

Ride Barrier Cracking—Time Will Tell

The ride barrier appeared to have been pierced again at the World's Fair last week, only to be snarled by a technicality. The administration reportedly approved a Continental Circus submission to install rides on its property, in a location vacated by a circus museum tent. A second such installation is also under discussion.

It is understood the promoters came up with a \$50,000 "lien bond" at the fair's request. The way was clear for moving in three major rides: Meteor, Scrambler, Octopus. But in one of those aggravatingly late demands that have characterized most amusement negotiations, the fair turned to the ride operators and demanded a \$25,000 bond from them, too. Mindful of what happened in the Transportation Area (AB, July 11) where rides were set up, then dismantled, the operators stood pat.

Nice profits were reported for two Lake Amusement Area shows, neither faced with tremendous operating costs like those which have folded. Lou and Manny Walters were clearing \$20,000 weekly with their International Wax Museum on a nut of \$7,000 weekly, and about \$8,000 a week on their production of "Les Poupees de Paris," the Krofft brothers' marionette revue.

Uphill climb was in store for the Belgian Village, the late-opening cluster of 134 buildings, less than half of which were open for business a week ago. Robert Straille's \$2.2 million investment reportedly had grown to \$4.5 million and he said he'd need 6 million paying customers to break even at \$1 or 50 cents apiece. Among Belgian items sold were waffles, custard, knishes and sundry other stores, including a dime pitch game. With \$800,000 of its own sunk in the venture, the fair was offering as much consideration as it could.

Puzzling policy to some Belgian Village operators was this: At 10 p.m. the pavilions close. The village then removes its gate charge and lets visitors stream into the compound to hear and see the Gilly Dancers and their brass band wandering through the streets. Concessionaires faced with this surge of potential customers must close their stores, which they do to the accompaniment of ungracious remarks directed at the fair's policy.

Blacklight use is being stressed by Stroblite Co., to its promotional advantage, as several exhibits are using its fluorescent products. At Bell Systems, the technique heightens an illusion of limitless space; a city replica in the New York City Pavilion takes on a special glow; Chrysler uses the application to highlight its stage-show, where an auto chassis seemingly assembles itself. The technique is common to amusement Dark Rides.

Attendance for 112 days reached 21,886,396 on Wednesday (12) when 183,003 turned out. As usual, the figure reflected some 20 per cent entering on passes. Nearly 5,000,000 of the total is accounted for by employees and others free-gated. A really big day, 267,126, made Aug. 9 the biggest Sunday yet, and fourth biggest day of the fair. The daily average is climbing: 195,414 now as against 185,554 through the first day of July.

A full house which shaped up like a stampede was in the cards for the Monday-Tuesday (17-18) evening, presentations of Puccini's lavish opera "Turandot" in Singer Bowl. About 150,000 free tickets were dumped on grocery stores, transit terminals and other outlets. Singer Bowl seats 10,000. Performance will be by the Indiana School of Music; the State is laying out \$70,000 to transport the 370 performers and equipment.

Lawsuit for \$500,000 was filed against the Fair Corporation by Allied Van Lines, an exhibitor in the Transportation and Travel Pavilion. Claiming breach of contract, Allied's Michael V. Fox, general manager, said "a heavy air of honky-tonkism has pervaded the pavilion." The pavilion manager retorted that Allied was being eliminated from the building for lack of rent payment, causing its lease to be terminated.

A new plan was being polished off to tackle the severe problem of waiting in line. At some pavilions such as Johnson's Wax there are announcements that waiting as long as two hours faces some visitors. As many as 165,000 are on line at one time around the grounds, while other buildings are begging for visitors. The plan calls for issuing tickets stamped for a particular time; patrons would have to return a short time before their assigned turn.

More money to the tune of \$200,000 is needed to bring the Minnesota Pavilion up to standards. The Legislature's special committee found the building still lacks a "State theme"; \$150,000 was appropriated in 1963. The Pavilion is run by a private group, North Star World's Fair Corp. The committee quoted a fair official as saying the only reason Minnesota was still at the fair was its good restaurant."