

Ford Builds Fair Skyway Into Future

By W. Clifford Harvey Automobile Editor of The Christian Science Monitor

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New York

Here I am at the New York World's Fair before it actually opens, riding in a car that has no engine under the hood, that steers itself and requires no more of the driver than it does of a backseat passenger.

As the car rolls smoothly on its electronically guided way, I am given a two-directional view of a distant world of the past and the space world of the future — all in a single packaged tour.

It is the Disney-created Magic Skyway trip built into the vast Ford Motor Company's Wonder Rotunda exhibition in the 1964 fair. The structure contains 2,400 tons of structural steel, enough to erect a 22-story office building 125 feet square. It contains 35,000 square feet of plate glass, 125 miles of electric wiring, and enough cement to lay a 4-foot-wide, 4-inch-thick sidewalk 19 miles long.

Driverless Transport

As for the Skyway ride, it is supposed to symbolize something of the future of driverless highway transportation, while piloting the World's Fair visitor progressively through a prehistoric period of monstrous dinosaurs into an age of limitless space, color, and shape.

This was it—the initial press preview of Ford's contribution to the World's Fair. We rolled effortlessly along a glass-enclosed tunnel into a dark region of flashing lights, passing realistic displays of battling, roaring animals and cave dwellers

preoccupied with the business of human survival.

The worlds of the past and future, Ford engineers call them. But the world of the present was there also. We rode in the latest 1964 automobiles from Mercurys, Lincolns, Fairlanes, and Galaxies to Ford's newest—the Mustang.

Mustang a Big Hit

Over in the New York Coliseum where the International Automobile Show just ended, the Mustang was a big hit at the 1964 show of hits. It breathed the aura of originality in styling such as you sensed in the introduction of the first Thunderbird several years ago. "Here's a car that has what it takes to set a new styling trend," the newsmen agreed.

These cars will be operated on the Skyway, 160 of them, seven days a week over two periods of six months each in two years. Mr. Disney was there to explain that the realistic animal and cavemen scenes were created through the introduction of a completely new system of "audioanimatronics."

This is the application of a "new dimension and form of entertainment," he said, "that we consider a breakthrough. It is the first major application of space-age technology to the field of entertainment. We used to work with cams and levers. Now it is electronics."

After the tunnel ride, the visitors are taken through what Ford calls the International Gardens. This is an imaginary vacation trip through 11 countries — scenes built to scale (one-half inch to the foot) of castles, churches, landscapes, and industries in action. You can "walk down" quiet streets and "float" along a country stream and believe "you are there."

As the cars rolled off the end of the lines, Lee A. Iacocca, Ford vice-president, formally introduced the newest company's product—the Mustang. "Not since before the World War," he said, "has Ford been so enthusiastic about an automobile in terms of pending publicity and acclaim."

But everything was temporarily forgotten in the glamour and excitement of the Wonder

Rotunda as Henry Ford II; Robert Moses, New York's planner and developer; and Mr. Disney launched the first ride on the Skyway. For newsmen from all over the United States the World's Fair had opened.