

# Eye-blowing quality comes to Adler via space movie on new projectors

BY KARA SPAK

Staff Reporter/kspak@suntimes.com

Chicago, prepare for an alien invasion.

The Searcher, the extraterrestrial narrator of the new ultra high-definition "Deep Space Adventure" movie, lands July 8 at the Adler Planetarium, guiding earthbound visitors through an outer space journey that planetarium officials think is second only to actual space travel.

While the Searcher is pure sci-fi fantasy, the planets, stars, galaxies and nebula projected in "Deep Space Adventure" are accurate portrayals of the universe. The Adler teamed up with the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and NASA's Ames Research Center in California to render astronomical data into precise images of space.

"Unless you have been to space, you'll have the highest quality that's ever been done before," said Doug Roberts, Adler's chief technology officer.

Replacing the 40-year-old Zeiss projector — made famous during a 2008 presidential debate when John McCain ripped a possible replacement as a "\$3 million overhead projector" — are 20 individual digital projectors for a screen resolution of more than 8,000-by-8,000 pixels.

The supercomputers were the only way to translate the data gathered through space travel and telescopes into authentic images.

"If you've got a Ph.D. in astrophysics, there are details you've never seen before," said Paul Knappenberger Jr., Adler president.

Knappenberger said eventually the planetarium hopes to customize the solar system

experience, bringing up different images based on the group attending the show. The projectors can be controlled by an iPad or an Xbox controller, which also may be part of future interactive experiences.

The Adler Planetarium was built in 1930, and "Deep Space Adventure" will be shown in a completely rebuilt Grainger Sky Theater under the building's iconic dome. In 2012, a space shuttle simulator given to the planetarium by NASA will be transported from Houston to Chicago, Knappenberger said Tuesday. He wasn't sure whether the entire simulator or select pieces such as the cockpit will be displayed.

The planetarium makeover and movie cost \$14 million, and planetarium officials earlier this month asked the Chicago Park District board to approve a \$2 increase for general admission. They had

hoped the fee increase would begin this month, but Ald. Ed Burke (14th) balked, saying he was concerned about affordable options for city children.

Knappenberger said Tuesday he met with Burke and agreed to ask for a fee increase of \$2 for everyone except children who live in the City of Chicago. If the fee increase is approved, general admission, which would not include "Deep Space Adventure," would be \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and \$8 for children who are not Chicago residents. New rates for Chicago residents would be \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors; admission for children ages 3 to 11 would remain at \$5.

"Deep Space Adventure Passes," which include the new theater experience and other Adler exhibits, are \$28 for adults and \$22 for children 3 to 11. Chicago residents receive a \$1 discount for children and \$2 discount for adults.



This Space Portal leads to the Adler Planetarium's rebuilt Grainger Sky Theater where the "Deep Space Adventure" exhibit will take visitors out of this world. | JEAN LACHAT-SUN-TIMES

Des Plaines casino nearly ready
Eye-blowing quality comes to Adler via space movie on new projectors
ATHLON SPORTS