

Rob Ocampo

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VENUES**today**

The news behind the headlines

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I think without being too self-absorbed, this would qualify as one of most anticipated tours of the year." — *Dave "Boche" Viecelli, touring agent for the Arcade Fire, which is launching a pre-tour tour of churches in Europe and North America.*

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VENUE NEWS

Rendering of the new Orlando Events Centre



ORLANDO ARENA DEAL SETS A NEW STANDARD

The Orlando Magic of the National Basketball Association and the city of Orlando have come to terms on a deal for a new \$480 million arena, scheduled to open in 2010. The deal has the city contributing \$270 million, while the team has agreed to pay the remaining costs with cash, bonds and guarantees on future revenue.

"This is one of the most unique deals in the last 10 years that I know of," said Allen Johnson, executive director of the Amway Centre, who was lead negotiator for the city. "I don't know of another venue that's been built for a professional team that's not either being run by the team or by a private management firm. This will be owned and operated by the city with a major tenant, The Magic, and the Orlando Predators. That's different than many other deals recently because usually you're just worrying about the money upfront and then you hand over the keys and step back. In this case, we'll be operating on a daily basis so it was important to get certain things in the term sheet that will benefit us down the road, like we'll be able to select the concessionaire, be a part of selecting the ticketing company; we'll select and manage the cleaning, ushering, and security companies."

Johnson said the final deal is probably just days away now. He was quite pleased with the outcome and with the team he lead, which also included Carl Hirsh of Stafford Sports.

The final approval "was supposed to happen tomorrow, but we are just doing a presentation tomorrow and moving it the the 22nd," he said Jan. 10. While the agreement has been signed between the Magic and the mayor, it still requires a stamp of approval from the city commission and the county commission has to sign off on some interlocal funding. He didn't anticipate problems.

"It's just a process," he said, noting that it is a very involved one because this deal includes three venues, the new Orlando Events Centre which will house the Magic and the Orlando Predators, the new performing arts center and the renovation of the Citrus Bowl, which combined constitute a "\$1 billion project with a lot of intricate financing."

Johnson likened the term sheet that has been agreed to "deciding how big your house is going to be and then you have to figure out the furnishings and everything else

inside. "

The box office was a big issue. "Currently, we have a separate box office for us and on game nights they use part of our box office. They were going to leave their ticketing people, have two separate box offices. I said that's not very smart, so we're going to have one box office and split the expenses and split the revenue." The city just renewed with Ticketmaster for three years with two one-year options.

These sources of revenue issues were key, Johnson added. "You have to realize, they use the venue 45 nights and we use it the other 150. Obviously, there are standards we'll have to meet to make them happy. They are our partners."

One motivator for the Magic was public relations and community perception, Johnson surmised. The billion-dollar project needs a public buy-in and the base might object to funding an arena for the Magic. However, they might see more value in a community events center. The team is putting \$10 million into the performing arts center, which is a public relations move. The team is also "putting \$50 million in cash up front into the building and they are paying us \$1 million a year in rent which we put at present-day-value of \$12 million, for \$62 million up front in contribution. They are also guaranteeing \$100 million of the six-cent collection (an increase in the resort tax). If that doesn't come in, they have to come up with some sort of security to cover that, instead of the county and city making up the shortfall." Johnson said

Those and other terms were originally released Dec. 22. The Magic will sign a \$1-million-a-year, 25-year lease on the arena, with a five-year option. The new facility will be twice the size of their current home, the Amway Centre (formerly the T.D. Waterhouse Centre) and will be part of the new entertainment and cultural corridor.

The Magic has long lobbied for the new venue, saying the 17-year-old Amway Centre doesn't offer the moneymaking amenities other NBA teams enjoy, despite renovations that included 200 luxury courtside seats. The new arena will include shops, restaurants, and lounges. Capacity will be 18,500, including everything from \$500,000 luxury corporate suites to \$5 seats.

"It was a difficult negotiation from our standpoint," Orlando Magic COO Alex Martins told the *Orlando Sentinel*. "We certainly didn't get everything we wanted."

In similarly sized markets — Charlotte, Memphis, San Antonio and Indianapolis — the team operates the building, and receives 100 percent of revenues from concessions, merchandising, ticket sales and parking for all events.

In Orlando, the city will retain ownership, and the Magic will receive gate receipts and concessions from their games. Revenue from other events will stay with the city, and will be used to offset the arena's operational costs, city officials said.

The city is receiving a greater share of other revenue as well.

Under the Amway Centre agreement, the city shared concession revenue from the Magic's games. While they gave this up, they gain a greater share of advertising, naming-rights, and luxury-suite sales revenue at the new arena.

The team will pay that revenue to the city in annual payments beginning at \$1.75 million, with three-percent increases annually. In 2006, the city received \$573,780 from those sources.

"The Magic's annual contribution will increase \$500,000 over their current contribution

to the Amway arena," Orlando's Mayor, Buddy Dyer, told the media on Dec. 21. "This increase is due to the City receiving a significantly larger portion of the new venue's advertising and naming rights. Of note, the only comparable market where the taxpayers get any naming rights is San Antonio, and that's \$35,000, far less than the City of Orlando will get."

"The Orlando Magic will contribute \$50 million in cash, \$12 million in capitalized lease payments, and \$42 million in present value of future revenues, including naming rights, suites and advertising," said Joel Glass, vice president of Communications for The Magic. "The Magic will also assume all cost overruns on the events center and has made a \$10 million contribution to the Orlando Performing Arts Center."

The Magic retained control over the choice of architect and construction team, a perk teams in similar sized markets have had. The Magic will be required to use the same open bidding process the government uses.

The city plans to finance \$270 million of the construction costs. Officials say \$170 million of that will come from an additional penny added to the hotel room tourist tax. The final \$100 million will come from bonds, though the terms have been in dispute since shortly after the arena deal was reached.

"In September, there was a \$100 million funding gap in the financial plan for the community venues," Glass said. "The Magic and their financial advisors provided the solution by agreeing to guarantee the purchase of up to \$100 million of subordinate tourist development tax bonds."

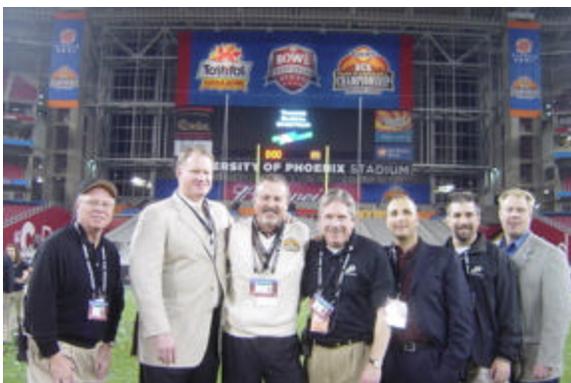
But city negotiators have told the Sentinel they believed the team was offering a loan guarantee, and believe the bonds will carry an additional \$37 million in higher interest costs to taxpayers.

"We committed to it, and nothing has changed regarding that commitment," Glass said. "There are no additional costs to the city, county, or taxpayers beyond the typical costs associated with these types of securities."

Orlando's mayor has said he believes the two parties can resolve their differences on this issue, and didn't expect it to delay the project.

Glass agreed. "Our goal from the beginning has been to be a good corporate citizen, and take a leadership role in helping plan for our community's future." — Liz Boardman and Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this article: Allen Johnson, (407) 849-2012; Joel Glass, (407) 916-2434; Brie Turek, (407) 246-3106



After hosting both the Fiesta Bowl and BCS Championship Game, Arizona Sports and Tourism President Ted Ferris (third from left) enjoys a moment with Global Spectrum's (from left) Mike Hasson, John Page, Peter Sullivan, Todd Glickman, Pat Talty and Michael Ahearn

NEW GLENDALE STADIUM HOSTS INAUGURAL BOWL GAMES BLITZ

Peter Sullivan and his Global Spectrum management team got a taste of college football after hosting two nationally televised Bowl Championship Series (BCS) games at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz.

On Jan. 1, the facility hosted the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, and then seven days later hosted the BCS championship game between Ohio State and Florida. Both college exhibitions came just after the facility wrapped up its National Football League season with the Arizona Cardinals. Sullivan said the games went off without any serious security incidents.

Venues Today spoke with Sullivan about how his facility prepared to host both national events and worked with officials from the Fiesta Bowl and the NCAA. Here are some of things he shared about the experience:

Kick-off and start times — “From an operational standpoint, I’d say things went really well,” Sullivan said of the two games which both had prime-time, Monday night kickoffs. The Fiesta Bowl officially began at 6:50 p.m., and Sullivan said his staff was able to get everyone in their seats by 6:15 through uniformed ushers and security personnel.

“The BCS Championship game was pretty much a carbon copy of that, and we had everyone in their seats a half-hour before the 6:30 kick-off.”

Sullivan said the city’s tourism department actively campaigned throughout the week to encourage fans to arrive at the facility early, using the public transportation system or prepaid parking. The facility also tried to lure fans to the facility early using three promotional parties, each with their own food and beverage component. Sunny skies with temperatures in the 80s also helped.

“We spoke with the airport people on the day after the BCS Championship game and they said it was one of their busiest.” Sullivan said.

Seating — In order to accommodate the swell of fans expected to attend both events, Sullivan and company had to upgrade the facility’s 63,000-seating capacity used for Cardinals games. Sullivan went with Extravaganza Seating for temporary sections placed in the stadium. About 5,000 seats were hoisted in the facility’s south-end zone — typically the entrance for the field’s portable turf. The remainder of the seating was installed at a grade on the facility’s south and north bridges — the other two sections where additional seats would enjoy a full line of sight.

“We actually set the whole thing up in about 14 hours and we got a lot of good response on our seating configuration,” he said.

Concessions — Sullivan said the Fiesta Bowl and BCS officials had not yet released per caps reported by concessionaire Centerplate on either game, although he believed both games did quite well with additional barbeque stations erected inside the concourse and outside in the parking lot, adjacent to a 20,000-person pre-game party hosted by the Fiesta Bowl organization on a nearby youth sports field.

His staff also placed portable restrooms outside of the facility in the parking lot to accommodate the pre-game parties — a first for the stadium — as well as some additional strategically placed portable restrooms inside the facility to meet the needs of the large capacity crowd.

Field — The stadium got a brand new grass-turf field for the BCS Championship game,

rolled out on top of the field used for the Fiesta Bowl game. The field will remain on the grounds until Feb. 7 when the stadium hosts an exhibition match between the U.S.A. Men's National Soccer Team and their counterparts in Mexico. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Peter Sullivan, (623) 433-7106

Rendering of the Sprint Center, Kansas City, Mo.



PENGUINS MULL MOVE TO K.C. AFTER OFFER OF FREE RENT

The Pittsburgh Penguins' plans of staying in Pennsylvania got a bit more complicated after AEG Live president Tim Leiweke made the National Hockey League team a very lucrative offer.

If team owner Mario Lemieux agrees to move the team to the new Sprint Center in Kansas City, Mo., Leiweke is

willing to let the team play rent-free with the option to emerge as equal managing partners. That means the team could get a cut of concessions, luxury suites and ticketing sales.

Leiweke has been mum on other aspects of the deal, saying he only made the announcement after his Jan. 3 and 4 meetings with team officials and Pennsylvania politicians leaked to the media.

"What we've tried to do is not publicly negotiate this deal," he said. "Word leaked out that [the team] was headed to Kansas City and we wanted to make sure this didn't become a spectacle. We want to make it clear to everyone that the offer didn't require rent or a buy-in."

Despite the lucrative deal, Leiweke said he was less than optimistic that the popular team would leave Pittsburgh.

"My expectation is that their preference would be to stay," he said during a Jan. 5 interview. The team said it was planning to make a decision within 30 days whether to move to Kansas City, or remain in Pennsylvania.

To keep the team in Pittsburgh, the city would have to come to the table with a plan to replace the aging Mellon Arena. At 45-years-old, the facility is the oldest arena in the NHL and lacks many of the modern amenities needed by a professional sports franchise. The team's lease with the facility ends in June.

Pittsburgh officials are said to be working on a Plan B to save the team after a proposal by the Detroit-based Isle of Capri Casinos to construct a \$290-million arena alongside a casino. Capri owner Dan Barden is currently in talks with Lemieux and Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell and Pittsburgh mayor Luke Ravenstahl on developing a plan to keep the team in town.

There also continue to be several groups interested in buying the team, although it was taken off the market after the slots deal fell through. Frank D'Angelo of Steelback Breweries in Tiverton, Ontario, has expressed interest in purchasing the team. Also

interested is William "Boots" Del Biaggio III, a venture capitalist who has an agreement with the Sprint Center to own any NHL team that relocates to Kansas City. Biaggio already co-owns the Omaha Scouts of the U.S. Hockey League with Lemieux.

"There's no doubt in anyone's mind that a hockey team would be a success in Kansas City," Biaggio said. "Especially a team like the Penguins which have a storied legacy in hockey history."

Biaggio also dismissed arguments that the city's past attempts at hosting pro teams was a black eye for its sports reputation. Kansas City hosted the Scouts for the 1974 and 1975 seasons before the team relocated to New Jersey and eventually became the Devils. The city also hosted the National Basketball Association's Kings for three seasons before the team permanently relocated to Sacramento.

Leiweke also said he has no doubts the team will succeed if brought to Kansas City, although he is in no hurry to steal another team away.

"Kansas City knows what it's like to be on the losing end of a team relocation and we don't want to create any turmoil in attempts to acquire a team," he said. "We don't want to get in front of the leagues on this one." — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Tim Leiweke, (213) 763-7700; William "Boots" Del Biaggio, (650) 234-7222



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BOOKINGS



HOT tickets

TSO PLAYS THE HOLIDAYS

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. 19, 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:* \$4,454,302; *Event:* Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band; *Venue:* **The Palace of Auburn Hills (Mich.)**; *Attendance:* 71,123; *Ticket Range:* \$65; *Promoter:* Blackbird Productions, Live Nation, Palace Sports & Entertainment; *Dates:* Dec. 20, 22, 28, 30; *No. of Shows:* 4

2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,374,269; *Event:* Widespread Panic; *Venue:* **Philips Arena, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 27,940; *Ticket Range:* \$49.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 30-31; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$703,378; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra - West; *Venue:* **Kemper Arena, Kansas City, Mo.**; *Attendance:* 19,619; *Ticket Range:* \$41.50-\$31.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Mammoth Live; *Dates:* Dec. 26; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$574,242; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra - East; *Venue:* **HSBC Arena, Buffalo, N.Y.**; *Attendance:* 13,762; *Ticket Range:* \$48-\$38; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 23; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$562,668; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra - West; *Venue:* **Xcel Energy Center, Saint Paul, Minn.**; *Attendance:* 14,656; *Ticket Range:* \$43.25-\$33.25; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 30; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001 - 15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$651,428; *Event:* Van Morrison; *Venue:* **Mandalay Bay Events Center, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 6,257; *Ticket Range:* \$157.50-\$47.25; *Promoter:* Andrew Hewitt, Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 30; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$603,200; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra - East; *Venue:* **Atlantic**

City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall; Attendance: 11,308; Ticket Range: \$59.50-\$39.50;
Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 28; No. of Shows: 1

3) Gross Sales: \$439,390; Event: Trans-Siberian Orchestra - East; Venue: **1st Mariner Arena, Baltimore**; Attendance: 11,666; Ticket Range: \$44-\$34; Promoter: Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 29; No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$255,900; Event: Trans-Siberian Orchestra - East; Venue: **DCU Center, Worcester, Mass.**; Attendance: 5,677; Ticket Range: \$50-\$40; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 27; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$220,795; Event: Trans-Siberian Orchestra - West; Venue: **Mark Of The Quad Cities, Moline, Ill.**; Attendance: 6,135; Ticket Range: \$39-\$29; Promoter: Live Nation, In-house; Dates: Dec. 29; No. of Shows: 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$69,571,870; Event: Radio City Christmas Spectacular; Venue: **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; Attendance: 1,065,222; Ticket Range: \$105-\$40; Promoter: MSG Entertainment; Dates: Nov. 9-Dec. 30; No. of Shows: 203

2) Gross Sales: \$8,243,897; Event: "Annie"; Venue: **Theater At Madison Square Garden, New York**; Attendance: 155,875; Ticket Range: \$94.50-\$30.50; Promoter: MSG Entertainment; Dates: Dec. 6-30; No. of Shows: 32

3) Gross Sales: \$240,000; Event: moe; Venue: **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; Attendance: 5,000; Ticket Range: \$48; Promoter: Live Nation, MSG Entertainment; Dates: Dec. 31; No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$90,579; Event: The Clarks; Venue: **A.J. Palumbo Center, Pittsburgh**; Attendance: 4,082; Ticket Range: \$25-\$20; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 30; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$82,963; Event: Andy Williams Christmas Show; Venue: **Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.**; Attendance: 5,134; Ticket Range: \$37.50-\$27.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 19; No. of Shows: 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$1,898,106; Event: Atlanta Ballet Nutcracker; Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; Attendance: 45,278; Ticket Range: \$89-\$15; Promoter: Atlanta Ballet; Dates: Dec. 2-30; No. of Shows: 28

2) Gross Sales: \$452,682; Event: Twelve Angry Men; Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; Attendance: 14,985; Ticket Range: \$43-\$14; Promoter: Broadway Across America; Dates: Jan. 2-7; No. of Shows: 8

3) Gross Sales: \$225,948; Event: Trey Anastasio; Venue: **House of Blues, Atlantic City, N.J.**; Attendance: 5,049; Ticket Range: \$39.50; Promoter: House of Blues; Dates: Dec. 30-31; No. of Shows: 2

4) Gross Sales: \$213,577; Event: Rodney Carrington; Venue: **Majestic Theatre, Dallas**; Attendance: 1,704; Ticket Range: \$75-\$39; Promoter: Outback Concerts; Dates: Jan. 5-6; No. of Shows: 4

5) *Gross Sales*: \$172,875; *Event*: Widespread Panic; *Venue*: **Roxy Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance*: 1,085; *Ticket Range*: \$500-\$125; *Promoter*: Live Nation; *Dates*: Dec. 29; *No. of Shows*: 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

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The Arcade Fire



HOT ARCADE FIRE HITS CHURCHES ON PRE-TOUR TOUR

There's a good reason the Canadian rock collective The Arcade Fire is one of the most buzzed about bands of the moment. And it has to do with a commodity that is increasingly rare in these blogging, YouTube, paparazzi-plagued days of instant news and media overload: a good old-fashioned

sense of mystery.

Though they logged more than a year and a half on the road in support of their 2004 debut album, "Funeral," the 10-piece Montreal band known for high-energy live shows in which band members switch instruments and bound around stage with reckless abandon, are dialing things back for the tour in support of their second full-length album "Neon Bible."

And though they could cash in and play much bigger venues and raise ticket prices, according to booking agent David T. "Boche" Vieceilli of Chicago's The Billions Corporation, the group has decided to stay true to their audience and artistic muse.

"I think without being too self-absorbed, this would qualify as one of most anticipated tours of the year," said Vieceilli. Before announcing the full slate of dates for their spring/summer tour, the Arcade Fire is playing a series of quirky venues where they will preview the material from "Neon Bible." The brief tour includes a three-night stand at the 600-capacity St. John's Church in London and two nights at London's 630-capacity Porchester Hall, as well as five nights at the 600-capacity Ukrainian National Federation Hall in Montreal and five at the similar sized Judson Memorial Church in New York.

Tickets for the London shows sold out in two minutes and the Montreal and New York dates took around six minutes each to sell out.

There is no doubt the band could be playing larger venues on their upcoming tour, but the church shows are the perfect example of how they have chosen to march to their own drummer. "They typically like to do things in a non-traditional way and the church shows are just a much more special experience," said Ian Quay, a representative for the group's management company, Quest Management. "Playing bigger venues is just not what they want to do. They're looking to continue playing in places that are worthwhile and not just in some bar."

Quay said Quest staffers scoured a number of New York churches in search of the right one for the shows and while space is limited, the band and management purposely booked multiple nights to give more fans a chance to attend. And rest assured that on

the upcoming tour, The Arcade Fire will be playing bigger rooms than they did the last time around, but, according to Quay, "they could be playing even bigger. And they could probably stand to play much larger venues, but we want to fulfill what they're looking to do."

Viecelli said the band doesn't want to play sheds and arenas and see their ticket prices soar past \$50 apiece for fear of alienating their hardcore fans. They could easily sell 15,000 or more tickets in New York alone at this point, Viecelli said, but, "they don't want them to feel like the band has been reading their press and that they've swiftly gone out of touch."

In an attempt to make sure only their real fans are attending the sneak preview shows, Billions, working with New York's Bowery Presents, decided to sell tickets only online for the New York shows, with a two ticket per person limit and no hard tickets issued. The all-will call show will require that attendees present a credit card and picture ID that matches their purchase, which means that if scalpers did get their hands on tickets, at best they will be forced to sell one half of the pair and attend the show with their clients. Tickets for the Montreal shows were handled by consignment at record stores, also in an attempt to limit the ability of scalpers to buy up the rare commodities.

Though dates have not yet been announced, Viecelli said a North American spring tour has been plotted out following a string of winter European dates. And while the band will certainly not be playing arenas – they did, after all, sell just north of 300,000 copies of their debut album, which is a solid independent success, but not a blockbuster – he said you can expect them to hit theaters of varying sizes. Just don't expect them to stay on the road forever, or to hit many secondary markets.

"With how quickly things have taken off and how much they love playing live ... they're such a tremendous group of live performers because they pour everything into every performance and that's why they're so mind-bogglingly convincing and energizing," he said.

"They're a restlessly creative group, so they won't stay on the road for two years because they want to get back to the studio and be a creative band instead of a regurgitative band. That's why they stopped touring for 'Funeral' long before most other bands would have stopped and turned down some larger tours and deliberately didn't court radio. They will always underplay, which is why there are places in this country they have yet to go to and may not. They will never go 40-50 markets deep, unless they tour for two years. And they do not want to be that kind of band." — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: David Viecelli, (312) 997-9999; Ian Quay, (212) 414-3255

After missing last year's Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo because of cancer, Sheryl Crow is back this year and planning to perform



75TH HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW UPS THE ANTE FOR ENTERTAINMENT

A 20-percent entertainment budget increase at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo accounts for bookings like George Strait, Reba McEntire, Sheryl Crow, Alan Jackson, Martina McBride and Beyoncé for the Feb. 27-March 18 event.

The undisclosed budget – the entire event costs around \$50 million – was enhanced to help celebrate the livestock show's 75th anniversary, said president and CEO Skip Wagner.

"We were aiming, quite honestly, for our best year," Wagner said Monday when the acts were announced. "We went after the stronger, top-end acts. We want to have record-setting attendance."

To do that, the fair will have to beat record attendance of 1,215,913 set in 2003, the first year the concerts and rodeos were held in Reliant Stadium, which can seat in excess of 72,000 people. The top potential attendance would be 1,450,440 if all tickets to all 20 shows sold out, Wagner said.

Singer/songwriter Crow will be making her first appearance at the fair, although she was scheduled last year. However, a couple of weeks prior to that concert, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and fellow cancer survivor Melissa Etheridge filled in for her.

Last year, the event had four sellout performances, including Strait, Ramon Ayala and Jay Perez, Hilary Duff and Brooks & Dunn, the latter of which set the livestock show's paid attendance record with 72,783 concertgoers, said Leroy Shafer, vice president and chief operating officer.

Other acts new to the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo will include Los Lonely Boys, KEM, The Cheetah Girls and Hannah Montana, and Josh Turner.

Strait will be returning for his 20th livestock show concert, with McEntire and Brooks & Dunn tied for what will be their 16th appearances. Alan Jackson will be making his 15th appearance.

Tickets will range from \$16 to \$300, available through Ticketmaster and also on the grounds, where Wagner said many patrons come to avoid surcharges. The 60 \$300 tickets allow patrons to sit in the front row behind the chutes.

"The \$300 includes not just the seats," Wagner said. "The people get to go down on the dirt and be as close to the stage as possible. They also get to have a chuckwagon steak dinner, carnival ride tickets and a souvenir gift bag."

The 120 tickets that cost \$200 will buy patrons all of the above, except the seats are in the second and third row up from the chutes. This will be the third year for the deal, although the third row was added this year because of the popularity of the package.

"They sell well," Wagner said. "They've already sold out for George Strait. We'll probably sell out 12 or 13 performances. Last year, we sold out nearly every show with two rows."

Not counting the \$200 and \$300 ticket packages, higher end concert tickets cost up to \$77 for the "action seats," Wagner said.

Most tickets will be sold in advance of the show, Wagner said. Some shows might end up with 10,000 day-of-show tickets available, like for the walk-up heavy Go Tejano Day featuring Pesado and Emilio.

But for most shows, the number of walk-up tickets will be more in the 3,000 to 6,000 range, Wagner said. Entertainment is booked in-house by buyer Jason Kane, Wagner noted.

Plans for this year's line-up began during last year's concerts with exit polls asking patrons what they thought of the show they just saw plus who they would like to see in the future.

"Two months afterward, we poll season ticketholders and do telephone polls of the general public," Wagner said. "By the end of June, we'll have a good grasp of who we're going after."

Officials try to have everything booked by November.

Acts that patrons mentioned last year included Sugarland and Josh Turner, Wagner said.

"We could tell based on losing Sheryl Crow that a lot of people were disappointed," he added. "It was easy to bring her back this year." – Mary Wade Burnside

Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo Line-up

Tuesday, Feb. 27: George Strait
Wednesday, Feb. 28: Los Lonely Boys
Thursday, March 1: Reba McEntire
Friday, March 2: Black Heritage Day with Natalie Cole, KEM
Saturday, March 3: Clay Walker
Sunday, March 4: The Cheetah Girls, Hannah Montana
Monday, March 5: Josh Turner
Tuesday, March 6: Gretchen Wilson
Wednesday, March 7: Sheryl Crow
Thursday, March 8: Alan Jackson
Friday, March 9: Pat Green
Saturday, March 10: Martina McBride
Sunday, March 11: Go Tejano Day with Pesado, Emilio
Monday, March 12: Spring Break Stampede with Sugarland
Tuesday, March 13: Spring Break Stampede with Ford presents Toby Keith
Wednesday, March 14: Spring Break Stampede with Rascal Flatts
Thursday, March 15: Spring Break Stampede Beyoncé
Friday, March 16: Spring Break Stampede Dierks Bentley
Saturday, March 17: RodeoHouston Super Series Championship Brooks & Dunn
Sunday, March 18: RODEOHOUSTON Xtreme Bull with ZZ Top

Interviewed for this story: Skip Wagner and Leroy Shafer, (832) 667-1000

MARKETING



Devils Chairman & Managing Partner Jeff Vanderbeek with Prudential Financial's Chairman and CEO Art Ryan; The Prudential Center will be the future home of the New Jersey Devils.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS LATEST TEAM TO LAND BIG NAME DEAL

The New Jersey Devils of the National Hockey League have announced a \$100 million deal with Prudential Financial for the naming rights to the team's new arena in downtown Newark.

The 20-year contract has Prudential paying the team about \$5 million annually for the naming rights to the \$370 million arena, located adjacent to the worldwide headquarters of the life insurance and investment behemoth. The facility is expected to open for the beginning of the team's 2007-2008 season.

Prudential CEO Arthur F. Ryan said during a press conference Monday that the deal was more about securing a legacy in Newark and less about promoting the Prudential brand name.

"Very frankly, Prudential doesn't need that," Ryan said. "So we had to look a little bit deeper. Part of it, of course, started with Newark. We've been here 130 years."

Ryan also said he doesn't mind if the arena is referred to as "The Rock," after the company's symbol of the Rock of Gibraltar.

"We're going to put Prudential Center up there. I suspect someone before long will be calling it The Rock, and that's fine with us," he said after a news conference Monday. "That's been our icon for over 100 years and we're not uncomfortable with that."

Company spokesperson Gabrielle Shanin said it was unlikely that Prudential would attempt to purchase other naming rights deals outside of the Newark area. The company has donated money to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark and secured the naming rights for the main performance hall, but that would likely be it.

"It's not really part of an ongoing strategy to be naming things," Shanin said.

The city of Newark contributed \$210 million to the arena, which was initially slated to cost \$310 million. The Devils are said to be paying for the cost overruns. HOK Sport is the architect on the project. The facility also includes a 4,800-square-foot LED/HD quality big-screen television monitor, two high-end lounges, a 350-seat restaurant,

2,200 club seats and 78 luxury suites. It's the first professional sports facility to ever be built in Newark.

The deal represents a continuation of the financial services industry's continued involvement in naming rights deals. Shawn Bradley, chief operating officer of marketing research at the Bonham Group, a Colorado naming rights consulting agency, said that banking and financial services companies are the largest category for naming rights deals, representing more contracts than the second, third and fourth categories combined. He said there are 25 naming rights deals for financial groups currently on the market. The next category, airlines, had six deals.

"This is an extremely large deal for an NHL-only facility," he said, adding that the number of naming rights opportunities in the pro sports is dwindling much faster than demand. Only four NHL teams currently don't have naming rights deals.

Furthermore, the high price tag, combined with a record naming rights deal at the nearby Shea Stadium in New York City, sets the stage for a potentially record-breaking naming rights contract at the proposed National Football League stadium in East Rutherford, N. J. — expected to be shared between the New York Giants and the New York Jets.

"I fully expect the Prudential deal will drive the price even farther," he said. "I think we'll see the value on that stadium reach the pinnacle."

Besides the hockey team, the Newark arena is also expected to host a new Major Indoor Soccer League franchise, and a possible college sports team. The arena is expected to seat 17,615 people for hockey, 18,500 for basketball and 19,000 for concerts. The Devils currently play at the Continental Airlines Arena in East Rutherford, N.J. The building's other tenant, the New Jersey Nets of the National Basketball Association, will likely be moved to a yet-to-be-built arena in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The new facility is part of an ongoing, multi-billion-dollar revitalization of Newark, which includes construction of the Triangle Park, connecting the arena to Newark Penn Station, as well as the renewal of the Ironbound District, waterfront development and a mixed-use retail, residential and business center. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Gabrielle Shanin, (973) 802-4757; Arthur Ryan, (973) 802-4757; Shawn Bradley, (303) 592-4290

CONCESSIONS

The midway at the 2006 Florida State Fair



FRIED PEPSI, AFFORDABLE SHOWS HIGHLIGHT FLORIDA STATE FAIR PLANS

What does a venue do when Fried Coke is the hot new fair food item but the facility has a contract with Pepsi?

Fried Pepsi, of course.

The hit of the State Fair of Texas in

Dallas will be appearing at the Feb. 8-19 Florida State Fair, Tampa, albeit under a different moniker.

Fred Brown, director of operations, said Larry Ormes of Indiana-based Carousel BBQ will adapt the food item, which resembles doughnut holes, for the Pepsi fair. "He called me about it and said he saw it out on the road and wanted to bring it to the Florida State Fair," Brown said. "We said, 'Absolutely.' We like new stuff."

Brown described Ormes' version as starting out with a funnel cake-like batter, only substituting Pepsi for water. "Then when you put it all together, you put Pepsi syrup on top of it," Brown said.

The other new fair food will be something called a Hot Roast Beef Sundae. That concoction will be two scoops of potatoes in a 10-ounce bowl, covered with roast beef, gravy, shredded cheese and a cherry tomato on top. "Then you can walk around and eat it," Brown said.

Brown did not have exact retail costs for the new items, but he estimated that Fried Pepsi would go for around \$3 and the Hot Roast Beef Sundae will cost around \$6 or \$7.

Last year's fair did not have a hot new food, Brown said.

"There hasn't been a whole lot of new stuff out there. It's about the world's largest smorgasbord anyway already out there."

Another change at the Florida State Fair, said Executive Director Chuck Pesano, will be an attempt to offer lower-cost musical entertainment with acts such as Davy Jones and Mickey Gilley appearing in a smaller venue, 5,000-seat Entertainment Hall, rather than at the on-site Ford Amphitheatre.

"What we're trying to do is keep things affordable," Pesano said. "The goal is to keep concert prices in the \$5 to \$10 range. To do that, we had to have certain groups that meet the budget."

The one headline concert that patrons who want to plunk down bigger bucks can see will be Stevie Nicks, who will perform in the amphitheater on Feb. 9 with tickets costing \$65, \$50 and \$35.

Otherwise, the line-up includes "1964: The Tribute," a Beatles show, on Feb. 11; The Drifters with Bennie Anderson on Feb. 13; Cornell Gunther's Coasters on Feb. 14; the Country Gold Tour 2007 on Feb. 15; Gilley on Feb. 16; Davy Jones, the former lead singer with the Monkees, on Feb. 17 and Ronnie Milsap on Feb. 18.

The approach is something Pesano has been working toward for a few years. "Last year, we had middle-of-the road acts that were low cost," Pesano said. "We tried to charge \$15 or \$20. But we found that patrons shied away from spending that much additional money. So we're trying to please the patrons."

This year's concerts, which mostly cost \$5 with the exception of the Country Gold Tour 2007, will allow families to walk around and make a last-minute decision to see a show, some of which will be repeated.

The entertainment budget for the entire fair is \$600,000, Pesano said. That includes walk-around acts and the new circus, Circus Hollywood, that will be appearing at this year's fair, all part of an effort to offer lower-cost and free entertainment for the price of admission. Brandon Ford is sponsoring the circus.

Last year, the Florida State Fair was Big Top-less, but prior to that, the Royal Hanneford Circus performed annually at the event.

The circus, according to Pesano, includes stunts and theatrics. Advertised stunts include "The Human Projectile" shot from the giant cannon, and the "Globe of Death," in which four performers are locked in a globe.

Ford also will bring an animal exhibit called "Circus Menagerie and Giraffic Park," billed as North America's only "traveling safari."

Last year's attendance was down to 434,000 compared to 523,000 in 2005 because of rain, Pesano said. He hopes to get back up to the half a million mark.

The price of admission remains \$10 for adults and \$5 for ages 6-11. "We look at everything every year, but we felt that it made the best sense to keep the same price," Pesano said.

Patrons also will be able to take advantage of six additional rides on the independent midway, which was possible because of a new configuration that added 800 feet to the area. The fair also added more food and "comfort zones" where patrons can sit.

The 2007 theme, "Nowhere but the fair," will be advertised in a new jingle in radio and television spots, and Pesano hopes that the theme will be a consistent marketing tool in upcoming years.

"Our idea was that by establishing a jingle and using it multiple years, it will start being recognized by people next year and the year after. When they start hearing the jingle, what will hopefully start popping in their minds is, 'Great, it's time for the state fair.'" — Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this article: Fred Brown, (813) 621-7821; Chuck Pesano, (813) 621-7821

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SHORT TAKES



Mourners gather at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, then cross the bridge to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. The funeral procession passed by Van Andel Arena, also a staging ground.

DEVOS PLACE HELPS LAY FORD TO REST

DeVos Place, Grand Rapids, Mich., became the staging ground for visitors hoping to pay their last respects Jan. 9-10 to the late President Gerald R. Ford, who was laid to rest at his Presidential Museum, just across the Grand River from the venue. The SMG staff at DeVos Place worked with local and national security personnel to set up a queue running through the convention center's Exhibit Hall and Grand Gallery. 57,000 people passed through security checkpoints and had the opportunity to sign condolence books. Concessions were open around the clock.

Contact: *Hilarie Szarowicz, (616) 742-6397*

AEG SELLS D.C. UNITED

The Anschutz Entertainment Group will receive an estimated \$33 million for the sale of D.C. United of Major League Soccer to an ownership group that includes San Francisco real estate developer Victor MacFarlane, former Duke basketball star Brian Davis and Discovery Communications founder John Hendricks, who founded the short-lived Women's United Soccer Association in 2001.

Contact: *Michael Roth, (213) 742-7155*

BLIGE, RICHIE JOIN ESSENCE FESTIVAL LINE-UP

Mary J. Blige and Lionel Richie joined the 2007 Essence Music Festival for headlining performances July 7 at the Louisiana Superdome, New Orleans. The announced line-up already includes Beyonce for a July 6 performance. The 2007 Essence Music Festival is produced by Essence Festivals in association with Festival Productions Inc. – New Orleans and AEG Live.

Contact: dbaxter@essence.com

STATE THEATER REOPENS AFTER SIX YEARS

After seven years of planning, fundraising and renovation, the State Theatre in State College, Pa., has finally reopened its doors to the public. The historic theater had its grand opening on Jan. 4 featuring Mike Reid, a Grammy-winning singer-songwriter and former Penn State All-American football player. The State Theatre, which originally opened in 1938 and closed in 2001, has been redesigned as a nonprofit community theater. The facility will host local community productions, children's theater, local and national concerts, film festivals and art-house and second-run films, among other events.

Contact: Mike Negra, (814) 364-1241

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

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