

VENUES**today**

The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

March 14, 2007 VOL. VI, Number IX ISSN 1547-4143

*Note - The March 14th e-newsletter was launched yesterday evening with incorrect header information and date. This is the corrected version. We apologize for the error.

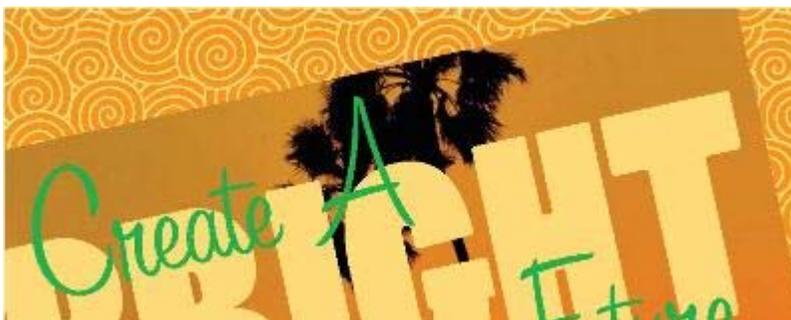
Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Our travels for the next two weeks include South by Southwest in Austin and the Midwest Fair Managers Association gathering in Nashville. Perhaps we'll see you soon. Look for coverage here and in our April print magazine. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"It will be the most amazing production process that anyone has ever undertaken...There are so many units, so many people, well over 100 ice skaters rehearsing simultaneously." — *Kenneth Feld of Feld Entertainment on production of the soon-to-be launched Disney's High School Musical: The Ice Tour.*

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The April issue of *Venues Today* will be packed with information!

* We'll take an in-depth look at one of the leading states in the venue world - **Florida**.

second look at what's happening overseas in **Europe**.

* The second **INTIX** quarterly of the year will be in this issue and we'll review the hot topics discussed during the recent Houston convention.

* We will debut our first **Spring Special** - a preview of what will be happening at the 2007 fairs.

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VENUE NEWS

Texas Freshman Kevin Durant is sure to be a crowd pleaser this year during the team's first round game at the Spokane (Wash.) Arena.



ARENAS PREPARE FOR FIRST ROUND OF MARCH MADNESS

Sunday marked the hurried race for final preparations at the 2007 March Madness Tournament, one of the largest sporting events in the country. Venue managers are given their game schedules with only four days notice and have to begin scheduling and hiring temporary staff to work the popular sporting events.

As always, alcohol sales are banned from all National Collegiate Athletic Association events, and most venues have to cover up their sponsor signage. Arena managers must also work with their suite-holders. In most instances, suite holders get first crack at purchasing tickets for the game, but unused

suites are first offered to the NCAA.

Kevin Twohig, general manager of the Spokane (Wash.) Arena, said venues nervously waited to get both their scheduling allotments and their team assignments. Pulling in a regional team or a Division 1 powerhouse can mean the difference between fans in seats, and half-full sold-out houses. The Spokane Arena, for example, was sold out nearly a year in advance, but Twohig said the ticket holders might not fill the stands on the early Thursday and Friday games if they hadn't landed the right team.

"Luckily, every one of our games is a marquee game and we couldn't have been happier," Twohig said. "I mean, we even got Notre Dame playing on Saint Patrick's Day — it just doesn't get any better than that."

The biggest winner this year was the Arco Arena in Sacramento, which secured number two ranked UCLA — a surefire ticket mover in the PAC-10 favorite region. Arco Arena also got Gonzaga, which almost eliminated UCLA in the 2006 Sweet 16 match-up. The two teams could face each other in the second round this year, likely making it one of the most watched games in the tournament. The second coup went to the United Center in Chicago, which landed the top-ranked Kansas team.

The other big game in the second round this year could be the University of Southern California versus the University of Texas, held at the Spokane Arena. Twohig said he expects that game, as well as the potential Oregon versus Notre Dame game on Saturday to do extremely well.

"In a market like ours, where we don't have an NBA team or an NHL franchise, this is an extremely big deal and our community really responds," Twohig said.

As always in the tournament, each participating school gets ticket allotments based on the size of the host arena. Twohig said each college was sold 250 tickets for the Spokane games, although not all will purchase their full allotment.

"We think whatever doesn't get purchased will be bought by Oregon," he said. "They're pretty enthusiastic about this year."

Rupp Arena in Lexington, Ky., had about 6,000 tickets available before Sunday, Food and Beverage Manager Brian McMillin said. As of Tuesday, the arena was sold out. Schools using that arena were allotted 550 tickets each.

The first game has a 12:40 p.m. start time on a Thursday, which could prove difficult McMillin admitted. Thankfully, the opening game against Stanford features Louisville, only 75 miles from Lexington and a likely big game draw.

"I think that afternoon will be fine, especially with Louisville as our lead," he said. "Sometimes you just never know. We could sell out 20,000 seats for a (University of) Kentucky game and only 17,000 will show."

McMillan said his second challenge will be the Friday games, which don't tip off until 9:40 p.m. and require ongoing food service to 4 a.m.

"We're under contract to provide refreshment and hospitality to media, so it's definitely going to be a very long night," he said.

Another winner in this year's draw was the HSBC Center in Buffalo, N.Y., which landed perennial favorite Duke, as well as third-ranked Pittsburgh.

"As far as attendance goes, I think we're going to do best with Pittsburgh," said Kevin Sylvester, the building's director of amateur athletics.

The HSBC Center officially sold all of its tickets in October and is also allotting 550 tickets to each participating team.

"We've been preparing for this for the last two years. It's an extensive process and there are a lot of guidelines set up by the NCAA," he said.

This year the building had to install three-sided shot clocks so that fans and players could see the timers from all angles. The arena also had to install LED-lighting along the backboard for better visuals, as well as new flooring and game surfaces.

"It all really needed to be done anyway, this was just a good excuse," he said. – Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Kevin Twohig, (509) 279-7002; Kevin Sylvester, (614) 246-7000; Brian McMillin, (859) 233-4567 x3530

Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell discusses an agreement to finance and build a new arena, to keep the Pittsburgh Penguins in Pittsburgh.



LEMIEUX PULLS HAT TRICK TO KEEP PENGUINS IN PITTSBURGH

PITTSBURGH — Just days after the Penguins hockey team owners threatened to relocate the team, local and state officials and Penguins owner Mario Lemieux announced on Tuesday that a deal has been reached on building a new arena for the team. The deal will keep the team in Pittsburgh for the next 30 years, officials said.

In a celebratory press conference at the Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center, Gov. Ed Rendell thanked Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato, Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and the Penguins ownership for the work in reaching the deal.

"These were difficult negotiations," Rendell said. "If you asked me what tipped the balance, it was the strength and loyalty and support of the Penguins fans. Kansas City or any city would have a hard time matching that support."

The \$290-million arena will be built across the street from Mellon Arena, the current home of the Penguins and the oldest arena in the National Hockey League. Gambling revenues make up the bulk of the funding for the arena.

Detroit businessman Don Barden, who recently won a slots casino license from the state that will allow him to build a casino on the north side of Pittsburgh, will contribute \$7.5 million a year for 30 years to finance the arena. The gambling-financed state economic development fund also will provide \$7.5 million per year for 30 years for the arena.

The deal calls for an annual Penguins contribution toward the \$290 million arena of \$4.2 million per year. About \$2 million of that amount should be recoupable through naming rights to the arena, which were given to the Penguins. Also included in that share is \$400,000 a year from a parking surcharge once the arena is opened, and \$200,000 a year from parking after Mellon Arena is demolished.

The Pittsburgh-Allegheny County Sports and Exhibition Authority, which will own the arena, will pay the Penguins \$8.5 million for the team-owned old St. Francis Central Hospital, which is in the footprint of the new arena. The team will be responsible for the maintenance, operation and management of the new arena and will keep all revenues generated by it.

Pittsburgh leaders said the two sides had the same plan from the start of negotiations.

"We shared the same goal as the Penguins' ownership – to keep the team here, playing in Pittsburgh for at least the next 30 years," said Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato. "Our new, multi-purpose facility will host NHL hockey and also serve as an entertainment centerpiece and economic generator for our entire region."

Onorato said that a \$15 million credit would be given to the Penguins to help the team to buy and develop 28 acres surrounding the new arena. He also noted that a labor stabilization agreement reached with local trade unions would allow the arena work to move forward without disruptions to the project's budget.

Pittsburgh's mayor echoed Onorato's enthusiasm for the arena deal.

"This is another great step forward for the City of Pittsburgh and our region," said Mayor Luke Ravenstahl. "We all worked very hard to ensure that the Penguins would stay here in Pittsburgh and to provide a new 21st century entertainment center for our city without using local taxpayer dollars."

Lemieux said the process of getting an arena deal has been a very long one. "I'm glad that I'm here today to announce that we do have a deal to keep the Penguins in Pittsburgh for the next 30 years," he said.

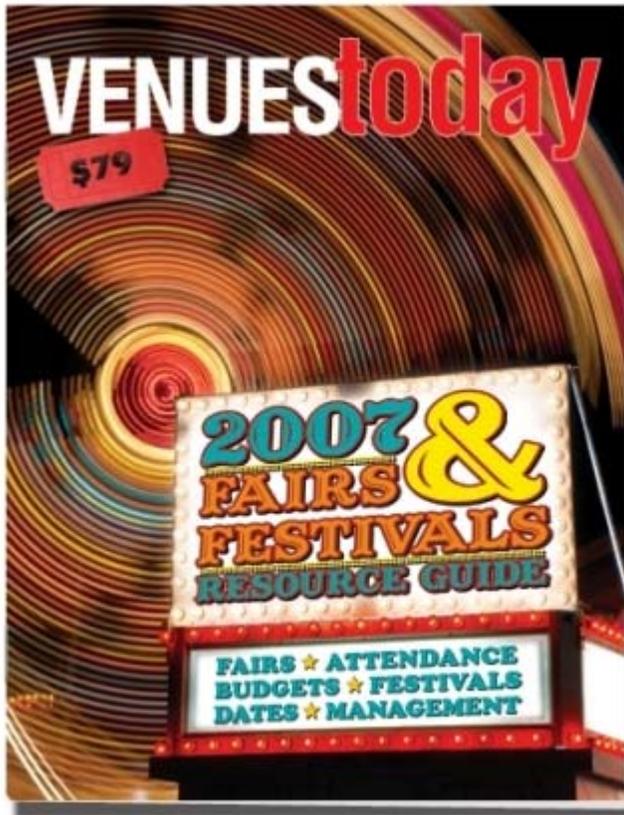
National Hockey League commissioner Gary Bettman, who had of late been brought into the arena negotiations, said the reason the deal came together is because local and state officials "stuck to the fundamental principles of their constituencies." He also credited Lemieux with doing what was necessary to seal the deal.

"Mario has made save after save after save," Bettman said, turning to the Penguins owner and former star player. "You are nothing short of phenomenal on and off the ice." — Jonathan Barnes

Interviewed for this story: Ed Rendell, (717) 783-1116; Dan Onorato, (412) 350-6500; Luke Ravenstahl, (412) 255-2142; Mario Lemieux, (412) 393-0200; Gary Bettman, (212) 789-2000

CORRECTION

The feasibility study for Roberts Stadium, Evansville, Ind., is not yet complete and a decision to build a new arena has not been made. *Venues Today* incorrectly reported that situation in last week's e-mail and regrets the error.



2007 FAIRS & FESTIVALS RESOURCE GUIDE

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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

ROD GETS THE NOD IN NYC

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. 20, 2007. 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*: \$4,381,499; *Event*: Rod Stewart; *Venue*: **Madison Square Garden Arena, New York**; *Attendance*: 45,752; *Ticket Range*: \$129.50-\$55; *Promoter*: AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates*: Feb. 8-21; *No. of Shows*: 3

2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,434,742; *Event:* Rod Stewart; *Venue:* **Bell Centre, Montreal, Quebec**; *Attendance:* 15,611; *Ticket Range:* \$106.48-\$46.85; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Feb. 24; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,033,025; *Event:* Josh Groban; *Venue:* **United Center, Chicago**; *Attendance:* 15,115; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$35; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Feb. 24; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,001,808; *Event:* Justin Timberlake; *Venue:* **American Airlines Arena, Miami**; *Attendance:* 14,717; *Ticket Range:* \$85-\$55; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Fantasma; *Dates:* Feb. 24; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$968,836; *Event:* Red Hot Chili Peppers; *Venue:* **Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Ill.**; *Attendance:* 14,524; *Ticket Range:* \$66.60; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* Feb. 27; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$608,786; *Event:* Josh Groban; *Venue:* **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 10,272; *Ticket Range:* \$79.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Feb. 20; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$457,756; *Event:* John Mayer; *Venue:* **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 10,905; *Ticket Range:* \$45.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, SMG Grand Rapids; *Dates:* Feb. 22; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$304,372; *Event:* John Mayer; *Venue:* **Mullins Center, Amherst, Mass.**; *Attendance:* 8,130; *Ticket Range:* \$45-\$35; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Feb. 26; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$272,409; *Event:* Taste of Chaos; *Venue:* **Long Beach (Calif.) Arena**; *Attendance:* 9,999; *Ticket Range:* \$45.50-\$15; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Goldenvoice; *Dates:* Feb. 22; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$226,262; *Event:* U.S. Hot Rod Monster Jam; *Venue:* **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; *Attendance:* 16,067; *Ticket Range:* \$23-\$12.78; *Promoter:* Live Nation Motorsports; *Dates:* March 10-11; *No. of Shows:* 2

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$563,420; *Event:* Mana; *Venue:* **AmericanBank Center, Corpus Christi, Texas**; *Attendance:* 8,248; *Ticket Range:* \$76-\$56; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Latino Event & Marketing Services, In-house; *Dates:* Feb. 25; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$455,288; *Event:* Larry the Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Wells Fargo Theatre, Denver**; *Attendance:* 10,650; *Ticket Range:* \$42.75; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* Feb. 23-24; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$333,196; *Event:* Sesame Street Live; *Venue:* **Nokia at Grand Prairie (Texas)**; *Attendance:* 15,281; *Ticket Range:* \$32-\$16; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Feb. 22-25; *No. of Shows:* 8

4) *Gross Sales:* \$218,202; *Event:* The Moody Blues; *Venue:* **Wells Fargo Theatre, Denver**; *Attendance:* 3,798; *Ticket Range:* \$69.50-\$45; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Feb. 26; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$201,580; *Event:* Wiggles; *Venue:* **Magness Arena, Denver;**
Attendance: 6,997; *Ticket Range:* \$35-\$18; *Promoter:* Wiggles Live USA Inc.; *Dates:*
 March 3; *No. of Shows:* 2

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$687,470; *Event:* Larry the Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta;**
Attendance: 17,600; *Ticket Range:* \$40.25; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* March
 9-11; *No. of Shows:* 4

2) *Gross Sales:* \$619,566; *Event:* Riverdance; *Venue:* **Broward Center For The
 Performing Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.;** *Attendance:* 9,946; *Ticket Range:* \$65-\$45;
Promoter: Broadway Across America, In-house; *Dates:* Feb. 23-25; *No. of Shows:* 5

3) *Gross Sales:* \$594,580; *Event:* James Taylor; *Venue:* **Wilshire Ebell Theatre, Los
 Angeles;** *Attendance:* 7,584; *Ticket Range:* \$99.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live,
 Goldenvoice; *Dates:* Feb. 20-24; *No. of Shows:* 4

4) *Gross Sales:* \$324,814; *Event:* David Copperfield "An Evening of Grand Illusion";
Venue: **Majestic Theatre, Dallas;** *Attendance:* 7,439; *Ticket Range:* \$52.50-\$24.50;
Promoter: The Roberts Group; *Dates:* March 10-11; *No. of Shows:* 5

5) *Gross Sales:* \$306,470; *Event:* Harry Connick Jr.; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta;**
Attendance: 4,398; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$45; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* March 7;
No. of Shows: 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

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Disney's High School Musical: The Ice Tour



THREE-UNIT WORLD TOUR FOR FELD'S NEWEST: HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL ON ICE

New paths and big risks mark the announcement Feld Entertainment will field another ice show. For one thing, they are fielding three units, playing 100 markets worldwide, the first year. Secondly, they are doubling up ice show offerings in a lot of major markets. Third, they are playing a lot of split weeks and short runs. And it's all supported by a blockbuster brand.

Disney's High School Musical: The Ice Tour is being produced by Feld Entertainment and Kenny Ortega,

who wrote the original Disney Channel movie. It is being mounted in cooperation with Disney Theatrical Productions. The show is set to debut Aug. 31-Sept. 1 at the Lakeland

(Fla.) Center, where two of the units are rehearsing. The second unit is rehearsing and will debut at the St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Sept. 7-9. The third unit, also rehearsing in Lakeland, opens outside the U.S.

Kenneth Feld, chairman and CEO of Feld Entertainment, said there is no comparison to other Feld shows in this endeavor. It is one of seven shows the family entertainment entrepreneur is producing this year. Besides the three High School Musical shows, he is producing new gold and blue units of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, a new Doodlebops show and a brand new Disney Live!

So the family show business is healthy? "It is for this family," Feld said.

Staples Center, Los Angeles, is one that snagged this first ice version of High School Musical. Lee Ziedman, general manager there, was very enthusiastic about the added family show. High School Musical Live, the concert version of the movie, performed its last show at Staples Center Jan. 29 and did tremendous business, he said. Now he has one of the designated "world premiere" dates of the ice version, set for Oct. 5. And in December, he will host Feld's Disney on Ice - Princess Wishes.

The Staples Center also gets two American Idol Live productions in this fiscal year. It's family show/reality show/TV spin-off heaven and Zeidman sees no waning of audience enthusiasm. "These are some high powered productions," Zeidman said. "It's tremendous news for the arena industry."

The ice show will be the first live production to feature content from the movie "High School Musical 2," which will premiere on the Disney Channel in August, just before the launch of the tour, Feld said.

That helps mitigate the risk. "This is high risk in the sense we're doing three at one time. We're not doing a show, letting it go out there and see how it does and then do another show," Feld said. "We have enough faith in the phenomenon, the entity and the creative team to put this thing out all at once."

Feld Entertainment's Nicole Feld said the production will move in nine trucks and will be similar to other Feld shows in that it is built to travel, in fact tearing down and setting up more than most. She was particularly enthusiastic about the creative team assembled on this show and the state of the art technology, both sound and lighting.

That team, besides Ortega and the Feld pros, includes Jeff Calhoun, director, who also directed Brooklyn the Musical and Grease among other shows; Patrick Woodroffe, lighting designer, known for his work with the Rolling Stones and Genesis: The Reunion Tour; and Peter Brosocchini, writer, who wrote the original High School Musicals.

To accommodate rehearsals, Feld Entertainment is bringing in a portable ice floor to be set up in the convention space at the Lakeland complex, Kenneth Feld said.

"It will be the most amazing production process that anyone has ever undertaken," he added. "There are so many units, so many people, well over 100 ice skaters rehearsing simultaneously."

Feld took a calculated risk on this show. He weighed his hunches against the number of DVDs High School Musical has sold, over 7 million units around the world; its international appeal; and the fact "the story touches young people all over the world. Especially today with access through the 'Net,' everybody has the same idea of what's popular at the same time," Feld said.

The cost of production “basically” tripled, he said. “In the live business, you don’t get the economies of scale you do with a movie. For each additional production, we have 80 percent of the cost of the initial production.”

“The big difference here is that High School Musical: The Ice Tour, is really limited, very limited engagements,” he said. “I think there will be a high demand for it. In some markets, we’re only doing two days.” Arena managers are hoping for added shows in most markets, where routing permits.

Allen Johnson, Amway Arena, Orlando, noted the huge buzz around High School Musical. He gets the show’s second date, Sept. 7-9. Elmer Straub, St. Pete Times Forum, who scored two weeks of rehearsal time as well as the show, had Disney Adventures on Ice May 10-13, so, like Staples Center, he’s looking at more family shows than the usual year, a good thing. He hopes that four or five shows will grow to eight during the course of the High School Musical ice show run there.

“In certain markets, we’re taking it out of the normal order of our typical tour. It’s a blending kind of tour. This was the ultimate exercise for Mark Duryea and his group to be able to book this the way that they did,” Feld said of his booking team. There are 135 key Feld markets in North America and “we’re playing 80-90 of them in the first season,” Feld said.

Feld Consumer Products is developing a line of merchandise for the ice tour that will only be available at Feld shows. It includes items not typical to the Feld productions, like pocketbooks and jewelry and “unique light products,” Feld said. “We have a group of inventors on the payroll; they’ve developed unique things that fit in with the sensibilities of High School Musical. I think it will be so good that anyone that has High-School-Musical-anything is going to buy our merchandise. With three shows going out at once, it is a tremendous investment.”

In the past, Feld Consumer Products has sold some merchandise from its ice shows to the Disney Theme Parks, he said, but it does not usually reach beyond its own shows with the merchandise division.

Tickets for the U.S. tour go on sale April 2. Dates were announced nationwide on March 13. The last date announced so far, all subject to change, is May 23 at the Laredo (Texas) Entertainment Center. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Kenneth and Nicole Feld, (703) 448-4045; Lee Zeidman, (213) 742-7255; Elmer Straub, (813) 301-6746; Allen Johnson, (407) 849-2012



Artists performing this year at SXSW include, from left, Amy Winehouse; Lucero; Lily Allen.

BOOKING AGENTS MAKE THEIR PICKS FOR SXSW

With over 1,300 bands playing at 65 venues in just four nights, finding the right talent to scout can be a daunting task for anyone heading to the South By Southwest Festival (SXSW) in Austin, Texas, March 14–18. The giant festival showcases new acts from around the world and can be a dizzying experience for anyone visiting the festival for the first time.

“What I tend to do is find booking agents and ask for their advice on which bands to see,” said professor and writer Wendy Fonarow, author of “Empire of Dirt,” a new book looking at crowd behavior in the United Kingdom’s live music scene. “Generally they know about the newest bands that have just signed with private management or might be negotiating a record deal. I find they’re the most ahead of everyone else,” she said.

And why not? SXSW, which now includes a film festival and interactive exhibition, has become a draw for booking agents to do business with other industry executives and a place to see the latest talent.

“I don’t think it’s really about finding the next hot band as much as it is about networking with people and showcasing the talent you already have,” said Bruce Solar, booking agent for the Agency Group. “Most of the bands that have a lot of buzz behind them already have deals with agents. Typically I’ll see two or three bands that I’m really looking for and just stumble on a couple more. Generally the bests bands you see down there aren’t from major showcases.”

Solar said he’s found the most productive approach is to sit in the lobby of the Driscoll Hotel and wait to see which executives come his way — this is his 14th year attending, so he’s used to seeing a lot of people he knows.

For Nicki Wheeler of United Talent Agency, there are typically four or five bands she looks forward to each year, but that’s more driven by the music fan inside of her than the businesswoman.

“Really, I’m there to check out what the competition is putting out and see who has what,” she said. “Plus you have to spend a lot of time helping out with your own talent and link them up with talent buyers and some festival promoters. A lot of managers also still go, plus there’s a big overseas presence and you have the biggest audience for Europe and Australia industry people in the U.S.”

Erik Niles, a booking assistant for Goldenvoice/AEG Live, said he’s also going to be on the lookout for some bands to book as openers at the El Rey Theatre and the Henry Fonda, both in Los Angeles — but the music fan in him always gets a kick out of the showcases.

“Working here, I already see everything, so I’m looking for any band playing Coachella because I’ll be pretty busy at Coachella this year,” he said.

As for choosing which industry parties and workshops to attend, Niles said he tries to play it by ear.

“I generally lay out what I have to do in advance and then it depends on how much damage I do to myself the night before,” he said.

As for bands playing in this year’s SXSW festival worth seeing, Niles recommends checking out **Ghostland Observatory** on Trashy Moped Records, an electro-punk

outfit hailing from Austin. Ghostland is launching a club tour after SXSW that includes the Bowery Ballroom in New York, a May show at the soon-to-be-opened House of Blues in Dallas and a spot at the Sasquatch Festival in Washington state. Niles said he'll also be on the lookout for **Girl Talk**, a DJ from Pittsburgh that is playing both Coachella and Bonnaroo.

Solar only has one recommendation he's willing to give out, and that's for his band **Lucero**, currently signed to Warner. The Memphis outfit is a mix of sad-sounding vocals and dismal guitar riffs, set to sound like a "punk rock band meant to play in a country-music bar," Solar said. The group is launching a small club and bar tour across the East Coast and Southeast U.S.

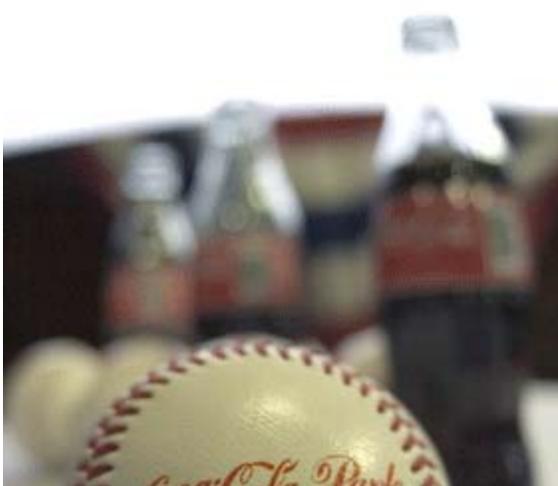
Wheeler had a lot more talent offerings to recommend, starting with San Francisco monster rock troupe **Birdmonster**, which is planning a U.S. tour directly after SXSW and is looking for additional dates in some major markets. Other bands she likes are **Hourly Radio** from Dallas, **Los Abandoned** from Los Angeles and **Cecil Bastida** of Tijuana.

Two other acts that promise to break big in the U.S. this year are British singers **Amy Winehouse** and **Lily Allen**. Both were Internet stars of sorts before signing record deals, moving digital singles through their MySpace pages and websites months before releasing an album. Winehouse, with her Motown revival sound, is being viewed as a potential opening act for major tour artists like John Legend or Ben Harper. Allen, a pop singer, is launching her own U.S. tour this spring which includes several stops at House of Blues clubs, the Fillmore in San Francisco and Coachella and Bonnaroo. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Erik Niles, (323) 930-5700; Nicki Wheeler, (310) 273-6700; Bruce Solar, (310) 385-2800; Wendy Fonarow, (310) 435-9257

MARKETING

A souvenir baseball spells out the new name of the ballpark for the Lehigh Valley IronPigs



COKE DISTRIBUTER PUSHES BEVERAGE COMPANY INTO NAMING RIGHTS DEAL

Coca-Cola is one of the largest beverage companies in the world, but it would take an independent bottler from Pennsylvania to push the company into its first U.S. sports venue naming rights deal.

The new deal to name the Allentown, Pa., ballpark, home of the Lehigh Valley IronPigs is worth as much in money as it is in, say, corn syrup and Nutrasweet. What was intended to be a deal to land pouring rights eventually turned into a naming rights agreement for the new Coca-Cola Park, a

\$48.4 million, 10,000-person capacity ballpark scheduled to be completed by April 2008.

The facility will host the Lehigh Valley IronPigs, the Class AAA affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies Major League Baseball team. This year, the IronPigs are playing their last season in Ottawa, Ont., ending a 15-year stretch that began as an expansion team in Canada. The team is co-owned by Joe Finley, who also owns Phillies single-A affiliate the Lakewood (N.J.) Blue Claws and Yankees AA affiliate the Trenton (N.J.) Thunder. The other owner is Craig Stein, who owns the Reading (Pa.) Phillies, a AA-affiliate to the Major League team of the same name.

The valuation of the deal is estimated at \$500,000 per year for at least 10 years. Finley said he was given higher offers, but decided to go with the local Coke distributor.

"The more we got to know each other, the more we became very comfortable with one another and began to generally like each other," Finley said. "It was very appealing for us on both sides because we were able to come to agreement relatively easily and the Coke name is an icon in Americana, synonymous with baseball."

The deal also includes a suite and several seating packages for Coca-Cola of the Lehigh Valley — that distributor is owned by Pittsburgh-based ABARTA, which owns three distributors in the region and is the sixth-largest independent Coca-Cola bottler and distributor in the country.

"We will try and activate everything we can, developing a connection between Coke, the team and our retail component," said marketing director Tom Pippet. "We plan to run programs with retail chains and independent stores whereby we utilize our benefits that we derive from the ballpark like season tickets, and parlay that into our partnerships with retail."

Pippet said the company plans to host promotions with retailers to design stadium displays made out of 12-packs, along with customized soda coolers and branded displays.

"We also plan to work with our parent company for a can or bottle that is customized with Coca-Cola Park or the team's logo to increase the salability of the product," Pippet said.

The deal was mostly orchestrated by the local distributor and not the national Coca-Cola Company, said Joe Brake, general manager of Coca-Cola of the Lehigh Valley.

"We had to get their approval for the licensing and they're aware of the fact this is happening," he said, later adding, "They'll be working with us on equipment and possibly some minor financing, but we negotiated this agreement so that it could work without any major outside financing. We wanted to make sure we would be fine doing the thing completely on our own."

Brake said the project is a matter of community pride for the local beverage distributor.

"When we saw the stadium, our hearts said that we just had to have it," he said. "Our plan is to paint the entire Lehigh Valley red."

It will also be dotted with several stadium directional signs, all emblazoned with the new Coca-Cola Park logo. The local distributor, which also bottles Minute Maid and Powerade, along with a number of less well-known drinks, plans to hold promotional giveaways and marketing activations for new products at the stadium. Coca-Cola will

also get signage on the scoreboard and outfield, as well as logos on the end seat of every aisle. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Joe Brake, (610) 807-5320; Tom Pippet, (610) 807-5327; Joe Finley, (215) 870-3892

CONCESSIONS



A special Saint Patrick's Day jersey from the Philadelphia Wings lacrosse team. The jersey will be worn by player Sean Greenhalgh during the team's Saturday game and auctioned off to benefit a lacrosse program at an inner-city Philadelphia school.

LACROSSE VENUES GO GREEN FOR CHARITY

The lacrosse program at Thomas E. FitzSimons school in inner-city Philadelphia will get a St. Patrick's Day pot of gold, thanks to the

Philadelphia Wings and the Wachovia Center.

"It's not often we get a game on St. Patrick's Day, and a Saturday night," said Frank Miceli, COO of the Philadelphia Wings, one of the 13 teams in the National Lacrosse League. "We decided to blow it up and have a good time with it. Wachovia Center is a good place to kick off people's St. Patrick's Day festivities."

The event is family friendly, and no more difficult to manage than a typical promotion night. The first 1,000 kids at the game get a free green T-shirt, emblazoned with the name of Wing's player Sean Greenhalgh. Leprechauns will roam the Wachovia Center, handing out lucky beads. At half time, two local Irish step-dancing teams will perform, in an extended half-time presentation. And green beer will be served at Cingular Pavilion and Finnegan's Wake, inside the Wachovia Center, while bands play Irish music, and the music of Irish bands, like U2.

"We did this with the Philly Phantoms [minor league hockey] when a game fell on St. Patrick's Day, but the charity portion is a new twist on it," Miceli said.

At March 17th's game against the Minnesota Swarm, the Wings will wear special green team jerseys, as will Mad Dog, the team's mascot. After the game, all 23 players will participate in a live auction of the jerseys.

"The players will hold the jerseys up as they are bid on, hand-deliver them to the winner," Miceli said. "He'll autograph it, while a photographer shoots a picture of the two of them."

The proceeds of the auction will be used to buy goalie equipment for the FitzSimons

High School lacrosse team, an inner-city school fielding a second year team. "The Wings goalies will present the money to the kids in person," Miceli said.

In another big Irish town, the Chicago Shamrox, also of the National Lacrosse League, will host a special St. Patrick's Night celebration at the Sears Centre in Hoffman Estates. Promotions will include players wearing special green jerseys, \$2 beverages, bagpipers, green beer and corned beef, Irish step dancing, a St. Patrick's Day fan parade at halftime, and a "greenest" fan competition. They're offering discount tickets with the slogan, "Save Green."

The luck of the Irish isn't so great in Boston, where TD Banknorth Garden is hosting college hockey, and isn't playing up the green.

"Celtics won't be playing at home, so no special events are planned," said Erica Hunt, in the Celtics' media relations department. She added that the team is wearing special St. Patrick's Day green and gold jerseys for the week. The Celtics will also mark St. Patrick's Day by unveiling a special, limited edition uniform and sneaker saluting former coach Red Auerbach. — Liz Boardman

Interviewed for this story: Frank Miceli, (215) 952-5241; Matt Litman, (215) 952-5916; Erica Hunt, (617) 854-8000



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SHORT TAKES

MID-AMERICA GETS CONTRACT RENEWEL

The Mid-America Center has approved a five-year contract extension with SMG for management of the Council Bluffs, Iowa, facility, said General Manager Charles Schilling. To deal with the center's operating deficit of \$435,000 in 2006, SMG and the Council Bluffs city council enacted several cost-saving measures into the contract including:

- A reduction of the management fee from \$125,000 to \$110,000 annually.
- Cash incentives if SMG keeps its annual operating loss below \$525,000.
- An SMG promise to contribute \$100,000 into a promotional fund for the building.
- An agreement to void the agreement if a developer offers to spend more than \$10 million to improve the facility and replace management.

"We're ahead of the curve and the building is doing extremely well. The market as a whole is populated with a lot of competition," Schilling said.

Contact: Charles Schilling, (712) 323-0536

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY APPROVES CONVENTION CENTER LEASE

The New Mexico State University Board of Regents has approved a ground lease agreement between the university and the city of Las Cruces to move ahead with plans to build a convention center on university property. According to a news release from NMSU, the city will lease an eight-acre parcel on the southwest corner of University and Union avenues for \$3,500 a year for 45 years, with the right of renewal for an additional 25 years. Under the agreement, the city will provide at least five paid internships a year at the convention center for students in the university's Hotel, Restaurants and Tourism Management program, and give students opportunities for employment at the center.

Contact: Sonia Banuelos, (505) 541-2162

KENTUCKY ART CENTER SEARCHES FOR NEW DIRECTOR

The Carnegie Visual and Performing Arts Center in Covington, Ky., will form a search committee to find a replacement for director Nancy Henry Chadwick, who resigned Friday. Chadwick had been director for just under three years. The Carnegie has a \$1.3 million budget and a staff of 13 and just completed a massive expansion.

Contact: Bill Seitz, (859) 957-1944

BROOKS AND DUNN HOST STADIUM OF FIRE AT BYU

Stadium of Fire, presented by America's Freedom Foundation, has booked country duo Brooks & Dunn to headline the 2007 Stadium of Fire concert at Brigham Young University's LaVell Edwards Stadium in Provo, Utah on July 4. The concert honors soldiers serving the U.S. both at home and abroad. America's Freedom Foundation will telecast Stadium of Fire through the American Forces Network to military troops and their families around the world.

Contact: Jack Tilley, (813) 541-4512

HOUMA HOSTS LOUISIANA BASKETBALL GAME

The Houma-Terrebonne Civic Center has been chosen as the host site for the Houma Area Convention & Visitors Bureau 2007 Louisiana High School Basketball All-Star Games on March 24. The games kick off with the girls first at 6 p.m., followed by the boys at 8 p.m. The event will bring 60 of the state's best girl and boy basketball players, as well as over a dozen coaches and staff members, to Houma and the bayou region. With their families and fans in tow, the Civic Center is expected to welcome over 3,000 spectators, who will witness the two battles of east versus west on the hard court.

Contact: David Ohlmeyer, (985) 850-4657

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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Nokia Theatre, Los Angeles - Senior Manager, Guest Services - Nokia Theatre, slated to open in the October 2007, has an...

Los Angeles Galaxy - Director, Ticket Operations - The Los Angeles Galaxy, now home to one of the world's most...

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