

## Venues Today

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**Subject:** FW: Jan. 18, 2006 Newsletter



**Dear April,**

**January 18, 2006 VOL. V, Number III ISSN 1547-4143**

Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. VT Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Linda Deckard just returned from the INTIX Annual Conference in Boston. Look for coverage here and in the February magazine. Managing Editor Natasha Emmons just returned from IAAM's International Stadium Management Conference in Tampa, Fla. For a full calendar listing, to view archives or to subscribe to *Venues Today*, visit our Web site at [www.venuestoday.com](http://www.venuestoday.com).

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### **QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"Let me tell you guys — go back and look at your *force majeure* [clause] in your contracts. There's a horrendous amount of liability. I cannot tell you how critical this is." — Glenn Mon, SMG, on one lesson learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

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## VENUE NEWS

***From left, Angus Watson, Bruce Flax, Joe Fallon, Craig Gates, and Jim Holtzman***



### **TOWN HALL BRAWL: INTIX ATTENDEES DEBATE EMBRACING TICKET BROKERS**

BOSTON — “We depend on you for our tickets,” said Jim Holtzman, president, Ace Ticket.com, a broker doing business in Boston, during the Town Hall session at INTIX here Jan. 12. “We’ll do anything we can do other than not do what we do.”

He was the lone broker on a panel of ticketing and venue professionals during the town hall

meeting dubbed “Ticket Brokers: Friend or Foe.” Moderated by Angus Watson, Ravinia Festival, Highland Park, Ill., the panel also included Bruce Flax, guest services manager, Foxwoods Resort Casino, Mashantucket, Conn.; Craig Gates, general manager, Tsongas Arena, Lowell, Mass.; and Joe Fallon, concierge, The Fairmont Copley Plaza, Boston, who noted he deals with brokers all the time to secure tickets for hotel guests..

Gates’ concern going into this discussion was the effect ticket brokers have on up and coming acts that play his 8,000-seat arena. In the 70s, it was easy to get a ticket to see a concert. Kids paid face value. “Now, with sold out shows and the price brokers are charging, it upsets me when a \$19.95 ticket to My Chemical Romance is suddenly selling for \$69.99. That will keep the kids who make the business grow from coming to shows.” His vote on brokers, “foe, not friend.”

Brokers represent \$3 billion-\$5 billion of a \$60 billion business, Holtzman, 5-10 percent of tickets sold. They specialize in the high-end seats. There is, in fact, a National Association of Ticket Brokers that polices members and has rules and regulations. It’s a licensed and tax-paying business, Holtzman said. “I run a business with four storefronts and 24 employees. We buy and sell tickets. We speculate on tickets. We have to stand behind what we sell.”

That prompted an audience member to ask where Holtzman is at will call at the amphitheater when the person who bought a ticket through a broker has a problem and is screaming at the box office personnel. Holtzman replied he only represents Ace and “I’m open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. to deal with problems.”

At Foxwoods, the usual complaint is from customers who think they are buying boxes, only to find that's not the case when they get to the venue. That problem is exacerbated by the fact the official Foxwoods seating chart is copied onto broker Web sites, making it look legitimate. "We need customers to know they are not buying from us," Flax said.

Gates estimated 90 percent of the customer service or ticketing problems at Tsongas are from tickets bought through the secondary market. "A lot of brokers are not legit," he said. "You can let the buyer beware, but we're the ones who look bad."

Baseball has been at the forefront of controlling the secondary (re-sale) market, with teams like the San Francisco Giants allowing season ticket holders to unload seats at an official, secure, team-run site. They re-sell 100,000 tickets a year.

Donna Dowless, Ticketmaster, noted there are new products being developed at a fast pace to address the secondary market. There is a market at the top end to resell and the venues, promoters and producers have the network to be able to do so.

Holtzman countered that there is a segment of the market that will continue to use brokers. "We're not going to go away. It's America; it's a capitalistic society. We maybe tipped you off that this market exists." He suggested the officially sanctioned auctions are all about this premium buyer.

Flax had no problem with whoever takes the risk deserving the money, whether it's the venue or the broker. Gates countered that his arena sticks to the ticket price in the box office, and that by law in Massachusetts the ticket cannot be resold for more than \$2 over face value plus a reasonable cost, though no one knows what that means.

Another member of the audience who held an auction for Bon Jovi tickets grouched that the highest ticket buyer was a broker. Those pre-sales were soon being sold on e-Bay for even more. When the Wiggles played the venue, the best seats were gone early on, disappointing parents who wanted to bring their four-year-old. Told the best seats were sold when they got to the box office, those parents asked why, then, they could buy them for \$300 on eBay. At some point it gets ludicrous, the audience member declared.

At the Colosseum at Ceasars Palace, Las Vegas, the concern is customer service and fair play. A rep from that venue wondered if brokers are being charged the 10 percent entertainment tax, or even could be, and how INTIX might work with the National Association of Ticket Brokers to reach some compromises.

Holtzman encouraged that tack. Visit NATB.org, he said. The National Football League is working with NATB on things like recovering stolen tickets. "If somebody steals tickets, the chances are they will go to the secondary market," Holtzman said. He emphasized that the brokers, for the most part, want to work with venues. "We don't want to upset you. Without you, we don't exist. We're your best customers."

Another audience member's tale of woe involved four Madonna shows. The biggest broker in town bought quite a few tickets, huge pockets of seats, which then did not sell in the secondary marketplace. The venue had to move people downstairs to fill the good seats that were left empty. Sometimes, it gets to the point the artist won't return to a venue because there are big holes in the house in a sold out show. One participant had sold out a show, 3,000 seats, and only 600 came. That artist won't come back either.

Holtzman agreed that can happen. He had some Rolling Stones tickets for the night following this panel, with a face value of \$475 and a \$50 fan club fee. "I'm selling them for \$249. Sometimes we do lose. We speculate. We're a futures commodity broker." As to filling them last minute when there's no hope they'll sell in time, Holtzman said he donates tickets to Big Brothers. "I hate to see a ticket go to waste and I know you make money off concessions." He was also open to the idea of returning the tickets to the box office for face value, mitigating his risk, to which the audience groaned. No other industry does that; except the heroin trade, one participant piped in.

It was suggested the problem of no-shows in prime seats could also be eased by reserving the first couple of rows for window sales, not the Internet, the option chosen by one small venue represented.

That didn't ease another's concern, who, being a nonprofit community education facility, has a core mission of access to the arts for the community. That person did not embrace brokers.

Don Vaccaro, TicketNetwork, who provides backend support for brokers, said there are 700-1,000 legitimate brokers in the U.S. and they contribute to the industry. Vaccaro suggested brokers want to cooperate with the venue, even share revenue and buy co-op advertising. He believed if the venue provided them with tickets, the price would go way down. He, too, touted the NATB. When the New York Nets had a problem with a broker, they kicked him out of the association, Vaccaro said.

A representative from Disney Theatrical Productions, New York, declared, "We don't resent the secondary market. It shows me my shows are alive and well; the event is healthy. We will court the broker with sales nights and tours of the theater." The exception would be any broker operating outside the law, but overall he applauded the venues that are taking the secondary market in house and, failing that, he embraces the brokers.

Historically, 20 years ago, before Ticketmaster or Ticketron, the box office did embrace ticket brokers, Holtzman added. "We were a distribution channel."

Flax noted the Boston Red Sox do a pre-registration list for season tickets prior to the on-sale and pick names via lottery to determine the order in which tickets are sold. "That's the future, better security," he said.

Holtzman wondered, though, if season tickets are so great on the customer relation and revenue sides of things. Baseball has gone to the secondary market for a reason, mainly no-shows in an 81-game season. "I'd rather have 81 different customers than one person 81 times," he said. — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Angus Watson, (847) 266-5062; Bruce Flax, (860) 312-3245; Jim Holtzman, (617) 734-6666 ext. 100; Joe Fallon, (617) 267-5300, ext. 1691; Craig Gates, (978) 848-6900*

## **ARCHITECTS OPTIMISTIC ON SUPERDOME REOPENING**

In the dark days this past September following the disaster that played out at the Louisiana Superdome when over 20,000 people crowded into the stadium to escape flooding, those who were at the venue at the time thought it would have to be torn down. It was unimaginable that the New Orleans landmark could be saved.

But a crew of Ellerbe Becket Inc. architects managed to get to the site before the city even reopened in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and began a thorough analysis. They think the venue can be back online in time for the National Football

League (NFL) season, November 2006, at a price of about \$139 million (with a possible range of \$125.2 million to \$153.1 million).

"There was no structural damage from the storm to the dome, other than some penetration in the exteriors, which really isn't structural," said Paul E. Griesemer, architectural director at Ellerbe Becket.

"Until there was really an analysis done and completed, I don't know that anyone could say for certain what the fate of the Dome would be," Griesemer said. "Everything looks pretty bleak the first time you walk into it after something like that. But as you got in and got things cleaned up and moved out, yeah, there was some damage, but it's primarily to finish items and things that can be repaired. Most of the backbone systems of the building are in fine shape."

The roof was sealed off by Nov. 1, but replacement will be necessary because about 70 percent of the surface membrane was damaged, according to Ellerbe Becket's report. The metal deck below the surface membrane also suffered damage and will require repair.

The exterior skin on the sides of the building suffered minor aesthetic damage and can be repaired with anodized aluminum, although matching the color will be difficult, the report stated.

The biggest difference between the Superdome project and a routine renovation is the complexity of financing, Griesemer said. "You have to deal with the insurance and FEMA. There are procedural things involved in a storm recovery that you don't have in a renovation."

There's also a lot more investigation involved, he said. "You have to make sure you know what the storm's effects were on systems that otherwise were functioning fine. You have to go through and test all the systems."

To date, 4,000 tons of debris have been removed, the football turf has been removed and electricity has been restored to the venue.

Testing continues on the electrical, telecommunications, audio-video, fire protection, security, plumbing, and heating/ventilating/air conditioning systems. Some damage has already been detected. A total of 53 people have devoted 2,500 hours to the project, including Ellerbe Becket's personnel and specialty consultants.

The main scoreboards in the four corners sustained damage and will require replacement. The two new video boards installed last season are operational, but the system needs more testing. The main telephone entry switch was flooded and must be replaced. But, luckily, the building's data servers were moved off site by the SMG operations staff and are in good working order.

SMG hopes to work some renovations that were already planned before the storm into the repair-work, but the state is still looking for the funding. "For a long time, the Dome has been looking to get in line with modern facilities in terms of revenue-generating things that NFL teams look for. So there's clubs and suites that they are looking to do some upgrades to, technology upgrades to the scoreboards; concession stands across the board need upgrading; the elevators are quite out of date," Griesemer said.

But if the venue is to serve as a shelter again, there will need to be further enhancements, Griesemer said. "The state and the operators of the facility need to really evaluate...the Dome's ability to properly be used as an evacuation shelter. A

stadium designed in 1973 just wasn't designed with the intent of being used as a shelter, so there are a lot of things that have to be discussed about how viable it is, even as a refuge of last resort."

The venue would have to work without city utilities, he said. "To retrofit the building to be a shelter costs an enormous amount of money. It's a huge effort. The emergency generator would have to be moved, the fuel supply would be moved, major electrical panels and switches [would have to be rewired]. Then there's the whole issue of providing potable water."

Right now, the accelerated timetable calls for the venue to be reopened by Nov. 1. Issues that could impede progress include more bad weather and a lack of available labor and building supplies in the Gulf region, Greisemer said. "The state has told us they want to take advantage of local contractors and have them benefit from the reconstruction efforts as much as anyone. Right now, we're soliciting for a construction management firm to come in and work hand-in-hand with the design team."

The November reopening would enable New Orleans to keep four major football events that occur at the end of the season — the State Farm Bayou Classic, the Nokia Prep Classic (state high school football championships), the Wyndham New Orleans Bowl and the Nokia Sugar Bowl — in addition to November and December home games of the NFL Saints and Tulane University.

About half of the foodservice equipment in concession stands was damaged. "Virtually every space was broken into in some form," Griesemer said. "Luckily very little of the big, huge, major equipment has to be replaced. It's a lot of the smaller equipment that can be manufactured off-site and shipped in and doesn't have to be custom fabricated in the Dome."

Centerplate is the venue concessionaire.

All of the carpet (about 53,000 square yards) must be replaced. About 30 percent of the sheetrock and 15 percent of the ceiling tile needs to be replaced. Much of the upholstered furniture was either damaged by water or mold. All of the furnishings in the box suites were damaged. About 35 percent of the spectator seats in the main arena had some degree of water damage. Rubberized concourse flooring on the 200 and 500 levels will require replacement. The football turf was damaged by contaminated water and will be replaced. And 11 of the Dome's 38 escalators and six of the 15 elevators will need some level of replacement.

Installing some sort of memorial to the people who died in the Superdome and throughout the city during the disaster has been discussed, but nothing has been decided, Griesemer said. "I know there are a lot of wants and desires in that area, but right now we're just looking to get the stadium back online as quickly as possible." — Natasha Emmons

*Interviewed for this story: Paul E. Greisemer, (816) 360-4462; Bill Curl, SMG at Superdome, (504) 587-3921*

### **IAAM's Dexter King, Glenn Mon and George Washington University's Tony Vecchione**



### **SMG'S GLENN MON SHARES LESSONS FROM HURRICANE KATRINA**

TAMPA, Fla. — As the senior vice

president of Stadiums and Arenas for SMG, Glenn Mon is responsible for the venues hardest hit by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita late last summer. The Philadelphia-based management firm suffered hefty losses, most notably at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans, which became the focal point of Katrina's devastation as tens of thousands of the city's displaced residents flocked to the flooded venue.

"Within a month, seven or eight venues were totally offline," Mon told a crowd of stadium managers at IAAM's 4th Annual International Stadium Management Conference, which drew about 150 attendees Jan. 12-14.

As of Sept. 4, 2005, in addition to the Superdome, SMG-managed venues that sustained storm damage included the Pontchartrain Center, New Orleans Arena and Mobile (Ala.) Civic Center. Venues that were pressed into service as emergency shelters included the Albuquerque Convention Center; El Paso (Texas) Convention & Performing Arts Center; Reliant Park, Houston; American Bank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas; Ford Park, Beaumont, Texas; CenturyTEL Arena, Bossier Center, La.; Baton Rouge (La.) Civic Center, Pensacola (Fla.) Civic Center; Palmetto Expo Center, Greenville, S.C.; Evansville (Ind.) Auditorium; and Kansas Expocentre, Topeka.

SMG carries business interruption insurance, Mon stressed. "Risk management played a huge role," he said. "Let me tell you guys — go back and look at your *force majeure* [clause] in your contracts. There's a horrendous amount of liability. I cannot tell you how critical this is."

For example, the New Orleans Arena's contract with the National Basketball League Hornets requires the team to return when the venue is usable. But the Ford Center lost an entire hockey season because the team had a *force majeure* right to cancel. "*Force majeure* language can be very, very ambiguous," Mon warned.

Mon stressed the three Ps: planning, preparation and performance. "Most natural disasters are predictable," he noted.

"You have to recognize that 'blank' is going to happen. You're not going to get away with nothing [happening]," Mon said, listing disasters including earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, fires, terrorism and structural failures. "All of these are not natural disasters — they can be manmade, as well.

"We emphasize the identification of assets," Mon said. These include personnel in risk management, legal, and the management and engineering sectors; and external disaster relief services. As for asset protection, the focus is on business records and property, keeping only essential personnel on site.

Human resources made sure that 185 employees of SMG facilities who were scattered by the storms could pick up their paychecks at any SMG venue.

Each building had relationships with essential help in the area. For example, the Mobile venue was back online within a day because the building allowed a firm that specializes in water remediation to stage equipment at the facility. "We had all of these contractors already lined up. That's something we learned after [hurricane] Ivan [in 2004]," Mon said. "Sometime, something is going to happen."

In preparation, Mon asked, "Are you a shelter? If you are, what's your role? Are you a refuge of last resort, which is what the Louisiana Superdome was." (Mon was general manager of the venue in 1995.) "Last resort is a place to go and hide and ride out the storm. There are no services."

When the venue held 9,000 storm refugees, food and water was plentiful. During the post-storm flooding, however, the population swelled to over 20,000. "Obviously, then the resources were stretched very, very thin," Mon said.

A crisis management plan needs to be in place, Mon said. "Who's in charge? What contracts do you have as part of your plan? This is just like having any event in your facility. The only difference is it's 24/7."

Following Katrina, SMG has changed its policy regarding who they will shelter as a storm approaches. "Identify who the essential personnel are going to be. Anyone who is not needed should not be there, especially families. Don't compound the problem," he warned. "Instead of having to get 75 people out [of New Orleans] who were our employees, we had to deal with 160."

One big problem the Superdome faced was that the gas reserves needed to keep the generator running was underground and was under 4 feet of water. Three building engineers worked with the National Guard to cut a hole in the wall of the engineering room to get the gas to the generator.

Then the SMG engineers hit the road to help out at the shelters. "These three guys got in a car and went to Houston," Mon said, fighting back tears. "I do get emotional because I'm so proud."

One of the biggest challenges SMG faced during this crisis was communications. "Katrina was an absolute nightmare in terms of communications," he said. Both land lines and mobile phones were out, as were e-mail and Blackberry communications. "The communication got to be very, very bizarre. ...We now have an inventory of satellite phones."

The satellite phones are shipped to areas that may need them. "They're great. They even use a solar battery," Mon said.

The disaster-assistance assets should be staged at an appropriate location, but that can change as the weather forecast changes, Mon warned. "Be aware of what's going on. We had our assets in New Orleans ready to go to Pensacola [Fla.], then Friday at 5, we had to shift our entire focus."

After the disaster, the damage needs to be documented quickly and thoroughly, Mon said. "Take pictures. Write records."

Within two days of the Superdome disaster, engineers from Ellerbe Becket were on site, Mon said. "They actually got into the dome before the city was reopened, and that was critical."

Let the Red Cross and utility companies into buildings, but make sure a contract is signed so that the venue will be paid for that usage, Mon said. "Business does not stop, even though Mother Nature tries to make it stop."

The New Orleans Arena is scheduled to reopen March 4 with a Placido Domingo concert, following \$12 million in repairs. However, the fate of the adjoining auditorium is still unclear. SMG is waiting to see if the city or FEMA will provide funding. The Superdome is schedule to reopen in November in time to host the National Football League New Orleans Saints season, following \$139 million in repairs. — Natasha Emmons  
*Interviewed for this story: Glenn Mon, (215) 861-0440*

## **SMG TO MANAGE NEW UNIVERSITY ARENA IN THE CINCINNATI REGION**

The facts that Bank of Kentucky Center will be located in the greater Cincinnati marketplace and the term is 10 years make signing a contract with Northern Kentucky University to manage the \$60 million arena a feather in SMG's cap, said Brian Kabatznick, SMG vice president of business development. He's also pleased that SMG will have input in the design-build process for the 9,000-10,000-seat venue, which is to open in the fall of 2007 or early spring 2008.

"We provide pre-opening services prior to ground breaking and through the construction process," Kabatznick said. The 10-year period begins the day of opening. "Our input in design and build allows for a fully functional and operational venue."

"The building is seven miles from downtown Cincinnati. It's a major-market building which will fill a nice niche in the Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky market," he added.

Andy Meeks, director of business operations for the university, said the request for proposals was sent to four companies, of which three responded, including Global Spectrum and Compass Facility Management.

The university chose to seek private management "because we're about to build a 9,000-10,000 seat multi-purpose arena and the truth of the matter is we simply didn't know how to run it," Meeks said. "We could unlock the doors and turn on the air conditioning, but we don't know how to book events and deal with promoters." Following the trend, this arena is not for basketball and university events alone; it will serve the region, he said. It will host, of course, NKU Norse events such as men's and women's basketball.

The longterm contract is typical for NKU, Meeks added. "We found if you take your time writing the RFP, do your research (and we do a lot of research, site visitation, reference checking) and if you make a good decision on the front end, not only is a longterm relationship possible, it's beneficial."

Of the firms bidding, "SMG is clearly the biggest. We felt that over time, especially with their booking system and routing system, they could bring the most complete set of services to the building," Meeks added. It will be another six to eight months before the university starts looking for a general manager. Meanwhile, Meeks is working with Bob Newman, SMG regional VP.

The contract, other than length of term, is fairly standard. It provides that NKU pay SMG an annual management fee of \$120,000. The incentive package has not yet been developed, but when complete it will be quantitative as well as qualitative, he said. "We're looking for budget, bottom line, attendance, and integration of outside events and university events. It's not just financially driven." The contract is subject to the state's 80/20 formula, which regulates that the incentive cannot be greater than 20 percent of the total of the fee.

In addition, SMG is investing in a marquee for the new arena. "The marquee commitment is for the cost but not to exceed \$200,000," Meeks said. "We are allowing them to recover their investment over the life of the contract through advertising on the marquee."

The architect is GBBN of Cincinnati. The consulting arena specialist is 360 out of Kansas City. The arena is funded through a state appropriation combined with the title sponsor commitment from Bank of Kentucky, which will pay \$6 million over 20 years.

Additional sponsorships will be sold by SMG and the university.

NKU has 14,000 students on campus. The university is four miles from the river. Current plans are to include 10-12 suites and an undetermined number of club seats.

"We are putting it on a piece of land that sets at one corner of the university property and making a huge effort for the arena to blend in with the rest of the university," Meeks said. "It will have some rounded features and a substantial amount of glass." — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Brian Kabatznick, (215) 592-6624; Andy Meeks, (859) 572-5575*

### **Seating at Maricopa County Events Center**



### **NEDERLANDER WINS ARIZONA PAC MANAGEMENT BID**

The Nederlander Organization has been chosen by the Maricopa County (Ariz.) Board of Supervisors to manage, book, promote and operate the 7,034-seat Maricopa County Events

Center (formerly known as the Sundome Center for the Performing Arts) with a 10-year contract with an option to renew for 10 years.

"We're in here for the long haul," said Dan Wohleen, who Nederlander has appointed as head general manager of the venue. Wohleen worked with Nederlander as a production manager at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, where Nederlander has a similar booking and management contract, from 1992 through 1999.

The building is unique in that it was designed with wheelchair accessibility in mind. The first owner, Del Webb, built it as part of a retirement community, Phoenix suburb Sun City West. In 1984, four years after its opening, Webb donated the venue to Arizona State University, which ran it until turning the deed over to the county in 2005. The county immediately put out an RFP for a management firm.

The venue was uniquely designed as the largest single-story performing arts center in the country, with no more than 12 stairs in the building, Wohleen said. "Seats are deep and extremely comfortable for leg room, and there are ramps, no climbing stairs anywhere. It's pretty interesting."

Wohleen hopes to expand the stage for modern production requirements, and several engineers who worked on the recent Greek Theatre remodel are working on options, he said, including Henry Chow. "We're looking at a number of things. The construction situation is still up in the air as to what we want to do, how far we want to go," he said. "We have been making up some plans, saying, 'OK, we can do this or do that or do this.' Some of that is now in my court. I would like to see where it ultimately goes."

The enclosed venue has 3,000 parking spots.

One of Nederlander's strengths obviously lies in the area of bookings. The organization operates over 26 theater and music venues in the United States and England.

Nederlander Concerts books, promotes and produces live entertainment for many top

California venues.

"Various management companies have various strengths, but there were several reasons we chose Nederlander. There are some improvements he wants to make so the facility can do different performances in it," said County Supervisor Max Wilson.

Nederlander must contribute \$1.6 million in capital improvements, which the county will match, according to Bill Scalzo, assistant county manager. Annual fees Nederlander pays the county will ratchet up each year to a total of at least \$3 million over the life of the contract, plus a percentage of revenue. "We're really looking for it to be a success for both of us," he said.

Wilson agreed. "Being in the business for a long time, they have an outstanding reputation. They own theaters all over the country. They have the ability to book something in Los Angeles, then go to Anaheim, then come here. So we can get on a regular circuit. In the past, they had a hard time because they would try to get a performer to just come here. That's a little hard to do."

There are 3.5 million residents in Maricopa County, one of the fastest-growing counties in the country. "When George Burns came [to the venue], people came up from Tucson to see him. It was packed. With Bob Hope, you couldn't beg, borrow or steal a ticket to see it," Wilson said.

Wilson said he hopes to continue holding community events, such as graduations, in the venue, but that the county will take a hands-off approach to other bookings. "We're going to leave that up to them. We think that they have so much more experience in that area. It's like me trying to tell the Los Angeles Dodgers how to play baseball."

Nederlander booked a Republican convention in the venue last week as their first booking, Wilson said.

Wohleen is excited to have a wide range of potential patrons, from the ASU college students, to the retirees, to the hordes of young families moving to the area. "Our programming will be directed toward a very broad spectrum of entertainment." He also has to have a Web site created for the venue.

Having the county as a landlord gives Nederlander access to recent population studies, also, he noted. — Natasha Emmons

*Interviewed for this story: Dan Wohleen, (623) 214-5231; Max Wilson and Bill Scalzo, (602) 506-7232*

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## BOOKINGS



### HOTtickets

#### HOLIDAY PACKAGES BOOST REVENUES FOR SEVERAL VENUES

**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 Dec. 28, 2005. To submit reports, e-mail [HotTickets@venuestoday.com](mailto: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:* \$1,359,795; *Event:* Widespread Panic; *Venue:* **Philips Arena, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 29,596; *Ticket Range:* \$48.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 30–31; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,105,750; *Event:* Aerosmith; *Venue:* **TD Waterhouse Centre, Orlando, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 11,782; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$55; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Jan. 5; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$655,610; *Event:* The Black Crowes; *Venue:* **Madison Square Garden Arena, New York**; *Attendance:* 11,332; *Ticket Range:* \$65-\$45; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 31; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$610,200; *Event:* Holladay Jam; *Venue:* **Verizon Center (formerly MCI Center), Washington, D.C.**; *Attendance:* 14,726; *Ticket Range:* \$45; *Promoter:* Bill Washington, Jeff Sharp; *Dates:* Dec. 29; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$506,524; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra; *Venue:* **HSBC Arena, Buffalo, N.Y.**; *Attendance:* 13,651; *Ticket Range:* \$48-\$28; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 28; *No. of Shows:* 1

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

1) *Gross Sales:* \$571,707; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra; *Venue:* **Verizon Wireless Arena, Manchester, N.H.**; *Attendance:* 12,476; *Ticket Range:* \$55.50-\$30; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 30; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$430,290; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra; *Venue:* **Alliant Energy Center Memorial Coliseum, Madison, Wis.**; *Attendance:* 13,507; *Ticket Range:* \$39.50-\$29.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 28; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$314,573; *Event:* Larry The Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Baton Rouge (La.) River Center**; *Attendance:* 8,118; *Ticket Range:* \$38.75; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* Jan. 12; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$244,000; *Event:* Z90 Jingle Jam; *Venue:* **iPayOne Center, San Diego**; *Attendance:* 7,948; *Ticket Range:* \$40; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 28; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$188,076; *Event:* USAC Midget Auto Races; *Venue:* **Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, Fort Wayne, Ind.**; *Attendance:* 9,408; *Ticket Range:* \$45.50-\$7.50; *Promoter:* Classic Motorsports, Inc.; *Dates:* Dec. 29-30; *No. of Shows:* 2

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

1) *Gross Sales:* \$504,075; *Event:* Phil Lesh & Friends; *Venue:* **Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, San Francisco**; *Attendance:* 8,165; *Ticket Range:* \$65; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 31; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$379,680; *Event:* Maroon 5; *Venue:* **Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.**; *Attendance:* 6,360; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$30; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 31; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$192,112; *Event:* HOT 92 Jamz Winter Wonder; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 2,822; *Ticket Range:* \$101.50-\$48; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts, Hauser Entertainment; *Dates:* Dec. 29; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$115,700; *Event:* Velvet Revolver; *Venue:* **Borgata Resort Spa & Casino, Atlantic City, N.J.**; *Attendance:* 1,799; *Ticket Range:* \$100-\$50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 30; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$98,066; *Event:* WWE; *Venue:* **Louis J. Tullio Arena, Erie, Pa.**; *Attendance:* 2,980; *Ticket Range:* \$41-\$21; *Promoter:* World Wrestling Entertainment; *Dates:* Dec. 30; *No. of Shows:* 1

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

1) *Gross Sales:* \$730,462; *Event:* Lord of the Dance; *Venue:* **Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham, England**; *Attendance:* 14,840; *Ticket Range:* \$57.46-\$26.52; *Promoter:* 3A Entertainment, Jack Utsick Presents; *Dates:* Jan. 10-15 *No. of Shows:* 8

2) *Gross Sales:* \$383,770; *Event:* Jeff Foxworthy; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Detroit**; *Attendance:* 6,895; *Ticket Range:* \$55.75-\$50; *Promoter:* Olympia Entertainment, Outback Concerts; *Dates:* Jan. 14; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$278,315; *Event:* George Lopez; *Venue:* **Dodge Theatre, Phoenix**; *Attendance:* 4,938; *Ticket Range:* \$100-\$47.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 31  
*No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$262,842; *Event:* Lord of the Dance; *Venue:* **NIA Academy, Birmingham, England**; *Attendance:* 5,547; *Ticket Range:* \$57.45-\$26.51; *Promoter:* 3A Entertainment, Jack Utsick Presents; *Dates:* Jan. 1–2; *No. of Shows:* 3

5) *Gross Sales:* \$243,948; *Event:* Madea Goes to Jail; *Venue:* **Dodge Theatre, Phoenix**; *Attendance:* 5,832; *Ticket Range:* \$48.50-\$45.50; *Promoter:* ALW Entertainment; *Dates:* Jan. 10–11; *No. of Shows:* 2

*Compiled by April Stroud, HotTickets@venuestoday*

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## MARKETING

***Left to right are Margie Ewen; April Mitchell, Alameda County Fair; Katie Phillips; Greg Kinder; and Tom Mitchell***



### COMPETITION STOKES EXCITEMENT AT CALIFORNIA FAIRS

SAN DIEGO — Fair marketers tap into patrons' competitive spirits to create entertainment, garner publicity and, ultimately, boost attendance, according to a panel assembled for the Western Fairs Association 83rd Annual Conference & Trade Show held

here Jan. 9–12.

Katie Phillips of the San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, saw participation jump from 20 to 50 in the second year of the Plein Air Painting Contest, held Friday, June 10, during the Fair.

The art show coordinator organized the competition, which had local artists paint images of the fair on-site, with judging held four hours later.

Pre-registration was \$10 and each participant picked up his or her ticket at Will Call that morning. "The only thing they had to bring with them was their art supplies," Phillips said. Blank canvasses could not be larger than 36-by-36 inches, and were stamped at the gate to prevent switcheroos from occurring.

"Lots of people go to the flower show; lots of people went to the carnival; others went to areas we didn't think they could get to, so that was interesting," Phillips said.

At 4 p.m., the entries were lined up for judging. First place won \$100, second won \$75 and third won \$50. Phillips also suggested that fairs offer to buy one of the winning

entries.

The only investment for the fair is in good, sturdy easels (that can't be knocked over by wind) and smocks for all the fair staff who will be handling the wet paintings.

Tom Mitchell, of the IT department at the Nevada County Fair, Grass Valley, Calif., launched a similar contest, but for digital photography instead of painting. The genius in this promotion is that the fair gets free photography for use in print ads and the Web site, Mitchell pointed out.

Contestants had to have cameras 3 megapixels or greater, and shoot in landscape mode at a maximum of 3 megs. They also had to sign up for the event early, like the plein air artists.

Two photos from each of 26 entrants were to be collected and displayed on two donated LCD video screens in the fairgrounds. "We didn't really stick to it [the limit] because it turned out to be easier than we thought it would be," Mitchell said. He used a SanDisk photo album machine to display the images. The total cost was about \$125, and each entrant paid \$10.

It was time-consuming, however, because people would return with hundreds of photos, he said. And, next time, Mitchell said he may use another system because the SanDisk machines were overheating throughout the day and needing to be reset. "I think when we do it next year, we'll look at some different solutions, maybe go back to a computer solution."

The display was also a good learning experience for spectators who saw how to use digital cameras and manipulate images, he said. And it was a good learning experience for fair management. "It really gave us more insight into the fair we had not seen before."

One sticky point is model releases, Mitchell warned. He asked participants to stick to landscapes and not specific people when shooting, but they didn't. "Any lawyer you talk to will tell you something different in terms of what's right and what's wrong," he said.

Greg Kinder, California State Fair, Sacramento, turned to the culinary arts to heat up the competition, and this one focused on the younger set. The first Tuesday of the fair was Kid's Day, which was also designated as the birthday of Poppy the Bear, the fair's mascot. "It was a full day of celebration, kids and food," Kinder said.

Competitions were held in three themed, fully functional kitchens, dubbed Kidz Kitchen. "It provided a very interactive and energetic atmosphere," Kinder said.

Two kid chefs, aged 11 and 16, provided demonstrations. And kids from different cultures were invited to cook and display their native fare. "That really brings it to the kids' level because they can see their peers doing something...to inspire them to hopefully participate," Kinder said.

Fair-going kids were allowed to enter the Poppy's Cookie Mania competition. "It was a very open contest, not too many rules about what kind, style, size, color. We just wanted kids to bring their cookies to the fair," Kinder said. Recipes were posted on the fair's Web site.

Margie Ewen, Sacramento (Calif.) County Fair, put kids through an even tougher challenge — boot camp. The state's Army National Guard built a "physical endurance challenge" of tires, netting, ramps, ropes, bails of hay, sand, telephone poles and other

obstacles. "We just give them the space," Ewen said.

Each successful child received a blue ribbon that stated: "I survived boot camp at the Sacramento County Fair." There were 15,000 ribbons awarded at last year's four-day fair.

"Parents love it because it gets them off the sofa and out doing something physical," Ewen said.

And this promotion has withstood the test of time — eight years and going strong. "It gets great media coverage. Since 9/11 it has more media coverage," Ewen said. "Media personnel have run the course and get back and say it's not an easy course."

In exchange for help from the Army, the fair gives them a 10-by-10-foot recruitment booth. — *Natasha Emmons*  
*Katie Phillips, (858) 755-1161; Tom Mitchell, (530) 273-6217; Greg Kinder, (916) 263-3033; Margie Ewen, (916) 263-2975*

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## CONCESSSIONS

***Front, left to right, Chad Weiner, Steve Gregosky, Bill Caruso, and, standing, Rick Abramson and Chris Bigelow***



### MODERN DISPLAYS & NEW TECHNOLOGY BOOST FOOD SALES

TAMPA, Fla. — A panel of concessions industry consultants and operators provided their best tips for increasing the bottom line to attendees at IAAM's 4th Annual International Stadium Management Conference here Jan. 12-14.

A cluttered counter decreases sales, according to Bill Caruso, president of William Caruso and Associates. "They're standing

there saying, 'What do I do? What do I buy?'" he commented.

It's important to keep lines moving, and giving patrons a choice of registers from a queue seems to work best. "Research has shown you're only as effective as the slowest person in line," he said. "People will not take advantage of [a slow patron], getting in front of another person."

But displaying fresh product in an attractive manner can increase sales, he noted. For example, one restaurant increased sales 30 to 35 percent after adding a 35-foot high rotisserie. "Quality, good lighting and facades — it doesn't cost you that much."

Stainless steel counter costs \$250 per foot, while lighting costs \$100-\$150 per foot, he said. "You need eight feet rather than four or five feet to display product," he said. "It's the old boardwalk effect — the product right in front of you. ...I spend the extra money

to put the merchandise up front. If you don't have it and other people do, business is going to go to competitors."

Semi-mobile units designed in modules are a trend, but they have motifs, he said.

Chris Bigelow, president of the Bigelow Companies, agreed. "We like to carry it up a little. Flash does get cash," he said. "People do use their eyes. They look up at the board, then down at the food — the sights and smells."

He said there is a constant battle between concessionaires and architects who want a consistent look in the concourse and wince at the idea of a garish Pizza Hut sign, especially if the franchise is not a sponsor. But the customer relationships and net sales will make up for any loss of sponsor dollars, he reasoned.

Rick Abramson, president of Delaware North Companies Sportservice, said it is important to allow concessionaires this freedom. "The concessionaire has to provide a revenue stream for you and they're going to be there a long time," he said.

Architects also hate portable carts because they impair sightlines from the concourse "but by the third game, it's lined with carts," Abramson said. They average \$1,000 in sales per game, he said. "The payback is pretty quick."

Portables can cost around \$15,000 and semi-portables can cost \$30,000-\$35,000.

Steve Gregosky, vice president of Business Development for Ovations Food Service, said one way to garner sponsorship through food service is a "bounce-back" coupon. "Work out a promotion where the customer comes in and gets a ticket that can be taken back to their neighborhood for the benefit of another transaction at the street level."

The coupons can be imprinted on souvenir cups, allowing patrons to take the cup to the sponsor, for example a 7-Eleven store, and receive a free refill all season.

One important way to effect the bottom line immediately is to add credit card capability. "As the audience gets younger, the use of credit cards goes up dramatically," he said. Venues that don't take cards have long lines at ATMs, which cause patrons to miss the entertainment. The capability should be available in portables, also, he said.

Credit card sales currently make up 10 percent of sales at fast food restaurants, and that percentage increases every year, Gregosky said.

A fee of 3 percent goes to the credit card companies, but "that's the cost of doing business," Gregosky said.

Chad Weiner, sales associate for Venue1, noted that credit card acceptance increases sales by 25 to 30 percent or more, "so you're still making out at the end of the day."

Weiner is also a believer in the MasterCard PayPass program, which allows cards to be waved in front of readers. "It's going to go up more and more every year," he said. "So you're making a purchase that will pay you back after four or five years."

He suggested that credit card companies may even pay to install the readers. "Visa, MasterCard, American Express have a lot of sponsorship opportunities. They're looking for a way to dump money."

Weiner also touted the use of gift cards because 8 percent of each gift card will go

unspent by the end of the season. "It's free money."

An audience member also pointed out that people who use all of the money on their gift card will inevitably go over the value and end up spending their own money on something they would not have purchased otherwise.

Abramson said that casinos are leading the way in loyalty card programs, which capture data on individual patrons. "That information is so valuable. They're light years ahead of everyone else," he said. "It's going to be a cashless society."

Major League Baseball's Philadelphia Phillies are the only sports and entertainment entity using prepay loyalty cards effectively so far, Bigelow said.

Abramson said Sportservice has added all-inclusive food packages, which bumps the ticket price up by \$20. That doesn't include alcohol, however. All-you-can-drink deals are likely to be controversial and even illegal in some states, the panelists warned.

Weiner also suggested that university venues accept student food cards. "You will see a tremendous, I'd say even better than 25 percent, bump if you take that student ID card." — Natasha Emmons

*Interviewed for this story: Bill Caruso, (303) 649-1600; Chris Bigelow, (816) 483-5553; Rick Abramson, (716) 858-5011; Steve Gregosky, (813) 948-6900; Chad Weiner, (954) 797-6131*

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## Coming Soon - Our Spotlight on University Venues!

In our **February issue**, we spotlight the ever-challenging world of university venues, from programming to fan behavior, and the wide range of needs in operating a campus facility.

This is also our annual focus on performing arts centers, which are constantly seeking new sources of revenue. We'll update you on that search and on new construction.

Don't miss your chance to advertise in this issue!

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## SHORT TAKES

### MARCHETTO JOINS OVATIONS FOOD SERVICES

Tom Marchetto has joined Ovation Food Services, a subsidiary of Comcast-Spectacor, as its new senior vice president, Strategic Markets. He will report directly to Ovation Food Services President Ken Young. Prior to joining Ovation Food Services, Marchetto spent 30 years with Aramark. When he left that company, he was president of Convention & Tourism Services. After retiring from Aramark, Marchetto started a new consultant firm, Brandywine Hospitality Group LLC, Chadds Ford, Pa. Marchetto received a Bachelor's degree in Food Services and Housing Administration from the Pennsylvania State University and continued his education and training through various leadership programs, including the University of Florida. He and his wife, Lois, have two grown daughters, Vanessa and Victoria, and reside in West Chester, Pa.

*Contact: Ike Richman, (215) 389-9552*

### **GESSNER DEPARTS WESTWORLD; COLLIER NAMED INTERIM**

Brad Gessner resigned as general manager of WestWorld, Scottsdale, Ariz., Jan. 10. Jay Collier, formerly events director there, has been named interim general manager. WestWorld is currently hosting the Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Auction, Jan. 14-22, which historically draws 150,000-200,000 attendance. Collier joined the WestWorld staff in September of 2004. Prior to that, he was executive director of the Douglas County Fairgrounds Complex, Roseburg, Ore., and before that event director at Freeman Coliseum, San Antonio, and event director, Augusta (Maine) Civic Center. Gessner was with the San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif., prior to moving to Arizona in 2001. According to the local newspaper, he's expressed interest in returning to the Coast.

*Contact: Jay Collier, (480) 312-6825*

### **NAMING RIGHTS TO PALACE ARENA CLUB SOLD**

Officials from Palace Sports & Entertainment and the Detroit Pistons announced they have signed an agreement with ERSA Group, a Plymouth, Mich.-based IT design and implementation company, that gives ERSA the corporate naming rights for the 17,000-square-foot club that will be located in The Palace of Auburn Hills' new North Atrium addition. The ERSA name will be used on directional signage in The Palace, all paper products used in the club and staff will be dressed in ERSA Club-specific uniforms. The new North Atrium addition is scheduled for completion near the end of April 2006.

*Contact: The Palace, (248) 337-0100*

### **FULLERTON, CALIF., PAC OPENS**

Cal State Fullerton's long-delayed \$48.5-million, 109,000-square-foot performing arts facility opened this past weekend. The campus-based facility, designed by Pfeiffer Partners, opened with a dedication ceremony Friday morning, a gala dinner and concert Saturday, and various dance and theater events Sunday. The center's 1,200 seats are broken up between the 800-seat Vaughncille Joseph Meng Concert Hall, the 250-seat thrust-stage Young Theatre, the 150-seat black-box Hallberg Theatre and the 50-seat McGarvey Family Dance Studio. There are also rehearsal spaces, dressing rooms, recording and dance studios, costume and scene shops, and faculty offices and classrooms.

*Contact: (714) 278-2011*

### **BANKATLANTIC CENTER DRAWS 54,000 IN FIVE DAYS TO FIVE EVENTS**

Billy Joel's second show and home contests by both the Florida Panthers and the Florida Pit Bulls highlighted five days full of events at the BankAtlantic Center, Sunrise, Fla. The Florida Panthers drew over 33,000 fans to two home stands Jan. 12 and 14. On Jan. 13, Linda Ronstadt took the stage at the intimate Sinatra Theatre presented by BankAtlantic, an event attended by 2,500. Joel's encore performance drew 17,948 fans Jan. 15. Tim Hardaway and his ABA Florida Pit Bulls derailed the undefeated Indiana Alley Cats by the score of 110-100 during a special Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Jan. 16) matinee at the BankAtlantic Center. Over 1,300 rabid Pit Bulls fans came out to cheer on the home team. The Florida Panthers 2005-06 season is presented by ADT Security Services Inc. Upcoming Panthers home games include the Carolina Hurricanes (Jan. 25) and the New Jersey Devils (Jan. 27). January is Coca-Cola Kids Month for Panthers home games at the BankAtlantic Center. Children 12 and under get in free with a paid adult ticket and are invited to a special postgame autograph session with select Panthers players. Other upcoming events include Aerosmith with special guest Lenny Kravitz (Jan. 19), The "World Famous" Lipizzaner Stallions (Jan. 21), Juanes (Jan. 28), Bon Jovi (Feb. 10) and the Rolling Stones (March 12). Upcoming acts at The Sinatra Theatre presented by BankAtlantic include Johnny Mathis (Jan. 22), Patti LaBelle (Jan. 26), Don Rickles and Tony Orlando (Feb. 4), Steve Lawrence & Eydie Gorme (Feb. 14), Donna Summer (Feb. 18), Engelbert Humperdinck (Feb. 21), Lily

Tomlin (March 3), Paul Anka (March 18), Natalie Cole (March 25) and Frank Sinatra Jr. (May 6). Upcoming Florida Pit Bulls home games include the San Jose Sky Rockets (Jan. 23 and Jan. 24).

Contact: *Justin Copertino, (954) 835-7712*

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