



# HUMAN PINBALL!

## Airballs relaunches ride concepts

Visitors to last winter's trade shows may remember seeing a product called Airballs – a human pinball game. Since then developer Skytrack has teamed up with a couple of well-known industry names to perfect the concept, and hopes to turn the ride into reality this coming season. *Park World* gets a peek

Based in the Netherlands, Skytrack is a young company determined to make a name for itself in the amusement industry with some fresh ideas. The Airballs concept, shown at IAAPA 2006 as a small prototype, now has a fresh look, revised layout and a new name: Pinball – The Ride.

Acting in a sales and marketing capacity for Skytrack, Roger Houben from 3DBA brought in Falcon's Treehouse to overhaul Airballs concept, and the results can be seen here, as well as in video form at [www.3DBA.be](http://www.3DBA.be)



The original Airballs ride vehicle as shown at last year's trade shows

On Pinball – The Ride, a patent-pending transport system propels riders through the attraction on a cushion of air, as they sit inside a “ball” surrounded by an inflatable bumper. Riders await their turn in one of two launch lanes, either side of the pinball table, and a new ball is launched into the attraction every 10 seconds.

Four flippers, controlled remotely from the rider's seats, are used to change direction and score points – just like a real game of pinball. Once the ball floats to the bottom of the table, it is picked up by a conveyor belt and transported to the loading-unloading area ready for the next rider.

An hourly capacity of 280 is possible using a 25 x 15-metre layout and a 10-ball set-up, with six balls at a time in play. Speeds and ride intensity can be adjusted by tilting the table or, a less expensive option, altering the air pressure inside the balls and flippers.

Skytrack's Jeroen van der Burgt anticipates Pinball becoming a popular spectator attraction and says an option is available to allow those watching to control the flippers just as though they were playing a real game of pinball: “It all depends on how well you know the other people riding. If they are your friends, then it will be fun to have control over their movements.”

Skytrack is also working with Falcon's Treehouse on the design of several other attractions using the Airballs technology and ride system: Airballs Race, a dragster game, and Airballs Shoot out and Pachinko.

Several FEC and amusement park operators have taken an interest and 3DBA is confident of signing up the first customers for Airballs Race and Pinball – The Ride very soon.



Pinballs - The Ride as designed by Falcon's Treehouse

## New book examines Pleasure Beach's role in social history

There's a new book available on Blackpool Pleasure Beach and it's written from a different perspective than other tomes on this much-loved British park.

*Riding on Rainbows: Blackpool Pleasure Beach and its Place in British Popular Culture* is the work seaside resort and popular culture historian John K Walton and examines why the park has been so successful over such a long period, when rival seaside attractions have faltered and fallen by the wayside.

*Riding on Rainbows* examines the experiences of the park's visitors and workforce as well as the history of the rides, and pays sustained interest in the planning and design of the park.

“Blackpool Pleasure Beach is Britain's most popular tourist attraction, and, like Blackpool as a whole, it is increasingly visible internationally,” says the author. “As a family-run business that has survived and prospered through three generations and is now beginning its fourth, it has kept a strong and distinctive ‘personality’ and a loyal, if critical, following.”

Walton believes the book will appeal equally to serious historians

and general readers: “As the author of previous histories of the fish and chip trade and of Blackpool, I am used to criticisms from academics who regard such subjects as trivial and insignificant. In fact the history of popular culture and everyday life, including holidays and entertainment, is central to our understanding of the present and the future through the past.”

John K Walton recently took up a new role as professor of social history at the Institute for Northern Studies at Leeds Metropolitan University in England, having performed a similar duty for many years at the University of Central Lancashire.

His book on the Pleasure Beach book features 44 photographs of the park, its visitors and its workers, most of which have never before been published. It is available from [www.skelterpublishing.com](http://www.skelterpublishing.com)

