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quare Studios' sign adds a constantly changing presence to a corner (this page, see top); the new Studio was created over the block to take full advantage of the view midway.



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DISNEY'S IMAGINEERS AND HLW CONCOCT AN ATTENTION-GETTER ON A PROMINENT SITE AMID THE CACOPHONY OF TIMES SQUARE.

by Soren Larson

Project: Times Square Studios, New York
Owner: Disney Enterprises Inc.
Exterior and signage designer: Walt Disney Imagineering
Architect of record: HLW International LLP—John Gering, partner-in-charge; James Lee, project manager; Stephen Newbold, project architect
Signage architect: Kupiec Architects
Engineers: HLW (structural), Tom Gasbarro, project engineer; Edwards & Zuck (mechanical, plumbing, electrical)
Consultants: Gordon H. Smith (exterior walls); The Systems Group (production control systems); Sony Electronics; The Lighting Design Group (studio lighting and rigging); Pook, Diemont & Ohl; Cerami & Associates (acoustical); Van Deusen & Associates (elevators); IO Media; Jerome Gillman Consulting Architects (building codes)
Construction manager: Tishman Interiors Corporation
Curtain wall: W+W Glass Systems
Glazing: Schott Corp., W+W Glass Systems
Special doors: Industrial Acoustics Co.
Special surfacing: Crossfield Products
Lighting: Arri/transtechnik (studio rigging); Production Arts (system integrators); Electronic Theater Controls (studio controls); Sony Electronics (production controls)
Conveyance: Nustar Elevator Construction Co.
Electronic sign: Sony Electronics (jumbotron); Multimedia (LED signage)

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Times Square was already quite bustling by the time the Walt Disney Co. decided to build a television studio there to host ABC's *Good Morning America* and other programming. Nevertheless, Disney's Imagineers, together with HLW International, managed to design an eye-popping facility on the site that they think cuts through the clutter.

"We wanted to create a window onto Times Square, and we were lucky to find this location," says Wing Chao, FAIA, executive vice president of master planning, architecture, and design at Disney Imagineering. "But the big question was, 'How do you stand out?' The [exterior] lighting was the key."

That lighting takes the form of a constantly changing, 4,000-square-foot video sign that wraps around the northwest corner of the new Times Square Studios, creating a 24-hour-a-day parade of news, promotions, and live broadcasts. "This is media as architecture," says Eddie Sotto, who as senior vice president at Imagineering headed the design team (he has since left the company). "We wanted something both sculptural and kinetic."

The other essential feature is the 4,600-square-foot Marquee Studio. The project's entire design, begun in spring 1998, sprang from a single viewpoint: a clear sightline up Broadway north from 44th Street, taking in all the area's frenetic

energy. The architects centered the design around maximizing this view and cantilevered the second-floor studio over the sidewalk.

Before any new construction, the first step was to gut the interior of the existing structure from the fifth floor down. Heavy concrete columns in the middle of the space were taken out, and the load was shifted to steel trusses along the edge. The ground floor hosts a second studio with three removable glass panels—the 14,000-pound units are floated on cushions of air, allowing them to be easily moved to engage passersby on the street. The glass in the ground floor and in the Marquee Studio was manufactured by Schott Corp. to

have ultra-low reflectivity, maintain clarity, and provide soundproofing.

So far, Disney's decision appears prescient: *Good Morning America's* ratings are already up. ■

