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Thursday, January 10, 2013

# Patriot Games

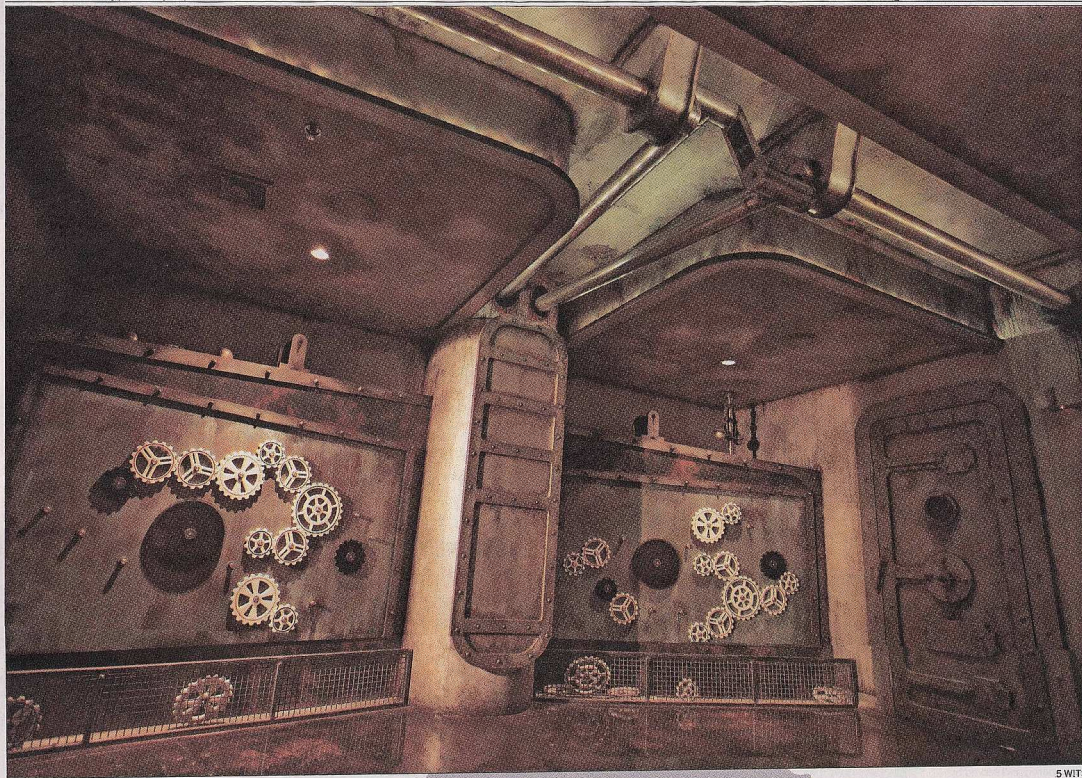


Match wits with spies, or plumb the ocean depths  
at two 'walk-through adventures' at Patriot Place Page D6

5 WITS

"Espionage," an interactive game designed by 5 WITS at Foxboro's Patriot Place, gives visitors a James Bond-style adventure dodging lasers.





Gears line the walls of the submarine Nautilus in "20,000 Leagues," an interactive adventure game inspired by the Jules Verne classic "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," at Patriot Place, in Foxboro, Mass. Designed by 5 WITS, it is paired with another game called "Espionage," which offers a James Bond experience.

# Patriot games

Match wits with spies, or plumb the ocean depths, at two 'walk-through adventures' at Patriot Place

By CHANNING GRAY  
JOURNAL ARTS WRITER

Just when I thought I'd found my way out of Captain Nemo's disabled Nautilus, a giant squid rocked my world.

I and a half-dozen brave souls had just spent an hour immersed in a Jules Verne fantasy world, having to solve a series of puzzles and use our wits to make our way through the storied submarine to freedom.

We managed to figure out the sequence required for pumps to empty the flooded diving bell that would carry us to the surface, and we were now climbing inside the darkened chamber, as water dripped from pipes overhead.

But as we were making our escape, huge tentacles wrapped around the portholes, and the diving bell began to lurch. Our guide, Asia, became hysterical.

That's just a taste of what it's like to experience "20,000 Leagues," an intense, interactive adventure located in a Patriot Place storefront in Foxboro, Mass.

This Jules Verne experience is one of two shows created for the shopping mall by 5 WITS, a decade-old company founded by Attleboro native Matthew DuPlessie. After earning a mechanical engineering degree from MIT, DuPlessie spent time in Florida designing theme parks for Disney and Universal Studios. He later returned to New England to get a master's degree in business from Harvard.

As a class project, DuPlessie designed an Indiana Jones-themed adventure that became known as "Tomb." His professors were so impressed that they became his first investors.

"Tomb," which resembled an Egyptian pyramid, was located in the Fenway section of Boston for years and was a big hit. One night, members of the Kraft family, who own the New England Patriots, stopped by and were so taken by the show that they asked DuPlessie to create a similar



"Espionage" agents work to solve a puzzle. The game has five different endings, depending on choices made by players.

attraction for Patriot Place. His company came up with "20,000 Leagues" and "Espionage," a James Bond-style adventure that involves cracking a safe, defusing a bomb and dodging lasers.

The idea behind what DuPlessie calls "walk-through adventures" is that participants are not just passive observers, like someone wandering through a haunted house, but they control — or appear to control — the environment.

When, in "20,000 Leagues," players successfully line up a series of tubes that allow colored liquid to flow into a series of glass containers, the submarine's engine comes to life as a huge overhead crankshaft begins to turn.

"Espionage," the other show at Patriot Place, has five different endings, depending on how the game is played out.

Immersing yourself in these bite-size theme parks is sort of like crawling inside a video game, a very convincing video game created with an astonishing sense of realism. I had to remind myself more than once that what I was experiencing in "20,000 Leagues" was happening in a shopping mall, so convincing is the illusion of being in a ship beneath the sea.

"We really want customers to be part of the ride," said Joe Botsch, who does marketing for 5 WITS.

"It's a lot of fun, even for adults," said Terry Valentine, who lives in Illinois and was visiting her daughter in Walham for Christmas.

Valentine had just emerged from "Espionage," proclaiming it "sometimes really dark, but not scary," at least not for adults.

Although there is something a bit unnerving about the illusion of being confined in a sub with a giant squid on your trail, "20,000 Leagues" is more about learning to work with others and use your smarts to solve increasingly challenging puzzles.

"We make it fun, not scary," said Botsch, right after explaining how, during a simulated elevator ride in "Espionage," the power fails and the car grinds to a halt.

In "20,000 Leagues," you start in a Jules Verne "museum," a stark space with prints and posters on the walls. A secret panel opens and you are ushered into a dimly lit chamber. As the door slides shut, bubbles rise in blue water outside narrow windows, and the illusion of sinking takes hold.

"That sounds like water," said an edgy Asia, our guide. "Can you all swim?"

From there, you enter Captain Nemo's eerie library, with its 25-foot ceiling and seaweed encrusted skylight with water shimmering above it. The players have to chart Nemo's journey on a map that lights up when they touch the correct locations. Then they have to pick out a sequence of notes on an organ before lights begin to flash and the group can make its way to the engine room, and more puzzles to solve.

"Espionage" is more "active" than "20,000 Leagues," said Botsch. Participants, who are trying to infiltrate the evil CABAL corporation, have to clamber through a laser tunnel, dodging light beams lest they set off an alarm and guards appear. And they have to crawl through a 2-by-3-foot vent.

"Espionage" players receive their orders from a newspaper box in the mall, then head to a rug shop that's a front for the spy ring. There they meet their operative. The objective is for the players to sneak into CABAL, destroy leaked blueprints and find the mole in their midst.

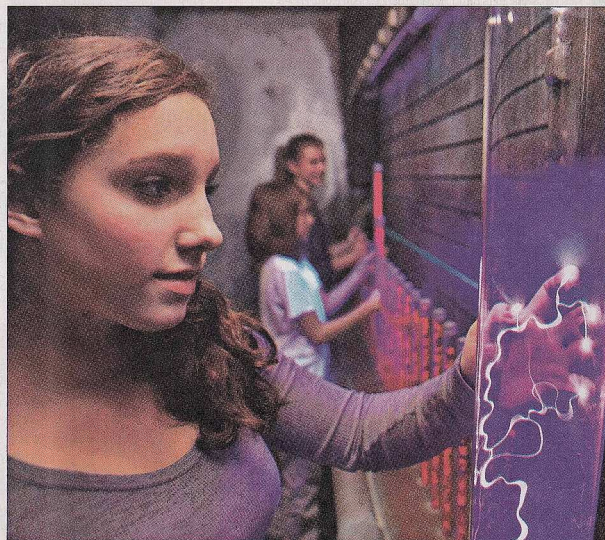
"It's got a different vibe," said Botsch. "It's more about the mission."

Tours, which accommodate up to 15 people, last about an hour, and run every 15 minutes. Weekends are the busiest, but Botsch said there is "something of a cult following" among grownups who show up for Friday's Adult Night. Tickets are \$18 for adults, \$14 for kids for each show. Combo tickets for both attractions are \$28 for adults, \$23 for kids. Show up with 10 or more friends and get a private tour. 5 WITS is also a popular spot for birthday parties. Call (508) 698-1600, or visit 5-wits.com.

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In "20,000 Leagues," players activate the submarine's engines by lining up tubes that allow colored liquid to flow into a series of glass containers.



Participants have a series of puzzles to solve in "20,000 Leagues," requiring strangers to work together on increasingly difficult challenges to progress through the game.



A spy in training hunts for clues in "Espionage."