

What A Wonderful World (of Disney): The Sound of Magic

by Mike Geoghan, PassPorter Guest Contributor

It is with great reverence that I borrow the lyrics from Louis Armstrong's beautiful song of optimism and hope. The song, "What a Wonderful World", written by Bob Thiele (a.k.a. George Douglas) and George Weiss, was masterfully recorded by Mr. Armstrong back in 1967. Just over 40 years later, I've realized how perfectly the song and its lyrics fit in with a place in Florida based on optimism and hope. Now on to the lyrics...

[Tip: If you'd like to listen to this song as you read this article, go to <http://www.seeqpod.com> and search on "What a Wonderful World Louis Armstrong"]

"I see trees of green"

Visualize if you will, the entrance to Disney's Animal Kingdom. From the time you walk through the turnstiles until the first moment you set your eyes upon the magnificent Tree of Life, all you see (with the exception of a few birds and some smaller animals) are "trees of green." If this man-made jungle of vegetation doesn't set the tone for a great day at this park, well you might want to "hop" on out of there and check out Epcot or the Magic Kingdom. This theme park's stock is climbing. Just look at what they've done in the last 2-3 years with the additions of the wonderful "Finding Nemo - The Musical," the new Yak & Yeti restaurant, and the amazingly-detailed thrill ride, Expedition Everest.

"Red roses too...I see 'em bloom...for me and you"

OK, as I write this, Lou Mongello of WDW Radio pod-casting fame has reminded me of the beautifully manicured gardens and landscapes throughout Walt Disney World (See Show #62 at WDWRadio.com -- nice job, Lou!). For me, one of my earliest memories of visiting the Magic Kingdom as a toddler in the 1970s, is seeing Mickey Mouse done in "flower form" at the entrance just in front of the Railroad Station. That has stuck with me in both memory (and Kodak pictures) for over 30 years. A more recent memory was a trip to Epcot's Flower and Garden Festival in 2006. From the character topiaries to the themed-displays, there are so many, "How do they do that," visuals. Pictures and videos do not do this annual event justice. The best word I can attribute to it? Breathtaking! And Disney does it "for me and you."

"And I think to myself...what a wonderful world."

This family-friendly destination located in central Florida has the ability to transform humanity. It doesn't do it by ending war, poverty, or hunger on a global level. Walt Disney World does it as we should all do it ... ONE PERSON AT A TIME! Just ask a cast member. You could be reading this article thousands of miles away from Walt Disney World, but if you've ever visited you have no doubt encountered the superior guest service that this Disney destination provides. Now imagine if you treated a family member, a neighbor, or dare I say, a stranger in your town the same way. It may sound a little "Pollyanna-ish," but isn't it possible to translate that goodwill and pay it forward? Let's all try and see if we can't change our "wonderful world" together.

"I see skies of blue ... clouds of white"

Has anyone seen the latest Disney promotional material attached to the "Year of a Million Dreams" campaign? It shows most photographed building in the world, Cinderella Castle, surrounded by you guessed it ... "skies of blue and clouds of white." Is this a coincidence? I think not! What does Disney do when they make these huge structures like the castle or Spaceship Earth or the Tree of Life? They make us look up. They make us wonder. Most importantly, they make us dream.

"Bright blessed days ... dark sacred nights"

You want "bright?" Check out the Osborne Family Spectacle of Lights at Disney's Hollywood Studios around Christmas time...VERY COOL! You want "dark sacred nights?" Check out Epcot's Candlelight Processional at the same time of year. If that doesn't absolutely touch you as a powerful experience, regardless of your faith, well then you should probably join the Tin Man on his quest to see the Wizard.

"And I think to myself...what a wonderful world."

Although it's not my preference, I've recently spent a long weekend at Walt Disney World (4-days/3-nights) without even visiting a theme park! I still had an amazing time getting a massage at a spa, taking a boat ride to Downtown Disney, enjoying the incredible food at the many restaurants, watching the fireworks, and even taking a stroll on the Boardwalk. That's just some of the other things to do while you're here..."what a wonderful world."

"The colors of a rainbow...so pretty in the sky"

This line is easy folks. Fireworks, fireworks, fireworks! Be they from

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"Wishes," "IllumiNations," or even my personal favorite, "Fantasmic!"
Pretty? You betcha.

"Are also on the faces of people going by"

OK, this is something I like to do and it gets better with age ...
"people-watching!" Next time you're on-property, score a Dole Whip at
the Magic Kingdom or your favorite cold beverage at the World
Showcase, and park it. If you sit there for just 5-10 minutes, you are
guaranteed to see people from every race, religion, culture, and
country. And you know what ... most of them are having the time of
their lives!

"I see friends shaking hands, saying how do you do"

Let's take a moment to single-out a particular group of cast members.
The people who stand around for hours and for the most part, greet you
happily as they make sure you get through the security and the
turnstiles at each park's entrance. You probably never noticed because
you're thinking about what ride to go on first, but next time you go ...
flash them a smile and say, "Thank you!" You'll be glad you did and more
importantly, so will they!

"They're really saying I love you."

Most of them can't talk, but keep this lyric in mind the next time you see
your favorite Disney character. Whether you're there for an autograph
or a picture ... guess what that character is "really saying?"

"I hear babies cry, I watch them grow"

I'm in my late-30's, and I'm about to become a father for the first time
this summer. This lyric is one that I've only witnessed from a distance
while "people-watching." It is a rarity, but it does happen that little ones
sometimes cry at the parks. Usually they are tired, but sometimes it may
be from fright. Perhaps they aren't ready for a particular ride or maybe
they just don't think a 7-foot tall Goofy is something they want to be
near. This will change. They will grow (and from what I've been told, it is
something that happens way too fast).

"They'll learn much more than I'll never know"

Our children and our children's children have many future challenges in
the "real world." However at Walt Disney World, they will have many
future rewards. They will not only enjoy the experiences that we can
give them when they are young, but they will get to see and experience

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much more of Walt Disney World's 40-plus square miles of property as more of it becomes developed. More parks, more rides, more shows, more resorts and more fun. Long after we're gone, they'll have "more that we'll never know."

"And I think to myself...what a wonderful world."

Thanks for reading and the next time you hear this classic song, think about this; both the song and this magical place were created within a few years of each other. Don't you think it is possible that two of the greatest entertainers of the 20th century, Walt Disney and Louis Armstrong, tapped into that same creative, optimistic and hopeful mindset we should all strive for in our lives?

Oooooooooooh Yeah!

About The Author: Mike Geoghan is a television producer in New York City. He currently works on the talk show "God Squad," hosted by a priest and a rabbi (insert own joke here), but has worked in the past for FX, PAX, and "LIVE With Regis and Kathie Lee." He and his wife Susan have been DVC Members since 2005 and are expecting their first child (a Disney princess) this summer. He soon expects to be a volunteer with the Make-A-Wish Foundation and someday hopes to be employed by "The Mouse." His favorite Disney character is Peter Pan, which explains his insistence on "never growing up."

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