

Cirque du Soleil: La Nouba

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Ever wondered what that great big silvery-white tent is at the West Side end of Downtown Disney? It's home to Cirque du Soleil's La Nouba.

If you're one of those who've been inside to see the show, you'll know exactly what goes on in there, but I bet if someone asked you, you'd struggle to describe it. I always think of Cirque du Soleil (literally translated into English, it means Circus of the Sun) as being the next generation of circus performance. That's not to say that it's like anything you've seen before, because it's not.

Cirque du Soleil's first performance was in Quebec in 1984 and founder Guy Laliberte originally set it up so he and his friends would have, "...a way to travel, have fun, and make audiences happy," according to *Cirque du Soleil - 20 Years Under The Sun*, a beautiful book that celebrates the first two decades of this amazing organization.

Since then, Cirque has grown and grown, with its repertoire now encompassing seven resident shows: Orlando's La Nouba, five in Las Vegas, and their newest New York-based show, Wintuk, which will perform for ten weeks each winter over the next four years. There are also six touring shows, which are currently performing in North and South America, Australia, Asia and Europe, along with two arena shows.

La Nouba was the first resident show outside of Las Vegas and premiered in 1998, following around ten years of negotiation between Cirque du Soleil and Disney. That's perhaps no surprise, as the two companies are exceptionally similar - both are creative organizations that know exactly what they want to achieve and the impact they want to have on their audiences.

So what's the show all about? Well, despite what I said about it being very hard to describe, let's give it a go. The first thing you should know is that it's a 90 minute show with no intermission and, although it may sound unusual not to have any break during a show, it's a format that really works, mainly because you become completely immersed in La Nouba. The first time we saw the show, we couldn't believe how quickly the time flew by. Before we knew it, everyone was applauding and it was all over. It surely couldn't have finished, but a quick look at my watch confirmed that it had. Since then, we've been hooked on seeing this show.

The name comes from the French phrase "faire la nouba", which means to party or live it up, and that's essentially what you'll see in this show - lots of characters enjoying themselves. There is a storyline, not that you'll ever be aware of it while you're watching La Nouba. The idea is that two groups of characters are featured in the show - the colorful Cirques, circus people who clash with the world of the Urbains (urbanites).

La Nouba was heavily influenced by the idea of fairy tales, which is appropriate, considering how much Disney has been the teller of such tales over the years. If you watch closely, you'll see the story of a frog turning into a beautiful prince within it. But the story is a very small part of the production. The majority of it is the amazing performances you'll see.

What I love about each performance is that you can't believe what you're seeing when it starts, and it just get more and more dramatic, until your jaw is hanging on the floor and you begin to wonder if what you're seeing is real or not. More than 70 artists from around the world take part in La Nouba and amongst the acts. You'll see trapeze artists, dancers, acrobats and of course, the obligatory clowns, who have a great way of interjecting light relief amidst the amazement conjured by their fellow performers.

The highlight for me, every time we've seen La Nouba, is the aerial ballet in silk, which looks absolutely stunning as the acrobats soar around the stage on red silk ribbons. The strength in their bodies is quite something, but you can't help but marvel at the expression they put into their performance as well. The German wheels are another favorite of mine and are not easy to explain! The best description I can manage is that the performers are inside giant wheels that spin and turn. I fully accept that it doesn't sound that exciting - it's something you need to see for yourself. Another act involving wheels that always gets the crowd going is the bikes, with their BMX maneuvers and their "walk" down the steps into the audience.

Another high energy act - and sadly one that signals the end of the whole show - is what's called the power track/trampoline, where you'll see people bouncing off the walls and through the windows of a three-dimensional building. It's a spectacular finale and you'll find yourself wondering how on earth they manage to miss colliding with each other.

Invariably though, the greatest applause of the night is reserved for the four tiny Chinese acrobats and the diabolos. It may be a name you've never heard, but you might have seen these, as they're found in

specialist shops and in the shop outside La Nouba. The diabolo is a wooden spool that dances on a string connected to two sticks - and you won't believe the acrobatics these girls can perform while keeping the diabolo moving.

It's an incredible show and, although there are some who don't enjoy it, for the main part, most people walk out with their jaws hanging open, unable to fully comprehend what they've just seen. In fact, we've seen the show four or five times now and we still spot new elements every time we view it. In that respect, I guess La Nouba is a little like Walt Disney World...

La Nouba is performed twice nightly Tuesday through Saturday at 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. (There are no performances Sunday and Monday.) It's not a cheap show. The top price seats, front and center to the stage, are \$128 plus tax for adults and \$103 for ages 3-9. Category 1 tickets are \$97 plus tax/adults and \$78/children, category 2 tickets are \$79 plus tax/adults and \$63/children, and category 3 seats are \$71 plus tax/adults and \$60/children. We usually go for category 1 tickets, as we like to be close to the stage and fairly central, but we don't feel the need to go for the top-priced tickets. To purchase tickets call 407-939-7600 ... or visit <http://www.lanouba.com>. Tickets go on sale six months in advance.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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