

Stunt Spectacular

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People enjoy watching stunt shows because they feel like they are in the middle of the action. The sense of danger, and the excitement that comes with it is a major driver of why stunts are popular with the public. Stunt shows also reveal the “how to” of creating the movie magic that people see when they go to the theater. Often when a person sees a great stunt in a movie, they ask themselves “how did they do that?” Stunt shows offer a real-world glimpse into how some of these very dangerous stunts are performed on movie sets all around the globe.

When developing a stunt show for a facility, there are certain concepts every designer and manager needs to be familiar with.

Safety

Safety is the highest priority in creating and operating stunt shows—not only the public’s safety, but the safety of the performers and the crew. This is accomplished in many ways. From the very first design drawings to the final installation, safety needs to be the first priority. The use of computers, cameras and sensors to control and monitor the action, helps ensure a safe environment.

Additionally, repeatability is a key driver of the design. A great stunt can be designed into a show, but if it is not repeatable, and repeatable in a safe way, it will not serve the primary purpose of a theme park stunt show, which is to perform hundreds of shows over and over again in safe and consistent manner.

Audience

Making the audience perceive an element of danger is a big driver in the design of shows we produce. Putting the audience as close to the action and the potential danger, without actually putting them in danger, is a key component of making a stunt show exciting. This is accomplished in many ways. First, by creating a safety envelope for the audience, we can then layer in effects, stunts, and other items, that get very close to this envelope without violating it.

In addition, items like smoke, fog, water, and sound effects, can be placed on or in the audience areas, adding another layer of realism to the situation, and thereby affecting the sensory perception of the audience. This is one trick we try to use in all of our shows.

Longevity

A good manager will realize early on in the process that we not only need to create one good stunt show, but one that can be operated hundreds of times a year. This creates a “wear and tear” factor that needs to be accommodated for in the design and fabrication of the show elements. It is also important to keep in mind the level of performer and crew talent that may be available at a theme park. While movies and TV shows draw upon a pool of talent that includes some of the worlds best performers and technicians, a theme park does not have this talent pool to draw from. So you always have to be careful to design and produce elements that can be accomplished with the level of talent that you have available.

Training

Both the cast and crew of any stunt show need to go through significant safety training before the first day of operations. Typically this period lasts 4-6 weeks, and can involve the entire cast and crew for some very long days. The key is to make sure that the design intention and the safety objectives are met, in a repeatable way. There is also continued training that goes on during the run of the show, particularly for stunt people who may be learning to perform multiple roles in a show. Once this training

is completed, it is important to always remain vigilant, and to continue to practice safety meetings and inspections, so as to not allow the cast and crew to become complacent, as with any other ride or attraction.

Knowledge

Managers need to know their audience, and how a show like this may fit into their current set of offerings. A stunt show is a great alternative to a very expensive roller coaster, and can offer the similar types of return on attendance and guest satisfaction. The key is to understand how a show like this will work with the other offerings that the park has, as well as its overall theme. Stunt shows can be produced very economically, but their operational costs, both with labor, pyrotechnics, and other expendables, can be significant, and should be factored into the long-term plan of the park. It does not make sense to build a great show, and then find that the operational costs limit it to only running on peak days, or for only one show a day. The key is to balance the production and operations cost against the park’s long-term goals to determine if this product is right for the park.



Courtesy of Utopia Entertainment