





# Afraid of the Dark

Scanlon continues to keep the lights burning at Portland's Rose Garden

BY LINDA DECKARD

**M**ike Scanlon not only turned a bankrupt Rose Garden into a humming event venue in 2005, he has persevered into 2006, making him the first repeat Hall of Headlines winner for *Venues Today*.

The recipient of the HOH Award in the Bookings category for the second year in a row, Scanlon, general manager of the Rose Quarter for Global Spectrum, has booked 50 concerts in 2006 at the 20,000-seat Rose Garden and 12,888-seat Portland Coliseum, up from 44 last year and 29 the year before Global Spectrum took over. "We generate over \$40 million in ticket sales, Scanlon said.

More importantly, with the help of a good, young Portland Trail Blazers National Basketball Association team, he has lured the Portland populace back to the venue.

It's a tale the industry loves. Russ Simons, principal, HOK Sport, summed up his vote for Scanlon thus: "As a former Major Arena Manager, who has had the full spectrum of positive and challenging experiences, I have a soft spot for a facility manager who despite the variety of outside pressures (NBA team, high profile owner, renovation, etc.) continues to stay focused, work hard and drive the facility and staff to success."

"He's afraid of the dark," said Peter Luukko, chairman of Comcast-Spectacor, which owns Global Spectrum. It's a trait he seeks in venue managers, and Scanlon excels. "He's been able to establish a great marketing department to support the shows and then he's been very creative in his field. He sticks his neck out there and attracts shows to the area."

Since Scanlon and his team took over at midnight Jan. 1, 2005, and through 2006, they have built a database from scratch, re-launched a Web site, energized a staff that had been through massive layoffs during the bankruptcy proceedings, and built up a sales and marketing staff that is getting respect. Scanlon leads a team of 100 fulltime staffers in Portland.



Top: Chris Oxley, executive director of Event Sales & Management; Mike Scanlon, general manager; and Howard Zuckerman, director of Event Sales & Management; bottom, the Dixie Chicks rock the Rose Garden Nov. 9, 2006.

"Now we have five people on our marketing and PR staff," Scanlon said. "We have two people just dedicated to growing our database. We have three people in the group sales department. Now we can be a full service building."

The key was educating the promoters that the Rose Quarter staff could help sell tickets. "Our database is 200,000 names now, in a year and half," Scanlon said.

Flexibility is also essential. In today's entertainment market, it's not about rent and expenses for venue managers and Scanlon is very savvy to that fact. "Everyone has to have some skin in the game," he said.

Relationships count bigtime and Scanlon and his team have made trips to see promoters and booking agents. And he benefits from Global Spectrum's corporate clout and ongoing ties. Rose Garden staffers Howard Zuckerman and Chris Oxley get a lot of credit for booking the building, both having years of experience in the business, Scanlon added.

Special events have helped eliminate the dark days as well. "We have just put in another bid for the US Figure Skating to host it in 2009," Scanlon said.

National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball will play its first and second round in Portland in '09, their first time in the state since the Sixties because of a just-abolished state-sponsored lottery that allowed wagers on National Football League games. "And we have a bid in for the 2007 Olympic box-offs, the final competitive step for the Olympic team."

"We're out there. I'm enjoying myself," Scanlon declared. "We worked with [Blazers VP] J. Isaac, but anytime the building and team are owned by the same entity for 10 years, and then you carve it up, there will always be issues over ownership and territory. It's been two years and we haven't had to arbitrate one issue. Everything has been worked out," Scanlon said.

**BOOKINGS**