

Nemo finds a home at Disneyland's latest attraction

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"MINE!"

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The above is what you are likely to hear if you stand for any amount of time in line for Tomorrowland's newest ride, the Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage, which opened earlier this week at Disneyland.

But that sound is not coming from the two siblings nearby squabbling over a \$3 churro. Rather, it comes from three seagulls perched on a buoy in the lagoon, who take in everything from passing yellow submarines to waiting tourists with a beady animatronic eye.

Fans of "Finding Nemo," the 2003 hit from Pixar about a clownfish named Marlin's quest to find his missing son Nemo, who was taken by a diving dentist to be a gift for his niece back in Sydney, will instantly recognize the birds from a scene near the end of the film. But even those who haven't seen the film should enjoy the ride based on it - and those who were saddened when Disney closed down Tomorrowland's submarine ride nine years

ago should be delighted.

Disneyland first opened a submarine ride in 1959, and operated one with varying themes - the last being Jules Verne's "30,000 Leagues Under the Sea" - until the '90s, when attendance on the ride fell so much Disney decided to close it in 1998.

A hit film about a small fish, however, gave Disney imagineers ideas - and an old ride a new lease on life. The same eight submarines overseen by Walt Disney himself at the opening 48 years ago were pulled out of mothballs, their diesel engines switched for more eco-friendly electric ones, and given a fresh coat of bright yellow paint (the original color was battleship gray, though that changed to yellow later).

Their interior is pretty much the same as it always was, with two rows of narrow fold-down seats (two spots were added, raising capacity to 40). Each seat faces a porthole.

The basic layout of the lagoon also stayed the same, with submarines making a large circle around the lagoon (which holds 2.1 million gallons of water), going under a waterfall into a rocky cavern where the bulk of the ride takes place.

Since this incarnation is based on a film set in Australia, the premise is that you are taking a submarine voyage somewhere in Australia to look at, among other things, an underwater volcano. The voices of the captain and his submates, therefore, have Antipodean accents. (Interestingly, none of the main fishy characters in the film speak that way - they're all American). After bidding you a cheery "good day," the crew starts the sub, and the show begins.

The ride through the open part of the lagoon is fairly uneventful, though underwater rocks, coral and fish are as scenic as any in a real glass-bottom boat ride (and speaking of glass, 30 tons of

recycled glass adds sparkle to this lagoon). Little touches from the movie, however, come up if you look. A full-size version of Darla, the dentist's niece who is labeled a "fish-killer" by Nemo's friends, can be seen, clad in a wet suit, holding a net.

The film's characters, however, really take over when the sub goes under the waterfall and into the cavern.

Previous incarnations relied on stationary sculptures and underwater puppets. This one is state of the art, with a three-dimensional animation system which projects Nemo characters into the water, so it feels like you are submerged with them swimming by outside. Once the sub is in the cavern, riders are taken through the film's basic story, with Nemo starting off going to school, getting lost, then Marlin and another fish named Dory going to find him, crossing sharks, jellies and turtles on the way.

There is also a volcano and a comical encounter with a whale.

Though the ride only lasts 12 minutes, it feels longer, and kids and adults who were lucky enough to get a sneak peek last Sunday (the ride opened to the public Monday) were unanimous in their praise.

Mikaela Henderson, 9, loved Darla's cameo, while her little brother Ian, 5, said he particularly liked going under the waterfall.

"My favorite part was when the whale spit out (the submarine)," said Amanda Barries, 4.

"I think it was way better than the others," said Amanda's mom Holly. "It's more colorful, more graphic, and it told the story."

"The effects were really great," said 12-year-old Mallory Soares.

Taylor Levine, 7, liked the part with the sharks, who seem to threaten the sub before backing off, saying "humans are not food!"

(a reference to the film, which features vegetarian sharks).

"I liked when the volcano starts, and all the lava," said 8-year-old Cassidy Kanner.

Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage is not the first Disney ride inspired by a Pixar film. Neighboring Disney's California Adventure has two rides inspired by "A Bug's Life" and one by "Monsters Inc."

Two years ago, Tomorrowland opened Buzz Lightyear Astroblasters, a dark ride that also doubles as a shoot-'em-up video game.