



An **ICON** of Baileys

A new visitor centre for Irish drinks company Baileys provides proof that originality pays and that multi-image still packs power

One of the most original corporate-based attractions to open its doors in the past year is the new ICON visitor centre created for drinks company Baileys' by Sarner International. Located within an £11.5m development in Leopardstown on the outskirts of Dublin, the 20,000sqft centre is notable both for a centrepiece 'multimedia' experience and for a cornucopia of bars and 'food acts' which are varied, stylish and, at times, charmingly idiosyncratic. There is an entry fee of Irish£4 for the experience itself but no charge for visitors just wanting to explore and enjoy the other parts of ICON — a name which, explains pr and marketing director Peter O'Connor, is based on the fact that 'Baileys is an icon of Ireland and this is an ICON of Baileys but it has now changed to "ICON, the home of Baileys"'.

The 12-minute a-v show, *Ériu*, is designed to explain the 'essence of Ireland' from its landscapes to its people (an image from the show is shown below). Produced by Michael Bennett, creative director at Sarner, it integrates 18-projector widescreen multi-image (confirming the distinctive feel and power of this undervalued medium and reaffirming the creative skills of graphics design house First Image who worked with Bennett on the show), video projection via Barco and Sanyo units, sound and lighting effects, and a revolving auditorium. A literate and sonorous Chris Shaw script is rich enough to be worth a second hearing.

Those who choose to begin their ICON visit with the show, then leave the auditorium to explore the rest of a complex where Tim Warner, interior architect and interior designer, has utilised space so that there is never an overall vista of the building. Instead, turning a corner, or climbing a level opens up new views and new attractions — a high-tech American-style bar, a cobblestoned corner of old Dublin, a library, a watermill — with all 'areas' offering food and drink to suit the 'local' atmosphere.

There are some entertaining touches — a field of cows rear-projected onto a restaurant's windows, vertically hung Pioneer plasma screens framed to simulate paintings, and lighting effects that lead the complex through a day and night cycle every 60 minutes (as pictured at the top of the page).

O'Connor comments: 'A key factor from the Baileys' perspective is that the entire complex is unique in these islands and, from what I can gather from tourists who come here, it is unique as far as they are concerned as well. It's not a place you come into for 15 minutes and then get out. You can come and enjoy a glass of Baileys or beer or something else, you can enjoy the food or enjoy the lighting changes. There are so many different nooks and crannies in the place that if you come here on numerous occasions you can go to different venues and enjoy yourself according to your mood and the moment. Feedback is very positive.'

