

**Rob Ocampo**

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**Subject:** FW: May 17, 2006 Newsletter



# VENUES**today**

"The news behind the headlines"

**Dear April,**

**May 17, 2006 VOL. V, Number XVI /b> ISSN 1547-4143**

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## **QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"It seems odd, after 112 years, I'm the last man standing. When I walk out of here next Friday, it's all by myself." — *Scott Partridge, sales director, on the demise of Amusement Business after more than a century of covering the mass entertainment industry*

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## **IN THIS ISSUE...**

- **AEG Partners with O<sub>2</sub> Germany in Berlin Arena Project**
  - **Faces & Places: Amusement Business Ceases Publication; Mazzola Moving to Albany**
  - **Quiet Period Gets Noisy for Clemens Center Fundraising Effort**
  - **Hot Tickets: The Palace Has a Royal Week of Multiples**
  - **World Sumo Wrestling Tour Hits the Mats This Month**
  - **London Visitors Bureau Debuts Live Ads at Shows**
  - **Ovations Wins Trio of Nashville Contracts**
  - **Short Takes**
  - **Help Wanted**
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## COMING IN JULY! OUR POPULAR MIDEAR ISSUE!

Our much anticipated midyear issue is back **in July**, with more information than ever on what you want to know: gross revenues, trends, ideas and news throughout the industry. Included in this issue are our popular midyear **Hot Tickets and Top Stops Charts**. July is also our third INTIX QUARTERLY. Use this edition to promote your venue ranking and to broadcast your message to the industry leaders. **ADVERTISEtoday.**

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**VENUE NEWS**



### **Renderings of O<sub>2</sub> World, Berlin**

#### **AEG PARTNERS WITH O<sub>2</sub> GERMANY IN BERLIN ARENA PROJECT**

The long-anticipated Berlin arena picked up speed with announcement of a new partnership between AEG and O<sub>2</sub> Germany. As part of the deal, the 17,000-seat, \$191 million arena, which will open in 2008, will be named O<sub>2</sub> World.

Long term, the project is envisioned as part of an entertainment district. It is being built on a 45-acre site that is the former site of the Ostgüterbahnhof (Eastern Depot) between Warschauer Brücke, Rummelsburger Platz, and Mühlenstrase.

Ted Tanner, AEG senior vice president of real estate development, who has visited the project this month, said, "a lot of the site work is done. It's going to be a terrific development, a 45-acre site right along the river in the eastern part of the city along the only remaining portion of the Berlin Wall. It's in the city limits, the former East Berlin section of the city."

He is particularly upbeat about the site location, an urban site surrounded by three major transportation hubs, all within walking distance. It's symbolic in terms of its location near the river and the Gallery Wall, the former East Berlin Wall, and it's a site that allows for additional development that will include residential, retail, entertainment and office uses and hospitality. It's a whole urban mixed-use development opportunity, Tanner said.

O<sub>2</sub> World is being built with private money, making that mixed-use option an important part of the deal. AEG's primary interest is getting the area up and operating, Tanner said, and "then to begin marketing other properties to other developers as we are with L.A. We have the entitlements and ownership. Except in L.A., we don't build the hotels and condominiums; that's not our core business," he added.

The strategic partnership with O<sub>2</sub> Germany, which is initially up to 15 years in length, is much more than a title sponsorship. The firm will develop a "face" for the arena that will be a 20,000-square-foot LED wall that will transform the front facade into a massive video screen.

The LED strips present a full image from a distance, Tanner said. "It's quite remarkable." It will be used for event information, sponsor information and other

advertisements. "Ultimately, it will be used to announce "things pertinent to the district we will develop," Tanner said. It is set well back from the main highway, so there is not concern about distracting drivers. Eventually there will be a development around it.

Bringing naming rights partners into the mix prior to construction is becoming more common in today's arena development world. "The naming rights deal with founding partners and sponsors will contribute to the bottom line, COI [committed operating income], and will help the financing and operations of the arena. That's the way we build these things," Tanner said.

The entertainment district concept, which is also happening in London at The O<sub>2</sub>, another AEG project, inside what was the Millennium Dome, and in Los Angeles, is another deal starter. "In certain strategic markets, we're more focused on more than stand-alone venues. We need to consider the potential for the arena acting as a catalyst and generating other economic development and, from our standpoint, additional value creation as a result of our investment."

Sponsorships more closely resemble partnerships in these mega-deals. "Nokia is a perfect example," Tanner said of AEG's partner in more than one city, just as O<sub>2</sub> is now. Telecommunications companies have a lot to contribute to the entertainment value of a project, he added.

Customers of O<sub>2</sub> Germany will enjoy advantages such as early notice about events on their mobile phones, pre-purchase privileges for tickets, a separate entrance, an O<sub>2</sub> bar, and the ability to download exclusive live content from top events to their mobile phones.

Construction is scheduled to begin in the second half of this year. — Linda Deckard  
*Interviewed for this story: Ted Tanner, (213) 742-7870; Michael Roth, AEG public relations, (213) 742-7155*

### **John Mazzola**



### **FACES & PLACES: AMUSEMENT BUSINESS CEASES PUBLICATION; MAZZOLA MOVING TO ALBANY**

After 112 years of publishing, **Amusement Business** (AB), a VNU publication, has shut down. There will be no June 2006 Summer Special. *Amusement Business* had covered the amusement park, fair and carnival industries, as well as auditoriums and talent.

**Tom Powell**, AB senior editor and former editor, who had been with the publication for 34 years, confirmed that VNU corporate informed the staff the publication was shutting down as of May 15. Powell, who was reached while having lunch in Nashville with carnival owners Gloria Myers, and David and Deedee Starkey, said he had "heard all the rumors," but it was still unexpected. VNU had been looking for a buyer for the publication and had at least one bid.

"We loved what we did," Powell said. Now in what he called "forced retirement," Powell had no specific future plans. "I'm open to anything," he said. All the AB staffers received severance, one week for every year they worked there, and a couple of days to clear out their offices. Powell won the President's Award from the late Loris Smith when Smith was president of the International Association of Assembly Managers

(IAAM) in 1987-88 for his contributions to the venues industry.

**Scott Partridge**, who had been with AB for 11 years, most recently as advertising director, is manning the phones at AB's Nashville office and letting people in the industry know the publication is closed. He is also looking for homes for the memorabilia and bound volumes that document the history of an industry. "I've been overwhelmed with phone calls," he said. "I'm being as honest as I can. I believe we fell victim to the corporate world, the corporate environment." His last day will be May 26. "It seems odd, after 112 years, I'm the last man standing. When I walk out of here next Friday, it's all by myself." He said he is seeking an industry association that might be able to house the bound volumes of *Amusement Business* that date back to the 1920s.

Tony Uphoff, publisher of *The Hollywood Reporter*, under whose purview AB fell these last few months since Robert Dowling's departure, was on his way to the Cannes Film Festival and unavailable for comment today (May 17). Emily Boak, a spokesperson for VNU, said the official response to VT inquiries is that *Amusement Business* was closed as "a business decision" and that "human resources is working on placing all the people with new jobs."

On a brighter note, another industry veteran, **John Mazzola**, has accepted the position of executive director of the **Albany (Ga.) Civic Center** effective June 5. He had been facilities director of the Okeechobee County (Fla.) Agri-Civic Center.

"It's back to what I know best, arenas and amphitheatres," Mazzola said of his new job. He will oversee operations of a 10,000-seat arena, 1,000-seat historic registry auditorium, and 2,500-seat Riverside Park amphitheater.

"The city is a community on the grow. They want to jumpstart all the business lines, including the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Civic Center," Mazzola said.

He will oversee a staff of about a dozen. Mazzola will answer to the city manager's office.

A 25-year member of the IAAM, Mazzola started his career with the New York Aeros of the Major Indoor Soccer League and has worked for several Southeast venues, including stints as general manager of the USF Sun Dome, Tampa, and the Florence (S.C.) Civic Center, and has worked for concert promoters. He is a Certified Facilities Executive.

He replaces Mattie Goddard who has filed lawsuits in the Dougherty County Superior Court and the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia alleging her rights were violated when she was fired. — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Scott Partridge, (615) 321-4253; Tom Powell, (615) 361-5265; Lynda Miller, Hollywood Reporter public relations, (323) 525-2153; Emily Boak, (212) 255-8455; John Mazzola, (863) 467-6105*



***The interior of the Powers Theatre at the Clemens Center, Elmira, N.Y., as is (left) and as it will become (right)***

### **QUIET PERIOD GETS NOISY FOR CLEMENS CENTER FUNDRAISING EFFORT**

The grand plan is to renovate the stage at the 1925-era Clemens Center, Elmira, N.Y., to better accommodate today's touring Broadway shows. But the extent of the renovation and the amount of funds needed is to be determined.

Michael Kenna, facility director, has had to let the cart get ahead of the horse to some extent because the local newspaper, located across the street and a season subscriber to their Broadway series, asked the pertinent questions when the 2006–2007 season brochure was published for pre-sale. A reporter was dispatched to determine why there were three Broadway shows not four and programming ended in March, not later. This departure from the norm alerted the paper that something might be up.

"We had to answer their questions," Kenna said, but he really wasn't ready to go public with fundraising efforts for a renovation, which will take the stage from its current 32.5-foot depth to a 40-foot deck. "Most of the shows we want in now can fit that, but we see down the road, the industry standard is now a 40-foot deck. If you don't have the space for that, they can make selective cuts, go up the road," Kenna said.

So they are in the process of putting a funding package together to determine exactly what improvements can be made. A lot will depend upon state and federal funding. The majority of the money will be committed before the public sector is tapped for the rest, he said of the usual fundraising scenario.

"The newspaper article was premature and not terribly accurate. We have been in the planning process for this phase since 2000," he said. Actually, his concern with accuracy was more the headline, which heralded the fact the Clemens Center was "Closing Its Doors." On the good side, there has been an outpouring of community support and Kenna is telling those people he'll be calling them back soon for their financial commitment.

Target date to begin construction is March 2007. Since performances are scheduled a year in advance, the decision to limit the schedule had to be made now, "but until we have the funding in place, we're not announcing how extensive the work is going to be, whether we're doing it all in one phase or if it will be broken into two phases."

If sufficient funds are not raised, the project can be aborted or scaled back. "If we wanted to put it back another year, though costs go up every year, we'd probably put it off a year and continue programming 2007," he said. They could still book pop acts and

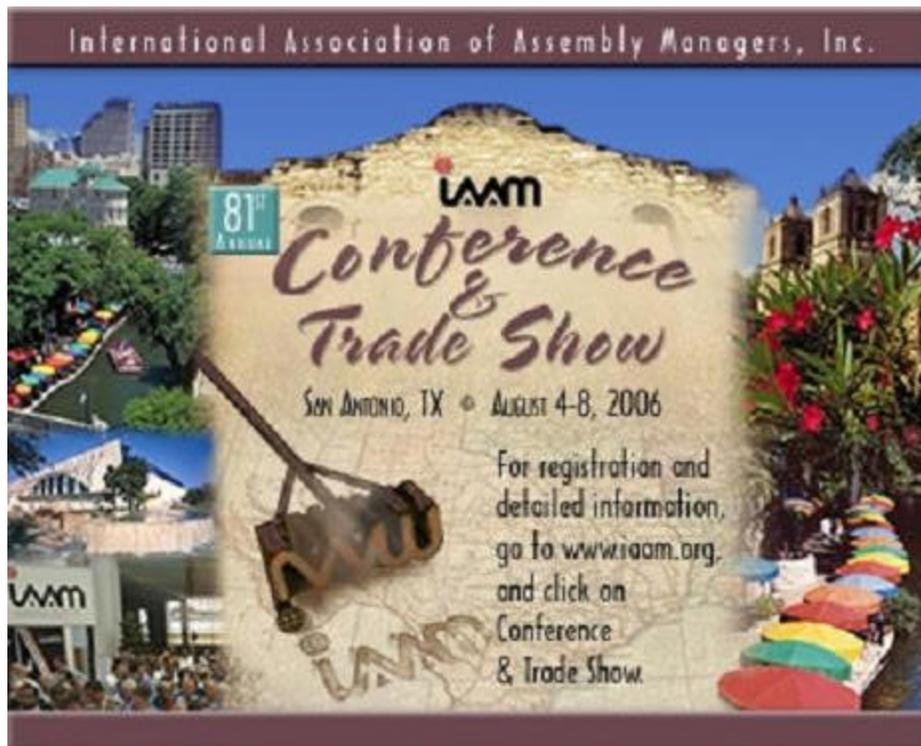
re-accommodate local groups that are now looking for alternate spaces.

In a perfect world, “when you do it publicly, you want to be able to say this is what we’re going to do, this is the extent of the work, this is how long it will take, this is how much we have left to raise, this is how we are going to be able to reach that target.” Possibly, things will quiet down again and they can get back to that agenda and it won’t be old news.

In 1999, Clemens Center opened Phase 1 of improvements, which dealt with the lobbies, public amenities and the exterior of the building. “So now we want to go out and say there is still more to be done,” Kenna said. “But we want to be able to do that and announce it to the public at the right time.”

Clemens Center hosts 40-50 events a year, plus another 30 promoter-type shows. The annual budget is \$1 million or higher, depending upon programming. For most of the last 27 years, it has shown a modest operating surplus, Kenna said. Clemens Center is one of the charter members of the League of Historic American Theaters. — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Michael Kenna, (607) 733-5639, Ext. 224*



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## BOOKINGS



### HOT tickets

#### THE PALACE HAS A ROYAL WEEK OF MULTIPLES

**HOT TICKETS** is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to **Venues Today** e-newsletter. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating

capacity category, which took place since April 25, 2006. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

The **Hot Tickets** this week as reported to **Venues Today**:

### **15,001 or More Seats**

1) *Gross Sales:* \$3,171,218; *Event:* Faith Hill and Tim McGraw; *Venue:* **The Palace Of Auburn Hills (Mich.)**; *Attendance:* 39,968; *Ticket Range:* \$87.50-\$47.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Palace Sports & Entertainment; *Dates:* May 5–6; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,111,582; *Event:* Kid Rock & The Twisted Brown Trucker Band; *Venue:* **The Palace Of Auburn Hills (Mich.)**; *Attendance:* 28,578; *Ticket Range:* \$41.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Palace Sports & Entertainment; *Dates:* May 12–13; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$994,050; *Event:* Jimmy Buffett; *Venue:* **Shoreline Amphitheatre, Mountain View, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 15,900; *Ticket Range:* \$126.25-\$36.25; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 25; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$919,911; *Event:* Nickelback; *Venue:* **Acer Arena, Sydney, Australia**; *Attendance:* 14,496; *Ticket Range:* \$69.78; *Promoter:* Dainty Consolidated Entertainment, Live Nation; *Dates:* April 29; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$898,050; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **The Colonial Center, Columbia, S.C.**; *Attendance:* 14,610; *Ticket Range:* \$64.50-\$54.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, The Messina Group, Varnell Enterprises; *Dates:* April 29; *No. of Shows:* 1

### **10,001 - 15,000 Seats**

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,000,098; *Event:* Faith Hill and Tim McGraw; *Venue:* **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 11,712; *Ticket Range:* \$87-\$67; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* May 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$395,478; *Event:* Rock Stars Concert; *Venue:* **Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall**; *Attendance:* 4,154; *Ticket Range:* \$349-\$39; *Promoter:* Funky Buddha Entertainment; *Dates:* May 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$348,262; *Event:* INXS; *Venue:* **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; *Attendance:* 7,026; *Ticket Range:* \$67.57-\$44.59; *Promoter:* House of Blues Canada; *Dates:* May 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$233,528; *Event:* Fall Out Boy; *Venue:* **The Arena at Gwinnett Center, Duluth, Ga.**; *Attendance:* 8,594; *Ticket Range:* \$30-\$28; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 30; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$220,314; *Event:* Fall Out Boy; *Venue:* **Jacksonville (Fla.) Veterans Memorial Arena**; *Attendance:* 7,580; *Ticket Range:* \$29-\$25; *Promoter:* Fantasma; *Dates:* April 25; *No. of Shows:* 1

### **5,001-10,000 Seats**

1) *Gross Sales:* \$257,419; *Event:* Pepe Aguilar; *Venue:* **El Paso (Texas) County Coliseum**; *Attendance:* 4,950; *Ticket Range:* \$68-\$20; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 28; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$243,284; *Event:* Fall Out Boy; *Venue:* **Arena at Harbor Yard, Bridgeport, Conn.**; *Attendance:* 8,312; *Ticket Range:* \$30-\$19.99; *Promoter:* House of Blues Entertainment, Live Nation; *Dates:* May 5; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$220,874; *Event:* Fall Out Boy; *Venue:* **BankUnited Center at University of Miami (Fla.)**; *Attendance:* 7,014; *Ticket Range:* \$30; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 26; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$210,577; *Event:* Deep Purple and Status Quo; *Venue:* **Newcastle (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 2,714; *Ticket Range:* \$90.08-\$77.67; *Promoter:* Andrew McManus; *Dates:* May 13; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$208,320; *Event:* Black Eyed Peas; *Venue:* **Agganis Arena at Boston University**; *Attendance:* 6,376; *Ticket Range:* \$35; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 29; *No. of Shows:* 1

### **5,000 or Fewer Seats**

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,450,137; *Event:* Chicago The Musical; *Venue:* **Broward Center For The Performing Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 27,615 *Ticket Range:* \$68-\$20; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-House; *Dates:* April 19–30 *No. of Shows:* 11

2) *Gross Sales:* \$441,424; *Event:* Larry The Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Providence (R.I.) Performing Arts Center**; *Attendance:* 9,866; *Ticket Range:* \$44.75; *Promoter:* Outback; *Dates:* March 24–April 29; *No. of Shows:* 4

3) *Gross Sales:* \$429,351; *Event:* R Kelly; *Venue:* **Chicago Theatre**; *Attendance:* 6,747; *Ticket Range:* \$73-\$43; *Promoter:* Billy Sparks, Jam Productions; *Dates:* April 26–27; *No. of Shows:* 2

4) *Gross Sales:* \$428,351; *Event:* Confessions; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 12,130; *Ticket Range:* \$49.50-\$27.50; *Promoter:* Marvelous Entertainment; *Dates:* April 25–29; *No. of Shows:* 6

5) *Gross Sales:* \$383,481; *Event:* The Wiggles; *Venue:* **Dodge Theatre, Phoenix**; *Attendance:* 16,035; *Ticket Range:* \$30-\$15; *Promoter:* The Wiggles Live! USA; *Dates:* April 29–30; *No. of Shows:* 2

*Compiled by Kristin Sarbeck, HotTickets@venuestoday.com*

### **Sumo wrestlers (Courtesy of Big Boy Productions)**



### **WORLD SUMO WRESTLING TOUR HITS THE MATS THIS MONTH**

National Basketball Association (NBA) fans will get a small taste of what's to come when four professional Sumo wrestlers take to the mat during half time at tonight's (May 17) Round 2 Game 5 Detroit Pistons and Cleveland Cavaliers game at the Palace at Auburn Hills, Mich.

The wrestlers, four of the 100 Sumo wrestlers participating in the World

Sumo League (WSL) Mega Tour, will first compete against each other. The winner, then, will wrestle the fourth.

"We just wanted the fans to see what was coming up," said Bryant Sillmore, public relations coordinator, Palace Sports & Entertainment.

Sillmore said building officials felt it would be a good event to promote the opening of the WSL Mega Tour, set for The Palace on May 26, the first of 13 U.S. dates. The tour is being produced by Big Boy Productions LLC, a New York-based sports and entertainment production company that has formed the WSL to promote professional Sumo matches at venues in countries all over the world.

"This is the real thing," said Rikk Fuelner, the tour manager. "It is all legit. It is sanctioned by the World Sumo Federation and there are certain guidelines we have to abide by."

The tour features some of the world's best Sumo wrestlers from Japan, Mongolia, Poland, Germany, Bulgaria, the United States, Great Britain, Republic of Georgia, The Netherlands, Ukraine, Hungary and Norway. The wrestlers are competing for total prize money of over \$1 million.

Tickets are on sale at The Palace and are selling for \$50 and \$25 for general admission tickets. Those 12 years and under receive a 50 percent discount on both the prices. There are some higher priced MVP seats.

Sillmore said the facility seats a maximum of 22,000 for Pistons games. Seating capacity for the wrestling competition will be about 16,000, once the staging and mats are in place. There is seating on the floor. "Other than the conversion crew, the event is fairly easy for us," Sillmore said.

Fuelner concurs, as far as the setup goes. The stage is a 24-square-foot, steel-reinforced stage riser covered with mats. The mats are then covered by, "for a lack of a better word, a bedspread-type covering so you don't see the mats. Inside that square, on the cover, is an 18-foot-diameter circle. That is where they start the matches."

Lighting and sound is fairly straightforward. The challenge of the tour, however, is getting the two semis and the 120 people of the tour in the nine buses from one place to another. Six of the nine buses have been outfitted for the wrestlers, with bigger bunks that have been reinforced. The wrestlers can weigh anywhere from 250 to 450 pounds or more.

Members of the tour include the sound and lighting technicians, the Sumo wrestlers and the Sumo wranglers, those just to look after the wrestlers.

"Many of these wrestlers are stars in their countries," Fuelner said. "They have to be taken care of. They need to work out every day. Many of them speak another language, so that can be a problem. They eat quite a bit and their diets are high in protein and high in carbohydrates. Some of them are diabetic so their sugar has to be watched."

Sumo wrestling is one of the oldest forms of martial arts and Japan's national sport. Sumo opponents battle barefoot and wear a mawashi, a traditional loin cover. The object is to throw your opponent outside the 18-foot ring, called a dohyo, or knock him to the ground. Wrestlers use many moves.

A typical Sumo match lasts less than one minute. If a bout goes as long as three minutes, there is a short pause after which the combatants start again.

"This really isn't violent," Fuelner said, adding he expects the shows to draw families.

Each tour stop will feature round-robin matches with 24 Sumo wrestlers. The WSL will have a Grand Prix Bonus System with points awarded to each of the Sumo wrestlers who win a match in competition. As a Sumo wrestler advances in each round of an evening's competition, there will be additional bonus points awarded.

Josh Dick at The Agency Group, the tour's booking agency, said the Sumo wrestlers are scheduled to go to the Allstate Arena, Chicago, May 27; Wachovia Center, Philadelphia, June 3; Bell Centre, Montreal, June 6; Continental Airlines Arena, East Rutherford, N.J., June 9; BankAtlantic Center, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., June 11; St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla., June 12; Arrowhead Pond of Anaheim (Calif.), June 16; Oakland (Calif.) Arena, June 17; Everett (Wash.) Events Center, June 20; Portland (Ore.) Rose Garden, June 21; Glendale (Ariz.) Arena, June 23; and Thomas and Mack Center, Las Vegas, June 24.

After the U.S. leg of the tour, it is to resume in August in Australia and New Zealand; in September in South America; mid to late September in Ireland and the United Kingdom; and conclude in mid-October in Europe.

Anthill Trading, a New York-based merchandising company is in charge of the merchandising for the tour. — Pam Sherborne

*Interviewed for this story: Rikk Feulner, (615) 400-7844; Bryant Sillmore, (248) 377-8221; Josh Dick, (212) 581-3100*

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## MARKETING

### ***Visit London promotion***



### **LONDON VISITORS BUREAU DEBUTS LIVE ADS AT SHOWS**

Venue operators are taking a wait-and-see attitude towards a first-ever live theatrical advertisement that was successfully premiered in London and will be seen this month in theatres in New York and Pittsburgh.

The 3-minute mini-play promoting Visit London raises the question of how audiences will react to advertisements in traditionally commercial-free venues, but also whether the move could open up new money-generating opportunities?

"If the response is positive, then people may jump on it," said Rodney Smith, director of business development for theaters and arenas for the city of Denver.

"I haven't heard anything like this before, but it could open a whole new revenue stream. I think in this day and age, managers have very open minds when it comes to ways to make money," said Robyn Williams, executive director, Portland (Ore.) Center for the Performing Arts.

The Visit London-produced ad was first seen in London earlier this month in a "test" before a different version was seen in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre.

The participating productions and theaters are: "Saturday Night Fever" at The Gaiety Theatre in Dublin; "Bad Blood" at the English-Speaking Theatre in Hamburg; "Stomp" at the Orpheum Theatre in New York; and "The Pillowman" at the Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre. The premier London performance was at "Steptoe and Son" at the Piccadilly Comedy Theatre.

"There were no complaints in London, but it did create a debate among some of the media," said James Bidwell, CEO of Visit London.

One of the ways the agency helps soften the impact of the ads is to hire well-known local actors. In England, for example, popular actor Robert Lindsay was part of the cast, while in Dublin a popular TV comedy series actress, Pauline McLynn, was featured.

Bidwell said the promotional sketches presented before the actual plays "have never been done like this before in this format."

The live-ad idea is part of a long line of offbeat marketing ideas from Visit London. The tourism group recently drove five London cabs on what they called a highly successful promotional tour of the United States.

"The idea [for the live ads] was initiated by us to do something a little different, to cut through the media world. We try to do marketing and public relations campaigns that break the mold in the tourist industry," he said.

Each of the presentations have different scripts that cater specifically to the various audiences, he said. "They are three minutes of lively conversations that go on between two sets of different actors. There's a mother and daughter, and a boyfriend and girlfriend. They basically discuss what they're going to do in London over a weekend," he said.

In the London version of the ad, a young woman who was part of the cast stepped out on stage to remind the audience to turn off all cell phones. She stressed that it was particularly important because it was the world premiere of the first theatrical advertisement.

As she left the stage, a haranguing ring beeped from one of the boxes in the first tier. A woman answering the phone blared: "No, no, you're not bothering me. I'm at the theatre but the show hasn't started."

A spotlight then showed the four people on stage as they discuss London's various tourist attractions ranging from the city's zoo to its many museums.

Bidwell said the sketches, which are presented before the featured play, take a "light-hearted approach." They're tailored to more comic-oriented plays rather than tragedies. The cities chosen for the performances are strong English markets.

He admits not all venue operators were eager to do commercials. "Certain theaters

didn't like the idea at all. It's like they're the whole last bastion of non-commercials," he said.

"To be honest, we picked theaters that wanted to work with us," he added. The venues are not paid to present the ads, but Bidwell pointed out they receive free publicity from the performances. "The ones we worked with love the idea," he said.

The presentations cost about \$800,000 each to produce, he said. Visit London works with the England-based Freud Communications and other agencies to create and produce the ads.

Expenses include writing the shows; paying actors and their expenses; various production costs; and marketing costs. Brochures or handouts tell playgoers they will be seeing the ads before the scheduled evening entertainment.

Bidwell said he does not think Visit London will do a similar promotion again. "It's kind of a one-off," he said. Nor does he think the move will create a rash of imitators. "It's a bit of a quirky thing to do. I think audiences will think it's great, but I don't think there are too many theaters willing to include this type of production," he said.

Williams said audiences may be more likely to willingly accept such ads if they are performed in the lobby, say before the paid-performances. "We're always doing stuff in the lobby to add to the whole theater experience. Once the lights go down and people are sitting down, you're setting an entirely different tone," she said.

Williams made the point that including ads before plays is a concept that is perhaps similar to modern-day movie theaters where movie previews as well as ads have become commonplace and generally accepted. "There was a day and a time 15 to 20 years ago when it was also horrible to bring drinks into the movie theatres. Now we've been doing that for years," she said.

She suggested that if venues could find a way of producing income through such performances, they would be more inclined to imitate the practice. "It all boils down to economics. If there's an economic reason to do it, American theater managers will be real receptive," she said. — David Wilkening

*Interviewed for this story: Rodney Smith, (720) 865-4226; Robyn Williams, (503) 274-6565; James Bidwell, 44 20 7234 5800*

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## CONCESSIONS

### ***Theming concept for the Tennessee State Fair***



### **OVATIONS WINS TRIO OF NASHVILLE CONTRACTS**

In a move to save city time and money, food service at three Metro-owned Nashville venues was bid in tandem. Ovation's Food Services was selected to provide concessions and catering at the diverse group of entertainment venues — Nashville Municipal Auditorium, the Nashville Convention Center and the Tennessee State Fairgrounds.

The principals are now negotiating a five-year deal with five one-year options, said Bob Skoney, manager of the Nashville Municipal Auditorium. Ken Young, president of Ovation's, said he expects it will be finalized within the next 60

days.

Centerplate currently holds the contracts with all three venues on a month-to-month basis. But this is the first time they were actually bid together, "the first time for all three of us to join hands," Skoney said. "They [Metro] thought it would put more emphasis on food service for our venues and it would be a more powerful deal and it is turning out to be that way. The state can save money issuing and overseeing the RFP."

The idea of combining the three concessions contracts originated with the city's finance director, who wanted to see if there were any savings and a better deal for the city, Skoney recalled. The result is one super contract with individual pages for each venue.

"My deal is different than the fairgrounds and convention center," Skoney said. While each venue manager wants the best deal individually, they are also "all scrapping for the city. It all goes in the same pot in a way," he added.

The big savings, though, is on the front end with the time and effort expended by the purchasing director and legal and auditing departments, Skoney said. The city is looking at similar efforts for security, parking and cleaning contracts for city facilities. The entertainment venues are not included in the first two, or at least the auditorium isn't, but the cleaning contract may go out for a group bid, Skoney said.

There is always the hope a bigger contract will be a better deal for the city, he added. Details of the Ovations deal are still being worked out, but it is to be a traditional percentage agreement.

Ovation's Steve Gregosky said Centerplate, Levy, Aramark, Culinaire and Sportservice also bid on the Nashville trio.

Young said the gross potential for the group is in the \$4.5 million to \$5 million range. Ovations will invest about \$1.75 million in improvements.

Gregosky said there will be renovations to concession stands, new concessions equipment and signage, and new directional signs at all the venues. Some new concepts will be introduced, such as Quizno's submarine sandwiches, he continued. There will be a new café concept, Nana's Front Porch, at the fairgrounds. "There's a lot of theming involved," Gregosky said.

"It was helpful we have fairgrounds all over the country. That was a plus," Young said of Ovations' winning bid.

Ovations also works closely with local companies to find partners for the project, which impressed Metro, Gregosky added. The local Quizno's franchisee is one such small business partner.

Ovations has multiple venues in one city in Fresno, Calif., with the fairgrounds, football stadium, Save Mart Center and baseball stadium, Young said. He also pointed to Portland, Ore., where the company services the Rose Garden and the Coliseum and, across the river, has the contract with the amphitheater in Vancouver, Wash.

While those are other examples of multiple contracts in one city and the resultant efficiencies in hiring part-time personnel and purchasing power, none are like Nashville with its one umbrella contract. However, it would be nice if that were the case. "We hope it's a trend, at least for us," Young said of Metro's decision to go with one RFP for the three.

"From the regional side, you can oversee it that much better and you're keeping event personnel employed year-round so when you train people they can work at all of your facilities," Young said. — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Ken Young and Steve Gregosky, (813) 948-6900; Bob Skoney, (615) 862-6392*

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## SHORT TAKES

### **CABARRUS ARENA & EVENTS CENTER MAY BREAK EVEN**

The SMG-managed Cabarrus Arena and Events Center, Concord, N.C., is on target to break even this year, according to local newspaper reports. Frank Lapsley, manager for SMG there, said this will be the first time the venue has broken even since it opened in 2002. Combining operational and capital costs, the arena had a \$2.3 million budget in fiscal year 2006. The Cabarrus Convention & Visitors Bureau also contributes \$100,000 to operations of the arena. The site houses the Cabarrus County Fair. In 2007, the Carolina Fuel, an expansion team in the American Indoor Football League, will play at the venue.

Contact: Frank Lapsley, (704) 920-3983

### **CONCORD AMPHITHEATER RENAMED SLEEP TRAIN**

The Concord, Calif., shed which began life as the Concord Pavilion, then became the Chronicle Pavilion for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, is being renamed Sleep Train Pavilion at Concord. The new season begins June 6 with Bruce Springsteen. Sleep Train is a mattress retailer. The venue is managed by Live Nation. One improvement Sleep Train wanted as part of the deal was a free shuttle service to bring concertgoers from the parking lot uphill to the amphitheater.

*Contact: Sleep Train Pavilion, (925) 692-2400*

### **ARAMARK BUYS GOLDEN COLLAR**

Aramark Corp. has completed the acquisition of a Beijing food-service company called Golden Collar. Golden Collar has 1,600 employees and 60 clients in four Chinese cities. Aramark said in a release that it worked with Golden Collar to provide food service at the Chinese FIA Formula One World Championship Round auto race.

*Contact: Aramark, (215) 238-3000*

### **BETHEL WOODS INAUGURAL SEASON ANNOUNCED**

Bethel (N.Y.) Woods Center for the Arts inaugural season includes Phil Lesh & Friends, Trey Anastasio and Mike Gordon featuring The Benevento Russo Duo on July 9, Ashlee Simpson with The Veronicas on July 21, Brad Paisley with Eric Church on July 28, Goo Goo Dolls and Counting Crows on Aug. 9, and Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops with Tony Award winning artist Faith Prince on Aug. 26. Jazz legends Wynton Marsalis, George Benson, and John Pizzarelli have been scheduled to perform during the Jazz Festival weekend, July 22–23, created by four-time Grammy Award winner Dianne Reeves, who is also scheduled to perform. The new performing arts center is comprised of a 4,800-seat summer pavilion with space on the lawn for an additional 12,000 patrons, an outdoor 700-seat amphitheater, and an interpretive and multi-purpose events gallery center. The gallery, to open in 2007, consists of approximately 4,500 square feet intended for community gatherings, lectures, receptions, meetings and other events, and the interpretive center, also scheduled for 2007, will include 10,000 square feet of exhibition space to tell the story of the 1969 Woodstock Festival, its historical context and its influence on American culture.

*Contact: Rachael Vollaro, (212) 843-8046*

### **BUD BRAND GETS A CORNER OF THE BANKATLANTIC CENTER**

Sunrise Sports & Entertainment and the BankAtlantic Center, Sunrise, Fla., opened the Bud Select District — a new Anheuser Busch-branded point-of-sale area outside section 111 on the plaza level — on April 27. SSE worked directly with Anheuser-Busch to create the Bud Select District and improve the access and visibility of their product lines. The BSD will replace a merchandise stand previously located outside Section 111, and will be a point of sale for all Anheuser-Busch products available in the BankAtlantic Center.

*Contact: Matt Sacco, (954) 835-7713*

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## **HELP WANTED**

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**Corbin Tourism Commission - Tourism Director**

The Corbin Tourism & Convention Commission/City of Corbin are seeking a Tourism Director and Facilities Mgr to direct tourism operations and operate a 7,500 seat facility, currently under construction. Submit info containing exp and expertise in staff management, scheduling sports & entertainment, plus knowledge of tourism. Inquires to [Inquiries to: director@corbinkytourism.com](mailto:director@corbinkytourism.com) Please send resume to: Corbin Tourism and Convention Center, P.O. Box 956, Corbin, KY 40702. All submissions should be postmarked no later than June 30, 2006. EOE

### **Orleans Arena-Event Coordinator**

Full time, salaried position with varying hours. Oversees all aspects of an event from preliminary planning to execution and final billing. Evaluate, develop, and interpret technical drawing related to event set-ups, staging, rigging, sound and lighting requirements. Insure compliance with all safety regulations. Qualifications: Associates or Bachelors degree in an industry related field or equivalent experience. To apply e-mail resume and cover letter to Darren Davis, [darrendavis@coastcasinos.net](mailto:darrendavis@coastcasinos.net).

### **Venues Today - Reporter/Editor**

Immediate opening. Sports and live entertainment trade magazine in Orange County, Calif., is seeking a qualified business journalist to write stories and assign and edit freelance copy. Some travel. A small firm with international readership. Two to three years editorial experience required. F/T, health benefits, EOE. E-mail resume to [Linda@venuestoday.com](mailto:Linda@venuestoday.com) or fax to: (714) 378-0040.

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