



**FROM LEFT:** Chris Beatty, part of the largest expansion in Magic Kingdom history; the Dumbo the Flying Elephant ride in the Storybook Circus area of New Fantasyland at Magic Kingdom Park

# Bringing Fantasy to Life

Grab your kids and pack your bags — this holiday season, the **MAGIC KINGDOM** is waving its Disney wand and expanding in, yep, magical proportions.

**T**HE MAGIC KINGDOM, an international icon as well as the most visited theme park on Earth, will officially open its largest expansion in history next month. The Orlando, Fla., fixture, designed by Walt Disney himself, is nearly doubling the size of Fantasyland (now dubbed New Fantasyland), a storybook land filled with attractions based on the classic Disney characters generations have come to love. New additions include a *Beauty and the Beast* forest area (Enchanted Tales with Belle) and *The Little Mermaid's* underwater world (Under the Sea — Journey of the Little Mermaid), as well as Storybook Circus, an area celebrating old-fashioned fun under the big top. *American Way* talked with Chris Beatty, senior creative director of Walt Disney Imagineering, the innovative team behind Disney's fantastic worlds, to discover what it takes to make the magic.

**AMERICAN WAY:** Fantasyland is one of the most iconic lands at the Walt Disney World Resort. What prompted an expansion?

**CHRIS BEATTY:** When we sat down to start looking at adding to the

## Did You Know?

The **MAGIC KINGDOM** is the world's only Disney theme park with two Dumbo the Flying Elephant attractions.

The **BE OUR GUEST** restaurant will seat 550 guests in three dining rooms.

**DUMBO THE FLYING ELEPHANT** is the first Disney attraction worldwide to use a pager system, which holds a guest's place in line while he or she plays indoors.

The **SEVEN DWARFS MINE TRAIN**, debuting in New Fantasyland in 2014, will feature a first-of-its-kind ride system that allows vehicles to swing from side to side along the track.

The expansion will create approximately **1,500 JOBS**, from construction to operations.

**WALT DISNEY IMAGINEERING** comprises more than 140 disciplines, including writers, lighting designers and horticulturists.

The **FANTASYLAND TRAIN STATION** pays tribute to Walt Disney with a Carolwood Park sign, an homage to the Carolwood Pacific Railroad steam engine Disney had in his backyard.

Magic Kingdom, all of the ideas just came back to Fantasyland because we have so many great stories to tell that have never been told. The big thing that we really fell in love with was this forest

concept. When you look at all of our classic stories, they almost always take place in a forest. So we thought this was a great opportunity to take our guests to a place that they have never been before.

**AW:** The concept of storytelling is so important at Disney. How does it influence your work?

**CB:** It is the core of what we do. Everything starts with a story, and [New] Fantasyland is no different. Even before we start talking about what kind of ride it is going to be or who we are going to meet, it always starts with a story of a place: Where are we? Then, with the guests: Who do we encounter in this place, and how do we encounter them?

**AW:** What are you looking forward to when guests enter New Fantasyland for the first time?

**CB:** One of the elements that will really surprise people is how immersive this environment is. When we say we're going to let you step into Beast's ballroom, our guests don't yet comprehend how amazing that moment is going to be. ... It will tug at people's heartstrings.

**AW:** Is New Fantasyland just for kids?

**CB:** Everything we do is geared toward family, and [New] Fantasyland will be no different. Every experience is well rounded and, from the smallest kids to our oldest fan, they'll all just love it.

**AW:** Any new projects in the works?

**CB:** Our hands are full right now, but, as Imagineers, we are always dreaming up new ideas and concepts — you'll just have to stay tuned.