

## Obscurity Point

### Horizons

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Prior to his death in 1966, Walt Disney conceived an idea for a utopian city of the future: a functional, populated urban area that would, “take its cue from the new ideas and new technologies that are now emerging from the creative centers of American industry.” Walt planned for his vision to be constructed on recently acquired property in Orlando, Florida, and it called for the construction of a commercial center, residential areas, local businesses, and schools- all of which would be interconnected by a mass series of transportation systems in the form of monorails. He wanted his city, titled the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, or EPCOT for short, to serve as a test bed for city planning in the hope that it would spring off into something greater, prompting for further expansion and commercial development to be made within the worlds of technology, innovation, and creativity.

Walt’s idea never materialized. Not exactly.



Above: Early concept art of EPCOT. Source: omniluxe.net

Enter the late 1970s, when imagineers at WED Enterprises were developing a second theme park for Walt Disney World that would supplement the Magic Kingdom, which was

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growing tremendously in popularity. They had previously abandoned Walt's EPCOT concept after having concerns about maintaining a real, working city, but aspects of the EPCOT idea, including the name, were revived when the concept of a futuristic, technology-based park became a topic of interest. This was the beginning of the 1980s after all.

On October 1, 1982, the park, then titled 'Epcot Center', opened its gates to the public and marketed itself as 'the beginning of the 21st century'. Its overall concept had changed and evolved from a futuristic community to a permanent celebration of human achievement through technological innovation and international culture. The park, which sits on a whopping 305 acres of land, doubled the size of the Magic Kingdom and was divided into two halves. The back section of the park, known as World Showcase, encircles a massive lagoon and contains 11 different pavilions, each themed and dedicated to represent a specific country. Usually these pavilions would be sponsored by their respective countries and for this reason some concepts,



such as the Spain or Israel pavilions, would have to be put on hold or scrapped entirely if their national government denied Disney's sponsorship proposal.

Above: Epcot Center's opening day celebration on October 1, 1982. Source: D23.com

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The front section of the park would be known as Future World, and would much more resemble Walt's original vision of EPCOT as an urban hub that embraces human innovation, creativity, technological development, and science. Like World Showcase, Future World was planned out to consist of several different pavilions, each housing different attractions and dedicated to a different aspect of science and human development. The various pavilions encircle the park's icon, the globe-shaped Spaceship Earth, which houses an attraction in itself. Each of Future World's pavilions could easily be identified by guests by colorful symbols that both represented the area of science they celebrated and the attractions they housed inside. The original nine pavilions consisted of: *Spaceship Earth*, which celebrated communication throughout history: the *Universe of Energy*, which educated guests about the value and importance of natural energy sources: *World of Motion*, the title attraction of the Transportation pavilion: *The Land*, which is dedicated to human interaction with the Earth, agriculture, and travel: *The Living Seas* pavilion is a large aquarium and served as a center for oceanic research: *Wonders of Life*, possibly the most bizarre area, was dedicated to the human body and education on the importance of health and fitness: the *Journey Into Imagination* pavilion aims to evoke creativity in the minds of guests with its colorful mascots, Dreamfinder and Figment: and *Communicore*, the central spine of Epcot that was split into East and West wings, and celebrated all the ideas of Future World by showcasing exhibits that centered around the newest achievements in technology.

The last of these pavilions would be known as *Horizons*, and housed an attraction dedicated to humanity's future. Like Communicore, it would take aspects from all the

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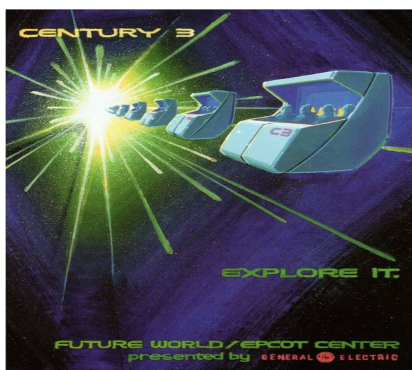
surrounding pavilions and combine them to provide guests with an interesting view of what the future of human civilization might look like. The ride took guests through time, space, and across landscapes of different geographical regions. This single attraction represented everything Epcot Center aimed to be, and stood as one of the defining attractions that made the park so unique thanks to its theme being centered around the next generation of families and human civilization. It was the closest Epcot came to replicating Walt's original concept, and would become known to many as one of the greatest attractions Walt Disney Imagineering would ever develop. So that begs the question, whatever happened to Epcot's best ride?

### The Horizons Prototypes

For all attractions created by theme parks, and especially by teams at Walt Disney Imagineering, there are often multiple concepts and variations created before the final product is approved and constructed. Horizons was no exception to this stage of early idea and conceptual development. In 1979, ideas of an Epcot attraction that would serve as a combination of everything Future World represented came to fruition and were pitched by show designer George McGinnis.

During its development phase, Horizons saw several name changes. It was originally pitched as Century 3 in order to acknowledge the third century of human civilization, but imagineers didn't think people would understand or appreciate this title, so they settled on a simpler one- Futureprobe.

It did not take very long for someone to realize that this was a bad idea.



Disney officials eventually settled on the Horizons title and work picked up on the overall development of the ride. There

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were several concepts for the overall theme of the ride as well. Reginald Jones and Jack Welch, two CEOs of General Electric, came up with the idea of the ride circling around Thomas Edison and his line of work which would lead to the development of the General Electric company. A second pitched concept was for the ride to primarily focus on the future of the United States of America alone, but with Disney wanting to appeal to a worldwide, international audience, they turned it down.

Above: A conceptual poster for Horizons with its working title- Century 3. Source: Insights and Sounds

Disney eventually settled on the concept they felt most accurately represented what Epcot was dedicated to, and work began on the dark ride that would be located between the World of Motion and Universe of Energy pavilions on August 5, 1981. The final product saw the ride become the unofficial sequel of Walt Disney's Carousel of Progress, which could be found at the Magic Kingdom. Rather than a family dreaming about what the future could bring, Horizons would take the same family to the 21st century and show how much technology had changed and evolved overtime. Support for this theory came from the animatronic figures installed throughout the attraction that bore an uncanny resemblance to the family members in the Carousel of Progress. Also, the attraction's signature song, "There's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow," was present throughout some scenes in the Horizons experience.

Below: Horizons opened its doors to the public on October 3, 1983. Source: horizons1.com



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### The Beginning of the 21st Century

Exactly one year after Epcot Center opened in 1982, phase two of Future World opened to the public and saw the addition of new attractions, the most notable of which being Horizons. Like World Showcase, Future World functioned on the basis of Disney reaching out to various companies to financially sponsor their attractions in exchange for free advertising and marketing within the rides they designed. Sponsors were also given their own private lounges in each of the pavilions, so who could turn an offer like that down? In the case of Horizons, its sponsor became General Electric, and the company's logo made its way throughout the ride many times through its set pieces and dialogue. On October 1st, 1983, Horizons, (presented by General Electric), was finally opened to the public and received praise for being “ a careful synthesis of all the wonders within Epcot, and applies the elements of communication, energy, transportation, creativity, and technology to a better lifestyle for the family of the future.”

The cost of the ride was approximated to be about \$60,000,000 USD, and this was after the team working on the ride had to scale back the budget by about ten million dollars. The unique design of the pavilion was meant to mimic the look of a spaceship and perhaps even an infinite, ever expanding horizon as an allusion to the unlimited, growing possibilities of the future. The classic logo of the ride was given a similar, three-dimensional design. The attraction layout was also somewhat unique, as it featured a continuous ‘omnimover’ ride system that was present in other Disney rides such as the Haunted Mansion, but instead of vehicles being on a grounded track or conveyor belt, they were suspended from above in a similar fashion to Peter Pan's Flight.



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Above: A look at the suspended omnimover ride vehicles of Horizons. Source: Disney Parks Blog

More aspects that differentiated the attraction from others included the use of two OMNIMAX screens, which were groundbreaking at the time of its opening, advanced audio-animatronic figures, and a one of a kind “choose your own ending” finale segment which was brought to life through the use of rotating projection screens, movie-quality camera work, and extremely detailed scale models of different landscapes. The ride was also known for its use of music, particularly the “New Horizons” theme song composed by George Wilkins, who also worked on the music for the Living Seas pavilion. The attraction, in hindsight, was an extremely impressive creation by WED Enterprises, and the work that was put in to it by the imagineers responsible resulted in a perfect blend of the principles Epcot was meant to be founded upon; it celebrated both the possibilities of the future and man’s relationship with nature, as well as paying tribute Walt’s original vision of the City of Tomorrow.

### The Horizons Experience

The Horizons ride was, no doubt, a long one and spanned a total duration of 14 minutes and 45 seconds. Guests would enter the ride’s queue, designed to be Futureport, the transportation hub of tomorrow, which came complete with a board advertising the different locations the ride would take them to. They would then step on to a moving conveyor belt and board their omnimover ride vehicles. These vehicles looked similar to the doom buggies in the Haunted Mansion attraction, but were attached from overhead, fit four people across, and took more of a box-like shape. Also, each vehicle came with three buttons, each of which had

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different locations on them. These would come into use later during the “choose your own ending” finale of the ride.

As omnimovers disembarked, the first segment of the ride began, entitled “Looking Back at Tomorrow.” This part of the ride focused on what the future would look like as dreamed by visionaries of the past and included an audio animatronic figure of Jules Verne in the spaceship from his novel *From the Earth to the Moon*. This scene transitioned to one of an apartment from a perspective of the future by people in the 1930s. This scene had a very abstract design and consisted of robots doing simple housework for their owners including giving haircuts, vacuuming the floors, and preparing food in the kitchen. The chef robot seemed to have been having a bit of a malfunction, however, as the kitchen would be in complete disarray with food splattered everywhere. The scene transitions once again to the future of the 1950s. This scene comprised mostly of neon lights and billboards, all aligned to depict a nighttime scene of a booming city. The designs of the buildings would be similar to something one would see in an



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episode of *the Jetsons*, complete with needle-shaped sky towers, flying cars, and people getting around on jetpacks.

Above: The 1930s scene from the “Looking Back at Tomorrow” portion of the ride. Source: D23.com

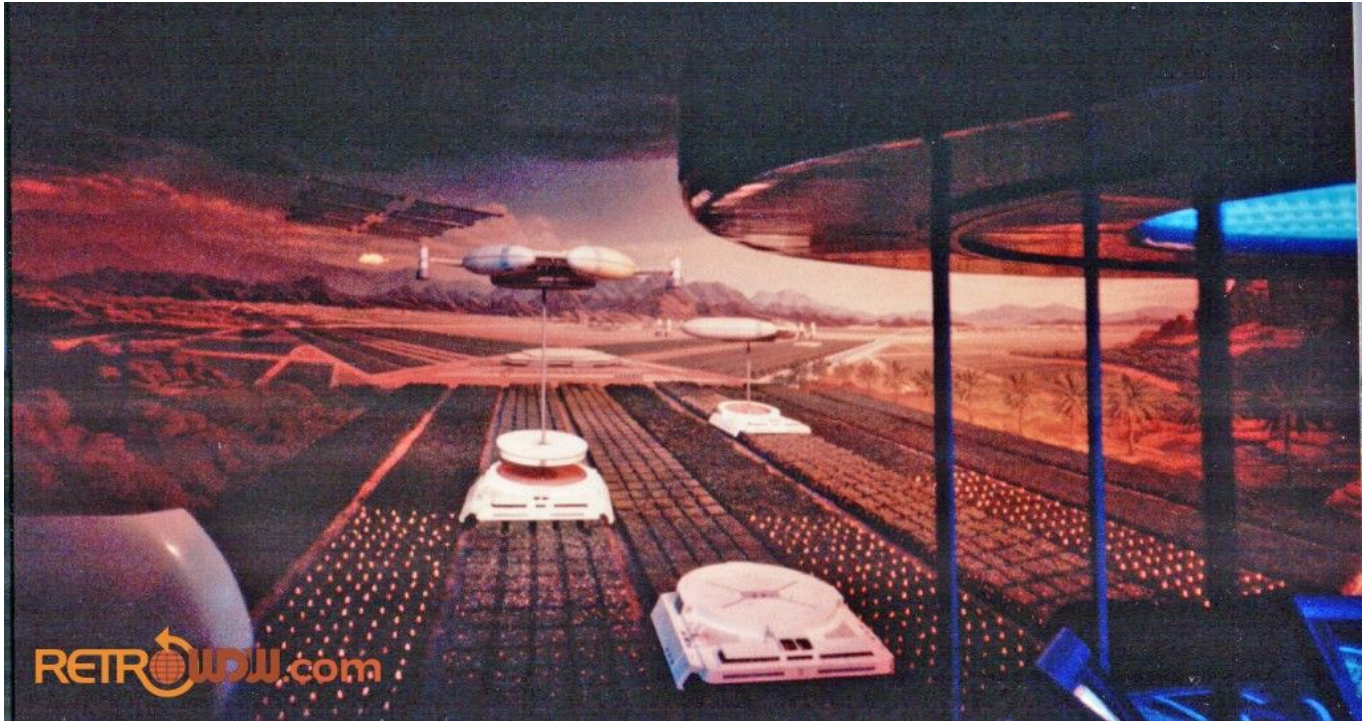
The second segment of the ride would then begin, and omnimovers would move into the omnisphere portion of the building. The huge, spherical screens would show footage of the technological capabilities of the present day. This short film segment highlighted scientific achievements including being able to harness energy from the sun, deep sea diving, cutting-edge medical technology, and space shuttle launches. It also touched upon the idea of colonizing outer space, which foreshadowed the third portion of the ride.

As omnimovers entered the 21st century, riders would be met by the narrators, an older couple enjoying their evening in their technologically advanced living room in the city of Nova Cite. The father, who would play a song on his synthesizer device, sat next to his dog while the mother sat across the room, having a video chat conversation with their daughter via hologram. All three characters, particularly the father and dog, were believed to be the same family members from the Carousel of Progress.

As the ride passed through the family’s hydroponic garden, they would arrive in Mesa Verde, one of the locations advertised throughout the ride and the home to the daughter character. Mesa Verde was once a dry, barren desert, but has been transformed into a beautiful, organic citrus orchard with the help of robotic harvesters and environmental research. It was at this point in the attraction where an orange scent would be blasted on to passing riders in order to make the scene seem as realistic as possible. Next, riders would enter the Mesa Verde home of

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the daughter. Her husband and son could be seen decorating a birthday cake in the kitchen while her daughter, (or the granddaughter of the narrators), would be seen in a different room, having a video conversation through the television with her boyfriend, who is working on repairing a



SoloSub submarine vessel.

Above: Omnimovers would overlook the citrus fields of Mesa Verde and be sprayed with a wonderful orange scent by cannons hidden in the foliage. Source: RetroWDW.com

As the omnimovers would continue, they would find themselves on the other side of the conversation, now in the boyfriend's perspective in the underwater colony of Sea Castle. Riders would see the boyfriend working on his damaged submarine and talking to his girlfriend back in Mesa Verde. The boyfriend character was modeled after the story designer of the attraction, imagineer Tom Fitzgerald, and was therefore given the nickname 'Tom II.'

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The vehicles would continue past Tom II's workshop and explore the outside city of Sea Castle, passing by a classroom full of students interacting with a sea lion, a couple eating dinner while looking out their bubble-shaped window, and the same classroom of students swimming past in scuba suits through the community kelp farms. The third and final stop of the tour would then initiate as omnimovers would pass into the outer space colony of Brava Centauri through an anti-gravity chamber of one of the station's docking bays. A family can be seen experiencing weightlessness, and a keen eye could spot a Winnie the Pooh doll from the parks floating towards the ceiling above.

Below: A classroom of students interact with a sea lion in the colony of Sea Castle. Source: Disney Parks Blog



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The scene transitions into one of the laboratories of the space station where research on giant space crystals is being conducted. The story would start to come to a close as riders would enter the living room of the narrator's grandson and his family, who is celebrating his birthday and videoconferencing with the other family members from Nova Cite, Mesa Verde, and Sea Castle. It should be noted that during the birthday party scene, Disney had to pay an extra \$3000 in order to use the 'Happy Birthday' song in the attraction due to it being copyrighted.

After the omnimovers exit the room, a voice from overhead tells riders that it will be up to them to decide which path they want to take to fly themselves back to Futureport, giving them the options of Mesa Verde, Sea Castle, and Omega Centauri. This is where the 'choose your own ending' element came into play, as the buttons attached to each omnimover would light up for passengers to press; the majority would rule when it came to selecting each return route. Using a system of screens that rotated continuously for each passing omnimover, short, 31 second videos would play that would give the illusion of the omnimover flying back to Futureport. Each video would be unique to the environment voted upon, resulting in a total of three different ride endings. As vehicles exited this portion of the ride, they passed by a giant, glowing General Electric logo before being unloaded back in Futureport and left with a final thought by the narrator; "If we can dream it, we really can do it. And that's the most exciting part!"

In order to create the video footage seen throughout the ride's three endings, it took advanced camerawork and extremely detailed scale models to create an effective simulated flyover of an outdoor scene. Keep in mind that this was made at a time before computer imaging software was used commonly as a tool for special effects in movies, so the models created had to be so large that they would provide at least 30 seconds of screen time. To give an idea of what

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this really means, the model for the Mesa Verde sequence was said to measure 32 by 75 feet, and had to be filmed in a hanger at the Burbank airport. Being produced in 1983 by 30 model makers and taking over a year to build and shoot the three segments, the Horizons Mesa Verde ending is to this day the longest continuously shot miniature sequence ever made.



Above: Artist Robert McCall paints *The Prologue and the Promise* mural that could be viewed when exiting the ride. Source: Imagineering Disney

As riders would exit their omnimovers and leave Futureport, they would pass under several colorful, crystal-like glowing tunnels and be led past *The Prologue and the Promise*, a mural painted by artist Robert McCall. This huge, beautiful piece of artwork was created to show civilized man's flow from the past and present and towards the mysterious, undecided future. Overall, the attraction became a huge hit with guests of all ages and due to its impressive

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animatronics, beautifully composed musical score, and focus on the aspects of innovation, progression, adventure, and discovery. It quickly became known to some as one of the best, most imaginative attractions ever produced by the Disney company.

## Trouble on the Horizon

On September 30, 1993, major changes came to Horizons when General Electric's sponsorship contract with the ride expired and was not renewed. For this reason, the ride saw the removal of all references to General Electric including signs, dialogue mentioning the company, and the spinning General Electric logo at the end of the ride. Even though the ride remained open, it is important to know that without the financial backing provided by the ride's sponsor, maintenance and repair costs could not always be covered for the attraction. The quality of Horizons began to spiral downward as some of its effects and elements began to malfunction, as well as the ride system breaking down much more often.

The ending of General Electric's partnership with Epcot and involvement with the ride entirely caused Disney imagineers to start thinking of replacing Horizons with a new space-themed pavilion; after all, Disney was in complete control now and had total creative freedom to do what they wanted with the attraction and the space it took up. Ideas of a redesign circulated, including a new ride that would launch riders through space in individual harnesses and allow them to experience rocket launches, space stations, and the universe from



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outer space. This concept never really carried through, and, to the dismay of many guests, Horizons was closed towards the end of 1994 for a brief period of time.

Above: The small Horizons sign after the removal of General Electric's sponsorship. Source: disneynews.us

Below: Concept artwork of the space attraction rumored to replace Horizons. Source: RetroWDW.com



Jump forward just about one year later in December of 1995. The west side of Future World was seeing some major changes, including the closure of the World of Motion ride to begin construction on Test Track and the closing of the Universe of Energy during its major overhaul into the (very dated) Ellen's Energy Adventure attraction. Walt Disney World management officials saw this as a problem, as with three of Epcot's major pavilions closed, one of which had an undecided fate, the only attractions that would be located in the west portion of Future World would be those located in the Wonders of Life pavilion.

In an effort to boost park attendance and keep guests entertained while in the park, Disney decided to reopen Horizons to the public, as they had not started deconstructing it, yet

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left it unoperational for almost over a year. This temporary ‘default’ re-opening to the beloved attraction extended its stay well into the beginning of 1999.

It was then when things started to change for good.

On January 9, 1999, Horizons was permanently closed to the public due to mysterious, unknown reasons. While no official reason was ever given by Disney for the timeless ride’s closure, many guests and fans have speculated several main possibilities over the years. The first of these reasons was the lack of corporate sponsorship given to the ride. It is believed that Disney did not want to continue to pour money into maintaining an older attraction like Horizons that had pretty much been taken care of for them during its entire run, and having to finance its operation would prevent them from investing in new rides and future park development. A wide rumor that also spread was the condition of the Horizons pavilion building itself. Supposedly, the ride was built on top of a giant sinkhole (typical Florida stuff) and over the years, it had started to become structurally unstable and unsafe for the suspended omnimovers to continue to operate. The claim that the roof of the ride was also wearing down and falling apart was also added to backup this theory. Supposedly, Disney employees were told that they couldn’t enter the ride building in fear of loose pieces of roof collapsing onto them.

Whatever the reason could have been, the ride was gone for good this time, as September 23, 1999 saw the removal of both of the signs that sat outside the ride. Disney was slowly removing all sources pointing to the ride’s existence in the park, and while no official statement was ever given as to why the ride was closing or what would be taking its place, it was evident to park goers that Horizons was gone for good.

Or was it?

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### The Night of October 1st

On October 1, 1999, several press groups claimed to have rode Horizons at night, after hours as part of an exclusive event in the park. While evidence of this claim was scarce, riders confirmed to guests that the ride, indeed, had not been touched on the inside. No effort was being made by Disney to remove or deconstruct the ride for future development. So what, exactly, was going on? Rumors circulated that Disney was unsure of what to do when it came to the space the attraction sat on, and they were trying to decide upon revisiting their previous outer space ride concept and demolishing the building altogether, or to keep the Horizons structure standing with an upgraded ride experience and new storyline.

To many park guests and fans who saw Horizons as a staple attraction of Epcot, perhaps even an ‘untouchable’ of the park, they expected the latter and, despite its soft temporary closing, anticipated another few chances to ride on the classic attraction. When Epcot unveiled its plans for the Millennium Celebration event to celebrate the new year towards the end of 1999, park fans and Disney enthusiasts believed that Epcot would reopen Horizons to guests once again. New Year’s Eve would be the perfect night to do it on, as the park was predicted to be extremely busy as guests would flood the gates of the park to celebrate the beginning of the year 2000. As the night went on, the park, indeed, reached its maximum capacity with guests wanting to celebrate the new year with fireworks over the newly-decorated Spaceship Earth, but to the dismay and disappointment of those anticipating one last ride on Horizons, the building remained quiet, unoccupied, and completely and utterly alone.

Guests were beyond surprised that the park chose to keep Horizons’ doors shut. After all, it would seem foolish for Disney to not operate a perfectly fine attraction on such a busy,

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overcrowded night. The least they could have done was give the ride a proper ending and properly inform guests of its closure- perhaps even give Horizons superfans a chance to depart Futureport one last time, but no. It had seemed that Horizons was finally gone for good this time.

...Or was it?

## The End of an Era

It was.

In March of 2000, work had started on taking Horizons apart from the inside. Audio animatronic figures and larger props from the ride were removed, as well as the omnimover ride vehicles. Some of these animatronics were preserved and reused for other similar attractions at the Disney parks, while others were locked away somewhere in the Disney archives. It is believed that Disney preserved as much as they could from the inside of the attraction as possible.

Below: Demolition finally begins on the Horizons pavilion. Source: wdwmagic.com



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On April 20, 2000, a ‘very special’ press event was announced that would reveal what new attraction would be taking the place of Horizons, and a construction wall was placed out front that read: “Watch this ‘space’ for a future announcement.” Taking place on a stage directly in front of the empty show building, then CEO of the Disney parks, Michael Eisner, announced the new, space-themed thrill ride coming to the area once occupied by Horizons. With the help of a colorful blast of fireworks to distract the guests from their sheer disappointment, Mission:Space, a new centrifugal motion simulator thrill ride, was finally unveiled to the public. Apparently, Mission:Space would need to be installed in a new building entirely, so work began on the demolition of the Horizons pavilion on July 7, 2000. In an effort to keep the demolition partially hidden, Disney planted several trees behind the construction wall, but it was no use. The Horizons pavilion building looked as though it had been struck by an earthquake. By the end of July, nothing but a pile of rubble remained of the attraction once known as Horizons. This would mark the first time in history that a Disney ride building would have to be completely demolished in order to make way for a new experience.

By the time Mission:Space opened its doors to mixed reactions in 2003, it was clear that a new era had begun. An era where the experience that once paid tribute to Walt Disney’s original concept for an EPCOT would cease to exist.

Below: Mission:Space, a simulator attraction, opens on the former site of Horizons. Source: [orlandoparkstop.com](http://orlandoparkstop.com)

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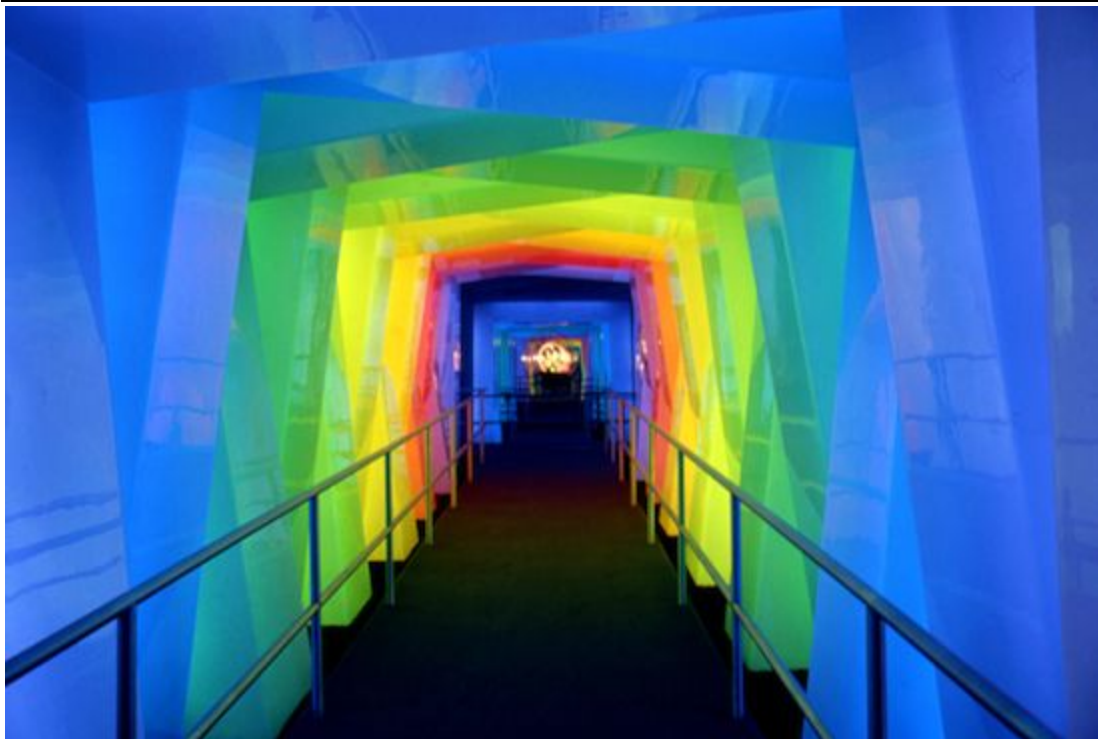
### What Remains of Horizons

Although Disney may have decided to pull the plug on the unique, one-of-a-kind attraction, bits and pieces of Horizons lives on to this day through easter eggs and references hidden throughout the parks, the technological achievements the world has made since the early 1980s, and its immense cult following. Many larger animatronics and props from the ride were put in storage by Walt Disney Imagineering or shipped away to be reused at some of the overseas parks, particularly Tokyo DisneySea and Disneyland Paris. For example, props like the SoloSub and a hovercraft can be seen on display while riding the Disney Studios Paris Backlot Tour. Other smaller items found throughout the ride, such as pieces of furniture in the living room sets or the genetically- modified fruit pieces, would be scavenged through by Disney employees and either be auctioned off online or kept as personal mementos of the ride.

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Many references to Horizons were left by imagineers in the United States as well. When Mission:Space took over, ride designers were sure to hide their fair share of Horizons tributes throughout the new attraction. These included the classic Horizons logo on both a spinning gravity wheel in the queue line and hidden behind the checkout desk in the Cargo Bay gift shop at the exit of the attraction. In Space Mountain at the Magic Kingdom, a 2009 refurbishment saw the addition of new scenes while exiting the ride, one of which included a variety of travel suitcases with a sticker for Mesa Verde being visible on one. Altogether, the whole exit sequence of Space Mountain is very reminiscent of scenes found in Horizons.

Below: The exit of Horizons is very similar to that of Space Mountain. Source: Disney Parks Blog



Also at Walt Disney World, a display in the One Man's Dream exhibit at Disney's Hollywood Studios once showcased old props from Epcot, including the original robot butler from the "Looking Back at Tomorrow" sequence of the ride; unfortunately, it has since been

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removed but is likely to return at future D23 Expo exhibitions or at similar Disney park events. Over on the west coast at Disneyland, several of the Horizons robots appeared in the entry mural at their Innoventions, which is located in Tomorrowland. It should also be added that during the late 1990s, Michael Eisner and Disney Imagineers were developing a second theme park for Disneyland, known as WestCOT. It was speculated that the west coast version of Epcot would come with a 'Horizons 2.0', but due to the failure of EuroDisney, (now Disneyland Paris), plans for such an ambitious park were shelved for the liking of the very confused, very problematic, Disney California Adventure Park. But that's a story for another day.



Above: A SoloSub prop from the ride can also be spotted hanging in Disney's Hollywood Studios' Backlot Express Restaurant. Source: photosmagiques.com

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It was also theorized that part of the reasons Horizons was removed was due to its overall quality of being a dated attraction; looking back at it, many, if not all, of the futuristic technologies presented in the ride have already been achieved in some form today. The most notable of these technologies that Horizons predicted include video conversations and the use of cellular devices, automatic kitchen appliances, genetically modified foods, and even small homes under the sea and in outer space. Although some of the innovations, mainly the use of flying cars and the colonization of outer space, aren't practical and are still in their prototype phases, research and work is being done by scientists on a daily basis to pursue such goals that were once seen as nothing but fantasy in the eyes of theme park guests thirty years ago.

If there is one thing fans of the Disney parks will not be forgetting anytime soon, it's Horizons, and Disney themselves has even made sure of it. With one of the largest fan bases in theme park history, the cult following that Horizons accumulated has led to the creation of countless articles, websites, blogs, video tributes, artwork, fan-made merchandise, virtual recreation projects, and even petitions for Disney to redevelop the ride and find a place for it back in the parks. As time goes on, more and more people have started to become fascinated by the great attraction that once resided on the space now occupied by a ride that locks you in a dark box and gives you severe motion sickness. With throwbacks being extremely prevalent in today's pop culture, Disney has taken advantage of the interest in the golden years of Epcot and has released several throwback merchandise lines, many of which include Horizons-related products. With this in mind, it confirms that Disney is very aware of the impact Horizons has made with its guests; they know what older fans want, but also need to appeal to younger audiences by installing intellectual property-based attractions. With a massive overhaul of Future

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World currently in development, fans hope that some of the new attractions to come will continue to pay some sort tribute to the original principles on which Epcot was founded upon, as well as having the potential to become as timeless as Horizons was.

### In Conclusion

Although hope still exists for Horizons to make its way back into Epcot somehow, the future doesn't seem to look too promising for a revival of the ride, at least not anytime soon.

What people need to do is celebrate.

They should celebrate the ride for what it represented, what it truly stood for, and how we, as a human race, no longer have a need for Horizons because we've accomplished almost all

of what the attraction prompted us to do: make new discoveries, innovate new technologies, and pave the way for a bigger, brighter future. That was what Horizons was built for. Not to entertain guests, but to inspire them to do the impossible. Now that human civilization has grown into something that not even Horizons could have foreseen, we no longer need a look into the promised future because right now, we're living in it.

Like the final message the ride left us with, we dreamed it, and we did it. Now it is our job, as members of the Earth we

all live on and share, to continue our journey and create new dreams to pursue.



Above: Horizons- Gone but never forgotten. Source: Theme Park University

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### Hoot and Chief

Before concluding this article, there is one last story about Horizons that needs to be touched upon. Two best friends, Cecil “Chief” Ed Barlow Jr. and Dave “Hoot” Ensign, took it upon themselves to daringly exit their omnimovers during rides and explore Horizons before it would close, documenting it all with their personal camera and getting as much video and audio coverage of the experience as they could. Sneaking around the ride, they would get up close and personal with all of the audio animatronic figures, special effects, and even discover hidden details concealed from the eyes of guests. Their adventures have been documented online on various websites, the most notable of which being *mesaverdetimes.blogspot.com*. A film that compiled the adventures of Hoot and Chief was pieced together by filmmaker Matthew Serrano. Titled *Remain Seated Please- The Hoot and Chief Story*, the film is incredible and serves to pay tribute to Horizons and Epcot in their glory days, as well as telling the story of two young men who shared an amazing friendship with one another; it is both compelling and emotional in its own special way. While Hoot and Chief’s story deserves more attention, please note that it was a very different time when the two friends abandoned their ride vehicles and went rogue throughout the attraction. Disney security was nothing then compared to what it is today, and leaving your ride vehicles wouldn’t only be risky in terms of getting in trouble, but is also very, very dangerous.

Below: A photo of Hoot’s girlfriend (and now wife), Sunnycide, in the kitchen scene of Horizons. Hoot and Chief sometimes brought their friends including Spike and Bionic Fonzi. Source: Mesa Verde Times

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But with that said, this article, like Horizons, is finally coming to a close. While Horizons may be gone, the fans and guests inspired by the ride will keep its spirit alive for years to come. Really, the best thing about the future is that you never really know what will come of it. Sometimes things go according to plan, while other times, you have to find a way to adjust to the change; and if there was anything Horizons taught us, it was that the change should always be embraced.

The parks are constantly changing, just like Walt had wanted them to, and things will come and go. As of right now, Horizons is gone, and it probably will be for a very long time. To sum up the legacy of this attraction, it is best to turn to a quote from Hoot during his final adventure with Chief:

“It’s done. Probably forever.”

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\*All photo sources have been properly cited within appropriate captions.