

Kristin Sarbeck

Subject: FW: March 8, 2006 Newsletter



VENUEStoday

The news behind the headlines

Dear Kristin,

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"People are intrigued because they are making an assumption that this is not a good time to do this, but at a time when our two worlds are in collision, this is the only art that bridges the cultures." — Miles Copeland, producer of *Bellydance Superstars*, on connection to the Middle East

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Pyramid Arena to House Giant Themed Bass Pro Shop
 - U.K. Watchdog Groups Call for Outlaw of Ticket Scalping
 - Hot Tickets: Bon Jovi Gives Shot to the Charts
 - Copeland's Bellydancers Shimmy Their Way to Touring Stardom
 - Live Nation & Mattel Breathe Life Into Barbie Doll For Tour
 - Apassionata Show Gallops Across Europe
 - Tabloid Darling's Bobblehead Draws Big Publicity to ECHL Team
 - Ovarions Gears Up for Nationals Spring Training
 - Short Takes
 - Help Wanted
-

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VENUE NEWS

Pyramid Arena, Memphis



PYRAMID ARENA TO HOUSE GIANT THEMED BASS PRO SHOP

The iconic, but troubled Memphis Pyramid Arena, which lost the University of Memphis and National Basketball Association's Grizzlies teams to the new \$250 million FedExForum at the start of the 2004 season, will become home to a new \$75 million Bass Pro Shop in 2008.

The fate of the city-owned, 22,500-seat, 32-story, stainless steel imitation of an Egyptian pyramid which opened in 1991 has never really been entirely clear. Seven years ago there was a move to make it the home and museum for the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. "We tried to get the Grammys to move to Memphis for the Pyramid, but it never materialized," said Scott Ledbetter, a local businessman who headed up the Pyramid Adoptive Reuse Committee.

The committee spent \$1 million to find out it would cost another \$140 million for the city and county to revamp the building to meet the needs of the Academy, which was also considering Atlanta, New Orleans and Chicago.

"We remained open but we have been hosting events like the indoor airplanes convention and the American Cancer Society. We were just not having the Rolling Stones anymore," said Terri Knight, office manager and booking coordinator for the Pyramid.

Ledbetter's 16-member committee started looking for other uses for the facility. A consultant was hired to do a cost analysis of what might be of most benefit to the community. There was no shortage of proposals. Some local businessmen wanted to start a theme park with thrill rides and an Egyptian-African motif. There was also a proposal to have the venue converted to offices with a small federal prison. There was also a suggestion to build an aquarium.

None of the proposals made economic sense, according to Ledbetter. "If we built an office, it would just move existing offices somewhere else," he said. The aquarium would cost \$250 million and would not draw enough people to justify the expense.

The consultant, RKG Associates, headed up by Richard Gsottschneider, came up with the idea for a destination lifestyle retailer. "We concluded a destination lifestyle retailer would bring in far more economic dollars to the community than other alternatives," said Ledbetter.

Two sporting goods store giants were considered: Bass and Cabela's. There's nothing wrong with Cabela's, Ledbetter said, but they tend to just build big boxes. Its stores are mostly all alike. "Bass, when it locates in a community, tries to draw from the region and tap into its cultural and natural history and designs all of its theming to showcase

that region," Ledbetter said.

A Bass store also typically is a major tourist draw, which is an emphasis in economic planning for Memphis, where the Elvis Presley shrine draws perhaps 900,000 visitors a year. "Their stores typically draw two to four million people annually with 60 percent coming more than 100 miles away," Ledbetter said. "Most people spend four to eight hours when they come to visit Bass, so some people actually plan their vacations around a trip there."

The Bass store is also expected to hire up to 400 people.

The city of Memphis is not spending any money to attract Bass, which will also apply for federal New Market Tax Credits which are possible in part because of the Pyramid's location. "The amount will depend on how much they spend developing the project, but it's our guess they're going to get \$30 [million] to \$40 million of cash equity," Ledbetter said.

The Pyramid has a debt of \$22.8 million but that is also being taken care of. "The rent that will be paid by Bass will be enough to continue to service and retire that debt. They're paying 2 percent of gross sales, not to ever be less than \$1 million a year," Ledbetter said. He added that estimates are the sports giant will pay \$2 [million] to \$3 million a year in rent.

A former manager at the Pyramid, Greg Lowry, who is now with the Colorado Convention Center, Denver, called the move "exciting for the city of Memphis, who now have a way to make use of that facility.

"I remember it was a big piece of the puzzle when Memphis got an NBA team. There were all kinds of events there — Billy Joel, Mike Tyson's big fight with the highest rating ever for pay-for-view," he said.

The deal with Bass may seem unusual but a spokesman for the Springfield, Mo.-based company said they have a reputation for leasing unusual properties and remodeling them to fit into the surrounding areas. Bass stores often bring in the outdoors through wildlife dioramas, murals, climbing walls, archery ranges and NASCAR features.

Preliminary concepts for the 360,000-square-foot Memphis arena involve a Bass Pro Shop retail store, restaurant, aquarium, waterfall and other outdoor features. The prospect of a hotel and museum was also raised. Plans for the Pyramid call for a climbing wall and a place to test-drive boats. One of the walkways leading into the Pyramid will be covered by a giant canopy that will look like a fish. Outside, plans are for a marina on the banks of the Mississippi.

Bass officials said tentative plans include the possibility of reactivating the observation tower at the top of the Pyramid and using the existing center-hung LED scoreboard, which measures 12-by-10 feet on each four sides, to show NASCAR television coverage and outdoor videos. There's also an existing education/performance center that could be used for community events and concerts.

"This project will be unlike anything we have ever done," said Bass Pro Shops President Jim Hagale, in a press release. "It is a tremendously exciting opportunity for our company and allows us to feature unique components not seen in any of our other stores while at the same time paying tribute to the wonderful outdoor heritage of this region." — David Wilkening

Interviewed for this story: Terri Knight, (901) 521-9675/ Scott Ledbetter, (901) 260-1170; Bass Pro Shops, (417) 873-5618

U.K. WATCHDOG GROUPS CALL FOR OUTLAW OF TICKET SCALPING

Major promoters of entertainment and sport events in the United Kingdom have called for ticket touting (scalping) to be made illegal, as a result of a growing problem with tickets being resold on the Internet at extortionate prices, including on the auction site eBay.

The issue has been highlighted several times by the BBC Watchdog consumer television program, which last October saw Cliff Richards appear on the show saying that he was outraged that scalpers were taking advantage of his fans by selling \$78.12 (U.S.) tickets for his tour for nearly \$694.36, even before they had officially gone on sale.

The program also received multiple complaints from viewers who had ordered front-row tickets to a variety of concerts at highly inflated prices, only to never receive their tickets.

As a result of a subsequent investigation by the Department of Trade and Industry, the company involved, Get Me Tickets, was forced out of business last month.

Although industry figures have discussed their general concerns about ticket scalping with culture secretary Tessa Jowell, the British government does not look likely to create any new laws, and instead wants the promoters and venues to deal with the problem themselves.

So far various initiatives have sprung up across the country. At the Metro Radio Arena in Newcastle, two new schemes have been adopted on the initiative of the arena's ticketing agency, Ticketmaster. One is a hi-tech device, AccessManager, that scans the barcode of all tickets of all visitors to the arena. This helps to crack down on duplicate tickets, as each ticket has its own individual electronic number. This also means that the arena can track tickets from point of sale to entry, and even void tickets if they are known to be handled by scalpers.

The system had previously been tried at the Manchester Evening News Arena, the largest indoor concert venue in Europe, which became the first U.K. arena to install the system in October 2004.

The other initiative is a ticketing system called TicketFast, whereby people buying tickets online are sent a unique PDF to print at home, which then becomes their ticket. It is hoped that it will prevent scalping.

"Very few people would buy a piece of A4 paper printed at home. It's also a much more convenient system for customers, as they receive their tickets within minutes of buying them," said Paul Tappenden, marketing director of the arena. "We have had a tremendous response and a great take-up for the first event we offered TicketFast, a concert by Katie Melua. Thirty-five percent of customers chose this system."

Tappenden sees this as a positive solution to a growing problem: "There are many more arenas than there were 10 to 15 years ago, and there are more bands touring so there are more events where there are rich pickings to be made for ticket touts on reselling tickets."

At his venue, the same faces were appearing at the front of the box office queue for a lot of big concerts. "The box office staff even started to recognize some of them," Tappenden said. Following research on eBay, the venue found that tickets for some events were selling for astronomical sums, including \$1,039.85 for two front-row tickets for the reunion of boy band Take That. In some cases the arena actually managed to

trace the people concerned on eBay and wrote to them advising them that their tickets would be made void.

Action to protect customers against ticket scalpers is being taken across the entertainment and sports industry. One of the major U.K. concert promoters, the Mean Fiddler Group, has included advice on its Web site about official ticket agencies that customers are safe to use and details of how to make an official complaint to the police and Trading Standards Authority for anyone who suspects that they have been a victim of fraud.

Reputable companies should also be registered with trade organization The Society of Ticket Agents & Retailers, which has a code of practice for members.

British consumers are also starting to take action themselves. A guy called Mike has for example recently launched an online petition called Stop The Ticket Touts (www.stopthetickettouts.co.uk), which so far has been signed by 1,739 people. In a statement on the site he says: "The first place I will be sending it to will be the Internet giant eBay. I feel it is because of eBay that ticket touting (or known online as cyber-scalping) is growing at a large rate. eBay has created a marketplace and a portal which encourages the overpricing of tickets and protects the identity of the sellers. After eBay changes its policies, smaller other Web sites will soon have to follow."

Although reselling concert tickets is not illegal in the United Kingdom, it contravenes the terms and conditions of sale, printed on the back of the tickets. Scalping is currently only illegal when it comes to tickets for soccer games, a law which was introduced to prevent known hooligans from gaining entry to stadiums. — Eva Johansson

Interviewed for this story: Paul Tappenden, 0191 2606024

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Request for Proposal Naming Rights Consulting Services

The Cumberland County Civic Center Board of Trustees is seeking sealed proposals from professional marketing, advertising, and sales organizations for the provision of naming rights marketing and sales services for the existing multi-purpose facility located in Portland, Maine. A complete copy of the RFP is

available from the Cumberland County Civic Center, One Civic Center Sq., Portland, ME 04101 or by calling (207) 775-3481. All proposals must be received by noon on April 14, 2006. The Civic Center reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and at their discretion, waive all formalities. Successful bidder will be expected to execute a contract and that is satisfactory to the Civic Center's Board of Trustees.

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BOOKINGS



HOT tickets

BON JOVI GIVES SHOT TO THE CHARTS

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 Feb. 7, 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:* \$2,352,440; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **St Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 31,425; *Ticket Range:* \$89.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Feb. 17-18; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,845,295; *Event:* Ricky Martin; *Venue:* **Coliseo De Puerto Rico, San Juan**; *Attendance:* 28,209; *Ticket Range:* \$175-\$30; *Promoter:* Tony Mojena Entertainment; *Dates:* Feb. 18-19; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,142,460; *Event:* 130th Annual Westminster Kennel Club Show; *Venue:* **Madison Square Garden Arena, New York**; *Attendance:* 32,134; *Ticket Range:* \$90.50-\$25.50; *Promoter:* Westminster Kennel Club; *Dates:* Feb. 13-14; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,123,956; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **BankAtlantic Center, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 14,895; *Ticket Range:* \$89.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Feb. 10; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$1,102,714; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Gaylord Entertainment Center, Nashville**; *Attendance:* 14,980; *Ticket Range:* \$85-\$47; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Feb. 14; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001 - 15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$979,118; *Event:* Aerosmith; *Venue:* **ipayOne Center at the Sports Arena, San Diego**; *Attendance:* 10,531; *Ticket Range:* \$128-\$58; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Feb. 10; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$935,394; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Gwinnett Arena, Duluth, Ga.**; *Attendance:* 10,852; *Ticket Range:* \$89.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Feb. 15; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$687,197; *Event:* WWE Smackdown; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 9,435; *Ticket Range:* \$258.64-\$29.55; *Promoter:* WWE; *Dates:* March 5; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$649,845; *Event:* John Farnum and Stevie Nicks; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 5,873; *Ticket Range:* \$125.51-\$73.09; *Promoter:* Andrew McManus; *Dates:* Feb. 20; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$622,963; *Event:* George Strait; *Venue:* **Mark Of The Quad Cities, Moline, Ill.**; *Attendance:* 11,041; *Ticket Range:* \$59.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, The Messina Group; *Dates:* March 3; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$756,600; *Event:* Il Divo; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 11,896; *Ticket Range:* \$79.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-house; *Dates:* Feb. 10-11; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$547,670; *Event:* Billy Connolly; *Venue:* **Newcastle (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 9,005; *Ticket Range:* \$60.81; *Promoter:* Duet Entertainment; *Dates:* Feb. 26-27; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$343,223; *Event:* Martina McBride; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 5,947; *Ticket Range:* \$75.50-\$28; *Promoter:* Radio City Entertainment; *Dates:* Feb. 18; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$335,085; *Event:* Il Divo; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 5,921; *Ticket Range:* \$65-\$40; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* Feb. 25; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$334,695; *Event:* Santana; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 5,621; *Ticket Range:* \$89.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* March 2; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$8,679,025; *Event:* Elton John; *Venue:* **The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 49,043; *Ticket Range:* \$250-\$100; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, In-house; *Dates:* Jan. 31-Feb. 19 *No. of Shows:* 13

2) *Gross Sales:* \$2,100,000; *Event:* Celine Dion, Elton John, Jerry Seinfeld; *Venue:* **The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 4,118; *Ticket Range:* \$1,000-\$100; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, In-house; *Dates:* Feb. 20; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$966,436; *Event:* Mamma Mia; *Venue:* **The Pasadena (Calif.) Civic Auditorium**; *Attendance:* 16,652; *Ticket Range:* \$67-\$22; *Promoter:* Theater League, Inc.; *Dates:* Feb. 8-12; *No. of Shows:* 7

4) *Gross Sales:* \$512,348; *Event:* Madame Butterfly; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 14,457; *Ticket Range:* \$76-\$10; *Promoter:* Atlanta Ballet; *Dates:* Feb. 9-19; *No. of Shows:* 11

5) *Gross Sales:* \$382,538; *Event:* Tuesdays with Morrie; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 14,300; *Ticket Range:* \$36-\$14; *Promoter:* Broadway in Atlanta; *Dates:* Feb. 21-26; *No. of Shows:* 8

Compiled by Kristin Sarbeck, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

Scene from Bellydance Superstars



COPELAND'S BELLYDANCERS SHIMMY THEIR WAY TO TOURING STARDOM

Miles Copeland knows a good thing when he sees it. Whether it's his early entry into the mid-

1970s punk scene in England, his longtime management of singer Sting's career, or his latest venture, the traveling dance troupe the Bellydance Superstars, scheduled to appear next at the Jane Mallett Theater in Toronto tonight (March 8).

While the latter might seem like a longshot, Copeland has managed to develop his scrappy group of dancers practicing the ancient Middle Eastern art into a legitimate touring force in the United States and Europe over the past two years. And with word-of-mouth growing, he's steadily booked them into increasingly larger venues that some of his old rock bands would give up their favorite guitar to play in.

They play the Royal Oak Music Theater in Detroit March 9 and have a packed schedule of performances and workshops through a June 18 performance at Olympia in Dublin, Ireland.

"The idea, really, is not that strange if you think of the template of 'Riverdance,'" said Copeland. "Look at the essence of 'Riverdance': obscure music and obscure dance put together to make a commercial show and phenomenon. One does not hear Irish music on the top of the charts, but we all like it. You don't hear Arab music on the top of the charts, but when you hear it, you like it and when you're exposed to the music, it works. If the public is loving it and tapping their foot up and down, the music works and it doesn't matter what the lyrics are saying."

After experiencing the cross-over success of Sting's 1999 hit "Desert Rose," which featured Arab singer Cheb Mami, Copeland was convinced of the potential for American audiences to embrace Arab music and culture, even, especially, in light of the state-of-the-war-in-Iraq world. In 2003, he put together the Superstars and secured them a booking on that year's Lollapalooza tour. After seeding the market with high-quality bellydance DVDs and a movie called "American Bellydancer," Copeland booked a 58-city tour of North America in late 2003 and early 2004, followed by a European tour.

By the time Copeland was plotting out the Superstars' 2005 tour, word had spread about their potential to draw. "I said, 'My god, bellydancing is beautiful girls dancing sensually, which you've seen in a restaurant, but not on a big stage in the context of a show,'" said Copeland. "Plus, there's a huge movement in America of women who have adopted it as a means of self-expression and exercise."

Aside from the interest among women of all ages, Copeland said the tour has also drawn teenagers, who are inspired for the same reason a previous generation was by rock and roll: easy entry. Just like any teenager in the 1960s seeing Jimi Hendrix could buy a guitar and start a band, any 15-year-old who sees the Superstars can buy a bellydance instructional tape and try it themselves and get together with friends and do it.

"It's also helpful that the Middle East is so much in the news and such a dominant factor in our foreseeable future," admitted Copeland. "People are intrigued because they are making an assumption that this is not a good time to do this, but at a time when our two worlds are in collision, this is the only art that bridges the cultures."

Among the other factors working in the Superstars' favor: a low average ticket price (\$32 in advance, \$38 at the door, vs. the \$60-\$100 average for competing shows), a low overhead and minimal production/set-up needs. The major cost is the salaries of the 14 dancers (who save by doubling up in hotel rooms), as well as that of the drummer and a four-man crew. Copeland said the break-even just for the show is \$30,000-\$35,000 a week. "That's lower than most dance shows and most of the money goes to the dancers, who are well paid in terms of the dance community," he said.

The staging requirements are also lean, with a 20-by-30-foot space preferred, as well as room for a 30-by-40-foot backdrop for projections. Given the minimal requirements, the crew can set up the three microphones for the drummer and sound check them in five minutes or less. The full set-up takes a few hours and there is a two-hour tech rehearsal at every venue to allow the dancers to get a feel for the stage.

Jim Farley has been presenting shows at the Marin Center in San Rafael, Calif., for 20 years and said he's never seen anything like the Bellydance Superstars. "It's definitely the superstars of bellydancing," said Farley, who hosted the show on Feb. 3. "It's theatrical, spectacular. The audience enthusiasm is akin to a rock concert. We present in the San Francisco Bay Area, so we have a very eclectic lineup of performances from around the world, but as soon as we heard about the tour, we signed up right away without even seeing it."

Farley said he suspected the show would play well at the Marin Center and it drew better than he expected, nearly selling out the 2,000-seat theater. In fact, the Center has already submitted a bid to have the Superstars come back in March of 2007. "I actually learned a lot about the different styles and culture and music from the show, which I think has a really bright future. I think he's onto something," Farley said. "I've been doing this for a long time and I'm always looking for the next trend and what was interesting was that the audience was all ages, all cultures, men and women, lots of young people and they all really connected with the artists."

In addition to the surprisingly strong turn out — which has ranged from near sell-outs at 2,000-seat performing arts centers to multiple night sell-outs in 400- to 500-seat rooms since the tour kicked off in late January — Copeland said solid merchandising revenue has helped keep ticket prices low and salaries paid. "This community buys programs, DVDs, CDs, hip scarves, everything," he said. "We do better on a per head basis than any dance group in the world. I'd say a minimum of \$10 a head and we've had shows where one woman spent \$900."

While the audience for the hour-and-45-minute show tends to be 70 percent female, mostly over 20 and averaging 35, Copeland said he's seeing more husbands, young daughters and families attending. "We're the only troupe like this in the world and we're proving that this art form has legs," he said. — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Miles Copeland (323) 512-4095; Jim Farley (415) 499-6400

Barbie actress Erin Elizabeth Coors with a costume from Fairytopia



LIVE NATION & MATTEL BREATHE LIVE INTO BARBIE DOLL FOR TOUR

Both Live Nation and Mattel Inc. are taking credit for the idea to bring Barbie dolls to life for the first time in the toy's storied 47-year history. "Barbie Live in Fairytopia" takes flight April 1–2 at The Palace in Columbus, Ohio, making an East-to-West zigzag

across the nation through an Aug. 30–Sept. 3 run at the Community Center Theater in Sacramento, Calif.

“We went and did joint research together — two of us from Mattel and two from Clear Channel [now Live Nation],” conceded Barry Waldo, executive director of the Entertainment Division of Mattel.

Barbie went from a static doll whose adventures depended entirely on the imaginations of little girls to a CGI animated DVD release in 2001 with *The Nutcracker*. Now there are five DVDs, including one depicting the Fairytopia world, released in 2005, Waldo said.

As for taking the world live, “We came up with the idea through consumer research. We were talking to moms and they were talking about how they would like to see these worlds come to life. Fairytopia, the world of fairies, was the one that really excited them because of the element of flying, which is very exciting,” Waldo said. “They said, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if we could find other ways to experience these stories,’ and they were saying they had seen other shows [for children] and they thought this would be a great idea their daughters would love.”

The show is designed to appeal to mothers as well as daughters, Waldo said. “In the research we did we were surprised how much moms wanted to come see the show because we kind of forgot that they grew up with Barbie,” Waldo said. “That’s one reason we added the all-original musical score [by Susan DiLallo and Robbie Roth], to make sure moms are as entertained as the girls are. Even with the costumes, how elaborate they are.”

There are over 100 pounds of glitter in the costumes, designed by Tony-nominated costume designer Gregg Barnes. His tour credits include the National Tour of *South Pacific*, *Anastasia on Ice*, *Rugrats — A Live Adventure*, *Blue’s Clues Live*, *Scooby-Doo in Stageflight! — Live On Stage*, and *Dora The Explorer Live*.

The show is directed by Broadway veteran Eric Schaeffer. The scenic designer is James Kronzer, whose touring credits include *Seussical The Musical*; *I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change*; and *Showboat*. The lighting designer is Chris Lee, the sound designer is Kai Harada, and the choreographer is Christopher D’Amboise.

This show is designed to tour for about two years, heading overseas after the U.S. leg, then, if all goes well, a new production based on next week’s DVD release depicting a new undersea world — *Mermaidia* — will be produced, according to Waldo.

Barbie is positioned as an actress playing these roles, Waldo said. “In Fairytopia, she’s playing Elina, which is a garden fairy, for us. [The DVDs] help drive strong concepts that could give us longevity.”

Fairytopia has a cast of 10 and a total crew of about 30 traveling in three trucks, plus merchandise trucks, according to Live Nation’s Executive Producer Stacey Burns. Merch is being handled by Live Nation, with glittery fairy wings for little girls expected to be the biggest seller, she said. There will also be plush, T-shirts, charm bracelets and light-up toys. Mattel is producing a limited edition doll to coincide with the show, also.

The show is expected to be an eight-hour load-in and four-hour load-out, Burns said. There are no special technical requirements for the flying performers; Live Nation will bring the special tracks and harnesses on the trucks, she said.

“I think the show could go to arenas, but I think the idea of seeing a show in a theater

and the whole theatrical tour is something we decided was for this show at this time," Burns said. "It's almost like a Broadway-type show, it's a musical, so I think a theater setting is appropriate."

The deals are different at each theater, with some co-promotes, Burns said. Ticket prices vary in each market, but average \$22.

Promotions will be along the lines of events with radio stations and other media partners where kids can come dressed as their favorite fairies or butterflies, Burns said. They will vary market-to-market. Barbie fan clubs with older collectors may also be a target in some markets, although the show is geared to the under-10 set and their mothers.

Obvious sponsorship, with corporate logos, will probably not come into play on the tour, Waldo said. "We're sensitive to that."

Actress Erin Elizabeth Coors was chosen for the lead role after a casting search headed up by the show's director, Live Nation and Mattel.

"It's new and exciting and we're hoping that's something that consumers will find appealing. It's different from other shows seen around the past few years," Burns said. — Natasha Emmons

Interviewed for this story: Barry Waldo, (310) 252-6219; Tracey Burns, (917) 421-5267

Apassionata Ovations Tour



APASSIONATA SHOW GALLOPS ACROSS EUROPE

The horse and riding entertainment event Apassionata is back on the road in the United Kingdom and Ireland with a new programme — Ovations Tour — this winter and spring. The opening performance was held at the NEC Arena in Birmingham Feb. 25–26.

It attracted a total audience of 9,600 over three performances, with the two Saturday performances the biggest sellers with 4,000 and 3,700 people respectively. The total capacity

per show was 6,000. "The key thing with equestrian events is to hold them at the right time of year, when there are not too many competing outdoor equestrian events," said NEC Arena Sales and Planning Manager Guy Dunstan.

Last season, the equestrian tour attracted more than 500,000 visitors across Europe. The new production features 48 horses, Icelandic opera singer Arndis Halla, dancers from Russia and France, live music and special effects. Marketed as "the greatest horse spectacular in the world" the show is a combination of performing arts, skilled riders

and unique breeds of horses from all over the world.

"We're positioning it as family entertainment, it is perfect for young girls who are into horses, but we're also targeting parents and grandparents, as this event is perfect to bring their children and grandchildren to," said Peter Massine, general manager of Equiarte, the promoter and producer of the show, based in Berlin. Ads are going in newspapers, equestrian magazines, local television and radio, and direct mail.

The show's director is Lorca Massine, who has directed more than 50 ballet and musical productions in venues such as the Metropolitan Opera House in New York and the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden in London.

Ovations opened in Germany at Jahnsport Forum, Neubrandenburg, at the end of 2005, and has played Sportarena, Budapest; Saska Arena Prague; Rai Amsterdam; Forum Copenhagen plus and Hartwell Arena, Helsinki, among others.

The Sunday in Birmingham was added as an extra date, with tickets going on sale only four weeks before the event, which resulted in fewer sales.

Tickets run about \$31.26-\$50.37 (U.S.). There are some special ticket offers available such as half-price for children under 14, and \$12.15 off top price tickets over Easter through leaflets distributed via direct mail. The company has its own mailing list, but also buys mailing lists from other companies for their marketing campaigns.

The NEC hosted Apassionata for two performances in January last year, and reported that ticket sales this year were up by around 5 to 10 percent on last year. "It was very well received. We're already talking to the promoter about dates for next year," said Dunstan. "It is becoming an annual event.

"The target group is families and horse lovers, as it's an equestrian show. It also appeals to people looking for entertainment — you don't have to understand horses to be able to enjoy it," said Dunstan. "People who understand horses are often from the countryside and are willing to travel far for this kind of event. We had people coming from 80 to 100 miles away, from the countryside in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Wales. It's a wide catchment area."

The breeds featured in the performance include Quarter horses, Andalusians, Lusitanos, Cartuja horses, as well as Heavy Horses. For the NEC, the event tied in perfectly with its profile as a home of horse-related events such as Horse of the Year, an annual national competition in show jumping and other equestrian activities held Oct. 4–8, and the Spanish Riding School, which is scheduled for November.

The cost to book the show depends on various factors including date and the specifics of the partnership or contract. Equiarte has been involved in producing, presenting, marketing as well as organising the tour, Massine said.

The technical requirements for Apassionata are: the ability to load in seven trucks of technical equipment, including portable horse stalls and an array of fixtures, riding paraphernalia and accessories. "It takes approximately two days to set up and one day to tear down," said Massine. "We have 85 participants, crew and performers, who travel with the show at weekends across Europe. The special requirements related to the 48 horses is that we need space for the 50-by-15-meter [164-by-49-foot] horse stall tent as well as a 15-by-20-meter [49-by-66-foot] warm-up area."

Apassionata uses four horse vans as well as large quantities of sand, straw, hay, wood shavings and horse feed.

The show will be in Newcastle, Nottingham, Glasgow and Manchester in March, travelling on to Dublin and Belfast in early April before finishing up at London's Wembley Arena April 15–16. *Apassionata* will also be the first family show to take place there after the construction is completed. The *Ovations* production then travels on elsewhere in Europe, with dates in Belgium, Sweden and Spain already confirmed. — Eva Johansson

Interviewed for this story: Peter Massine, +49 30 20 91 57 40; Guy Dunstan, +44 121 780 4141

MARKETING

Limited edition Runaway Bride bobblehead



TABLOID DARLING'S BOBBLEHEAD DRAWS BIG PUBLICITY TO ECHL TEAM

When Duluth, Ga.'s most famous bride-to-be, Jennifer Wilbanks, disappeared last April right before her wedding and turned up in New Mexico with a false rape and abduction accusation, Gwinnet Center's opportunistic marketing staff tried to think of a way to piggyback on the tremendous publicity surrounding the case.

The result was one of the most widely reported promotions in ECHL history. "They definitely picked a winner with this one," said Chris Hendley, marketing manager for the Gwinnett Center. "They knew this promotion would sell tickets and that was the main objective."

At last Sunday's Gwinnett Gladiator hockey game, 5-inch 'runaway bride' bobblehead dolls were given away to the first 1,000 people through the doors of the Atlanta venue. The dolls featured a generic female face with a veil, a sweatshirt imprinted with "I (heart) Duluth" and running shoes labeled "Adios" — a play on the Adidas brand. Fans lined up three hours in advance of the game and the dolls were gone in about 10 minutes.

However, overall game attendance was 4,389, a lower number than average due to warm, spring-like weather, said Steve Chapman, the Gladiators' team president.

The idea was hatched when Chapman and Gladiator Director of Marketing Chris Peace brainstormed at the end of last year's hockey season. "We were amazed by the national coverage of Wilbanks' story and how long it lasted," Chapman said. "As a joke, I suggested we should do a bobblehead doll to commemorate the event. At first, we decided we shouldn't do it because it wasn't the right thing to do. But when we found out that Wilbanks sold her story last September, we went ahead with the idea."

The Gladiators partnered with local hip-hop radio station 95.5 The Beat to promote the

giveaway, in addition to advertising in local newspapers like the *Gwinnett County Post*. "We also have several marketing deals with local cable companies and advertised the giveaway in our print promotional materials," Chapman said.

The bobblehead doll garnered added attention nationally, as well. Though Chapman predicted the promotion would be a big hit locally, since the runaway bride story put Duluth on the map, it mirrored Wilbanks' coverage in the national news. "It has taken off. We were on Good Morning America and the national news stations," he said.

As of yesterday, March 7, there were 26 of the bobbleheads up for auction on eBay, with the top bid at \$103.51 with less than four hours to go.

About 1,200 of the \$7 runaway bride dolls were purchased for the giveaway from Destroyer Promotional, a St. Augustine, Fla.-based manufacturer of promotional sports-themed products, including bobbleheads, hats, action figurines and bags. Destroyer's principal, Jeffrey Bouchy, is a sports industry veteran. He spent 1998 through 2002 leading the Orlando Predators of the Arena Football League and the Peoria Pirates of the arenafootball2 League. Bouchy has also worked in collegiate athletics, minor league hockey and arena event management.

This coming weekend, the Gladiators game features a military appreciation weekend promotion. The team will wear camouflage jerseys to honor the U.S. troops, and these will be auctioned off for charity at the end of the game. There will also be military vehicles on display at the arena.

In a similarly edgy promotion, the ECHL Las Vegas Wranglers plan to hand out bright orange hunting vests that read "Don't shoot me, I'm human," in reference to Vice President Dick Cheney's recent hunting mishap to the first 1,000 patrons at their St. Patrick's Day game March 17 at the Orleans Arena.

Gladiator individual game ticket prices are \$19 for club seats, \$16 for premium seats, \$12 for end-zone seats and \$10 for mezzanine seats. — Lisa White
Interviewed for this story: Steve Chapman, (770) 497-5105; Chris Hendley, (770) 813-7500

COMING IN MAY - OUR SALUTE TO PAFMS

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CONCESSIONS

Ken Young at Space Coast Stadium, Viera, Fla.



OVATIONS GEARS UP FOR NATIONALS SPRING TRAINING

A call from Tony Tavares, president of the Washington Nationals of Major League Baseball, to Ken Young led the Oventions Food Services president to another baseball game. Young, the owner of minor league baseball teams in Norfolk, Va., and Albuquerque, N.M., spent the first weekend in March watching baseball at Space Coast Stadium, Viera, Fla., spring home for the Nationals.

Young said the Nationals took over management of the venue and its amenities this season and brought on Oventions two weeks ago. The national firm replaced a local caterer. Oventions deal with the Nationals is for three years. Milt Arenson's Facility Merchandising Inc. is providing the merchandise there. Arenson has the Nationals contract in Washington, D.C.

Space Coast Stadium also houses the Brevard County Manatees of the Florida State League, who will play 70 games there. The Nationals will play 15 spring training games and two exhibition games against World Baseball teams.

The stadium seats 8,100 and has seven concessions stands. Young said Oventions will beef up the business with lots of portables and with an expanded menu, most notably their signature half-pound Black Angus burger. Oventions will receive a percentage of the gross.

Jeremy Zimmerman has been named general manager for Oventions in Viera.

This newest client joins another recent addition, Cinergy Center, Cincinnati, where Jay Smith is Oventions GM and the firm moved in Jan. 1. Global Spectrum, sister company to Oventions, was awarded the management contract for the renovated and expanded Cincinnati convention center last week. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Ken Young, (813) 948-6900, ext. 104

SHORT TAKES

SMG SIGNS SECOND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT IN MEXICO

SMG Mexico has been awarded a contract by Grupo Autofin to manage the Expo Imperial and Foro Imperial, the new exhibition and convention center in the Diamante section of Acapulco, Mexico. The Expo and Foro Imperial are part of the Mundo Imperial Project, which includes Casa Imperial, a hotel resort complex with 879 rooms and

Fiesta Imperial, a 210,000-square-foot plaza which will be home to restaurants, lounges, discotheques and artistic and cultural events. Expo Imperial features exhibit and meeting space totaling over 360,000 square feet. Immediately adjacent is the 4,800-seat performing arts theater, the Foro Imperial. The complex is projected to open on Nov. 1, 2007. SMG's International Sales Office now oversees 55 accounts. The Mundo Imperial Project is headed by Grupo Autofin Mexico, which includes 60 companies, 6,200 partners, 170 points of purchase in Mexico and more than 1 million clients. Grupo Autofin Mexico is the leader in the auto financing and real estate lending industries. The family-owned firm recently received approval to open their own bank, Banco Autofin México. This is SMG's second venture in Mexico. On Nov. 2, 2005, SMG Mexico took over management of the World Trade Center in Mexico City's central business district. SMG is working with E.J. Krause to bring exhibitions to the country.
Contact: Joanna Armandi, (215) 592-6620

ILLINOIS TWEETER CENTER RENAMED

The Tweeter Center, Tinley Park, Ill., first known as the World Music Theatre, then the New World Music Theatre, has now become First Midwest Bank Amphitheatre. The 16-year-old, 30,000-capacity shed is managed by Live Nation, formerly Clear Channel Entertainment. Live Nation also announced Jimmy Buffet will perform at First Midwest Bank Amphitheatre on Aug. 5. Tickets go on sale March 13.

Contact: (312) 540-2110

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND WILL OPEN JOHN PAUL JONES ARENA

Larry Wilson, general manager of the University of Virginia's John Paul Jones Arena, announced that Dave Matthews Band will be the Grand Opening event for the 16,000-seat facility Sept. 22–23. This will be the first concert in Charlottesville for hometown favorite, Dave Matthews Band, since their appearance at Scott Stadium in April 2001. Tickets for these events will be available for purchase in the next several months and members of the community can sign up now for special 'Keeping Up with the Joneses' email alerts by visiting the John Paul Jones Arena Web site . Keeping Up with the Joneses allows subscribers to review upcoming events and notifies them when tickets go on sale. The arena's soft opening is scheduled for July 2006. It is home to the University's men's and women's basketball teams.

Contact: Liz Flynn, (434) 243-4957

ANSCHUTZ STEPS DOWN FROM REGAL BOARD

Regal Entertainment Group announced Philip F. Anschutz's intention to retire from the Company's Board of Directors effective at the Company's next annual meeting on May 10. The Anschutz Company will continue to have representation on Regal's Board through Craig Slater, a current Regal Board member. In addition to stepping down from Regal's Board, Anschutz also announced his retirement from the Board of Directors of Union Pacific Railroad and Qwest Communications so he may devote more time and attention to his privately held investments, including AEG.

Contact: Dick Westerling, (865) 925-9539

QUICKEN LOANS ARENA GETS WI-FI

AT&T Inc. announced that Wi-Fi service is now available throughout Cleveland's Quicken Loans Arena, home to the Cleveland Cavaliers and host to major concerts, family shows, sporting events, and other entertainment performances. The Wi-Fi service will be available throughout much of the venue, including Gordon's Sports Bar, the food court, Bridges at The Q restaurant, press lounge and work area, and other portions of the arena. Day-pass memberships are available at the arena for \$7.95 and provide unlimited access to all AT&T Wi-Fi hot spots for a 24-hour session.

Contact: Sarah Baker, (617) 692-0510

HELP WANTED

Venues Today now offers free help wanted listings in the e-newsletter. For more information or to submit listings, e-mail April Stroud, Advertising/Production Manager at: April@venuestoday.com

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To submit news or information to ***Venues Today*** contact:

Linda Deckard, Publisher, Editor-in-chief
(714) 378-5400
linda@venuestoday.com

Natasha Emmons, Managing Editor
(714) 378-5400
natasha@venuestoday.com

For advertising information, contact:

Sue Nichols, Eastern Region
(615) 662-0252
sue@venuestoday.com

Pauline Davis, Central Region
(615) 356-0398
pauline@venuestoday.com

April Stroud, Western Region
(714) 378-5400 ext. 23
april@venuestoday.com

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