

5 Wits Entertainment Center Carves Out Unique Niche in Themed Entertainment

By JOSH YOUNG | Published: [AUGUST 17, 2017](#)

I often get asked: what's the next big thing in the world of themed entertainment? The short answer is, more and more venues are looking for immersive environments for smaller groups. This gives a more intimate experience for the guest and allows them to get hands-on, thus giving patrons a direct impact on what happens in the story. Leading that charge is 5 Wits Productions.



Now keep in mind, [5 Wits has been around](#) since 2004. That means they were around well over a decade before the escape room craze started sweeping the United States. Their growth from a fairly small start-up company to where they are now seems to be rocketing forward at a fairly fast pace thanks to their new business model. Let me explain.

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Recently, I got a chance to visit the 5 Wits location in Albany, New York and I was genuinely blown away. This location offers three adventures: Drago's Castle, Deep Space, and Tomb. Are these an escape room? Not exactly. Guests have an overall objective, puzzles to solve along the way and the sets all tie around a central theme. However, that is where the similarities end.



First and foremost, let's talk about the sets. You'll be hard pressed to find any escape room with the quality of design you'll find in any 5 Wits location. Map projection, realistic rock work, and even animatronics make the [5 Wits](#) experience rival even the best theme parks in the world.



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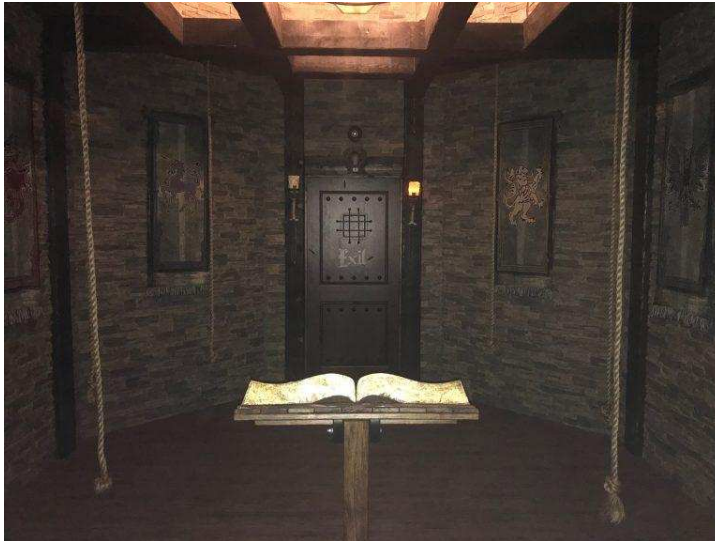
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Rather, the entire system is completely automated and requires zero room resetting by an employee after a group has gone through a particular room or zone within each adventure. Let me explain. Groups are admitted into every adventure as soon as there is space available in the first zone of the experience.



Let's say I'm in the first zone of the adventure. I'm in the middle of completing a challenge such as repeating a pattern of musical notes via hitting symbols on the wall around an ancient pharaoh's tomb. However, even if I get it right on the first try, the group ahead of me is struggling a bit in their task. The automated computer system can recognize the hold up ahead and instead of having my team twiddle their thumbs, it can throw out a different challenge with different musical notes or a new game altogether.



Each zone has a series of challenges that a group can encounter. Depending on how well your group does (as well as how the one ahead of you is doing), your adventure can vary. However, everyone will get to experience a particular challenge for a pre-determined minimum amount of time regardless of how they or the groups ahead or behind them are doing. This means you don't get "jipped" out of a particular challenge just because the team ahead of you is plowing through their version of the adventure.

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Why does this matter? Throughput. 5 Wits seems to have brilliantly solved the issue most escape rooms struggle with. Once you begin an escape room, 99% of the time, you can't put another team into the same game until: 1. the team ahead of you is finished and 2. the game is reset because pieces of puzzles need to be put back in their proper place and relocked. 5 Wits designs all of their puzzles and challenges where when one group leaves, the next group simply gets different directions.

For example, let's say I have a challenge of matching a set of tiles on the ground to a pattern on the wall. Pretty standard escape room stuff. Once the tiles are arranged in the proper order, a camera in the ceiling recognizes that they are placed in the proper position and a disembodied Egyptian pharaoh congratulates players on their cunning wit. Now in nearly any escape room in the world, you'd have to have an employee go in and mix all the tiles up again. However, 5 Wits simply has an A and a B version of that same puzzle. While the group is gone, in less than 15 seconds the room resets to the B version where tiles need to be arranged in a completely different order. The deciphering key on the wall simply changes through a sliding wall panel. 100% automated. 100% genius.



On the flip side, let's say your team can't quite grasp a particular challenge. You have been struggling at it for a few minutes. Each challenge is designed to give helping hands along the way. This could be in the form of a clue. Or maybe it provides missing information. Sometimes it will flat out tell you what to do. Regardless, if a challenge isn't completed and the team behind you is nipping at your heels? The automated system will give you a themed message to the effect of "it looks like you're having some trouble, here's some help" and a door magically opens to progress you into the next zone of the adventure.

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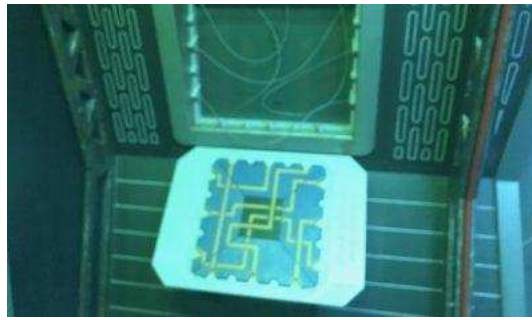
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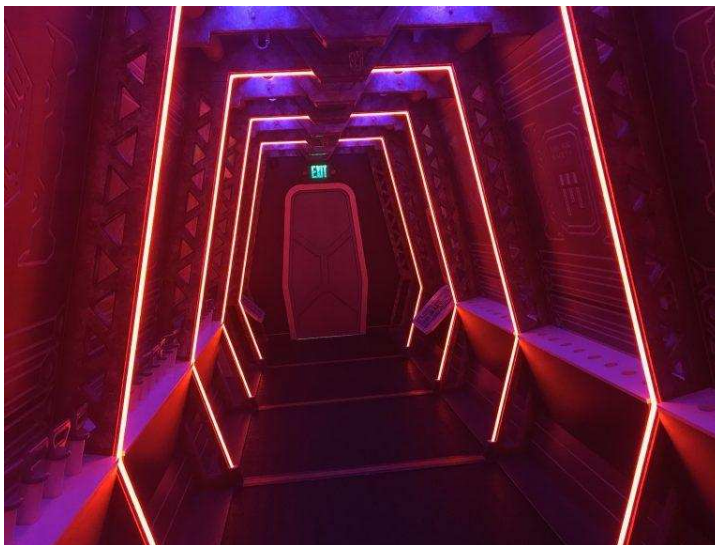
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Finally, and this may be the most ingenious aspect of all, even though 5 Wits has permanent locations located in malls and shopping plazas, each of their newest games are completely modular. That's right: portable. Let's say 5 Wits wants to open at a mall in a new city. They simply find a spot with a certain amount of square feet. Each game is fabricated where it can be duplicated and placed into existing facilities quickly and easily. Basically, it's an adventure in a box. Even though it does NOT appear that way while you are going through them.

Even more ingenious? Every adventure 5 Wits creates fits the same footprint. Let's say that they are opening a new location in city X. 5 Wits can take three different existing adventures in other three cities where they currently have a 5 Wits location. To city X, these are all new to them! However, in the three other locations, they can develop a brand new adventure, replicate it in triplicate (since they all fit the same footprint) and BOOM – now you've got a city with three "new" adventures that they have never experienced and the older locations get to market a brand new adventure.



Can you tell I'm geeking out a bit? That's because I am. You don't come across companies who approach everything with the level of quality and smart design that 5 Wits does. I can't express to you enough how ingenious, clever and fun these adventures truly are. If you're traveling to a city they have a location in, definitely make it a part of your itinerary. And if a 5 Wits isn't near you currently? Watch out. I guarantee you it will be within the next several years. They are poised to expand fast and you'll remember this article and think "I remember Theme Park University raving about this a while back!". You're welcome.

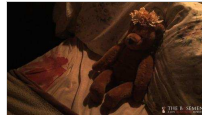
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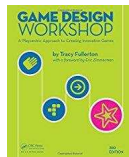


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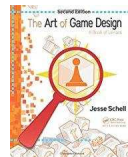
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