night-time fireworks extravaganza: Illuminations 2000 Reflections of Earth is the perfect night cap to a magical Disney day.

9:30pm +	WDW	More Disney Magic! Not quite ready to tuck in? Don't worry! You can let out that child inside you at Fantasia Gardens Mini-Golf located across from the Disney/MGM studios, hop over to Pleasure Island for the night, or, check out the Extended Magic Hours at the Magic Kingdom – the night is yours, do with it as you please!
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SATURDAY, AUGUST 11

Time	Location	Activity
	Hotel	CirqueCon Registration Area
11:00am - 2:00pm	Cirque Theater	Activities in the La Nouba Theater VIDEOGRAPHY PROHIBITED PHOTOGRAPHY RESTRICTED This is the day we've all been waiting for. Join us once again Saturday morning as we open our rooms for registration purposes, then, assemble out front of the Cirque du Soleil theater for a morning of circus delights! A Q&A, a tour of the facility and more!
6:30pm - 8:30pm	House of Blues	Group Meal @ House of Blues At 6:30pm join us at the House of Blues for our group meal! Enjoy a three-course meal including salad and corn bread, a selection of Rosemary Chicken Breast, Cajun Meatloaf or Creole Jambalaya, and chocolate cake for dessert!
9:00pm - 12:30pm	Downtown Disney	Group Show - La Nouba! <i>Doors open at 8:30pm.</i> Then it's off to La Nouba at 9:00pm, where, once upon a time a door opened and two worlds collided. Dreams clashed with reality. The mundane mixed with the marvelous. It was no longer possible to tell where one world began and the other ended. This new place was called La Nouba... Stick around because you'll want to be in on the group photo with a few cast members and party with the cast in the Green Room!

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12

Time	Location	Activity
10:00am - 12:00pm	Hotel	Our Kaffeeklatsch On Sunday morning, join us once again in our hotel rooms for the Kaffeeklatsch - an impromptu get-together to give us your thoughts about the weekend. Come have a cup of coffee or tea and let us know how we did and what can be improved for our next adventure: CirqueCon 2008: Tokyo! Or just stop by to say "good-bye!"

WALT Disney World Transportation



Disney's Port Orleans: French Quarter

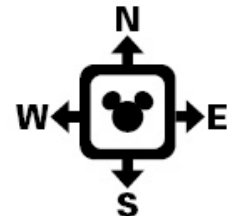
2201 Orleans Drive
Lake Buena Vista, FL. 32830
407.934.5000 (voice) / 407.934.5353 (fax)

Driving directions from the Airport: Follow the signs for the SOUTH EXIT / SR-417 "Greenway" SOUTH in the direction of Walt Disney World. The Greenway is a TOLL ROAD so you'll pass through 2 toll booths (\$1.00 each for a total of \$2.00 in tolls.) Take EXIT 6 (SR-536/International Drive) WEST toward Disney World. Continue on this route until you pass under I-4 and the WDW welcome sign (you will cross FL-535 and pass by the Marriott Orlando World Center hotel.) Once on Disney Property, take the 3rd Disney Exit for the Downtown Disney Resort Area, following the signs to Port Orleans/Key West. Take a left at the light onto Bonnet Creek Parkway. At the next traffic light, take a right onto Orleans Drive. The entrance to Port Orleans: French Quarter is the first one on the right.

Disney Bus Transportation

Catch Disney bus transportation at the "Blues & Jazz" stop located out front of the main house in "Port Orleans Square". Bus service runs on a regular schedule, generally every 10-20 minutes, to/from a variety of locations within the Walt Disney World resort:

- One bus runs to/from Magic Kingdom.
- One bus runs to/from Epcot.
- One bus runs to/from the Disney/MGM Studios.
- One bus runs to/from Disney's Animal Kingdom/Blizzard Beach.
- One bus runs to/from Downtown Disney (including Pleasure Island & Typhoon Lagoon).



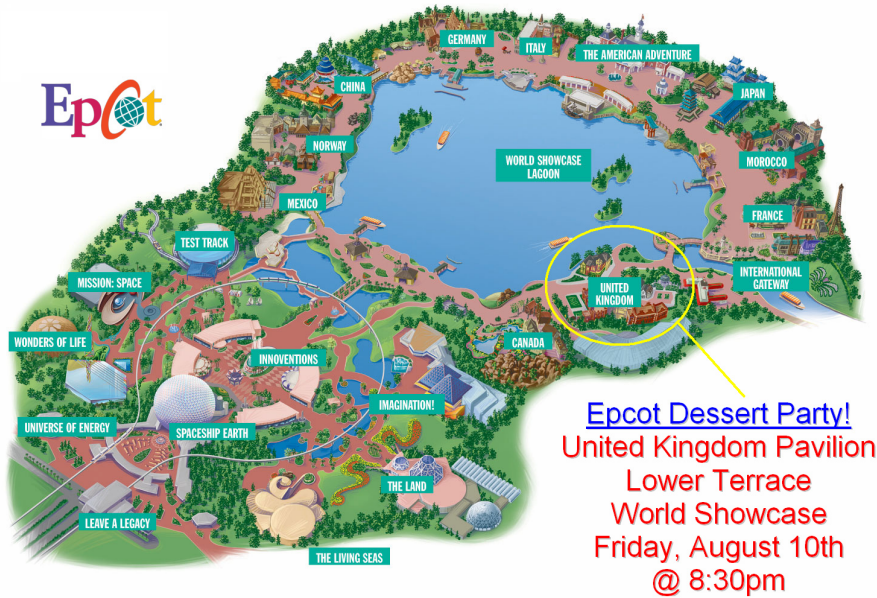
Destinations are displayed on each bus marquee and the busses run in a loop. Each park has its own Bus depot, where you can catch a bus to your next destination without returning directly to the hotel. To return to Port Orleans, follow the signs and watch the bus marquee display for "PORT ORLEANS".

Water launch

Transportation directly to Downtown Disney is also provided by water launch. Boats depart from "French Quarter Landing", the resort's marina, located behind the "Doubloon Lagoon" (Pool) every 20 minutes from 11:00am until 4:00pm and every 10 minutes from 4:00pm until 11:00pm. Please allow enough time for boarding and travel time – the water launch down the Sassagoula is quite popular and you may experience an extended wait due to limited seating.

CirqueCon 2007: Orlando

EPCOT Dessert Party



CirqueCon 2007: Orlando

Official Show



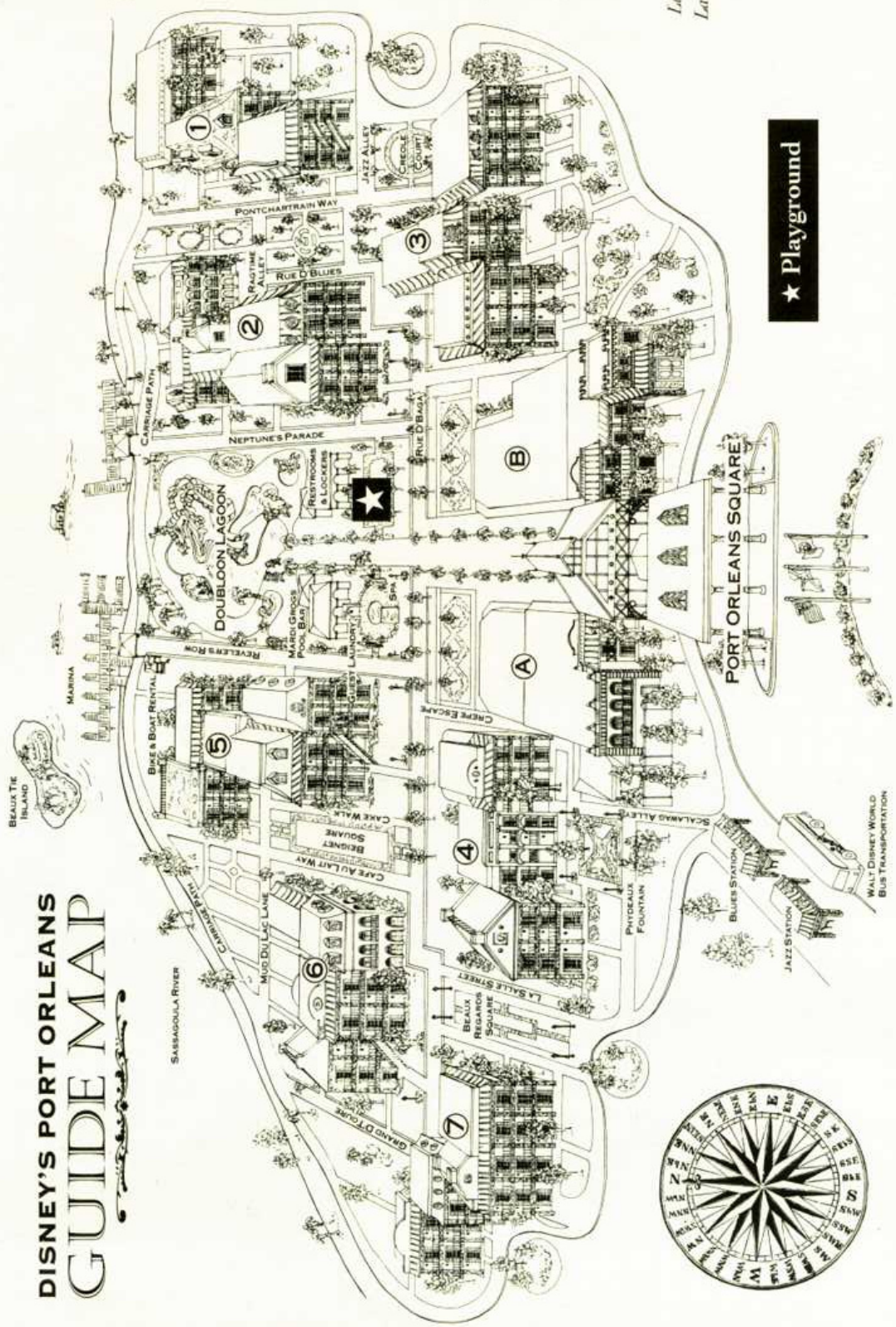
Boat Launch

Ride the Sassagoula back to
 Port Orleans: French Quarter



LA
NouBA
 CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

DISNEY'S PORT ORLEANS GUIDE MAP



★ Playground

- A RESTAURANT & LOUNGE**
Sassagoula Floatworks & Food Factory
Scat Cat's Club
Jazz Lounge
- Bonfamille's Cafe**
Full Service Restaurant
Restrooms
- B REGISTRATION GIFTS ARCADE**
Front Desk, Guest Service
Jackson Square Gifts & Desires
Merchandise
South Quarter Games
Arcade Game Room
Restrooms
- Bell Services**
Limousine Service, Luggage
Laundry Drop-Off/Pick-Up

WE WANT YOUR AUTOGRAPH!!

**Be sure to autograph the
Official CirqueCon 2007: Orlando!
Poster. Copies will be available
after the convention at
WWW.CIRQUECON.COM**



“Faire La Nouba!”

By: Ricky “Richasi” Russo – Orlando, Florida (USA)



*Once upon a time...
A door opened and two worlds collided.
Dreams clashed with reality. The mundane mixed with the marvelous. It was
no longer possible to tell where one world began and the other ended.
This new place was called La Nouba.*

On December 23, 1998, just a few short weeks after the Las Vegas premiere of «O» (Cirque du Soleil's second resident show), the lights dimmed, the audience hushed and a shock of electric excitement filled the air in the La Nouba Theater for the very first time. It was the culmination of a lot of hard work, blood, sweat and tears, and a vigorous production schedule that saw the birth of three shows in the span of seven months. On June 2, 2004, Cirque du Soleil together with the Walt Disney Company celebrated La Nouba's 5th Anniversary in a bona fide festive manor, and yours truly was invited along to join in the fun. Imagine my surprise when I returned home from CirqueCon 2004 in Vancouver to find an invitation from a Publicist and PR representative with La Nouba, waiting patiently in my email's inbox.

Naturally I didn't miss the opportunity to party it up with the folks at La Nouba. It was an evening filled with thrills, laughter and fun, and I would like to share my party experience with you while at the same time providing an overview of the show, its performance space and everything else in between. And while these events took place a little over three years ago, I couldn't imagine a better way to bring all of you, our CirqueCon members, into the festivities that may await you this weekend!

faire la nouba!

#

Begin a Tale

“La Nouba, presented by Cirque du Soleil exclusively at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, is celebrating five amazing years! We would be very honored if you could join us! You are invited to join us for the 9pm performance of La Nouba on June 2, 2004, followed by a celebration with the cast and crew! Thank you for your continued support of Cirque du Soleil. We look forward to seeing you at La Nouba!”

I left for Downtown Disney on the 2nd full of excitement, unsure of exactly what to expect upon my arrival. The air crackled with electric excitement; I was anticipating the experience so much so that my palms were damp with sweat. What would it be like? Would something special be announced during the show? What would happen afterward? Would I really get to meet the cast? What kind of party will it be? All these questions and more surfaced in my mind as I walked from Downtown Disney's parking lot to the area of La Nouba's beautiful free-standing theater.

Upon arrival I immediately located the media check-in table located along the backside of the theater, and made my way over. For all my talk, when I walked up to the press agents, I was at a loss for words. Concerned was more like it, because I really didn't know under what pretence they had me placed on their list. I wasn't official "media" in the true sense of the word (unlike many of the other folks there) so I was a little curious, and spoke with trepidation. I needn't have worried; my credentials were already on hand in an envelope marked with my name.

The credentials consisted of a basic colored lanyard with an elongated ID Tag featuring a black background with a headshot of one of the Les Cons at the top and "Celebrating 5 years! La Nouba June 2004" underneath in varying font sizes and varieties. Below that the space for my name and as soon as my eyes brushed over what they printed I couldn't help but smile: "Richasi" was on top in bold and below that my real name: "Ricky Russo." Too cool!

An itinerary sheet accompanied the credentials, which detailed the evening's events as follows:

<i>5:30pm</i>	<i>Show Seating Time</i>
<i>6:00pm to 7:30pm</i>	<i>Special La Nouba Performance</i>
<i>8:00pm to 10:00pm</i>	<i>Dinner at BET Soundstage Club, Pleasure Island</i>
<i>10:00pm to 1:00am</i>	<i>Post Production Party, Bongo's Cuban Café, 2nd Floor.</i>

This was but a fraction of what the press and other honored guests were able to experience throughout the day, as I found out. It was unfortunate I wasn't able to come earlier, but I was extremely happy and honored just to be considered, mind you. Here's what I missed:

<i>11:00am</i>	<i>Celebration Moment, Cirque du Soleil Theater Exterior</i>
<i>12:00pm to 1:30pm</i>	<i>Behind-the-Scenes lunch with the Cast</i>
<i>1:30pm to 4:00pm</i>	<i>La Nouba Media Experiences</i>

It was really that last one I was the most interested in. I wondered: what exactly were the media allowed to do? Were they given backstage tours? (Most definitely.) Were they allowed on stage? (Possibly.) Did they get to try their hand in some acts? (Surely not... right?)

Wrong!

While I must take this with a grain of salt, I learned about all the special "goodies" the press were able to take part in during that Special Media Experience time I missed by talking to a newspaper writer out of the Tampa Bay area. Not only were members of the press able to take backstage tours and climb up into the rafters and see the scaffolding, but also received the opportunity to tumble on the FastTrack!

He regaled me with tales of some of the media personnel who were overanxious to try, and some who were just too frightened to attempt it. As for me, if I had been there, I think you know what I would do. I would be all over that FastTrack in a heartbeat! Though I have no formal training (ok, I have absolutely no training at all), I think just being given the opportunity to tumble would have been more than enough. What an experience, no?

Before long it was time to enter the theater -- the pre-show was about to begin, so I took my seat in Section 204, Row HH, Seat 10. The view from this seat was spot on, dead center, right behind the soundman by a few rows. I couldn't have asked for a better seat on such a short notice...

Sit Back, Relax and Enjoy...

"Ladies and Gentlemen - welcome to Cirque du Soleil. During this performance smoke effects will be used, but these are harmless to your health. The use of video equipment, and especially flash cameras, is strictly prohibited because of the danger it presents to our acrobats. In case of an emergency, please stay calm and proceed to the nearest exit -- here, here, here, and here. The ushers will direct you. And now, sit back, relax and enjoy... La Nouba!"

The lights dim down and the audience becomes still now; a shock of electric excitement filled the air as any previous vociferations come to a sharp end. And then the unforgettable sound of a lone trumpet fills the theater, as the Festival of Characters enter, one by one, and introduce themselves to us. The Trumpeter, himself a prince in this fairy tale, brings with him a wonderful medley of personae and a signature melody that warms the heart. We're introduced to L'Oiseau, the colorful green bird; Les Danseurs, a man and woman in love; the Flying Man, who will soar into our hearts on a band of red silk; the Balancer, colorfully dressed from head to toe, complete with a cat's tail; an Acrobat in Red, forever tumbling, he stoke the party; Le Promeneur, shuffling about with an ever present smile; and the Titan, a menacing, threatening man. They vanish as quickly as they come, and once again the theater falls lifeless, and dark.

The quiet is disturbed, not by the harrowed scream of a demented creature or of a maiden in distress, but of the chime of a doorbell. Ding dong. Ding dong. The door creaks open, a column of light shines through, outlining the form of a lady, a rather round and lifeless creature, whose job it is to clean and sweep the floors around her. She is the cleaning lady, representing the every day man or woman, no doubt. But as she goes about her duties, oblivious of the world she has entered, the creatures of this fantastical realm are beginning to stir. The Green Bird tiptoes behind her; sensing a movement, she turns but there's nothing to be found. But then... startles at a man riding a bicycle upside down across her field of vision. And before her eyes (and ours) more and more weird and wonderful apparitions begin to materialize: two sleepwalking fools canter by; a small train pulls in to station, and the cries of a hungry, estranged wolf mix with the howls and sirens of warning to announce the coming clash of dream and nightmare.

Unable to hold back any longer, the insane world of La Nouba pours forth and spills upon the stage before us. Startled, we all peer at the newcomers as they stream steadily from the opened door. Caught up now as she is in their world, we march forward to their militaristic tune. Fantasy and reality are merging before our eyes and we are lost to make heads or tails of either.

La Nouba is an unforgettable journey through this universe - at once threatening and exhilarating, frightening and familiar. La Nouba is the story of all stories, the site of all mysteries, where dreams and nightmares sleep side by side. La Nouba is memory, individual and universal. It beckons to us, challenges us to uncover passions we thought we'd lost long ago. Here, anything is possible.

La Nouba contains two types of families or groups and throughout the ride the magic and fantasy of the colorful Cirques (circus people) clash with the monochromatic world of the Urbains (urbanites). But as in fables, it is not so much this contrast as the interplay between these two groups which sparks our curiosity and feeds our imagination. From this encounter is born fear and ecstasy. From this encounter is born La Nouba.

Roue allemande (German Wheel)

What started as a popular gymnastics exercise in Germany has become a crowd-pleasing act for Cirque du Soleil. Six-and-a-half feet in diameter, the wheel consists of two metal hoops joined at six points. Identical twin brothers turn and spin the wheels while performing gravity-defying somersaults and acrobatics.

Though both were featured in Cirque du Soleil's Nouvelle Expérience, this is the first time they are performing together as a duo.

Funambule (High Wire)

The Funambule act takes place on a 90-foot, half-inch wide steel wire. With remarkable balance and precision, a high wire walker ascends to a height of 34 feet above the stage as his partner descends from the theater's eighth level to the fifth on a diagonal wire. The performers' breathtaking maneuvers include head balancing, and death defying somersaults. Using two different types of bicycles, one of the high wire walkers executes a wheelie and later crosses the wire while carrying another artist on his shoulder. This amazing team is comprised of three acrobats who are life-long students of the discipline.

Diabolos

The diablo, or Chinese yo-yo, is a children's game first introduced into the realm of the arts in Cirque du Soleil's Quidam. This entrancing act features four young Chinese performers. Holding two sticks linked by a string, they slide, juggle and toss a musical wooden spool while performing flips in the air. Demonstrating increasingly difficult maneuvers, the artists attempt to outdo each other in dexterity and ingenuity.

Vélos (Cycles)

This act gets rolling with a BMX wizard whose difficult maneuvers never fail to mesmerize the public. His technical twists, gymnastic turns and spins on one wheel are highlighted in incredible tricks such as G-turns, boomerangs and megaspins, all accompanied by lots of footwork. The second half of the act features yet another artist whose feats are equally astonishing. His hard-to-believe stunts include riding over obstacles without ever putting his feet down, jumping off high platforms, hopping up and down steps and into the audience on one wheel, and even jumping over an artist and a guest before literally plunging into the bowels of the stage.

Cadre aérien (Aerial Cradle)

The aerial cradle looks like a door and is a perfect example of equal-opportunity strength and agility. This amazing athletic display features elements of traditional circus aerial cradle with a unique and special difference – the male and female artists take turns supporting one another 34 feet above the stage.

Ballet air et soie (Aerial Ballet in Silk)

In a stunning display of grace and strength, the artists become one with the ribbon of red fabric that cradles them. This breathtaking aerial dance requires immense agility and flexibility, and allows the performers a wide latitude of acrobatic and artistic expression.

Equilibre sur chaises (Balancing on Chairs)

Rokardy's chair act was created exclusively for La Nouba, and integrated in the show on January 24, 2003. The artist stacks furniture he has found in the imaginary attic of La Nouba in order to light a chandelier, which mysteriously rises just beyond his reach every time he tries to get to the last candle. Rokardy defies gravity and the laws of physics as he balances precariously on a stack of six chairs, two books, and a baby carriage atop a table elevated 16 feet in the air. When he finally manages to reach the chandelier, Rokardy, who is now 34 feet in the air, surprises his audience with a unique hand balancing image, before lighting the last candle.

Grands volants (Flying Trapeze)

Four pendulum-like swings, on two different levels, carry a team of perfectly synchronized aerialists 53 feet above the stage. This innovative bi-level rigging enables the trapezists to create a visually arresting exhibition of rhythm and athleticism. Timing is key when all four trapezes are swinging in tandem and the aerialists switch places – barely inches away from colliding.

Power Track/Trampoline

This act in La Nouba takes ordinary trampoline and power track performance to a new level. The stage is set on fire in this high-energy acrobatic display of phenomenal timing and spatial awareness.

All too soon the production came to a close, but it would be an ending not soon forgotten. For during the final stanza and last curtain call hundreds of multi-colored balloons fell from the heavens, released by the “Fabulous Figures” that dance their whimsical dance about the tops of the theater; everyone in the audience was covered! Balloons were floating, hands were clapping, and whistles were blowing and through it all I stood, misty-eyed, reveling in it all, as the phrase “La Nouba 5th Anniversary” was projected on the asylum wall.

It was truly a birthday bash.

But the show was just one act of a three-ring circus that night.

Kungaloosh! Kungaloosh!

One after another the audience members jumped from their seats, hands clasping together in appreciation of yet another mind-boggling performance of Cirque du Soleil's La Nouba at the Cirque Theater in Downtown Disney West Side. A deafening roar flooded the house as the artists of the nights performance filled the stage; an admiration of their mastery. Up in their roost the musicians rocked on as if their very life depended on it; their song filling the theater with a sense of festivity. And in this moment hundreds of balloons fell from the rafters, raining a celebratory cry upon us all. It was June 2nd, 2004; La Nouba was celebrating its 5th Anniversary and the inmates of the asylum were ecstatic.

I was one of the last to leave the theater as most of the ensemble with credentials was told to stay behind. We would personally be escorted to the next item on the itinerary, but I felt a little lost. Many people began chatting around me to obvious acquaintances or friends, leaving me to my lonesome. Some even began to leave on their own and I wasn't sure where to be or what to do. I probably looked dense sitting in my seat, or standing gazing idly at the La Nouba 5th Anniversary projection on the set, but I didn't care. I had just observed one of the best performances of La Nouba I could remember and I was still misty-eyed and overwhelmed.

Eventually it was my turn to check out of the asylum. As I rounded the theater and once again came to a stop outside the Boutique, I pulled out the agenda and looked it over, thinking about what was coming next – the Dinner and Post Production party.

Living in Orlando I've visited Disney World quite often and have seen parties ushered across the parks with a uniformed cast member's red baton waving in the air, with a curiosity to know their destination. I never thought I would be one of those people until I rounded the theater's boutique. At that very moment more than one uniformed Disney representatives with red batons greeted us and led us through the gates of Pleasure Island to the BET Soundstage Club, where we would be wine and dined like kings and queens for the next two hours.

As I entered the club I was immediately struck by its stark decor. Sleek, stylish and contemporary, the BET Soundstage is multi-leveled (you enter from the top floor) and consists of two moderately sized rooms, a full bar and a performance stage. Since this was my first time at the club I wasn't sure what I would find, however I expected more of a hip-hop theme rather than the Jazz, Rhythm & Blues and Soul that the club is more styled for.

Both rooms were cleared and set up with an alternating display of sit down tables for those who wanted to eat, and standing tables for minglers to set their drinks upon. As I came round to one of the standing tables I was instantly offered a glass of red wine, which I took straight away. And why not? I was as much a guest here as the rest of the lot, and before long, the entire media ensemble filled the club. Not everyone came mind you, but a good share did and whoever decided to come was looking for a feast.

And they were not to be disappointed.

Chefs were on hand to serve some of the most scrumptious and mouth watering dishes I've ever had: the most tender roast beef and juicy vegetables, succulent seasoned chicken with potatoes au-gratin, and delicious shrimp pasta with bread... to name but a few selections. And let's not forget the deserts, which were a chocoholic's dream! Chocolate "Mouse" Martini's, wonderful fudge brownies, triple chocolate chip cookies and even tiramisu. There were of course other types of deserts, but those concoctions seemed to have slipped my chocolate-overloaded mind.

The meal was accented with more wine, good company, and a documentary about La Nouba's five years. Since I didn't know anyone at the dinner I stayed to myself and watched the video presentation, which was displayed on multiple flat-panel screens around the club. The video was pretty standard fodder -- shots of performers in and out of makeup, running through their routines, interview snippets from cast and crew, music from the show, and various other materials -- but it kept me from going insane, really.

About an hour into the dinner I met a group of IT professionals from Disney, who asked me repeatedly if I worked for the company. I said no but understood their inquiry since I had worn a Disney polo shirt to the event. But it was nice to mingle with these folks since I, too am an IT professional, and boy did they have stories to tell. I also met Bob Mervine, staff-writer for the Orlando Business Journal, who was gracious and interested to hear my Cirque du Soleil fan-exploits. He and I, along with the nice young lady who had accompanied him, began to discuss Cirque at length. We were soon joined by a man whom I will only say was a Disney employee with a corporate credit card. He had other ideas for fun that night.

That fun would be had in the next club over -- the Adventurer's Club.

For those uninitiated, the Adventurer's Club presents a unique interactive experience in a setting reminiscent of the fictional 1930s adventurer club. Old time pictures of African safari's, jungle exploration in Asia or mountain scaling in India litter the wall with other paraphernalia of the avid adventurers.

"You are a visitor to the Adventurers Club on New Years Eve 1937," the storyline goes, "when the Club holds an open house for the purpose of recruiting new members. You will be invited to become initiated as a Club member and participate in the various activities that are held that evening..." It's been said that one should think of the Adventurer's Club as a theater that is presenting a play, only you're the star of said play.

My adventure began down in the Main Salon, where a full bar is accessible. The entertainment here is more "off the cuff", improv, and raw than in other clubs. You never know exactly what's going to happen when you enter this establishment, which is something I certainly found out as the evening progressed. Originally the three people I met at the dinner wanted to come over for a drink, so I followed because I didn't want to be left alone (I normally don't drink), but who would have thought I'd end up on the floor professing my desires for "ol Babylonia", a mask, hanging on the wall?

Right... where's my drink now? Rum and Coke, coming up!

The first few minutes of my foray into the Adventurer's Club were rather subdued. I was actually at ease since I'd been to this particular club one other time so I knew exactly what kind of trouble one could get into here. But I kept things light, played along with the cast and had a good time chatting with my newfound friends. Before long, however, the Maid character found herself lodged between the nude legs of a full statue of Zeus, positioned in the center of the Main Salon.

"Oh, look," said the Maid. "I seem to be in a bit of a spot."

Oh my yes, she was. You never know exactly what any of the characters will say or do at any given moment in time. I made the mistake of catching the Maid's eye and bantering back and forth with her, as she commented on her predicament. How could I stay silent with her head between Zeus' legs? She was a prime target for my warped sense reality and dry sense of humor. A few moments later, however, the wall above me began to come alive and with it a nasally voice filled the room.

“Oooh! Oooh! Oooh ancient Babylonia,” the cast chanted.

This sealed my fate. I was now about to be initiated.

The Maid snatched me from my bar stool and pulled me in line with Babylonia, a hanging mask fixed to the wall. When its eyes and mouth started to move I got nervous and thought, “Oh lord... What exactly is going to happen here?” A moment later another gentlemen brandishing a bottle of Corona was swept up beside me and it was apparent that he too was going to be part of the fun and games. Whether he liked it or not, I might add (and he did not).

Now, picture little 'ol shy me standing in front of a group of onlookers as I look up at Babylonia on the wall, wondering what on earth possessed me to come to the Adventurer's Club? I knew whatever they had in store for me wasn't going to be pretty. I'm sure they'd make me make a fool out of myself. Darnit, why did I have to tease the Maid? And at the thought of this my ears started burning.

“Oh, my subjects,” said Babylonia with great effort. “Greet me! Greet me like you would a passionate lover! Greet me with great affection!”

I did the only thing I could think of to do...

I got down on my knees and bowed, humbly.

Babylonia was ecstatic! One point for me.

Babylonia put the two of us through our paces. First, she made us show off our manly bodies, not by stripping naked right there in the Salon but by assuming the pose of Zeus' statue: arms stretched out, legs slightly askance and muscles bulging (second point to me, though, no muscles to bulge). Secondly, I was forced to use my wisdom of words and profess my undying love to Babylonia, telling her how I'd ravish her, hold her and keep her safe. And thirdly, with scores of people watching us unabated, Babylonia made us dance for her. Oh, not a slow-dance to be sure; how about swinging hips and pelvic thrusts?

Talk about embarrassment; I was crimson. But it was fun! I returned to the bar after a roaring round of applause from the onlookers and sat amongst my new friends. Did I need that drink now? Oh yes... Kungaloosh! Kungaloosh!

The partying and drinking continued over at Bongo's Cuban Cafe, where we waited for the cast and crew of La Nouba to show up after their second performance. Here I was completely out of my element, wandering around with my newfound friends until we lost each other. Soon, the likes of the Bilodeau brothers (German Wheel), Yuri Maiorov (Aerial Ballet in Silk), Carlos Moreira (Aerial Cradle/Character), Krystian Sawicki (Le Titan), and many, many other members of the cast and crew came to live it up; to party!

And live it up they did!

The party was still going when I turned to leave, around midnight. I was tired and overwhelmed but extremely happy. I had an amazing night that would not have been possible except by the generosity of Cirque du Soleil and those behind the scenes at La Nouba. And for that I want to say thank you for allowing me to participate in La Nouba's 5th Anniversary celebration. It was a blast!

And perhaps you'll have similar adventures here at CirqueCon 2007: Orlando!

Live it up!

faire la nouba!

“Performance Space: La Nouba”

By: Ricky “Richasi” Russo – Orlando, Florida (USA)

The La Nouba performance space is a collaboration of four entities: Cirque du Soleil, Scéno Plus, Walt Disney Imagineering and the Rockwell Group. All four worked together to design and construct what would be Cirque du Soleil’s first (and currently only, but that will change shortly with the construction of the Tokyo 2008 project) freestanding theater built exclusively for their needs. Armed with a budget between \$20 and \$30 Million (USD), Scéno Plus designed the approx. 75,000 square-foot (7,000 square-meter) drum-shaped theater that is a wonderful testament to both structure and beauty and a shining example of ingenuity and design.

Let us take a peek into this amazing performance space, shall we?

On the outside, the Cirque Theater is like a “castle” standing prominently on the shores of its kingdom, in this case on the shores of Village Lake in Downtown Disney’s West Side. The structure, accented in white Teflon-coated canvas fabric, stands approximately 160 feet tall from the concrete sidewalk to the tops of its spires. Atop the theater rests the namesake of the company in big blue lettering and even higher still, the castle is topped with four fluttering flags featuring the famous sun logo of Cirque du Soleil. And while the outside is something to marvel, the interior is no less so.

On the inside of this concrete-canvas behemoth, on the second floor, rests its performance space. Like many of Cirque’s theaters, the first thing you’ll notice upon entering is the set and out-in-the-round stage. The set, which has been referred to as an “Elizabethan-style” stage due to its symmetrical style, is said to be reminiscent of a well-traveled path or trail. While that may be true, many see the insane nature of an asylum, and certainly that too is true. That asylum-esque nature is created with a 60×200 foot trellis construct made of PVC panels and scrim, which allow for wonderful projection and shadow play conjuring up uncanny images of Orwellian reminiscence. The wonderful backdrop is overshadowed by mountainous outcroppings, jetting up from the floor on either side. These rocks stand approximately 60-feet tall and are constructed of hard steel, but padded using wood and bleached velour (a velvet-type material.)

Even the showroom seats are abound with detail; modeled after old-fashioned auditorium chairs, these seats are steel and wood constructed and covered in red velvet. They were built by American Seating of Grand Rapids, Michigan especially for La Nouba. But look up from your red-colored seats and see the seven cloud-like “Fabulous Figures” that decorate the ceiling of the showroom; their whimsical dance about the tops of the theater forever captured. These “figures” are manufactured out of copper tubing and wrapped in mesh and measure approximately 30-feet in length. You may not know, though, that these fanciful leapers were designed by Michel Crête, the set designer.

You may spot the musicians next, resting upon two platforms housed in the 75-foot towers rising on either side of the stage. Separated but not disconnected from the performance, these musicians play the various notes of La Nouba's live music. They do so by staying connected via a complex audio system that allows each musician to speak with the bandleader, their other band mates and take direction if something were to happen. Usually the tick of a metronome is heard throughout their setup to keep everyone on the same beat and time. The platforms themselves are nothing more than steel planks welded together (among other various pieces) and contain an external elevator (which performers rise and lower from during the show).

The stage has many technological achievements also.

The retractable Power Track, as it is called, is 60 feet in length and fully automated, which means computers control the retraction (at 2-feet-per-second) of this enormously powerful trampoline. But don't let that quick retraction fool you into thinking the floor is light; it's not, it weighs over 10,000 pounds! The Power Track was specially designed by Cirque du Soleil (and Paco Corp.) to allow the performers to jump higher and faster than ever. The PowerTrack is the next evolution of the FastTrack as seen in Alegría. Ironically the PowerTrack became so popular that it was installed in Alegría, taking the old FastTrack's place.

The stage comes alive during the performance by a set of elevators commonly referred to as lifts. There are five in all, resting just below the stage surface. The ascent and descent of these lifts are controlled by numerous motors (45 in all!) that must be in complete working order for the lifts to even function. The five lifts themselves rise to a maximum height of 16-feet; the center stage lift is also capable of descending 16-feet below the stage for a 32-feet range of motion! And they each have a 3,000 pound weight capacity. The stage itself is protected by an impact-resilient material called "Mondo Sport Floor" applied over wood in order to avoid injuries to the acrobats and dancers.

Two télépheriques (or tracks) installed along the back wall of the stage are 78-feet (24-meters) above the ground and are capable of moving props, scenery and acrobatic equipment during the show at 4-feet-per-second. These tracks provide an easy system for moving objects in and out of view of the spectators. You'll find various strange props, lights and chairs gliding by throughout the various acts including "The Grand Monument," a 40x30 foot structure of aluminum and painted scrim.

The set is fully automated as well. The 25x60-foot Trapeze Net (designed by Doug Kiddell of Cirque du Soleil), for example, is protracted and retracted by eight motors, including two 40-horsepower tensioning winches with up to 5,000 pounds of force. Not one soul comes out to set up or tear down the trapeze net. Additional set pieces are operated using a motorized counterweight system, such as: the trampolines (which descend from the ceiling), the flying doors (of which there are 9), the petite fenêtre volante (or New York Window,) two pedestal platforms and the four trapeze grips.

The JR Clancy Company of Syracuse, New York installed the 44-line set rigging system and 35 of the winches used for these props. The lifts were designed and installed by Showmotion of Connecticut in partnership with Disney Ride and Show Engineering. Westsun Scenic Edge, Inc. of Winnipeg actually designed and installed the computer control system, which makes the space come alive using a Windows NT based program called Dynatrac.

With fixed tiered seating in a 180-degree semicircle around the stage, the auditorium has neither a proscenium arch nor an architectural ceiling, which makes it similar to many of Cirque's other theatrical ventures. To some, the first glimpse provides the image of a traditional big top; to others, it is Cirque du Soleil's greatest achievement. Regardless of how you see it, it is a one-of-a-kind structure for Cirque du Soleil in that it's Cirque's first stand-alone theater complex, but also a self-contained Cirque world. What do I mean? For the first time, a show space, ticket booths and Boutique (which Scéno Plus also designed) are housed directly in the same complex.

{ Sources: Cirque du Soleil Press Room and the Cahners Magazine Division of Reed Publishing USA Nov 1999 - Abby Bussel }

This excerpt is a special rewrite of an earlier article series entitled "The Houses of Cirque," published in the Fascination! Newsletter in June 2003.

“The Bike Jump Story”

By: Keith Johnson – Seattle, Washington (USA)

Bounce. Bounce. Bounce.

The warm rubber of the trick bicycle’s wheels squealed as they repeatedly struck the floor, sidewalls bulging to absorb the weight of bike and rider. Landing again and again, I heard each bounce distinctively as I lie on the La Nouba stage less than a foot from this ersatz pogo stick.

How did I get myself into this? It wasn’t my fault, really!

Cirque has made a place in several of its shows for audience participation. David Shiner’s “Silent Movie” scene from Nouvelle Expérience, Rene Bazinet’s “Gunslinger” scenario from Saltimbanco, or Francois Dupuis (Baby’s) hapless “Papa” from Mystère come quickly to mind. Almost every Cirque show has a place for a “real” or “fake” audience member to participate, even if only in the pre-show “animation”. It helps bring the audience further into the performance by making one of their own a part of Cirque’s magical world.

For La Nouba, that moment is the Bike Jump.

Doug White is a champion freestyle stunt bike rider, specializing in balancing and pogo-sticking his way over any obstacle in his path. He along with Daniel Boyer performed the cycles act in La Nouba for several years. It’s one of the more unusual skills in the Cirque canon, a variation on the equilibrist tradition displayed in other acts such as chair balancing or rola bola. But it’s one of the more popular acts with the savvy children in the kid-friendly environment of Walt Disney World.

It was December of 2000 when my wife (then-girlfriend) LouAnna Valentine and I took our long-awaited 12-day trip to Orlando. The entire visit was packed with activity, visits to all the big theme parks, and innumerable magic moments we shared together. And we made sure to snag tickets to La Nouba’s 6pm show on our last Saturday. We were looking forward to completing our slate of Cirque’s permanent shows.

The theater in Downtown Disney was impressive, with its high spires inspired by the circus tents of touring shows. We arrived anxious to see the show and dressed for the occasion, with LouAnna looking beautiful in a red blouse and black pants and I matching with black slacks, a blood red dress shirt and long black tie. Together we looked as yuppie-ish as we might aspire to be, and would have fit in just fine at any of the hoity-toity bars in the complex.

The show proceeded flawlessly. The clowns, with their “box” animation routine were hilarious, and the wonders performed in front of our disbelieving eyes were everything we were expecting. The characters, including the four all-white Les Cons (The Nuts-played at the time by David Level, Justin Osbourne, and Pawel and Witek Biegaj) made the stage their playground.

Then, with a scream and the band powering into “Distorted,” the cycles blasted onto the stage.

We were curious as to how the cycles might be incorporated into the show. Both Doug and Darrel displayed unbelievable balancing skills, at one point ascending a set of stairs that appeared from below the stage, and at another with Doug ascending the stairwell between Sections 102 and 103, crossing behind the center section of seats, descending the red-carpeted stairs on the other side and making his way back onto the stage – mostly on his back wheel!

The Cons were taking all of this in with confusion and curiosity. Who can these wild men be, and why are they interfering in our universe? As the act progressed they became more bold, venturing closer to the bikers. Halfway through, in an act of defiance, two of the Cons lay flat at the front of the stage, flashing a look to Doug that he should attempt to jump over them. However, when he ventured his bike close, the first sprang off the floor and fled to the safety of his comrades. Doug, his face partially hidden behind his BMX bike helmet, only glared down at the remaining Con and continued to balance on his bike.

Bounce. Bounce. Bounce.

This confused the other three Cons - Why was he not jumping over their friend? They cogitated and sputtered over this unlikely development, scratching fingers over bald white pates while the biker continued menacing their comrade with his bike.

Then one of them got an idea. In a break from the standard format of the routine, he raced down the stairs into the audience! The other two were now totally bewildered – here was one friend who had not been jumped over; while another was leaving the safety of the stage universe to venture into the “real world.” But the Con gestured at his two friends to join him, and with the urging of the Con lying at their feet (“Go! I don’t want to lie here forever,” he seemed to say) the other two ventured gingerly off the stage.

LouAnna and I watched this unfold with keen interest from our seats in the wheelchair-accessible section at the top of Section 104. Once reunited, the Cons raced up the stairwell between sections 103 and 104, then took a hard left and scurried up the main aisle toward our position. Now it was getting more interesting as they were getting closer and closer to us. What were they going to do? We were totally unprepared for what would happen next.

Stomping to a halt behind us, one Con pulled my chair back and to the left. He slipped his arms under my shoulders and proceeded to lift me up above his head! Another took one leg; the third took the other. Before LouAnna could protest (only managing a startled, “OH!” during the entire three seconds of the kidnapping) we were off!

I was now horizontal, lifted off the ground and being carried by the three Les Cons as the audience chuckled and applauded. Two spotlights focused their attention on us, blinding me with their bright warmth. I could feel the cloth of the Cons garments as it occasionally brushed against pieces of exposed skin, rustling with their efforts. They were breathing hard but didn’t seem to be overly exerting themselves; they had me firmly gripped in strong hands and arms. They didn’t speak, keeping up their mime persona. The smell of greasepaint and sweat emanated from them.

Confused for only the barest of moments, I quickly understood they were going to do something with me, but I couldn’t be sure what. But I played along, flailing my arms and legs in mock terror. I mimed a wordless scream and played it to the hilt, making eye contact and mouthing “Help me!” to any audience member I could. But the Cons moved quickly, descending the stairs they had come up mere moments before and retaking their place on stage, back comfortable in their home environment. They finally laid me on the stage floor to the right of their prone compadre, between him and the still-bouncing biker.

Bounce. Bounce. Bounce.

I sat up with feet straight out, face contorted in fear, still playing the terrorized patron. The stage floor was warm from the heat of lights and performance. The sound onstage was not as loud as I was expecting, the musicians playing the soft piano improv bit from the end of “Distorted.” I had expected the glare from the lights to be blinding, but I could see many of the faces in the audience staring back at me.

I was enjoying playing the part, and started to glance around the front of the audience when I felt two fingers press firmly on my forehead. It was the Con next to me cueing me what to do next. He only needed to press for a second until I got the point and lay prone on the warm stage as he had previously done. He quickly sidled up to me, snuggling his right side tightly against my left. The band played softer, tighter, as if ready to pounce.

Bounce. Bounce. Bounce.

I closed my eyes and tried to relax. I knew I was safe, but didn’t want to see it coming. My mind was racing – “This is *so cool*!” The Con lay close to me, motionless, waiting. The biker continued to pogo, getting ever more closer.

Bounce. Bounce. Bounce.

Something was wrong. Biker Doug took no action. I was perfectly still as was my new friend, yet still nothing. A second later the Con realized the problem and sat up, reaching

over my stomach to tuck my right hand tightly under my butt. The biker wanted to get as close to me as possible and didn't want to risk smashing fingers. After flashing the audience a bemused look that caused an eruption of laughter, he lay back down and snuggled close. The biker bobbed closer and closer, the squeaking of his tires becoming louder with each movement, each a tiny earthquake on the stage floor.

Bounce. Bounce...

BOUNCE!

With an audible grunt of effort Biker Doug launched himself, leaving behind a small breeze of air on my right. My closed eyes "saw" him rocket overhead as his body eclipsed the lights shining down. A split second later he landed with a THUMP! to the left of the Con. The band erupted in celebration and the audience broke into applause. He had done it!

I opened my eyes and looked slightly to my left. The Con had quickly risen from his place next to me and offered his hand to help me rise from the stage. He had a strong pull and I was back on my feet in an instant. It was done, the stunt over. Next was something I never thought would happen. The Con looked at me, smiled and – spoke!

"Heyyy, gimme a hug!"

He wanted to welcome me to his fraternity of Les Cons. This threw me for a loop. I was NOT expecting him to speak! And for the first moment of the entire experience I didn't know what to do (strange, since he had just told me!). I just stood there, staring at the Con with his silly grin. But he had handled people like me before. As the audience continued its applause he reached forward and hugged me. Again the strong smell of greasepaint mixed with sweat. I managed to move my arms enough to hug him back and we parted, he moving away to join his brotheren.

Yet the show continued, and here I was standing at the front of the stage, lights glaring at me, all alone. The Cons words had thrown me completely out of the moment, out of "character." But I knew I had to get off the stage and back to my seat, preferably as soon as possible. It was also clear that I wasn't about to be carried back in the way I had been brought down.

One of the spotlights was still on me, helpfully illuminating my way as I ran up the aisle, stooped over and trying not to be conspicuous (too late!). In retrospect, if I had my wits about me I would have gathered myself, brushed off my clothing, and only then "realize" I was on-stage and run up the stairs in mock horror. Such would have been the best "capper" to complete my "characters" experience. But all I could think about was sitting! So I hunkered down and slinked back to my seat, the spotlight following me obediently. With a silent blink it was gone, and my moment in that special universe was over.

LouAnna stared at me with wide eyes. I was a mess – hair tousled, clothes ruffled, face flushed and sweaty, breathing hard from climbing the aisle steps two at a time. “I had *no idea* that was going to happen,” I assured her between breaths. In the darkness I composed myself and settled my racing heart. It had been quite an experience, and I concentrated for a moment to take in every detail. Out of the corner of my eye I could catch glimpses of other patrons occasionally looking at me – some with interest, others envy.

Eventually everything returned to normal and the rest of the show proceeded uneventfully. I thought that would be it, that I would leave as anonymously as I entered. But the surprises continued when, after the well-deserved standing ovation and the house lights had been raised, an usher presented me with a small placard. It was a “Disney Magical Moment” certificate, given at the time to people who had been picked for various participatory things – skippering the Jungle Cruise boat, pulling the Sword out of the Stone, participating in a parade or show. For me it was “Bike Jump Stunt”, dated and signed by the WDWorld Resort president and a Cirque representative. A nice scrapbookable keepsake memory, since there were no pictures allowed.

And, more surprisingly, my moment of stardom continued outside the theater, as a few people came up to ask if I was part of the show! Perhaps my clothing or “characterization” suggested to them I was an audience plant. But no, I was as “normal” as they.

Well, maybe a little more so. There might actually have been a reason the Les Cons chose me as their victim that night.

Truth be told, I had been introduced to the audience at an earlier point in the evening. And it was with the help of several of the kindest Disney and Cirque employees I have had the good fortune to meet. For during the Animation before the show I had the honor of proposing marriage to my lovely wife in front of a full house of 1,650 patrons, prior to the start of La Nouba. It was a moment neither of us will ever forget.

But that’s another story.

What Happened At CirqueCon 2006

Las Vegas....

Didn't stay in 'Vegas, it went to RIO!!

By- Lorraine Peck - Spring Valley, CA

Added comments by- Rich Alford - Seattle, WA

In September of 2006, a magical event, CirqueCon 2006: Las Vegas happened. At that event, many new and lasting friendships were formed; this is the story about one of those friendships in the amazing journey we took.



The first CirqueCon I was able to attend was Las Vegas '06. I heard about '04 AFTER the fact (bad timing), and when '05 happened, I was celebrating my first wedding anniversary (bad timing, again). Las Vegas worked out to be the perfect CirqueCon for me in both timing and location. When I headed out to Vegas in September, I had no idea what to expect, other than being able to see all the resident Cirque shows, possibly meet some of the artists and maybe meet others in the world who share my passion for Cirque. I was looking forward to meeting other likeminded people out there who were just as nutty as I am about Cirque du Soleil. Boy, did that ever happen and more.

It wasn't hard to feel comfortable once I arrived at CirqueCon after all the contact and planning through the Forum. Walking up to the registration desk, I was instantly greeted with a warm welcome from LouAnna, Keith and the others behind the counter. Standing off to the side was Rich, one of the essential four of the organizing core. I struck up a conversation with him and thanked him for all his work on the website, taking over organizing for the "magic bus", and moderating the Forum. I was off to meet a couple of new friends, including my two new "best mates", Dave and Cameron, from Australia. While we were at the group meal Saturday, I was discussing the traveling shows and lamented the fact that there are only two that I hadn't seen yet, Alegria and Saltimbanco. Both shows were overseas, and I had been anxiously

awaiting their return back to the States. I learned that Saltimbanco was going to be closing OVERSEAS in Brazil. Some already had tickets and trips planned for December. "What?? I thought. That can't be! It hadn't come down to San Diego yet, and I'd only seen it on DVD".

<Rich> For my part, I had traveled in January of 2006 to Mexico City to see Saltimbanco. I had heard it would likely close at the end of the year in South America and, I didn't want to miss the chance of seeing it before it was too far away. I really liked the show and I regretted that I wouldn't have more chances to enjoy it as I had with the others, or so I thought....

The CirqueCon weekend was so totally awesome. Way beyond any expectation I could have even begun to have about what it would be like. I left Vegas for home with some new friendships and a niggling little thought about investigating this rumor about Saltimbanco closing without coming back to North America. In the CirqueCon Forum website I posted "Is anyone else as crazy as I am?" and proceeded to ask if there was anyone else from the CirqueCon group who would be willing to travel to Rio with me to go to the final show IF we could buy tickets. I needed a travel buddy so my husband would feel comfortable with me going to South America by myself.

One of the traits I have is perseverance and persistence. When I get an idea in my head, as some from CirqueCon might remember (think Le Reve' back stage tour after the show) I HAVE to investigate to see if I can make it happen. Since I was off work the day after I returned, I went on the official Cirque website, clicked on Saltimbanco "buy tickets" and it took me to a Ticketmaster website in Brazilian Portuguese. How was I going to find anything out if I couldn't read the site? Hmmm...being the resourceful person I can be, I decided to contact some of the people I met who worked at CDS RSD in Vegas (thanks CirqueCon!). I left a message, "I was in Vegas for CirqueCon, heard a rumor and can you tell me if Saltimbanco's closing in Brazil? Can you tell me the date of the final show, and most of all, can I buy tickets? I can't seem to read the information on the website in Brazil." A couple of days later, I got a message back... "Saltimbanco's closing December 10th, and it's a 'Corporate Only Show' HOWEVER, we got special permission (from Mr. Bolingbroke himself) to sell you tickets to that show." Oh my

God! I'M GOING TO RIO!! I was literally jumping up and down at work when I got this message on my voice mail.

I was in contact with one CirqueCon member who thought she might like to go to Rio, and was thinking about it. When I got word that I could buy tickets, I needed a definite YES to be able to start planning the trip. She thought it might be too much on her plate for the year, so she said to keep looking for someone. Meanwhile, RichDVD, (yes, Rich Alford, one of the fearless organizers of CirqueCon '06) responded to my post asking for more information about this crazy idea of mine. I phoned and told him, that yes, in fact, I do have the opportunity to buy tickets, did he want to go? I believe his reaction was something like, "call me crazy, but count me in". I had my travel buddy!!

<Rich> For me, it was an easy decision. I was between jobs, taking some time to relax and, here comes a chance to travel to Rio to farewell Saltimbanco, I simply couldn't pass that up. Especially now that I had someone to go with who appreciated Cirque as much as I did.

Rich and I discussed where to stay, what to do while there and OF COURSE how many shows we wanted to attend. The biggest question was just what tickets we wanted to buy. Regular seats for Saturday early show, Tapis Rouge for Saturday late show and Tapis Rouge for the final show Sunday. We went from buying tickets to the final show, to going to THREE shows while down there. I couldn't believe we were able to buy tickets for so many of the shows. (Thanks HEAPS to Cirque!) There was a tiny problem with Tapis Rouge for the final show though. I was told that all the seats associated with Tapis Rouge were already sold out. I asked if it was ok for us to pay the difference in ticket price to be able to be part of the Tapis Rouge experience in the tent. Well, no, I was told, since Guy La Liberté himself bought all the Tapis Rouge tickets.

Now, that got me to thinking. For over 16 years, I have admired Guy's work with Cirque and I thought, WOW, he's going to be down in Rio, I'm going to be down in Rio, wouldn't it be so awesome to meet my hero and just shake his hand and say a heartfelt thank you for all the wonderful things he has provided for me (and all other Cirque fans)? So....I sat down and wrote a

two page letter to Guy telling him how much I love his body of work and how much it has added to my world. I asked him, if it was at all possible, would I be able to meet him? I signed my letter with my cell phone number AND my email. I never heard back from him before I left for Rio.

Rich traveled down from Seattle to San Diego and we hopped on a plane to Rio. A dear friend from college I hadn't seen in almost 24 years actually lives in Rio. I finally found him and arranged for him to be our AWESOME tour guide for our time down there. We were treated to some amazing sights and scenes in Rio courtesy of Marcio. The real reason we were there, though, was Cirque. At Saturday's early show, we were part of the animation. I had never had that experience before. I knew this was a magical trip, no

doubt. I sat in awe of the show, with tears in my eyes that I was ACTUALLY there in Rio, seeing Saltimbanco LIVE. I was blown away. During the intermission, we talked and visited with the

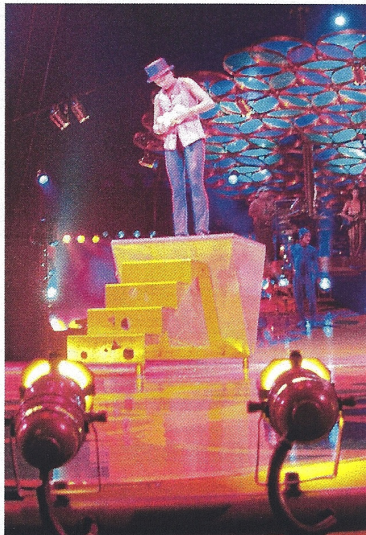
people working the Tapis Rouge tent, explaining that we would be in there for the next show. They couldn't believe we were actually staying for BOTH shows in one day. After the show, we got to meet one of the musicians I had been emailing, and a few of the other artists. They loved the chocolates that Rich brought all the way from Seattle.

<Rich> I know these folks who travel with Cirque put so much of themselves into what they do, I like to find a way to say "Thanks" beyond the applause. Anyone who has met me knows I'm not shy when it comes to things like Chocolates. In Seattle, we have a local Chocolatier that is AMAZING and is my absolute favorite decadence. When I travel to see a show, I bring a couple of very large boxes of these chocolates along with me along with a note that I send backstage for the Artists and Crew. In this case, I had also made some souvenir Saltimbanco buttons for the final farewell that I shared with the folks as well, the seemed to really appreciate the thought.



Between the first and second show we got to meet with some artists and get to know them. This was just the start of the magic that was to come...

Then, it was out of the main tent, around the outside and back into the Tapis Rouge tent. Since they already knew us, (courtesy of Rich's outstanding buttons he gave away) we were treated like old friends. They really took care of us. (Maybe they thought we were the crazy Americans?) Into the show we went, to FRONT ROW seats. I was nearly jumping out of my skin that I was sitting so close to the stage. We got smiles from the artists and even a wink from the juggler! Later, the artists recognized me as "the one in the front row going nuts at the Saturday night show". Too funny!



Sunday dawned and I checked my email yet again, in the hopes of hearing something from Guy or Cirque about the letter I sent. No such luck. Meanwhile, Rich got on the computer and checked out some sites and found Tapis Rouge tickets for sale for the final show! (I'm sure he wants to tell that side of the story). We decided to buy the tickets and gifted OUR tickets to my friend Marcio and his wife. We all got to the



show, and Rich and I were hanging around outside the Tapis Rouge tent just hoping to see Guy. While waiting, we were able to talk to some artists we met during our CirqueCon weekend! (A few

from "O" and one from Varekai, now in "Love") How cool is that?! (Thanks, again, CirqueCon!) Guy finally walked out on his way into the Chapiteau and I said "Hi, Guy!" he turned to me and asked "are you the one who wrote me



the letter?" I said "oh my God, you got my letter? AND you read it?" he said "yes, and I didn't know how to get in touch with you" and he turned to his assistant and said "give them Tapis Rouge access for intermission" and to me he said "I'll see you then!" Oh my gosh, I was going into the Tapis Rouge tent AND I was going to meet my hero. I was doing a happy dance that he actually got my letter and READ IT!! Now on cloud nine, we went into the show, told my friends we would be in the Tapis Rouge tent at intermission and we would catch up with them after the show.

<Rich> This is actually the part of our trip that made an amazing journey into a life experience for both of us. Let me take us back in time to Saturday afternoon. I was in the business center of the hotel checking my email and, out of habit decided to check e-bay. I always do a "cirque" search to see what treasures may be had. This time, I was totally shocked to see that someone was selling tickets to the FINAL show on Sunday and these tickets were located in row A close to the center of the stage (Lorraine and I had tickets for that show already but it was back in section 201. We really wanted to be close to the "action" so we were very interested). Rather than bid on the tickets (the price was quite high) I emailed the seller saying that I was interested, I was in Rio and I had American Dollars (cash) and, I appreciated the value of these tickets and would be interested if they didn't sell at auction. At that point we left for the Saturday shows. Sunday morning rolled around and, I checked my email, sure enough there was an email from someone I didn't know (I sort of recognized the name but, I couldn't really place it), it was the seller of the tickets. No one bid on them (I pretty much figured that would be the case) and he wanted to sell them. He emailed me his phone number in Rio and, I called. He was a very nice guy, we struck a great deal on the tickets and, arranged to meet him at his hotel right away to do the transaction. We got to his hotel and, it turned out it was the hotel all of the Cirque Artists and Crew were staying at while in Rio. We even met a couple of artists on the way into the hotel. We were VERY excited. We called they guy with the tickets and he came down to



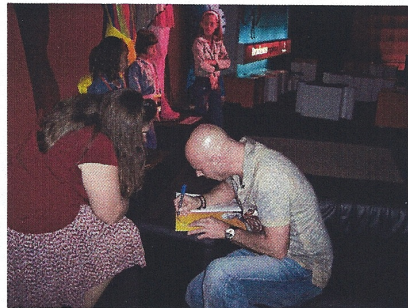
the lobby to meet us. We meet the guy in the lobby; he has the tickets and a program book in his hand. After introductions he said he'd also autographed a program book for

me (odd I thought). I asked if he was in the show, he said yes, he plays THE BARON... OH MY GOODNESS... Jesko... used to play the part of the "kid" now the Baron, selling us HIS finale tickets... what a stroke of amazing luck!! He was very gracious, posed for pictures and talked with us for quite a while. I would have never

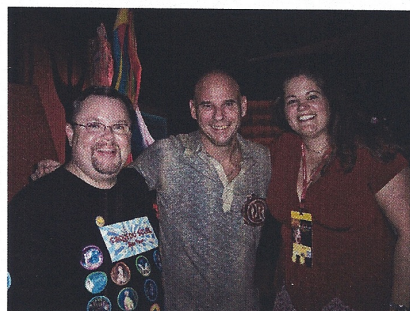


guessed something like this could have happened, not only do we get tickets close to the stage, we meet one of the main characters of the show, AMAZING!!! We left the hotel, extremely excited, now is when we gave our existing tickets to our guide and friend Marcio and his wife. And there is still much more to the adventure coming up....

The feeling in the Chapiteau that night was other worldly. We were sitting just three rows from Guy, and watching him



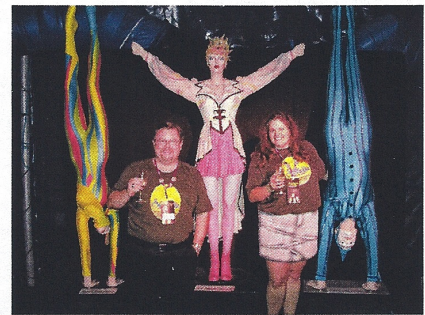
watch the show was amazing. The artists performed their hearts out. It was incredible. Intermission came and we headed to the Tapis Rouge tent. I cannot begin to explain the feeling of elation I had at actually meeting Guy face to



face. He sought us out in the tent and offered to sign our programs. While signing my program "Welcome to the Circus!", he asked "Are you coming to our party

tonight?" I said, "Party? I would love to come!" He asked how many in my party, (four) and he turned again to his assistant, and said, "Be sure she gets on the bus or gets directions to the party". (Rich decided to ride with Marcio and his wife in their car). A photo op followed and he was off.

I found my friends after intermission, asked them how they liked the show (They were truly amazed and blown away. We created two new Cirquesters that night!) I was so excited when I finally told them we were INVITED by Guy to the party! We were joking with the artists the day before that we were going to "crash their party" and now we were invited guests by none other than Guy! Does it get any better than that? It does!

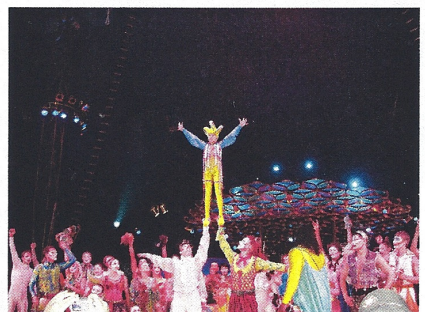


The final show ended and the artists we met



waved us up on the stage. Can you believe it, we were UP ON STAGE after the final show! Simply amazing...absolutely surreal. I talked to Amo

the clown, Armen the musician, Lee and Darren telling them we were going to the party. They couldn't believe it. The bell rang and the artists took their final bow. I snapped a picture and I watched them clear the stage with tears in my eyes. Guy and his son went up on stage. It was so precious to see this little tyke investigate the Saltimbanco chair. He put his little boy in the chair and I took another picture. It was so cute!



I hooked up again with Fifi, from "O", Claudio, now from "Love" and a couple other artists from "O". We found the bus and loaded on. I was sitting with artists from so many different Cirque shows, I couldn't keep them all straight in my

mind which shows and what acts they performed. I was so overwhelmed with excitement to be on the bus that I didn't even take one picture! Arriving at the exclusive club where the party was held, we were drummed in over a bridge by a local Samba School. (I just love percussion!) Into the venue we walked. Banners lined the walls with trivia on the 15 years Saltimbanco toured the world. There was a laser light show with outstanding Brazilian music. I was greeted with a champagne glass that never seemed to empty (they filled it every time I put it down!). They had an astounding amount of food on the Brazilian barbeque not to mention massive quantities of sushi available. I thought "pinch me! I can't really be here!" I found Rich and my friends and stood in total awe of the whole scene. I got to meet SO MANY artists from so many different shows, I lost track of who was who. The artists and people I met were simply amazed that Rich and I would travel all the way from the U.S. to Rio "just to see a Cirque show". We danced, ate and were merry. The crème de le crème was the Butterfly Samba school show. (I am almost as big a nut for butterflies as I am for Cirque.) There were just so many serendipitous events that happened around this trip. After the Samba show, we had to go (it was 3 AM!). On the way home, my Brazilian friends commented that they had NEVER been to a party in Rio with better food, music and entertainment. They were very impressed with Cirque du Soleil. At the party, I never did get the chance to speak directly to Guy, much to my own disappointment; I couldn't seem to find him in the throng of people before he left.

I got safely back to San Diego and haven't stopped talking about the whole trip since. I read "The Spark" and realized the trip to Rio was none other than me following my passion, which is what they talked about in the book. My dream has always been to retire and travel the world to see Cirque shows. The trip was my dream made into reality BEFORE I retire! (Why wait?) I wrote another letter of thanks to Guy. This letter was thanks for making my trip to Rio so unbelievably special and for providing me with one of the top 5 greatest experiences of my life. Along with my thank you letter to Guy, I sent him a picture of his son sitting on the Saltimbanco chair and another of the final bow of the cast.

When I decided to attend CirqueCon '06 in Las Vegas, little did I know it would be such an

awesome experience. Wow, to be able to see the shows in Vegas, peek a little into the behind the scenes, meet so many artists and make so many new friends. It was over the top! I didn't know it would open doors for such a wonderful, once in a life time experience of Cirque in Brazil, where I was able to reconnect with a friend I hadn't seen in 24 years. (Sharing Cirque with Marcio and his wife will always be a special bond for us.) Being able to see the last show of Saltimbanco (as we all knew it) and the opportunity to meet Guy face to face was simply beyond any dream I ever had! I certainly didn't expect to meet a fellow Cirque nut who would "vivez passionnément" (live passionately) enough to travel all the way to Rio to see a final show with me. I do feel Rich and I will be Cirque buddies for life because of CirqueCon '06 and our incredible Cirque Rio trip.

<Rich> There's not much more I can add to the story. Just being part of the farewell finale was special enough but, to be treated with such kindness by the artists and crew of the show and, to be included as honored guests by Guy was truly an experience I'll never forget. I was very proud to be an extreme Cirque-Fan showing these folks that we do exist and we remain completely passionate about Cirque. I was personally gratified that Fifi remembered our group when we were at "O" during CirqueCon and had great things to say about us as a group. Knowing that we as a fan base are appreciated feels really good.

One final note, for all of us that are passionate about Cirque; to know that we can make lasting friendships from sharing this common interest truly is one of the most "Cirquey" thing we can do.

The Fourth Unofficial Gathering Of Cirque du Soleil Passionates

Where are we gathering from?



CirqueCon 2004 VANCOUVER

The First Unofficial Gathering of Cirque du Soleil Passionates

Friday, May 21, 2004 to Sunday, May 23, 2004
Douglas House & Cambie Lodge Bed and Breakfasts
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

*And so the journey begins. Or continues.
Traveling far across the continent we are called by some
unheard, un-vocalized scream.
We come from British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana,
California, Louisiana, Georgia, Virginia, Florida and even Mexico.
We stand ready for the amazements that lie before us.
Yet fear what we may discover there.
At this time and this place we have chosen to gather.
To find our way through the darkness to where others stand bathed in light.
To be with them, and in so doing, be together.
Laugh and cry together. Experience. Together.
And part knowing we have found our kind.
We stand together, yet we all stand alone.
We are Quidam. Yet we are all Passionates.
Welcome!*

OUR FIRST STEPS – It all began with a proposition by Cirque fan Jeff “sfogviper” to come together during Quidam’s Vancouver, BC run. Seattle fan Keith Johnson, who was already planning a gathering for his family and friends, suggested combining the two groups and the idea was well received. Fascination! (the unofficial Cirque du Soleil newsletter) publisher and Orlando fan Ricky “Richasi” Russo brought the newsletters’ sponsorship to the endeavor, enthusiastically lending his support, and CirqueCon was born.

THE BED AND BREAKFASTS – What if we all roomed together in the same facility? Keith, who had previously organized group outings, suggested two special Bed and Breakfast lodges that he thought we be just perfect for us. The Douglas House and Cambie Lodge (www.dougwin.com / www.cambielodge.com), cozy turn-of-the-century houses, were right next to each other in a quiet residential neighborhood about a mile south of the Grand Chapiteau; very close to the cosmopolitan downtown of Vancouver. The intimacy, character and charm of these two homes-turned-inns and their closeness to the Cirque tent-grounds (not to mention reasonable rates and free on-site parking) made them perfect choices! With attendees making their own airfare arrangements (many flying into Seattle and carpooling up), and also buying their own tickets to Quidam, having nearly everyone stay together created a sense of community. It was also our combined numbers that lead Cirque to take notice and contact us.

THE PROGRAM PACKETS – In addition to the special weekend we experienced, we put together small packets of information and mementos as gifts for our attendees. Each person received: A Program with articles and information, two CD’s chock full of rare music by Cirque and its musicians (a third was made for Montréal,) full-color name badge with lanyard, a spread of food and wine at our Friday “Cocktail Hour,” and all the planning, research and communication, both on-line and via phone and email, necessary to make the trip happen and answer questions.

OUR SCHEDULE - What did we do during our weekend? Many folks planned small trips throughout Vancouver to see that fabulous city or took in multiple performances of Quidam. The “official” CirqueCon activities were detailed in a page from our Program Book:

FRIDAY, MAY 21

Time	Location	Activity
5:00pm – 6:00pm	Douglas House B&B Kitchen	Welcome to CirqueCon “Cocktail Hour” We invite everyone who's in town (and not attending a show) to stop by our headquarters Bed & Breakfast for a little "get to know you." We'll have a few munchies and some Cirque Du Rose wine for consumption. We'll also have space for you to show off your rarest Cirque collectible. We'll have older programs, Cirque du Soleil wallpaper books, and other Cirque memorabilia you won't find elsewhere.

SATURDAY, MAY 22

Time	Location	Activity
1:30pm – 3:30pm	Quidam Backstage Entrance	Special Welcome from Cirque du Soleil A very special event for CirqueCon Vancouver members! A tour of the Quidam site, Tapis Rouge, and a free gift!
4:00pm – 6:00pm	The Old Spaghetti Factory	CirqueCon Vancouver Group Dinner We'll have seats in the same area but probably not at one big table. We'll eat and party and prepare for the show. After dinner folks are free to tour Gastown, return to the Bed & Breakfast to dress for the show, or head straight to the tent to be there when the gates open at 7:00pm.
7:00pm – 11:00pm	Grand Chapiteau	Cirque du Soleil: Quidam At some point while on the Cirque grounds we'll want to gather to take a group photo, so bring your cameras (just don't use them inside!). After the show, don't leave the tent! Cirque will have another exciting event for us at approx. 10:30pm - a special post-show Question & Answer session with Cirque artists, including autographs and photos!

It was an incredible weekend for our 30 members which spurred us on to consider other trips. Of course our final numbers told the story: 31 total members, all of whom attended Quidam; 11 rooms rented at the “headquarters” Bed & Breakfasts; 4 rooms rented by members at other places, for a total of 15 hotel rooms, approximately 33 room nights. Quite impressive for a first-time ad-hoc fan event!

For more details on how CirqueCon was created, a fun history of our trip, and some local press we got check out “Our History” section of the CirqueCon website. You can also see photos from the weekend in our “Photos” section.

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CirqueCon 2005 MONTRÉAL

The Second Unofficial Gathering of Cirque du Soleil Passionates

Friday, April 22, 2005 to Sunday, April 24, 2005
Marriott SpringHill Suites Vieux-Montréal
Montréal, Québec, Canada

*And so the journey continues. Or begins anew.
We heed the call, that whisper on the wind. Louder this time, reaching farther.
So again we gather. Together.
Old friends. New friends. Faces never before seen, yet souls familiar.
Again we bond with fellow Passionates.
Bearing witness to that which is newly created, still forming, unexplored.
Wrapping ourselves in its warmth. Together.
And the creators welcome us. Inviting us to peek behind their mask.
What mysteries will be revealed?
We come from far away. But we know where we are.
We are home. Together.
Bienvenue!*

THE INVITE – During the group dinner at CirqueCon 2004: Vancouver, André Belanger, Internet Marketing Manager for Cirque du Soleil in Montréal (who had made the trip from Cirque International Headquarters to be with us that weekend,) made a very vocal suggestion that the following year we should gather again for the premiere of the newest traveling show – in Montréal! With such an open invitation, who were we to say no? In the end 130 total people joined us – 60 purchased our Standard membership representing 90 people. Our members came from more than half of the United States, all the Canadian provinces that touch the US except Manitoba, three locations in Mexico, as well as Australia and Germany.

WHERE TO STAY? – Working with Tourism Montréal, we secured rooms with The Marriott SpringHill Suites Vieux-Montréal on rue St-Jean-Baptiste (www.springhillmontreal.com.) It offered plenty of rooms, all the creature comforts of a large international chain, an impressive list of amenities, and was less than one-quarter mile from the Cirque tent site on Jacques Cartier Pier! The standard suites went for approx. \$145.00 USD per night, with roomier deluxe suites going for approx. \$165.00 USD per night, with all taxes included! All in all 42 rooms were rented at the SpringHill Suites for a total of 144 room nights.

SPECIAL TICKET OFFER – Cirque du Soleil graciously offered an exclusive block of tickets for our “official” show at 8pm on Saturday, April 23, in Section 205 near the soundboard, and we sold 66 of these tickets (43 purchased tickets elsewhere for a total of 109 total tickets purchased.)

EATING TOGETHER – Our venue, the Restaurant du Vieux Port (www.restaurantduvieuxport.com), was just down the block from our hotel, less than one minutes walking distance! The restaurant offered us a “group menu” of: Choice of soup or salad, Choice of Beef Striploin, Grilled Chicken Breast, or Filet of Soul Provencale entrée, and Dessert, along with Coffee, Tea, or soft drink. The total cost per person, including all taxes and gratuity, was \$31.00 USD. The dinner was very successful, with more than 60 Cirque Passionates spread amongst several tables in a large room, enjoying their meals and talking animatedly.

OUR SCHEDULE – Our event turned out to be another once-in-a-lifetime weekend for over 100 “Passionates.” As for what we did? See our schedule!

FRIDAY, APRIL 22

Time	Location	Activity
3:00pm – 5:00pm	TOHU – La Cité Des Arts du Cirque	TOHU Tour A combination of dream merged with reality, TOHU is creating a “hub” of circus performing arts in Montréal. This tour will cover all aspects of the site, from environmental considerations to their burgeoning circus memorabilia and art collection.
6:00pm – 7:30pm	Marriott SpringHill Suites Rooms 524/252	CirqueCon 2005: Meet and Greet We invite everyone to our room for a little “get to know you.” We’ll have munchies and such for consumption. Have a Cirque collectible you’d like people to see? Show it here!
8:30pm – 10:00pm	La Basilique Notre-Dame de Montréal	“And Then There was Light” (Field Trip) Take in this interesting presentation on the history of Montréal and the Basilica in words, lights, projections and sounds. Images are played across large screens and canvas sails strung throughout the sanctuary.

SATURDAY, APRIL 23

Time	Location	Activity
11:45am – 4:00pm	Cirque du Soleil International HeadQuarters	Cirque International Headquarters Tour Where all the magic and wonder is created! Cirque du Soleil has opened its doors and has also offered us the opportunity to shop at their Headquarters Boutique! This is the first time the IHQ Boutique has been open to non-employees – ever! It is similar in “style” to the boutiques on tour, with everything out and available for handling, and at a 15% discount!
5:00pm – 7:00pm	Restaurant du Vieux Port	CirqueCon 2005: Group Meal Gather with other Passionates to eat, drink, and talk of our shared “passion.” A perfect way to prepare for the wonders to come.
7:00pm – 10:30pm	Le Grand Chapiteau @ Jacques Cartier Pier	Cirque du Soleil’s Corteo We will watch as Cirque “combines the passion of the actor with the grace and power of the acrobat to plunge the audience into a world of playfulness and spontaneity situated in a mysterious area between heaven and earth.”
11:30pm	Restaurant du Vieux Port	“Time for Desert” After the show ends, some of us may go back to the Restaurant du Vieux Port (open till Midnight), or even other places in Old Montréal, to have dessert or coffee and “de-compress.”

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Thursday, September 21, 2006 to Sunday, September 24, 2006
Treasure Island Hotel and Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada, United States

*The loudest call comes from far away.
Echoing across the desert, rebounding off the canyons.
But crystal clear.
Once again we heed the voice.
Gathering with fellow Passionates in our greatest number.
Bearing witness. Together.
A flower in the desert. A liquid oasis.
The lure of the sensual. A glimpse into the void.
Universal love.
With our hosts revealing more of the mystery.
What happens here...
Living. Passionately.
... Will be remembered forever.
And we will experience it. Together.
Welcome!*

FINALLY – It's been called everything from "Sin City" to the "City of Lights," and in 2006 Las Vegas at long last also became our special playground. We debated the city as a destination for the next CirqueCon during the Meet & Greet Cocktail Hour at CirqueCon 2004: Vancouver. We were set to take our traveling circus to Cirque's flower in the desert when André Belanger, Internet Marketing Manager for Cirque du Soleil, invited us to visit Montréal instead! Having experienced the premiere of a new traveling show, as Cirque's guests, the time felt right to take on Las Vegas and its multitude of shows.

OUR MEMBERS – Our membership numbers were also quite impressive: 162 memberships were purchased for a total of 190 people representing 22 of the 50 United States, 2 Canadian Provinces, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Scotland, England, and Australia. Truly an international convention of Cirque Passionates!

TAPIS ROGUE – Cirque's Resident Show division (headquartered in Las Vegas) went above and beyond and rolled out the red carpet for us, surprising and exciting our members with remarkable, unprecedented access to their theaters, artists and managers. They also handled ticket sales for each of the five "official" CirqueCon attended shows --- «O» – Sep.21.2006 @ 10:30pm, LOVE – Sep.22.2006 @ 7:30pm, Mystère – Sep.22.2006 @ 10:30pm, KÀ – Sep.23.2006 @ 6:30pm, and Zumanity – Sep.23.2006 @ 10:30pm --- to which they have our heartfelt thanks, not to mention throwing one fabulous Meet & Greet at their offices! And Ground Zero for all our activity: Treasure Island (TI) Casino-Hotel.

OUR SCHEDULE – If we thought Montreal was an once-in-a-lifetime weekend; Las Vegas took it up a notch and then some! As for what we did? See our schedule!

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Time	Location	Activity
10:00am - 2:00pm	T.I.	CirqueCon Registration Table Open
3:00pm - 5:00pm	MGM	<p>Activities in the KÀ Theater</p> <p>We start our weekend off with a bang! We first journey to the MGM Grand and the KÀ Theatre, where we will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch a rehearsal from Section 202. • Have a Q&A and Photo Op session with artists, technical staff, and coaches following the rehearsal. • We will then be able to watch show set-up as it begins. <p>And at some point during the afternoon, attendees will be given the rare opportunity to look into the void!</p>
6:00pm - 9:00pm	Cirque RSD HQ	<p>CirqueCon 2006: Las Vegas! Meet & Greet</p> <p>Early evening is the perfect time for our “Meet and Greet”. It’s the place where members meet old (and new) friends, receive their membership packets, and sample local foods as well as tidbits brought by other members. This year’s Meet & Greet is very special, as it will take place at the Cirque du Soleil Resident Shows Division (RSD) Headquarters!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSD Staff will be on hand to answer questions. • Cirque du Soleil Senior VP of Live Shows, Michael Bolingbroke, will be visiting and talking with us (his department oversees resident/touring shows and marketing!) • There will be a free raffle for Cirque stuff, which everybody can enter! • And there will be an auction of special Cirque du Soleil memorabilia gathered specifically for us (and appealing to our Cirque collector sensibilities) to benefit Street Teens.
10:30pm - 12:00am	Bellagio	<p>Group Show - «O»</p> <p>We gather at Bellagio to witness the spectacle that is «O». What some call “the ultimate Cirque experience” will awe us with its beauty and elegance. But that isn’t all...</p>
12:00am - 1:00am	Bellagio	<p>Activities in the «O» Theater</p> <p>Following the show stay in your seats for our special Cirque du Soleil activities...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists will come out for photo ops and a Q&A! • Sit on the ledge of the pool for a group photo opportunity! • Finally, each attendee will be able to retrieve water from the «O» pool in a specially-provided vial. <p>How cool is that?!? And that's just the first day!</p>

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Time	Location	Activity
10:00am - 2:00pm	T.I.	CirqueCon Registration Table Open
2:00pm - 4:00pm	T.I.	CirqueCon Group Meal - Dishes Buffet Gather with other Cirque Passionates (in an especially reserved area) to eat, drink, and talk of our shared “passion.” A perfect way to prepare for the continuing wonders to come, and just steps away from our activities at the Mystère Theater. Dishes features Barbeque, Asian, Pasta, Pizza, Salad, and Bakery stations, with something for everyone.
4:20pm - 6:00pm	T.I.	Activities in the Mystère Theater Friday the 22nd brings us the unexplored and the familiar. Meet in the TI’s Mystère Theater for the following activities... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will watch a rehearsal with a member from the artistic staff to explain what's happening and to answer questions. • After the rehearsal, watch set-up as it begins with a member from the technical staff available to answer our questions.
7:30pm - 9:00pm	Mirage	Group show - LOVE The power of the words and music of the Beatles combined with the artistry of Cirque du Soleil in a brand-new production.
9:00pm - 9:30pm	Mirage	Activities in the LOVE Theater Following the show, stay in your seats. We will meet in Section 200 to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the change-over between shows. • Members of the artistic staff will be available for a brief Q&A. • A Cast photograph will be provided to each attendee!
10:30pm - 12:00am	T.I.	Group Show - Mystère Catch a free tram next door to our “headquarters” hotel, the Treasure Island (T.I.), to take in the 10:30pm performance of Mystère, Cirque's first (and some still say best) Vegas resident show.
12:00am - 12:30am	T.I.	Activities in the Mystère Theater Following the show, stay in your seats... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again we will step onto a Cirque stage for an exclusive group photograph of CirqueCon members with “Alice,” the snail! This photo will be taken by a professional photographer and will be provided to each attendee on Saturday. And we're not through!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Time	Location	Activity
10:00am - 2:00pm	T.I.	CirqueCon Registration Table Open
3:00pm - 5:00pm	NY-NY	Activities in the Zumanity Theater We start our afternoon off at New York-New York with activities at the ZUMANITY Theater. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the transformation of performers into their sensual on-stage characters as Zumanity takes you on a journey from reality to fantasy. • Wardrobe and artistic representatives will unveil secrets behind the stunningly outrageous costumes and make-up designs. Performers will be available to answer questions and chat with event attendees.
6:30pm - 8:00pm	MGM	Group Show - KÀ Our evening begins at 6:30pm at the MGM Grand. This powerful spectacle dazzles with its high-tech storytelling.
10:30pm - 12:00am	NY-NY	Group Show - Zumanity Finally, we walk across the street to New York-New York for the 10:30pm show of ZUMANITY, ANOTHER SIDE OF CIRQUE DU SOLEIL. Be prepared to be provoked! Or, if you're lucky, evoked!
12:00am - 1:00am	NY-NY	Activities in the Zumanity Theater After the show, stay in your seats. We'll be treated to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Meet and Greet with the artists in the theater lobby!

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Time	Location	Activity
10:00am - 12:00pm	T.I.	Our Kaffeeklatsch Join us in Keith and LouAnna's room for our version of an "Onions and Roses" panel, where members are encouraged to give their compliments and suggestions. Come have a cup of coffee or tea and let us know how we did and what can be improved. Or just stop by to say "good-bye!"

And so the journey begins. Or continues...

CIRQUECON 2008



The Fifth Unofficial Gathering Of Cirque du Soleil Passionates!

**Statement from Francois Macerola,
Vice-President of Cirque du Soleil**

It is with great pride and honor that Cirque du Soleil is present today for this unique and unprecedented event in its 22-year history. For the first time ever, Cirque du Soleil will have a permanent home outside North America dedicated to its loyal and devoted fans in Japan. We have designed a theatre that will pay tribute to the unwavering loyalty of our audiences and reflect some of the attributes at the core of Cirque du Soleil's creative impulse: transparency, cleanness, youthfulness, energy and strength.

The design of the theatre will harness the energy of the sun to warm audiences' hearts. A timeless symbol of youth, the sun has been a constant source of inspiration throughout our history and our shows. It will be the driving force for creators, performers and employees involved in this new project.

Today's ceremony marks an important step in the creative process of this new project. It is the beginning of the journey leading to an unparalleled production to open in 2008—a shining testament to the loyalty and dedication of our Japanese and international audiences.

**Join us in the fall of 2008 as we
journey to the land of the rising
sun to celebrate the new resident
Cirque du Soleil show opening
in Tokyo, Japan.**

**For more information, go to
www.CIRQUECON.com**

