

Rob Ocampo

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VENUES**today**

The news behind the headlines

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"He did a marvelous job for us, helping us understand this was not a business we would be really good at. Managing an orchestra and managing a hall are two entirely different things." — *Steve Wogaman, executive director of the Allentown (Pa.) Symphony on his interactions with planning facilitator Al Webber, who helped Wogaman bring Compass Facility Management to the facility.*

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VENUE NEWS

Rendering of the Sedgwick County Arena, Wichita, Kan.



SMG WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK ON NEW WICHITA ARENA

Sedgwick County Commissioners selected SMG to manage the new \$201 million, 15,000-seat Sedgwick County Arena, Wichita, to open in 2009, last month. Ron Holt, assistant county manager, said the decision was based in part on the fact SMG was willing to pay the county a fee and assume the operating risk if that was

the turn final negotiations took.

"One of the questions we asked in the interview process was if we were willing to turn over the keys to this new facility and have you write us a check each year and you take over everything, would you be willing to do that and, unequivocally, they said yes," Holt said.

That was something the county employees, who currently manage Kansas Coliseum and bid on managing the new arena, could not do, Holt said. Global Spectrum, which also bid, was not as enthusiastic about assuming the operational risk, he said. The county has experienced deficits as high as \$500,000 one year at Kansas Coliseum, according to John Nath, general manager there for the county. Holt said that probably one in every five years there has historically been a deficit at the coliseum and the county wanted to explore its option to mitigate that risk, taking a set fee each year instead.

"In any year they didn't make any [money], we'd still get our fee. We're probably not going to do that, but as we delved into that a bit, their answer and being unequivocal in saying they would be willing to do that was a real selling point," Holt said.

The county was also impressed with the fact that SMG brought the biggest promoter in the U.S., Live Nation, to the table with them, Holt said. Live Nation's Bob Roux was at the oral presentation for SMG to confirm a pending partnership regarding Wichita, confirmed Brian Kabatznick, SMG vice president of business development.

"We looked at the market and realized bringing in content is obviously very important. Wichita is not Kansas City. We have a strong relationship with Live Nation, and we arranged a deal with them that we have access to their exclusive line of content, tours they produce, and we will work as partners in the marketplace," Kabatznick said. SMG will not just be a "venue operator offering the promoter dates and rental rates, but we will partner with them. It gives Live Nation further incentive to look at Wichita, to utilize Wichita more than they have in the past." Kabatznick emphasized it is not an exclusive. All promoters are welcome. But it does give Wichita "a preferred position" with Live Nation.

The county and SMG will begin seriously negotiating the final deal in the next 10 days, Holt said. Nath is on the county commission negotiating that deal and said he expects it to take about 45 days.

Ground will be broken on the new arena in August. It opens Fall 2009. The county is working with Miles Gallagher of the Superlative Group, Cleveland, Ohio, on naming rights and premium seating, though they will likely roll premium seating into the SMG deal.

The cost of construction, which was just increased from \$184 million, is being funded through a voter-approved one percent sales tax that is in effect July 1, 2005, through Dec. 31, 2007. Included in the amount is \$15 million for a parking garage, but \$6 million-\$9 million of that amount will be held in reserve for maintenance and operating deficits, Holt said.

The contract with SMG will be for a minimum of three years and will probably include management of the existing Kansas Coliseum property, Holt said. The fate of the Britt Brown arena there is to be determined, but the county is renovating the pavilions for continued use.

SMG gave the county "strong assurances that if coliseum employees want to stay in this business, they'd certainly make a real effort in keeping those folks on board," Holt said. "They offered us the best opportunity for a contract with as little financial risk as the county might want to take. That's why we have to negotiate this, to understand clearly what that means," Holt said.

The county employees are total professionals as they continue to operate the existing arena and prepare for the changeover, Nath said. "We had an excellent bid and were

extremely aggressive. We are proud of the product. It was based on reality: a reasonable, achievable, practical operational plan. We were close to what everyone else proposed, but we could not come to the table with ability to assume a potential deficit, take risk," Nath summarized.

Kansas Coliseum has been very successful, said Nath, who has managed the building for 11 years. "We average 3,500 for hockey, 5,000 for concerts, that's the reality of this market." The coliseum houses the Wichita Thunder of the Central Hockey League.

This summer, the county is investing \$9 million in the 135,000-square-foot Pavilion 1, 85,000-square-foot Pavilion 2, and 65,000-square-foot indoor equestrian center. Renovations take place May-December. The 10,500-seat Britt Brown Arena has had 11 years of deferred maintenance; its fate is to be determined.

There is some disappointment among county employees, Nath admitted. His department consists of 43 people who are literally seeing a 27-year-old county department disappear. Most can probably stay in the business if they choose to, but some have opted for transfers to other county jobs already. Nath lost five employees in October and is looking for new hires to handle what is turning into a good year so far, including two sold out Cirque du Soleil shows, Blue Man Group, Bill Gaither and Mannheim Steamroller along with the perennials.

This change has been a long time in the making. Fifteen years ago, some city businessmen began exploring private construction of a downtown arena. The county deferred investing in Kansas Coliseum expecting that to happen. In 2002, the final privately-led effort was dropped and the county decided to upgrade the coliseum. Meanwhile, city officials came to the county and offered to let them own and operate a downtown arena rather than renovate the coliseum, which is located 10 miles outside town. The county accepted the challenge pending voter approval of a sales tax, which went through. It all came together in 2004, Holt recalled.

Kabatznick is impressed with the routing opportunities "from Kansas City to Wichita down to our buildings in Oklahoma down to Texas. Wichita is centrally located in the U.S. East to West and West to East. It will get a bite of the apple once if not twice [per tour]." The marketplace is established and the unknown is the impact moving downtown will have. Kabatznick is bullish on the likelihood it will be a repeat of Jacksonville, Fla., and Oklahoma City, where downtown arenas "spur higher attendance and more events, but also the economic development that comes along with that. We're bullish on Sedgwick County and Wichita." — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Ron Holt, (316) 660-9393; Brian Kabatznick, (215) 592-6624; John Nath, (316) 755-1243

INTERNATIONAL GROWTH CHOSEN OVER SECONDARY MARKETS FOR LIVE NATION

Live Nation officials see growth in the international market, but are hoping to leave behind smaller venues in U.S. secondaries. The Beverly Hills, Calif.-based concert promoter recently followed up news of two acquisitions in Europe with an announcement that it was mulling a plan to sell underperforming amphitheaters in the U.S.

So far, Live Nation has announced the potential sale of two U.S. sheds: the Germain Amphitheater in Columbus, Ohio, and the Verizon Music Center in Indianapolis. Company spokesperson John Vlautin said the move was part of a company plan to focus on larger markets and divest its interest in tertiary properties.

"We're looking at refocusing our interests and moving the company in a pro-growth direction," Vlautin said.

The move comes as Live Nation continues its international expansion, wrapping up the purchase of Gamerco, the largest concert promoter in Spain. Live Nation also recently announced it had acquired a majority stake in Jackie Lombard Productions, a leading promoter in France. When completed, the acquisitions will expand Live Nation's global presence from five to seven of the top 10 recorded-music markets worldwide including the U.S., England, Germany, Canada, Italy and Holland.

Vlautin said the European acquisitions followed a U.S. strategy to develop a network of facility ownership, promotion and management contracts allowing it to negotiate large-scale pan-European concerts and tours. The developing network also allows the company to leverage greater sponsorship packages for companies looking to include live music as part of their marketing strategy.

The acquisition of Gamerco includes its affiliates Iquapop, Troubleshooter and Cetisa and continued involvement of principals Gay Mercader, Pino Saggiocco and Robert Grima. The firm typically produces 250 shows a year, mostly in Madrid and Barcelona, with international bookings that include Marc Anthony, Il Divo, Luis Miguel, The Who and George Michael.

Founder Jackie Lombard of Jackie Lombard Productions will also move over to the Live Nation family after the acquisition is completed, likely before the end of January.

As for the two U.S. facilities on the market, Live Nation has begun to shop those facilities with the help of CB Richard Ellis, following a plan announced in a November conference call by CEO Michael Rapino to investors. During the conversation, Rapino discussed plans to focus operations on top markets and divest a number of smaller venues.

"The venues targeted for sale are either in small, non-core markets or larger markets where the alternative-purpose value of the real estate is greater than the value to us a music venue," company officials later wrote in a press release describing the call.

The Germain Amphitheater could be an enticing buy to commercial real estate developers because of its proximity to the Polaris Fashion Place, a growing retail district in Columbus. The facility was opened in 1994 by PromoWest Productions President Scott Steinecker along with Jules Belkin of Cleveland-based Belkin Productions and Dave Lucas of Sunshine Promotions. SFX bought the facility in 1997 and sold it to Clear Channel in 2000, which then spun Live Nation off in 2005.

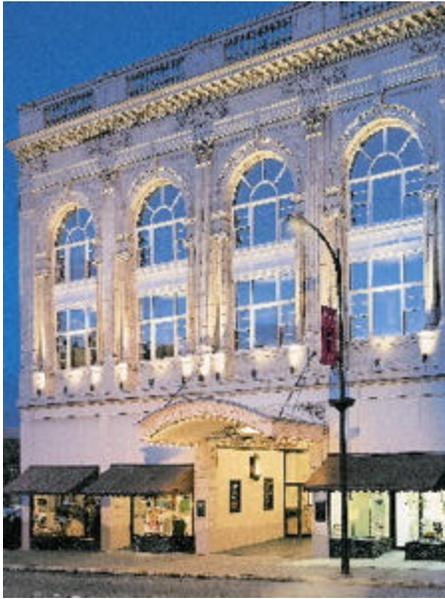
"In terms of sales, what I think we're seeing is a move to appease investors by freeing up equity in the company," said analyst William Prewy, who monitors the company for Credit Suisse First Boston. "I think there is some pressure on Live Nation to boost cash flow, especially as the company moves forward with its acquisitions strategy. The consensus is that there needs to be a serious discussion about what venues and facilities fit into Live Nation's vision, and what facilities simply don't. I predict we'll continue to see more sales."

Part of the concern, Prewy said, is that there are currently more venues than there is talent to fill the arenas. Without a larger pool of viable acts that can fill amphitheaters, it will become difficult for Live Nation to maintain the facilities. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: John Vlautin, (310) 867-7127; William Prewy, (404) 897-

2800.

Renovated Allentown (Pa.) Symphony Hall.



COMPASS TO BRING NEW DIRECTION TO ALLENTOWN HALL

After spending \$5 million renovating the 100-year-old, 1,200-seat Allentown (Pa.) Symphony Hall, the Allentown Symphony Association was stymied on how to market it, until they found Compass Facility Management.

Last month, the symphony signed Compass to a five-year contract that will give them the opportunity to make about \$100,000 annually in fees, said Steve Wogaman, executive director of the symphony who had also been helping the hall. The Allentown Symphony is the smallest symphony orchestra in America to own its own hall and is one of only a handful that do. The symphony acquired the hall 50 years ago, but only lately invested large amounts for restoration.

When he came on board, the challenge was first to learn about running a venue and then to find someone else to do it better. Wogaman was looking for someone who knew what not to do from experience, a pleasant alternative to learning the hard way.

For his part, Steve Peters, president of Compass Facility Management, considers this the perfect time to take on the Allentown market. The restoration is gorgeous, he said. The hall is part of a new art park that is changing the landscape of downtown. The back wall of the hall is now a huge mural. There is definitely a downtown revival taking place, he said.

The goal for the symphony is to make the hall more self sufficient and the method will be in having separate staffs, one dedicated to the venue, one to the symphony.

Wogaman said the symphony has been operating on a \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million budget. His goal was to get that to \$2 million "to properly run the hall and the symphony." For the upcoming year, the facility budget is \$800,000; the symphony, \$1.2 million. Early successes with outside bookings, including Jim Brickman, have them on track to hit that goal, he said.

In 2003-04 season, the hall renovation was completed. In 2005, the symphony brought in a planning facilitator, Al Webber, who brought the idea of private management to the table from his experience in Reading, Pa., where SMG runs the Sovereign Center, Wogaman recalled. "He did a marvelous job for us, helping us understand this was not a business we would be really good at. Managing an orchestra and managing a hall are two entirely different things."

Under orchestra management, the hall had only booked about 60 dates, most of them the orchestra itself, leaving nearly 300 dark days. "The box office had just graduated from a shoebox, we had no on-line ticketing and no internal marketing department," Wogaman said of 2004-05.

In the summer of 2006, Wogaman undertook a Web search for a private management company and came across Compass Facility Management by way of the International Association of Assembly Managers site, "only to discover Steve Peters is the incoming president," he said. Things have started to click into place in 2006-07, he admitted, "but still we want to pass the reins over to Compass because they clearly know what they're doing." There will be no more 2005-06 seasons, where the symphony lost nearly \$300,000, he said.

"The goal is to grow as well as break even. The community gave us \$5 million. They want to see more stuff. To hunker down and yearly balance the budget without justifying all the money spent on the hall would have been, in my mind, irresponsible," Wogaman added.

"Compass is inheriting a going concern now," he said. "And we have a 200-seat catering facility on the third floor, a \$200,000 catering kitchen, that was unfinished space for 100 years. It's the nicest civic living room in Allentown, with windows looking out over the city. No one in our organization has any background in catering management."

Peters was pleased with the potential for catering. "There is a lot to be done with downtown partnerships. Catering will be a large part of it," he said. "It's a terrific room."

Carl St. Clair has taken the reins in an interim capacity for Compass. Peters said the national search is on for a permanent manager. St. Clair has opened new accounts for Compass across the nation. St. Clair came on board Dec. 1.

The deal is unique for Compass in that the client is a presenting organization that will continue to present, Wogaman said. "Carl St. Clair and I are working closely to ensure the relationship between Compass and the orchestra is that we are a rental client of the hall, the fee being zero, but we will behave like a rental client." On the other hand, the orchestra will still act as promoter on a select basis. "Compass Events won't be the only promoter, we can promote," he said, citing the profitable experience the symphony had with Brickman. Other events booked before Compass came on board include Philip Glass and Bonnie Rideout. "We have a risk budget. The board hasn't decided how big it will be," Wogaman said.

The Allentown Symphony Association still has about \$2 million to raise to pay for the recent renovations, Wogaman said. Including the irrevocable remainder trust as earned income, it operates on a 55-60 percent earned income ratio. "We get about \$200,000 a year from the trust and we raise about \$500,000. If we were renters instead of owners at the same rates we offer others, we'd save about \$300,000 a year."

Compass now manages seven performing arts venues, Peters said.

Allentown Symphony Hall was originally constructed as a market house in 1896. In 1899, the hall was converted to a theater by the architectural firm of J.B. McElfatrick and renamed the Lyric Theatre. In 1959, with the help of a dedicated group of Allentown civic leaders, the Lyric Theatre was purchased by the Allentown Symphony Association expressly as a permanent home for its symphony orchestra. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Steve Wogaman, (610) 432-7961; Steve Peters, (515) 232-5151

Jennifer Kelly



FACES AND PLACES: KELLY LEAPS FROM MARKETER TO MANAGER; TOLLETT MOVES ON

After seven years with **Global Spectrum** in various marketing roles, **Jennifer Kelly** has been named general manager of the firm's newest private management account, the 3,500-seat, \$21 million convocation center to open at the **USC Aiken**, S.C., in April.

Kelly made the move to Aiken from the Colonial Center at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, where she was director of marketing. Prior to joining Global Spectrum at the Wachovia Center in Philadelphia, Kelly was a regional marketing director for the Harlem Globetrotters.

"I thought I was going to become the assistant general manager in Columbia. That was my next logical step," Kelly said. She is excited to be learning the "other side of the business" and said she has already found out marketing directors know a lot about operations the more the client asks questions. Being part of a private management firm also helps. "It's so easy to call the operations guy in Philly and say this is the problem of the minute," which is comparable to what one does in marketing, she said.

The **USC Aiken Convocation Center** will open April 21. She has already booked the gold unit of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus for July; Doodlebops, Oct. 28; and Disney Live, March 27. The Aiken market is about 500,000 people. The nearest competition is the James Brown Arena in Augusta, Ga. (formerly the Augusta Civic Center).

Gerard J. "Jordy" Tollett has resigned his post as president and CEO of the **Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau** (GHCVB). After 35 years of public service, Tollett has decided to pursue other ventures. Tollett offered, and the GHCVB executive committee accepted, his services on a consulting basis until 2008.

Tollett will assist in transitioning the GHCVB to new leadership once a CEO has been selected. GHCVB chairman **Doug Horn** and chairman emeritus **Don Henderson** are interim directors.

For more than 20 years, dating back to 1981, Tollett was director of the City's Convention & Entertainment Facilities Department, overseeing operations at prominent Houston landmarks such as the George R. Brown Convention Center, Wortham Theater Center, Jones Hall and a host of other properties and parking facilities.

In 1997, he also assumed the role of president and chief executive officer of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Contacts for this story: Jennifer Kelly, (803) 479-5611; Lindsey Brown, (713) 437-5275



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BOOKINGS



HOT tickets

SHAKIRA SHAKES SAN JUAN

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. 5, 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:* \$2,688,203; *Event:* Shakira; *Venue:* **Coliseo De Puerto Rico, San Juan**; *Attendance:* 22,258; *Ticket Range:* \$225-\$40; *Promoter:* Gianfi Communications; *Dates:* Dec. 13-16; *No. of Shows:* 3

2) *Gross Sales:* \$796,273; *Event:* Guns N' Roses; *Venue:* **Rexall Place, Edmonton, Alberta**; *Attendance:* 13,355; *Ticket Range:* \$67.76-\$33.38; *Promoter:* House of Blues Canada; *Dates:* Dec. 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$784,548; *Event:* Aerosmith; *Venue:* **Target Center, Minneapolis**; *Attendance:* 9,445; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-house; *Dates:* Dec. 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$770,572; *Event:* Guns N' Roses; *Venue:* **Pengrowth Saddledome, Calgary, Alberta**; *Attendance:* 13,370; *Ticket Range:* \$67.76-\$33.66; *Promoter:* House of Blues Canada; *Dates:* Dec. 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$637,145; *Event:* KIIS FM: Jingle Ball; *Venue:* **Honda Center, Anaheim, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 10,654; *Ticket Range:* \$150-\$55; *Promoter:* KIIS FM, Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001 - 15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$439,581; *Event:* Mannheim Steamroller; *Venue:* **Gwinnett Arena, Duluth, Ga.**; *Attendance:* 7,460; *Ticket Range:* \$157-\$30; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Dec. 12; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$402,105; *Event:* The Cheetah Girls; *Venue:* **Bi-Lo Center, Greenville, S.C.**; *Attendance:* 11,531; *Ticket Range:* \$39.50-\$29.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Dec. 30; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$321,509; *Event:* Panic! At The Disco; *Venue:* **Long Beach (Calif.) Arena**; *Attendance:* 11,373; *Ticket Range:* \$29.50-\$22.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$253,229; *Event:* Mannheim Steamroller; *Venue:* **Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, Fort Wayne, Ind.**; *Attendance:* 4,519; *Ticket Range:* \$152-\$30; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Dec. 5; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$226,690; *Event:* Jimmy Lange vs. Fontaine Cabell; *Venue:* **Patriot Center, Fairfax, Va.**; *Attendance:* 3,951; *Ticket Range:* \$500-\$25; *Promoter:* John Lange; *Dates:* Dec. 9; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,001 - 10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$432,704; *Event:* Edge Xmas; *Venue:* **Nokia at Grand Prairie (Texas)**; *Attendance:* 9,712; *Ticket Range:* \$39.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Dec. 8-9; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$426,638; *Event:* Disney Live; *Venue:* **Dodge Arena, Hidalgo, Texas**; *Attendance:* 24,670; *Ticket Range:* \$40-\$15; *Promoter:* Feld Entertainment; *Dates:* Dec. 20-24; *No. of Shows:* 9

3) *Gross Sales:* \$345,581; *Event:* Guns N' Roses; *Venue:* **Everett (Wash.) Events Center**; *Attendance:* 5,243; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$39.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* Dec. 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$307,448; *Event:* Brian Setzer Orchestra; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 5,939; *Ticket Range:* \$70-\$37.50; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* Dec. 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$239,004; *Event:* Motley Crue; *Venue:* **Steelback Centre, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario**; *Attendance:* 4,784; *Ticket Range:* \$50.71; *Promoter:* House of Blues Canada; *Dates:* Dec. 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$596,098; *Event:* On Golden Pond; *Venue:* **Tampa (Fla.) Bay Performing Arts Center**; *Attendance:* 11,649; *Ticket Range:* \$62.50-\$20; *Promoter:* In-house; *Dates:* Dec. 5-10; *No. of Shows:* 8

2) *Gross Sales:* \$331,725; *Event:* Hairspray; *Venue:* **Tampa (Fla.) Bay Performing Arts Center**; *Attendance:* 7,032; *Ticket Range:* \$65.50-\$20; *Promoter:* In-house, Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 12-17; *No. of Shows:* 8

3) *Gross Sales:* \$242,799; *Event:* The Nutcracker Ballet; *Venue:* **Tampa (Fla.) Bay Performing Arts Center**; *Attendance:* 5,924; *Ticket Range:* \$54.50-\$18.50; *Promoter:* In-house, Orlando Ballet; *Dates:* Dec. 21-23; *No. of Shows:* 4

4) *Gross Sales:* \$227,588; *Event:* Harvey Korman, Tim Conway; *Venue:* **Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, Edmonton**; *Attendance:* 3,802; *Ticket Range:* \$66.07-\$38.79; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts Canada; *Dates:* Dec. 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$144,768; *Event:* Harvey Korman, Tim Conway; *Venue:* **Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, Calgary**; *Attendance:* 2,454; *Ticket Range:* \$66.07-\$38.79; *Promoter:* House of Blues Canada; *Dates:* Dec. 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

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The crowd surges at the Fremont Street Experience in Las Vegas during a Chicago performance.



NEW YEARS EVE CROWDED BUT SAFE ACROSS U.S.

A combination of unseasonably warm temperatures for much of the country and a lack of terror alerts combined to create a hearty party vibe at a number of New Year's Eve celebrations across the country. Here is breakdown of New Years Eve events across the nation:

New York — Times Square

The granddaddy of all NYE celebrations, the New Year's Ball Drop in Times Square drew one of the biggest crowds on record

this year. "It was definitely on the high end [attendance-wise] this year and part of it is the weather, but we also had more entertainment than ever before," said Lori Raimondo, vice president of Marketing for the 98-year-old event's co-producer, the Times Square Alliance. Drawing an estimated one million people to downtown New York were performances by Christina Aguilera, rock bands My Chemical Romance and P.O.D. and Academy Award-winning rappers Three 6 Mafia. This year's party also featured the first-ever performance by a Broadway show, with live entertainment from the cast of "Jersey Boys."

The free to the public event had three stages with continuous entertainment paid for by the respective television networks who beam live from Times Square and in another first, Target stores sponsored "practice" countdowns on the hour beginning at 7 p.m. during which confetti was dropped. The drops also featured a twist: "wordfetti," small pieces of paper that had different words on them for each hourly practice session, including the phrases "hope," "dance," "peace" and "celebrate." At midnight, one ton of confetti was dropped, including wordfetti that said, "celebrate," adding to the 1,000 pounds of confetti that was dropped each hour leading up to midnight. Raimondo said as far as she has heard there were no major incidents or crowd control issues at the event.

One Big Apple event that did not go off on New Year's as planned, though, was a scheduled show by soul legend James Brown at B.B. King's Blues Club and Grill, which was canceled earlier in the week following Brown's Christmas Day death.

Boston — First Night Boston

Not everyone is interested in squeezing into a tight spot beside boozy revelers on New Year's Eve. In fact, this year a record 1.1 million people came out for Boston's annual First Night event, at 31-years-old, the oldest and largest New Year's celebration of the arts in North America. The event, founded in 1976 by a group of artists and community activists looking to create an alternative, arts-oriented event has been reproduced in more than 200 cities and towns. This year's First Night featured more than 1,000 artists giving 200 performances and exhibitions at more than 40 indoor and outdoor venues around Boston. The non-profit corporation is sponsored by private donations, corporate sponsors and sales of entry buttons; figures on 2006 badge sales were not available at press time according to an event spokesperson. The budget for the event is \$1.4 million, about \$150,000 higher than 2005 thanks to an expanded development effort aimed at cultivating more individual contributions in light of less corporate and government contributions. It brings in an estimated \$47 million for Boston businesses, not including button revenue.

The theme for the centerpiece Metro Boston Grand Procession this year was "Life on Earth," which was enacted by dividing dozens of groups into four sections: the natural world, the human world, the mythical world and the wired world, with each color-coded section led by a different piece from the Back Alley Puppet Theatre and Puppeteers Cooperative. Pleasant weather in the low 40s helped boost attendance at the event.

Also included in this year's festivities were ice sculpture displays, a huge fireworks display at midnight, as well as family fireworks at 7 p.m.

Las Vegas — Fremont Street Experience

When you go to Vegas, you expect things to be over the top. Which is why the Fremont Street Experience delivers, and then some. The annual blow-out, which closes off four of the areas five pedestrian blocks for the only time all year in order to charge an \$80 entry fee, featured 6 bands playing on four alternating stages, ranging from such hip

acts as All-American Rejects and OK GO to boomer faves Chicago. Organizers said they expected around 15,000 attendees, though final numbers were not available at press time. The 10 member properties in the Experience all participate in the party, which takes place under the gigantic VivaVision screen (90 by 1,500 feet long) and patrons' wristbands allowed them entry to all the casinos lining the mall.

"This was the largest scale so far in terms of production," said spokesperson Lisa Robinson. "We have two permanent stages and we constructed two new stages, which had about \$1 million worth of additional equipment, including 900 moving lights on each stage and 40,000 pounds of equipment." This year was also the debut of a national feed for the event, which was shown on Direct TV's CD USA program from 8 p.m.-12:30 a.m. PST. Robinson said the diverse musical line-up definitely drew a wide age range of attendees and while it was not yet known how much money the Fremont party contributed to the local economy, tourism officials said the expected 300,000 tourists who descended on the town for New Year's are thought to have pumped tens of millions into the local economy.

Atlanta — Peach Drop

In its 18th year, this 16-hour, family-friendly event featured children's activities all day and entertainment from such stars as country music's Lonestar and a spectacular night-ending fireworks display. Anna Masters, a spokesperson at event publicist 360 Media, said organizers made some changes this year, including the addition of a giant 18-by-24-foot LED screen erected near site center Woodruff Park that allowed the overflow crowd who couldn't make it into the park to see the Lonestar performance. Smaller screens were also erected in nearby Kenny's Alley, an area with several bars and nightclubs. Attendance for the free event was around 175,000, which was average, but good considering the intermittent rain during the day.

"Luckily, for the Peach Drop it dried up," said Masters of the night-ending event that's similar to New York's ball drop. "Normally we like to keep the music local, but this year we decided to have a big headlining act [Lonestar] and go with more of a Southern Rock vibe and we think it worked." Music on the two stages began at 6 p.m. and Masters said extra security was called in after consultation with city and state officials who were concerned that the concurrent show across town by Widespread Panic and the Chick-Fil-A Peach Bowl college football game could make for crowd control problems. Masters did not have security numbers or final figures on concession sales.

Boston — Resolution Ball

One of the more unique NYE events in the Boston area is the 10-year old Resolution Ball, a gathering of 20 and 30-somethings that moved up this year to new digs at the recently opened diamond-rated Westin Boston Waterfront. The party, which drew an average crowd of about 1,500 people this year was held in a larger ballroom than in the past and featured the usual assortment of party favors, gift bags, a sponsored midnight champagne toast and footage of the ball drop on several large video screens.

Depending on how early one bought tickets and which package one chose, prices ranged from \$85 (\$95 day of) for a basic entry to the party, to \$175-\$225 per person for a sit down buffet dinner and reception with hors d'oeuvres before the party to \$199-\$322 for a package that included a reception before dinner, a separate VIP room with more seating and a private bar.

"It was our 10th anniversary, so in addition to being in a new location, we tagged it as a sapphire anniversary celebration and we made up special ads that featured a model in a sapphire colored dress that represented the party," said Keri Callahan, lifestyle

editor for the event's promoter, Boston Event Guide.com. The party, which lasted from 7:30 p.m. until 2 a.m. featured music by the Felix Brown Band and DJ Samuel L. during band breaks. A boomer-oriented sister party, the Back Bay Gala, took place across town at the Colonnade Hotel and drew around 450 guests.

St. Paul, Minnesota — Que Fiesta!

St. Paul's Landmark Center hosted a party for the swanky set under the banner of "Que Fiesta! Five Star New Year's Eve." The annual event, which lasted from 8 p.m. until 12:30 a.m. cost \$30 in advance and \$40 at the door, with dancing to Vic Volare and his orchestra, hors d'oeuvres, a poker room, door prizes supplied by local organizations and businesses, dancing lessons from the Arthur Murray Dance Studios and a champagne toast in one of the state's most beloved and stylish buildings. With a new Latin theme for this year, the party added an element that program director Emily Condon said was wildly popular: tango exhibitions by four local dancers that took place during band breaks.

"It's a big dancing event and the room with the exhibitions was packed all night," said Condon. One of the other unique aspects of the Fiesta is the wide demographic it draws, which Condon said ranges from 25-65 and includes a number of parents with their adult kids, older couples who come to dance and younger groups who spent a lot of time in the Texas Hold 'Em poker room. — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Anna Masters, 404-577-8686; Lori Raimondo, (212) 768-1560; Keri Callahan, 781-444-7771; Emily Condon, (651) 292-3276; Lisa Robinson (702) 678-5600

MARKETING

Inside the new Times Union Center



NEWSPAPER WEBSITE THE KEY TO NEW TIMES UNION CENTER TICKETING

When two venues share the same name, it's inevitable people might get confused, especially when trying to look up the facility on the Internet.

Visitors of the recently renamed Times Union Center

in Albany, N.Y. — formerly the Pepsi Center — wouldn't have much luck if they typed in timesunioncenter.com into their web browser. Instead, they would be directed to the website for the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts in Jacksonville, Fla.

That creates a dilemma for Albany officials and executives at SMG, which hold management contracts for both facilities. To alleviate confusion, the Albany-facility has opted to make its primary web portal link through the building's new title sponsor, the Times Union newspaper.

"Because the other building is a theatrical facility, our naming rights partner still felt the name should be acceptable and I can't disagree with that," said longtime General Manager Bob Belber. "We spoke with agents who are routing big arena tours and almost all said they don't think it will be a problem having a similar named facility."

The Albany facility is undertaking a major marketing campaign to drive traffic through the newspaper site www.timesunion.com, whose front page includes a well-placed click through advertisement for the facility's home page, timesunioncenter-albany.com as well as a Tickets.com website for purchasing capabilities. With so much web traffic already going to the newspaper site, as well as the arena site, both the facility and the newspaper feel the new relationship will drive up traffic for both businesses.

In May, the Times Union newspaper agreed to a 10-year, \$350,000 per year naming rights contract with the facility that includes advertising incentives for promoters and in-arena signage and positioning. The newspaper also agreed to cover \$300,000 in name change expenses, replacing everything from exterior building signage to highway indicators announcing the new Times Union Center.

Despite the volatile times the newspaper industry is facing, publisher Mark Aldam said the deal made economic sense because of the advertising incentives involved.

"The economics are very positive for us," he said. "There's a responsibility from the venue's standpoint to invest in advertising with the newspaper."

That deal includes a promise on the part of the venue to purchase a full-page advertisement each week in the newspaper's entertainment tabloid called *Preview*. The ad will appear on the inside cover of the section and cost \$1,000 per ad — a considerable deal Belber explained since the same space usually runs \$5,000 in the 144,000-circulation newspaper. The ad will also include information about how to purchase tickets online through the Times Union Center's ticketing partner, Tickets.com, as well as listings of upcoming shows at the venue.

Belber said the arena has a deal worked out with the paper to include additional advertising incentives to promoters that advertise Times-Union shows using the newspaper, or the newspaper's website. The newspaper will match 50 cents on every dollar spent on Times Union Center advertising, including the page-three advertisement in the entertainment section. The promoters must all also provide 16-event tickets to the newspaper to be used for promotional purposes.

Belber said his arena is contractually obligated to fill the page-three space, but shouldn't have any problems. The Albany arena hosts 165 events per year, including 25 concerts and a number of Feld-produced family shows like Disney on Ice. The arena also has three sports tenants — the Albany River Rats of the American Hockey League, the Albany Conquest of the arenafootball2 league and NCAA Division One Sienna College's men's basketball team, which Belber estimates moves about 7,000 tickets per game. All three teams have expressed interest in using the advertising space.

"We're estimating \$5 million in marketing benefits over the 10-year period," Belber said.

For the newspaper, there's hope that the name deal will continue to boost interest in the newspaper through traditional naming rights benefits like broadcast mentions and increased signage, along with renewed readership at the website. The paper has operated a web site for over 10 years, but recently underwent a major revamp to incorporate the Times Union Center onto its front page. Aldam said he hopes the deal drives up traffic for his newspaper website and ultimately leads to more readers for the newspaper and the online news.

"In order to get online tickets," which represent 65 percent of ticket transactions at the Times Union Center, "you have to log onto our website and that takes the relationship to a whole new level." Aldam said. "We expect a lot of the attendees not to be regular timesunion.com visitors, but perhaps the experience of connecting through the website more often will change that. Maybe along the way, the visitors will find some value in the information that we bring them and some will become regular readers." — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Bob Belber, (518) 487-2008; Mark Aldam, (518) 454-5403

CONCESSIONS

FOOD SALES FAIR FOR COLLEGE FOOTBALL EVENTS

Food sales at 2006-07's bowl games didn't explode this year, according to interviews with concessionaires managing the facilities. While some found moderate success in specialty items and breakfast pairings, most said sales were only slightly up over last year. Here is the summary of the games before or ending on Jan. 1:

Alamo Bowl

Alamodome, San Antonio

The Aramark-managed food service didn't release per caps for the game, but manager Terry Caven said overall food sales were up this year for the football match-up pitting the University of Texas against the University of Iowa.

"We definitely had a huge Texas crowd, considering that Austin is just a short drive from here, so we really knew what to expect," Caven said, adding that the facility mostly chose to stick with its traditional food items like smoked sausages, hot dogs and barbequed sandwiches. Caven said Aramark chose to run two new food stations for the game: a barbequed plate station and a corn-on-the-cob station.

"They both did pretty well considering they were new concepts for us," Caven said. "The corn-on-the-cob actually outsold the barbeque plate nearly twofold. We had the corn-on-the-cob selling at \$3.50 and the barbeque plate selling for \$9.50. We figured the corn-on-the-cob would have limited appeal, but I think a lot of people just liked its price point."

AT&T Cotton Bowl

Cotton Bowl, Dallas

It's rare that a sports concessionaire will sell \$3,000 worth of coffee at a football game, but with a 10:30 a.m. kickoff and frosty temperatures dipping into the 50s and 60s, Ed Campbell said his catering service of the same name nearly sold out of the morning beverage, which it moved at \$1.75 per cup.

"You can never underestimate how popular breakfast items are going to be, especially when it's cold outside," said Campbell.

Other hot items included cinnamon rolls, which Campbell estimated brought in \$1,700 at \$3.25 a piece, along with a popular post-game barbeque station. Campbell said he hadn't calculated the overall value of the barbeque stations, but said the food stations were key in helping achieve his \$7.35 per cap for the event, which drew 74,000 people.

Rose Bowl

Rose Bowl, Pasadena, Calif.

A USC beating of the University of Michigan brought out droves of football fans from Southern California, but not much concessions magic for Centerplate, which had little unique to report this year about food sales at the popular sporting event in Southern California.

Concessions manager Dave James estimated that per caps were slightly up, although he said they were mostly driven by beer sales since the Rose Bowl is the only collegiate event at the stadium where alcohol is sold. A heavy tailgating scene, followed by a 2 p.m. kickoff, didn't make for a boisterous lunch crowd. Suite meals were prepared offsite by independent concessionaire Smith Brothers due to kitchen limitations at the facility. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Terry Caven, (210) 226-7256; Ed Campbell, (214) 426-4866; Dave James, (626) 577-3124



SHORT TAKES

CHEVROLET AMPHITHEATRE MOVES TO WATERPARK

Pittsburg's only permanent outdoor rock concert venue is moving to the suburbs. The Chevrolet Amphitheatre will relocate to Sandcastle Waterpark in West Homestead, about five miles east of the city along the Monongahela River. Sandcastle officials signed an agreement at the end of December to lease a little used amphitheater at the water park to Live Nation, which will produce concerts there under a new tent.

Contact: Mary Lou Rosemeyer, (412) 462-6666

SECONDARY TICKET CONFERENCE ANNOUNCES RETURN

The Ticket Summit tradeshow, hosted by secondary tickets software platform TicketNetwork, has announced it will host its second annual conference and tradeshow July 17-19 following the success of the 2006 event in Las Vegas. That event drew 300 people and speakers from StubHub, eBay, RazorGator and TicketNetwork. This year's event will feature similar speakers and include additional information on growth in the

secondary market. It will take place at the Venetian.
Contact: Stephen Kobelski, (860) 870-3400

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER BREAKS RECORD

The San Diego Convention Center broke all previous annual attendance records when the one-millionth visitor walked through its doors during the International Auto Show which ran from Dec. 27 to Dec. 31. The occasion marked the first time since the Convention Center completed its first calendar year of business in November 1990 that more than one million people in total attended events. The facility opened its doors in November 1989 and doubled in size to 2.6 million square feet in 2001. Estimates are that year-end 2006 attendance will reach a little more than one million people, a 9.4 percent hike from 2005.

Carol Wallace, (619) 525-5000

ARAMARK INVESTORS VOTE TO GO PRIVATE

Aramark Corp. will be taken private after shareholders overwhelmingly approved a \$6.3 billion buyout bid Wednesday. Of the 606 million votes cast - mostly by proxy - 592 million, or 97 percent, supported the bid to put Aramark in private hands. Fewer than 100 attended the shareholder meeting. The purchase price, approved by Aramark's board in August, of \$33.80 per share represents a 20 percent premium above Aramark's closing price on April 28 - the last trading day before the buyout.

Contact: David Freireich, (215) 238-4078

HELP WANTED

For more information or to submit listings, e-mail April Stroud, Director of Sales & Marketing at: April@venuestoday.com

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Everett Events Center - Event Manager - Responsible for planning, coordinating and facilitating the logistics of event...

Amway Arena (City of Orlando), Fla. - Arena Operations Superintendent - Starting Salary: \$49,108 to 61,401, depending on qualifications. Grade: NB113...

Fox Theater, Spokane, Wash. - General Manager - Would you like to be part of the equation for ...

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE FULL EMPLOYMENT LISTINGS ABOVE](#)

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