

# KUNGALOOSH!

The Adventurer's Club Gives its Final Performance.

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With one week left until closing, there's a frenetic energy at the Adventurer's Club in Disney's Pleasure Island. Every available space is filled with a laughing, jostling wall of people who seem determined to wring as much enjoyment as possible from every last second. Strange words that don't make much sense to first-timers, but are beloved by the Club's many regulars, are shouted from all directions: "Kungaloosh! Hoopla! Jump up for Jenkies!"

At first, it seems like some odd, secret language. But by the end of the night, everyone in attendance has participated in the induction ceremony (sometimes more than once), learned the most popular phrases, sung the official theme song, and even taken a vow to uphold the Club's doctrine. In other words, we've all become fellow adventurers in a zany world filled with colorful characters and inanimate objects that periodically come to life.

## NO TIME FOR SADNESS

The last few weeks have become much busier than usual. There are now eight hours of interactive shows presented each night throughout the building, including the wildly popular (though seasonally

challenged) Halloween and holiday shows, and a much longer "Hoopla" finale.

In addition to the main stage shows, visitors wander in and out of the smaller rooms jam-packed with artifacts and trip souvenirs – along with several surprises. A floating genie's head resides in the Treasure Room, two masks wake up and start insulting the guests, the "Colonel" leads sing-alongs in the Main Salon (pictured on the opposite page). Plus, a

large group of very talented actors bring the quirky cast to life while mingling with guests. From prim President Pamela Perkins, to ladies' man Hathaway Browne, to the ever-eager Junior Adventurer Emil Bleehall, the actors portraying them never break character. In addition, the cast changes roles each night, so guests never know who will be playing which character and what spin they'll bring to the part.

Though all of the Pleasure Island



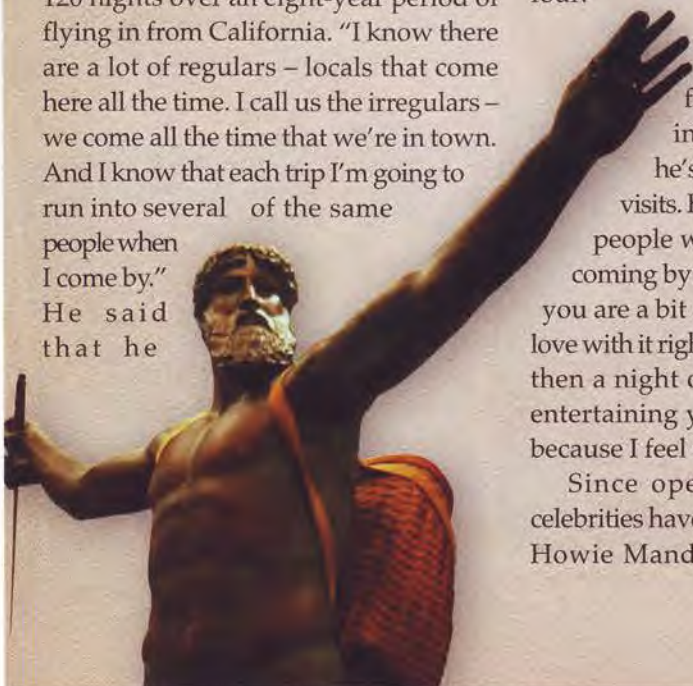




clubs are closing on the same night, the most vocal group by far has been the Adventurer's Club's fans. But according to Adventurer's Club cast member Jay Becker, who is playing the part of Graves the butler this evening, the cast is trying to portray business as usual. "In here it's 1937. And to our characters, the Club will be around forever."

## THE CLUB THAT KNOWS YOUR NAME

RJ Held, the owner of the 550-member Yahoo Adventurer's Club group, estimates that he's been to the Club between 100 to 120 nights over an eight-year period of flying in from California. "I know there are a lot of regulars - locals that come here all the time. I call us the irregulars - we come all the time that we're in town. And I know that each trip I'm going to run into several of the same people when I come by." He said that he



can't find anything quite like this near his home in San Francisco. "I like the direct interaction with the characters here. It's like a meet and greet that goes on and on. And it's a different experience every time. It's scripted, but it can still be different based on the actors playing the characters that night and their dealings with the audience."

It's a combination that seems to resonate with fans of all ages, including children. Tonight, a little girl volunteers at the Welcome Party and is soon on stage clapping, dancing and even hula hooping during Fletcher Hodges' song.

Cast member Eric Pender, who happens to also be playing Graves this evening, recalls another little girl who has come in several times with a stuffed cow, just like the one the Emil character carries. "Kids enjoy the club on a whole different, magical level. Even teens that are often eye rolling over other things seem to really enjoy it here. And seeing their parents get picked on is an especially fun bonding experience for them!"

Lori Divincenzo and her mother Bernadette fly to Orlando from Boston at least three times a year and come to the Club every night of their stay. "This place is like my Cheers (from the TV show). Everyone really does know my name. I'm 24 and have been coming to the Adventurer's Club since I was 21." Her mother adds, "And we've been bringing her to the [Pleasure] Island since she was four!"

Jeremiah Good, from Sherman Oaks, Calif., first discovered the club in 1996 and estimates that he's made more than 80 repeat visits. He said that most "normal" people would probably be happy coming by once or twice only. "But if you are a bit off the bubble, you fall in love with it right away. What can be better than a night of wacky Club members entertaining you? I keep coming back because I feel at home here."

Since opening in 1989, several celebrities have come through, including Howie Mandel, Neil Patrick Harris,





## CLUB SECRETS

> Zeus (pictured on the previous page) is actually a bank! Affectionately known as "The God with a Rod," the giant statue of Zeus holding a fishing rod has a slot in his right leg where some fans drop in pennies for good luck.

> The Club memorialized actors that left the cast by taking a memento special to a particular actor or character and putting it on display inside the front cabinet in the Treasure Room.

> The sealed letters on Grave's serving tray contain messages supposedly written by the various cast members. One from President Pamela Perkins scolds a fellow Club member for wearing a lampshade and dancing on the bar at a past event!



Robert Guillaume and Raul Julia, and Pixar's John Lasseter. And the cast says they've been honored every time Disney Imagineer Joe Rohde, the main designer of the Club (and who has loaned items from his own collections, including some of the masks) has dropped by. "I think he's been proud to show it off to his friends," said Becker.

### THE DREADED ANNOUNCEMENT

It was June 27 when Disney first announced it was closing all six Pleasure Island clubs to make room for new shopping and dining options. Fans, many of whom feel as though they have an ownership in the club, were stunned at the news. Sites such as SaveTheAdventurersClub.com sprung up almost overnight. Valerie Stephens created a petition that garnered more than 7,000 signatures, as well as a show advocating for the Club's pardon on Blog Talk Radio.



And sci-fi writer Peter David (who proposed to his wife at the Club) started a map-sending protest from his personal blog.

When nothing worked and the weeks started dwindling down, the fans finally began accepting that the closing was really going to happen. That's when many decided they wanted to see "their place" one last time.

Divincenzo said her family changed their airline tickets as soon as they heard the announcement – but she wanted to make sure they came down a week ahead of time. "I knew I couldn't handle being here on the last night because I'd be a mess. These are my people and it feels like my place. Right now I don't even want to face the idea of coming back when it's gone."

Good plans on standing in line outside the Club as early as 9 a.m. on the Club's last day, if allowed. "I've been saving my flyer miles for years just for a reason like this. The day I found out about the Club closing, I booked a



room and my air because I wanted to be sure I'm there for the last night."

Guests have also used the last few weeks to thank the cast members in creative ways. They've posted video and slideshow tributes, sent in pictures and drawings, and hand delivered cakes and scrapbooks. A few have even inserted the cast onto Jinkies cereal boxes (the made up sponsor of the Radio Broadcast show put on in the Club).

Dawn Gorsuch from Chatham, Ohio first came by the Club with her husband 15 years ago, on their 25th wedding anniversary, and has been back more than 40 times. "We are just so devastated about the closing of this marvelous place. It feels like losing family. I know it's silly, but I cry at the thought of all this."

Though they're also sad, of course, the cast is appreciative of the time they've had. "Nineteen years is a great run, especially in theatrical shows, and especially in the

Like most Adventurer's Club cast members, Eric Pender (left in both photos) and Jay Becker (right in both photos) have portrayed various characters on different nights. On the left, both play the part of Graves, the butler, normally reserved for one actor per night. On the right, Pender, as Otis T. Wren, and Becker, as Emil Bleehal, take part in the nightly Balderdash Cup Competition in which Emil is almost always the winner.







attractions," said Becker. "Maybe some day it can come back in some form. But for now, we're moving forward." Adds fellow cast member Pender, "As a performer, you're always looking for your next gig. It's just sad that we won't all get to work together anymore on a daily basis."

## FUTURE PLANS

While the Club closed its doors to the public on Sept. 27, it will actually stay open for special events through the end of January. Many members of the cast are already preparing for new jobs. "Disney has worked hard to find new positions for everyone," said Becker. "The changes are a major renovation to improve the Island and not a cut in staff, which we

all appreciate."

Held confided, "I'm not writing the Club off just yet. There are still a lot of rumors floating around that it might come back in some way. So I'll hold out hope for a little longer." In the meantime, he's considering turning his Yahoo group into a database of "where are they now" information about the various cast members for their fans.

And what about the characters that inhabit the Club? Will they get a happy ending? The rumor is that on the last night's performance of the Radiothon, for the first time the characters won't be able to raise funds to keep the Club open. The doom and gloom is lifted, however, when a wealthy donor suddenly appears

to whisk them all away for a fabulous safari. In other words, the show will go on... just not in the real world.

A well known quote has started popping up in one of Samantha Sterling's shows that seems to beautifully summarize the entire situation, "Don't cry because it is over. Smile because it happened." Becker nods at the line and adds, "This was the best job I ever had. Just an amazing place to work. To all the fans: thanks for loving it as much as we do. Kungaloosh! And keep adventuring."

*(Note: This issue went to press one week before the Club's closing. Please check our Web site at [attractionsmagazine.com](http://attractionsmagazine.com) for videos and more pictures.)*

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