

Meet the Wizard Behind the New Wizarding World of Harry Potter Ride

ORLANDO - Fla. - May 1, 2019- Meet the brains behind the new magic in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. Christopher Dasani all smiles knowing that his new ride for the Wizarding World of Harry Potter is opening in June 2019.

When he was growing up he always enjoyed going to Harry Potter World. Someday he wanted to be the one to cut the ribbon for a new ride and now at the age of 25 he is. He was a fan of Harry Potter growing up and still is. Therefore, when he received the news he would be moving to Orlando after he graduated he was thrilled. There is no better way to celebrate his 10 years of working at The Wizarding World of Harry Potter than with the grand opening of his new ride.

Dasani is still young and new to the business but he did not let that stop him from showing his ideas to his coworkers and bosses. He knew where he wanted to be and what he wanted to do. Even on his first day of work, he acted like he had been working there his whole life according to one of his coworkers. He impressed many people not just with his skills but with his personality as well. He never complained, he just did what he was supposed to do.

When he first started working at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter he shadowed the head ride designer. He said he received a lot of great advice from him and learned a lot. He was able to see how this world worked and what he needed to do to make it in this business. It was hard at first to stand in the background for a lot of the projects, Christopher described. However, his supervisor never ignored him and always let him put his ideas in. "I learned a lot from him for the first five years I was there, I always loved learning new ideas about roller coasters." He said if it was not for his supervisor he would not be where he is today. Christopher's supervisor, John Barone who retired two years ago talked highly of him. "He always worked hard and fixed everything I told him he should fix," Barone said. Many of Christopher's coworkers stated how they love to work with him. He is easy to get along with and never makes anything too intense. Though, he really is the star of the show he never shows it, one of his coworkers described.

His idea for the new ride came to him when he was watching the Harry Potter movies. When he was watching he thought why does Hagrid not have his own ride in the park, he has such a large part in the movie. Therefore, he wanted to make it all about Hagrid and what made Hagrid who he was. Even though there is already a ride about Hagrid and his cabin, it does not really do Hagrid justice. Christopher had a plan and he was going to make it happen. As soon as he thought of the idea he called up his team and had to tell them everything he was thinking. "My mind was just a maze of ideas when I first thought of the ride I wanted to design," he said. Christopher said it took him weeks to figure out what exactly he wanted the ride to be. He knew it needed to involve Hagrid and his magical creatures. However, it also needed to involve something else that described Hagrid. Christopher finally got an idea of what that would be and

he came up with Hagrid's motorbike. Those two things were the biggest pieces in the ride and what made it stand out from just another Harry Potter ride.

It took a year to design the ride and to make sure it was even possible for it to be in the park. Christopher and his coworkers worked day and night to make sure this ride was going to be perfect. Not only did he have a design for the ride, but he also had a design on how to release the elements of the ride. He talked to Universal and got a plan together on how this was going to work. The ride was going to feature magical creatures, but Christopher wanted there to be something different with how the elements of the ride were released. His plan was to have Universal release a new creature that was going to be on the ride every day. Then he teamed up with Pottermore who would release an article about that certain creature on that same day. To make the announcement of the ride even better he worked with Tom Felton, who played Draco Malfoy in the Harry Potter movies. He had him make a clip announcing the new ride at Harry Potter world because there is no better way than with a Harry Potter cast member.

Christopher also talked about how he was able to work with J.K Rowling on the ride. He wanted to have her input to make sure he got every single creature and aspect of the ride right. He knew if he did not have the right aspects of the ride it would not actually feel like the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. He knew as a fan himself he always enjoyed seeing the things in the books and movies come to life.

The park was doing a sneak peek of the ride earlier in the week, some of the fans of the park and series stood in line for hours to talk to Christopher. He did not want to give away too much about the ride, but he almost did a couple of times because he himself was so excited.

When it came to deciding where the ride was going to be it was one of the most difficult parts of the ride design. He wanted at least a medium-size ride, but he needed enough space for all the creatures that were going to fill the ride. He thought it would be good to have the ride in the Hogwarts Castle grounds. Since that goes right into the Forbidden Forest it was the perfect place. Christopher also talked about how he wanted the ride to be interactive like many of the other rides in the park. The riders would get to be super close to the creatures while on the ride.

He used a lot of his own experiences at the park and as a Harry Potter fan to really think of what fans would want to see on the ride. "As a fan myself I know how much these fans pay attention to detail," he said. However, there were a lot of challenges when it came to designing this ride he described. There is so much you can do with this series, but there is also so much that has been done. He did not want to overdo it or under do it, this is why it took so long to finally get a design for the ride together.

The closer the opening of the ride becomes the more excited Christopher becomes. He goes into the park almost daily and every time he sees the ride that is yet to be uncovered the more realistic his idea is. "Every day I look on Pottermore and see that they have revealed a new creature for the ride and I think this was really my idea," he stated. He described how he never would have thought this would be his life right now. He graduated from college and just decided he would apply for Universal just to see. He almost took another job only to find out he was

accepted as a ride designer at Universal Studios. “Not everyone gets to work their dream job on the first try, I count myself as very lucky.”