

VENUES**today**

The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

March 21, 2007 VOL. VI, Number X ISSN 1547-4143

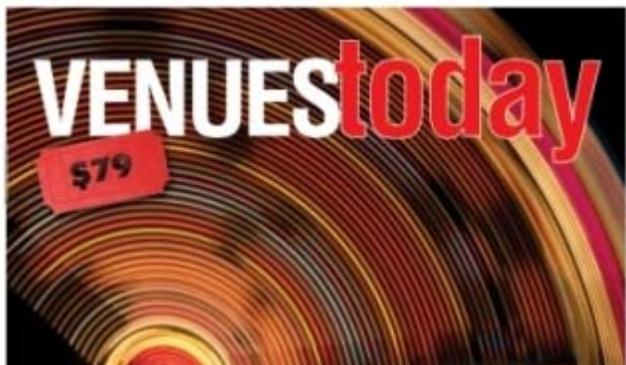
Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Reporter Dave Brooks just returned from a weekend in Austin at the South by Southwest music conference, and Linda Deckard is preparing for a trip to the Mid-West Fairs Association gathering in Nashville. 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

"If you've got a young child today and they have any access to Disney at all, and you can't get her Hannah Montana tickets, you have let her down." — *Leroy Shafer, chief operating officer of the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, on this year's top performer.*

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VENUE NEWS



Pete Townshend delivers the key note address at SXSW; Straylight Run performs at a Universal Music Showcase; Booking Agent Bruce Solar (right) talks with band manager Todd Golightly after a touring panel.

SXSW TAKES ON INTERNATIONAL, INTERACTIVE FLAIR

AUSTIN, Texas — Word of mouth wasn't the best way to learn about new bands at this year's South by Southwest (SXSW) conference March 14-18. Instead of having cool friends, visitors needed to simply check their iPods, cell phones or laptops to coordinate their long weekend of bands and beer.

"I had a couple hours to kill and was trying to figure out what to do when I got a text message telling me that Daniel Johnston and the Nightmares were doing a set in the Day Café," said Barry Miller of the Austin Playhouse. "After that, I was checking my phone pretty regularly to get updates on what was going on."

This year, SXSW used a comprehensive Short Message Service (SMS) texting application to keep visitors abreast of popular events. Registered participants — there were about 11,000 in all, estimated publicist Elizabeth Derczo — signed up for the service on the SXSW website, simply by inputting their number into a database. The SMS messages told patrons about a Donovan performance at the Whiskey Bar, a panel on the music of Nick Drake, and operation hours for the events' annual Flatstock poster sale. One text message was even sent out looking for softball players for the closing Sunday picnic.

"As a means of keeping in touch with people, it makes the most sense since nearly

everyone these days has a cell phone," said Technology Director Scott Wilcox, who oversaw the systems for SXSW. "It's a pretty simple application to run once you decide which messages you want to send out."

Wilcox said there was no system in place to determine which messages went out: he was simply trying to keep users informed of events that hadn't generated a lot of buzz, but were still interesting. He said he was cautious about only sending out a few messages a day to avoid inundating people's phones.

Registrants weren't the only ones who could use the system — anyone of the 150,000 "non-official" visitors who descended on the city for the festival could opt-in to the system by texting a five-digit number with messages like "find La Zona Rosa" to get directions to the nightclub on Fourth Street, or "find Kings of Leon" to get information about when the Nashville band was playing their live show at Stubbs.

That wasn't the only way to get information — visitors could subscribe to SXSW.mobi on their mobile handheld devices for mobile-formatted directories of clubs, parties and bands, or use the myPodder download application from PodcastReady that allowed participants to download digital recordings of the over 100 informational sessions hosted at the event's music, film and interactive conferences. MP3 files from nearly all of the 1,600 bands were available for individual download, or in bulk using the festival's Bit Torrent system, which assists with large file downloads. Visitors could organize their artist showcase calendar with an online application that allowed them to choose which bands they wanted to see, and then download that information onto iCal or Outlook.

"We wanted to offer registrants a variety of methods to organize their choices at this year's festival so they could maximize their experience," Wilcox said. "One of the things we hear over and over are that there are so many things to do at South by Southwest and it's confusing to try and keep track of all of them."

Besides the boost in interactive features, this year's festival saw a large increase in international music participants using SXSW as a means to attract outside listeners.

Over 38 countries held official showcase events, although the cultural lines for most acts weren't ever clearly drawn in the sand. Chilean-born el Axel lives in Norway and raps in Norwegian, while French national Pierre Aderne sings in Brazilian Portuguese and American Jessica Fichot sings in flawless French.

"It really challenges the notion of 'World Music' when you have so many distinct voices that no longer fit in along traditional geo-political borders," said Gilberto Gil, former Brazilian director of culture, during his keynote address. "Just as identity and nationality become so much harder to quantify, so do the sub-genres we try and place on musical sound."

The biggest newcomer onto SXSW's international scene this year was the country of Norway, which hosted a Saturday party to raise awareness about Norwegian bands and festivals. The event was hosted by Platform, a government agency to boost tourism and cultural interest in the Scandinavian nation. Bands like Bermuda Triangle and Davey Jones' locker performed while organizers handed out free beer and Texas barbeque.

"We want to tell the world about the great music coming out of Norway and that the rock and roll culture is very much alive," said Arnfinn Bjerkestrand of the Norwegian Musician's Union. "We continue to present some of the strongest musical festivals in Europe that draw thousands of people. This event is a chance to let people see what type of music is coming out of Norway and becoming popular around the continent."

As there is every year, SXSW was awash with talent from emerging acts and unsigned bands, divided throughout 65 participating official venues throughout town, as well as hundreds of unofficial celebrations open to the general public.

The Austin Convention Center was the scene for some of the biggest names at South By Southwest this year, including a reunion concert featuring Iggy Pop and the Stooges and Rickie Lee Jones, along with up-and-coming indie rock bands like Peter Bjorn and John, as well as Daniel Johnston and the Nightmares. Across the river and the Congress Street Bridge was the site of a three-day outdoor concert hosted by title sponsor Mountain Dew and supported by a main-stage and a small retail village. Headliners at that series included longtime Houston rap-outfit Public Enemy and Against Me! from Gainesville, Fla. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Barry Miller, (512) 619-4983; Scott Wilcox, (512) 467-7979; Arnfinn Bjerkestrand, (47) 2 306 2150; Gilberto Gil, (212) 532-3184



Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo; The midway outside Reliant Stadium, provided by Ray Cammack Shows

75TH HOUSTON RODEO DRAWS 1.8 MILLION

Miley Cyrus as Hannah Montana is the new Raven.

The Disney network star, on a bill with the Cheetah Girls, broke the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo's all-time record with a paid attendance of 73,295, besting the 2006 record of 72,867 set by Brooks & Dunn.

"If you've got a young child today and they have any access to Disney at all, and you can't get her Hannah Montana tickets, you have let her down," said Leroy Shafer, chief operating officer of the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, which was *Venues Today's* second best attended fair in 2006 after the State Fair of Texas.

The event, which ran from Feb. 27 to March 18, posted its second highest attendance ever at 1,806,129. The record was set in 2004 at 1,890,174. The 2007 attendance was nearly seven percent higher than last year's 1,688,103, which Shafer attributed to near-perfect weather and the show's 75th anniversary.

"We only had one weather day in 23 days," he said. "I've been here 34 years and it's the best weather I've ever seen at the show.

"It never was cold at all. And all those things came together to make a tremendous

presentation and a tremendous set of records.”

Last year’s fair took in more than \$72.7 million in revenues and paid just more than \$55 million in program expenses, for a net gain of \$17.7 million, which goes in part toward the show’s charitable scholarships and to help retire the debt on Reliant Stadium, Shafer said.

For 2007, Shafer expects revenues to be up 3.5 to 5 percent, but he did not have final figures the day after the event ended.

“We’re weeks away from having final figures, so I’m just guessing at this point,” he said.

Laveen, Ariz.-based Ray Cammack Shows, which placed 60 rides on the midway, also had a record run, exceeding last year’s previous record, said Tony Fiori, the carnival’s media and marketing director. “I think it was a lot of things,” Fiori said. “The entertainment line-up was outstanding, and they’re doing a better job of marketing their product and getting better every year.”

The carnival also set a record in pre-sales of \$10 and \$50 coupon books, with income at \$2.3 million, the first time the carnival had done more than \$2 million in pre-sales. “Everything was up – food and games and carnival presales,” Fiori said.

Because of the Houston Livestock Show’s 75th anniversary, which was dedicated to the event’s volunteers, the entertainment budget was raised by 20 percent, but Shafer declined to release the final figure paid for all the acts.

“We didn’t pay more for individual entertainment,” Shafer said. “We just brought more in of the top line. Where we might have had two that we paid the maximum, we had five or six.”

The budget increase seemed to have paid off, with seven sell-outs, including Cyrus, which sold out in three minutes. The next-fastest sellout was George Strait, which took three hours to sell out, Shafer said. After Cyrus, the second-highest attended concert was Beyonce at 72,057; then Brooks & Dunn, at 71,559.

The fourth best-attended show actually was the replacement show for Rascal Flatts, which canceled its March 14 show at the last minute when lead singer Gary LeVox came down with bronchitis. Taking the group’s place was a trio consisting of Clay Walker, Joe Nichols and Jack Ingram, which brought in 70,539 paid attendees.

Strait had the No. 5 show with an attendance of 70,317; and ZZ Top had the only other concert above 70,000 at 70,014. The seventh sell-out was the Go Tejano Day concert by Pesado and Emilio, with attendance of 69,641.

“We really have a sellable manifest of 69,200 or 69,300, so when you see numbers of 71,000 or 72,000, that means we sold a lot of standing-room tickets,” Shafer said. “On Hannah Montana, we sold the maximum that the fire marshal allows us to sell, which is 3,000 standing-room tickets.”

The range of ticket prices is the same for all concerts, and spectators can pay as low as \$16 for the upper bowl or as much as \$300 for front-row chute seats that also pays for a chuckwagon dinner, a night at the Corral Club lounge, carnival tickets, and the portable director’s chair from which they can watch the show and then take home as a souvenir.

"The average ticket price is \$27.50," Shafer said.

The show tickets get the fairgoer in the gate as well, Shafer said. If someone wants to attend without seeing a show and the rodeo, gate admission costs \$6 for adults and \$3 for ages 3-12.

Sponsorships were on the same level as last year, Shafer said. The livestock show shares Coca-Cola and Ford sponsorship with the Houston Texans NFL team and then also has 41 "unique" sponsors of its own, Shafer said.

The sponsorship program, combined with the livestock show's corporate supporter's program, nets the event about \$14 million, Shafer said.

For advertising, the livestock show used the logo "Year of the Volunteer."

"It was in our advertising, throughout the program, everywhere," Shafer said. "We probably had 300 banners in Reliant Stadium and all over the grounds that said, 'Year of the Volunteer.'" Volunteers bought 40 percent, or about 18,000, of the show's season tickets, Shafer said.

As for marketing, the show dedicates 20 to 25 percent of its budget to the Internet, but Shafer said as of now, the event does not put much stock in the YouTube viral marketing efforts that some fairs have started to explore. "We've looked at it and right now, people are wasting their time and energy and not getting a lot of impression and a lot of buzz," Shafer said. "I've watched three fairs that posted on YouTube and looked at that impression, and 500 people looked at it. If I don't put something out there that 50,000 people see, it's not worth the effort."

That does not mean the situation couldn't change in the future, Shafer said. For now, "what we do want is the cover page to the *Houston Chronicle* (Web site) so that no matter what, people get our pop out with our logo and prices every time they look at it," Shafer said. "Then you get 50,000 impressions.

"Don't get me wrong. We're looking at podcasting and we're looking at text messaging. But we're going to do the things that get the reach and that work." – Mary Wade Burnside

HOUSTON BY THE NUMBERS

Total Receipts: **\$72.7 million**

Net Gain: **\$17.7 million**

2007 attendance: **1,806,129**

2006 attendance: **1,688,103**

2004 attendance (highest): **1,890,174**

Average Ticket Price: **\$27.50**

Highest Price Ticket: **\$300**

Admission without access to rodeo: **\$6 for adults, \$3 for kids**

Corporate Sponsorship Revenues: **\$14 million**

Best attended show of 2007(all-time record): Hannah Montana (March 4), **73,295**

Best attended show of 2006: Brooks and Dunn, **72,867**

Interviewed for this story: Leroy Shafer, (832) 667-1000; Tony Fiori, (602) 237-3333

NATIONWIDE ARENA REBOUNDS AFTER STOLEN TICKETS

Bar-coded tickets saved the day, after \$30,000 worth of prime tickets for the March 18 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Men's Basketball Tournament at Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio, were stolen.

"In the days before the scan system, this would have been a nightmare," said Eric Granger, arena general manager for SMG. "We wouldn't have been able to do anything until two people showed up for the same seat."

550 tickets for games between the University of Tennessee and Virginia, and Virginia Tech and Southern Illinois, were stolen from a car on March 17.

"The teams get tickets for the band and boosters, but they aren't released for the second round [of games] until the teams get past the first round," Granger said.

Saturday morning, university officials picked up the block of tickets at Nationwide's box office. The officials left the tickets in their car while they ate breakfast at a restaurant in nearby Blendon Township, Ohio, and the car was broken into while they were inside. The NCAA asked Granger not to release the university's name, but police reports said it was the University of Tennessee.

"The tickets were intended for fans who were already in town," Granger said. "Many of them would have come back the next day for will-call, but they are required to take possession of them."

University officials reported the theft to Blendon Township police, and to Ohio State University, Nationwide Arena's partner for the tournament. Believing the tickets would be scalped in Columbus, Blendon Township police alerted the Columbus Police Department.

Ohio State's director of ticketing worked with Nationwide's box office to invalidate the tickets. New tickets, with new barcodes, were printed.

"Unfortunately, those people didn't get the nice souvenir ticket, they got a standard looking one," Granger said. "But that also helped us differentiate the tickets."

Nationwide Arena, the NCAA and the universities acted quickly to spread the news to the media. A list of impacted seating sections was published online and in local newspapers. The NCAA also issued a press release, warning that new tickets should be purchased through Nationwide's box office, or at one of the participating universities, and not from secondary markets.

The word was out, but police and venue staffers still had to know what to do next.

"A stop message appears on the scanner, so the ticket taker knows they are bogus," Granger said. They can then direct the patrons back to the box office. Before the games, uniformed police officers patrolled the entrance to Nationwide, checking scalpers for "hot" tickets.

"In Columbus, [scalpers] have to have a peddler's license," Granger said. "Police asked them to see the tickets they were selling, and since nobody had the wrong ones, they showed them to the police."

"We partnered with the secondary market in this," Granger said. "It only helped us, and them."

"We did not have any issues at all in Columbus," said Joellen Ferrer, public relations assistant for StubHub, one of the largest secondary ticket websites. "If any of the tickets sold on our site were involved in this, our FanProtect Guarantee would have held true, [with] buyers getting comparable tickets. Our guarantee works for both the buyer and the seller. We capture credit card info from all sellers to minimize any chance of fraudulent tickets."

The media blitz worked: None of the stolen tickets were presented at the games, even though approximately 20,000 fans turned out for the two games, which were sold out a year in advance.

Granger said the venue tells people to treat tickets as cash, but they may remind people not to leave them in their cars in the future. Police have not made any arrests, but continue their investigation.

"Nothing like this has happened before," Granger said. "At each event, we have one or two customers report lost or stolen tickets, but nothing like this. But with the scanners, it wasn't really that bad." —Liz Boardman

Interviewed for this story: Eric Granger, (614) 246-4202; Joellen Ferrer, (415) 222-8442

Bruce Lehrke



LONGHORN'S BRUCE LEHRKE WAS MENTOR TO MANY MARKETERS

Bruce Lehrke, who produced the Longhorn World Championship Rodeo for 35 years, died March 16 at the age of 71 from cancer. The rodeo closed its season in Tulsa at the fairgrounds arena March 16-18, opening the day its leader died.

This whole rodeo season has been strange for the many who have known Lehrke for years. He was unable to travel with the show most of the year, but his widow, Sheila, said not a beat was missed as the staff, including daughter Heather, stepped up.

"His illness, occurring when it did just before the start of our 2007 run, brought out the strengths of each individual member of our staff, for which Heather and I are greatly appreciative," Sheila Lehrke said. "As we look to the future we know that we will draw from these strengths and utilize them in sustaining the unique qualities that Bruce brought to the company."

Lehrke died at his longtime home in Whites Creek, Tenn., a ranch that many in this industry visited over the years. The Longhorn Ranch will be the site of a memorial service for Lehrke's family and friends at 2 p.m. on April 4.

Kevin Contardo, director of marketing and promotions, Hara Arena, Dayton, Ohio, knows that ranch well. He visited Lehrke there the last couple of years and was ready to go again this year. His clearest recollections are of the big window, "so Bruce could see who was coming up the road," and the old typewriter, still his preferred method of

communication in the e-mail age.

Contardo was one of the many in the arena business whom Lehrke mentored over the years. Every one of them would point to the fact that Lehrke took an interest in them and their careers as a paramount part of his personality. Contardo said Lehrke taught him that persistence pays. "He taught me to never take no for an answer," Contardo said, particularly from the media when seeking news coverage. The rodeo has a wealth of great stories and is too often overlooked by marketers and media fixated on sports like basketball and hockey, Contardo noticed. Lehrke did not let that stop him and he pulled out all the marketing stops to get attention.

For instance, he had some trademark buck-teeth, better than any you can buy in a prop store, Contardo said, which he would slip on while media and group sales buyers were being ushered into a meeting, much to the shock of his co-host if he was a first timer. Lehrke would play the poor guy role to the hilt, complaining of a toothache while the unaware were trying not to rudely stare at his protruding teeth, until the whole charade would end when he surreptitiously removed the teeth during a mouth-covered cough. The ruse would slowly dawn on those gathered, as snickers turned to guffaws and Lehrke had, as always, gotten their attention in a way that would be remembered.

That's the kind of marketer he was, Contardo said. He built relationships, he told stories, he was storied.

Born in Wisconsin on Aug. 21, 1935, to Billie Jr. and Ellen Nick Lehrke, Lehrke acquired a love of horses at an early age, experienced the life of a ranch hand on large western ranches, and produced his first rodeo at the age of 21 on his parent's farm outside of Milwaukee. To support his love of producing rodeos, Lehrke also worked for several years at the *Waukesha Freeman and Milwaukee Journal* selling retail advertising; learning skills that served him well in marketing rodeo.

In 1966, he moved to Nashville to manage and produce the Loretta Lynn Rodeo. After several successful years he acquired ownership of the rodeo from Mooney and Loretta Lynn and trademarked the name, Longhorn World Championship Rodeo.

He is survived by his wife Sheila and daughters Heather Lehrke of Whites Creek; Lynda Lehrke of Bellingham, Wash., and Debra Barnes of Nuevo, Calif.

Memorial donations may be made to the Minnie Pearl Cancer Foundation, 2410 Patterson St., Ste. 110, Nashville 37203, and Friends of Rodeo, PO Box 428, Merced, CA 95341. – Linda Deckard

Editors Note: *Venues Today* will further salute Lehrke and his contributions to the live sports and entertainment industry in an upcoming issue of our print magazine. Please send us your photos and fond thoughts.

Interviewed for this story: Sheila Lehrke, (615) 876-1016; Kevin Contardo, (937) 278-4776



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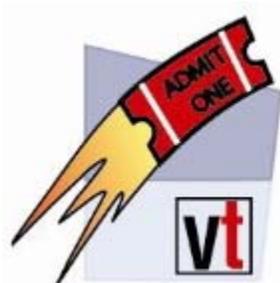
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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

NICKELBACK GIVES ITS FIVE-CENTS WORTH IN MID-AMERICA

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. 27, 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:* \$8,083,647; *Event:* 2007 Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament; *Venue:* **St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 22,269; *Ticket Range:* \$363; *Promoter:* Atlantic Coast Conference, In-house; *Dates:* March 8-11; *No. of Shows:* 11

2) *Gross Sales:* \$2,369,333; *Event:* Wisin & Yandel; *Venue:* **Coliseo De Puerto Rico, San Juan**; *Attendance:* 38,605; *Ticket Range:* \$130-\$30; *Promoter:* No Limit Entertainment Corp.; *Dates:* March 16-18; *No. of Shows:* 3

3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,727,069; *Event:* The 2007 Mountain West Conference Basketball

Championships; *Venue: Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas; Attendance: 50,083; Ticket Range: \$37-\$27; Promoter: Mountain West Conference; Dates: March 6-10; No. of Shows: 8*

4) *Gross Sales: \$1,311,577; Event: Justin Timberlake; Venue: American Airlines Center, Dallas; Attendance: 17,418; Ticket Range: \$89.50-\$56; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: March 5; No. of Shows: 1*

5) *Gross Sales: \$1,243,420; Event: Justin Timberlake; Venue: Toyota Center, Houston; Attendance: 16,974; Ticket Range: \$96-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: March 4; No. of Shows: 1*

10,001-15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales: \$631,051; Event: Delirium; Venue: Peoria (Ill.) Civic Center Arena; Attendance: 8,191; Ticket Range: \$99.50-\$39.50; Promoter: Live Nation, Cirque du Soleil; Dates: March 1-2; No. of Shows: 2*

2) *Gross Sales: \$591,842; Event: Nickelback; Venue: DCU Center, Worcester, Mass.; Attendance: 12,311; Ticket Range: \$49.50-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; Dates: March 11; No. of Shows: 1*

3) *Gross Sales: \$567,340; Event: Nickelback; Venue: Bryce Jordan Center, University Park, Pa.; Attendance: 12,573; Ticket Range: \$45.50-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; Dates: March 4; No. of Shows: 1*

4) *Gross Sales: \$520,963; Event: Nickelback; Venue: Hampton (Va.) Coliseum; Attendance: 11,950; Ticket Range: \$47.50-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; Dates: March 9; No. of Shows: 1*

5) *Gross Sales: \$486,090; Event: Nickelback; Venue: Petersen Events Center, Pittsburgh; Attendance: 10,737; Ticket Range: \$47.50-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; Dates: March 13; No. of Shows: 1*

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales: \$722,085; Event: Josh Groban; Venue: Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.; Attendance: 7,534; Ticket Range: \$150-\$95; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: March 8; No. of Shows: 1*

2) *Gross Sales: \$435,770; Event: Nickelback; Venue: Arena at Harbor Yard, Bridgeport, Conn.; Attendance: 8,910; Ticket Range: \$49.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; Dates: March 7; No. of Shows: 1*

3) *Gross Sales: \$430,398; Event: Nickelback; Venue: U.S. Cellular Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Attendance: 9,047; Ticket Range: \$47.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; Dates: March 1; No. of Shows: 1*

4) *Gross Sales: \$257,490; Event: Harlem Globetrotters; Venue: Constant Convocation Center, Norfolk, Va.; Attendance: 8,803; Ticket Range: \$85.50-\$14.50; Promoter: Harlem Globetrotters; Dates: March 3; No. of Shows: 2*

5) *Gross Sales:* \$204,363; *Event:* Borderfest; *Venue:* **Dodge Arena, Hidalgo, Texas;** *Attendance:* 4,329; *Ticket Range:* \$67.50-\$37.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-house; *Dates:* March 3; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$471,800; *Event:* Harry Connick Jr. & His Big Band; *Venue:* **Chicago Theatre;** *Attendance:* 6,860; *Ticket Range:* \$77-\$37; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* March 15-16; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$362,439; *Event:* Celtic Woman; *Venue:* **Chevrolet Theatre, Wallingford, Conn.;** *Attendance:* 8,130; *Ticket Range:* \$71-\$31; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* March 2-3; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$277,495; *Event:* All Premieres; *Venue:* **Keller Auditorium, Portland, Ore.;** *Attendance:* 9,142; *Ticket Range:* \$114.50-\$12.50; *Promoter:* Oregon Ballet Theatre; *Dates:* March 3; *No. of Shows:* 4

4) *Gross Sales:* \$274,266; *Event:* Larry the Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Shea's Performing Arts Center, Buffalo, N.Y.;** *Attendance:* 5,754; *Ticket Range:* \$42.75; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* March 2; *No. of Shows:* 2

5) *Gross Sales:* \$246,023; *Event:* Jeff Foxworthy; *Venue:* **Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Fla.;** *Attendance:* 4,187; *Ticket Range:* \$59.75-\$53.75; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* March 10; *No. of Shows:* 2

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

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Booking agents Matt Covey of Tamizdat, John Pantle of United Talent Agency and Marsha Vlasic of MVO Ltd. explain what they're looking for from bands during a touring panel on March 16 at South by Southwest



CROWDED TOURING MARKET PUTS PRESSURE ON AGENTS TO REIN IN ARTISTS

AUSTIN —“Right now it’s harder than ever to make it in a band. There is so much competition, and it’s getting a lot more difficult to impress people,” said Booking Agent Frank Riley of High Road Touring in Sausalito, Calif. “Bands are having to do so much more than just play good music if they really want to make money.”

New realities in the club and theater touring market are making it increasingly difficult for touring artists, and no one knows that better than the booking agents who schedule concerts for a lot of these bands. In fact, it’s the booking agents who often have to remind artists of the new realities of the live music market: there’s more bands out there reaching more people, who in turn are going to shows less and less.

"People just don't [randomly] go to shows anymore; there are too many other options of things to do," said Bruce Solar of the Agency Group in Los Angeles, adding that it's harder for acts to simply be discovered on the road. "[Bands] have to create something before they go out on the road. I'm also seeing a lot of live bands who don't have their acts down tight. You can have a great product on the Internet, but if you suck live, then you're just not ready for touring."

Transportation costs are continuing to rise while the consolidation of the concert promoter business is taking away a lot of the leverage that booking agents once had.

"It really makes you wonder about collusion when you start to get the exact same offer from two different venues in the same market," said Booking Agent John Pantle of United Talent Agency in Los Angeles and formerly a talent buyer for House of Blues.

With touring support increasingly difficult for bands to secure from record labels, emphasis on merchandise sales and corporate sponsorships are becoming increasingly important to an artist's touring viability. Pantle said he's seeing a lot of bands launch marketing initiatives that don't require acts to post a banner of the sponsor company or require the band to thank the business at the end of the night. Sponsors, he said, are aware that those elements can hurt the authenticity of the show and many are content to simply have promotional materials available at the concert.

"Of course, not everyone wants to wear the chicken suit," joked Riley, who said many acts he deals with would not sign onto corporate sponsorship deals.

Merchandising is the other big money maker and several acts have found creative ways to move up their merchandise sales. Beck, for example, allowed fans to make their own t-shirts using designs and images from his new album, "The Information," during a festival appearance at the LA Weekly Detour in downtown Los Angeles.

"It kills me when bands go out on the road with nothing," said Solar. "You have to leave people with something to remember you by, even if you have to give it away."

The other big component is marketing and self-promotion, said Marsha Vlasic of MVO Ltd., who said she expects her bands to do a lot of their own leg work. The consolidation of venues and regional promoters has left just a few marketing agencies promoting a wide variety of shows.

"It's difficult because you'll have the same company that promotes Bad Brains also doing the promotions for say, The Violent Femmes, and in many cases, they use the same strategy, hire the same creative teams and make the same media buys," she said. "You will not see many differentiations of marketing strategy."

That means more work for the artists; especially those hoping to sign on with an agent.

"A lot of bands want people to do the work for them, but booking agents want empirical data from groups before we sign anyone. It's a business proposition and we need to know the risks before we go in, so the more information a band can give us about past shows, ticket sales and accomplishments, the better," Pantle said. "We expect people to prove themselves and the Internet is making that more and more possible."

And don't forget to celebrate the success stories, said Riley, no matter where they happen.

"A sell out is a sell out, no matter if it's at CBGBs or Madison Square Garden," he said.
— Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Frank Riley, (415) 332-9292; Bruce Solar, (310) 385-2800; John Pantle, (310) 273-6700; Marsha Vlastic, (212) 414-9380

MARKETING



Rendering of the new Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre, Alpharetta, Ga. TITLE CHOSEN, GROUND-BREAKING IMMINENT ON NEW ATLANTA-AREA SHED

Verizon Wireless has acquired the name-in-title rights to the new \$35 million amphitheatre being built in Alpharetta, Ga., by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Construction will begin on the venue, to be called Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park, in June.

The reason management approached Verizon, according to Donald F. Fox, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra chief financial officer and executive-in-charge at the new venue, is that "the amphitheatre is of a size and stature that we thought was consistent with work that Verizon Wireless had done around the country in other similar venues."

Verizon's name adorns venues in Charlotte, N.C.; Indianapolis, Birmingham, Ala; Houston, Kansas City, Mo.; Virginia Beach, Va. and several other locations where they have a strong presence in the community. The company's Southern area office is headquartered in Alpharetta. This is the only Verizon-titled venue that has a classical-music component to it, he said.

Verizon has declined to give the monetary amount or the years they are investing in the new amphitheatre, but Fox said it is a multi-year, multi-million dollar arrangement.

Primary funding for the amphitheatre will be through a tax-exempt bond issue. The Woodruff Foundation donated \$5 million and the City of Alpharetta and Fulton County each donated \$1 million. Fox explained that the symphony is not raising money for the facility, because they are in the midst of a significant campaign to raise money for a new symphony center in Atlanta so, "We didn't want to do anything to divert anything

from that project. There will be some internal financing through the symphony.”

The bonds are not government backed but issued through the tax-exempt Robert W. Woodruff Arts Center, which has a high bond rating according to Fox. “Bonds are issued in a lump sum and then repayment usually occurs over a 30 year period,” Fox explains. Repayment is made through revenue generated by the theatre.

Plans call for the venue to be multi-use, incorporating symphony concerts, popular music and local events such as high school graduations or school activities. Fox said the stage will be built so they can later accommodate live theatre at the venue.

“We don’t have a fly box as part of the architecture, but the roof and stage are being built so they can accommodate one along with a counterweight system and the like in the future,” Fox said. There is also hope that a cultural center will be built on the site.

Planning for the site began three years ago. The 12,000-seat amphitheatre is being built on 45 acres of wooded land outside Atlanta in north Fulton County. Fox said the site has a natural bowl shape. Seven thousand of the seats will be under cover; the others will be lawn seats.

KKE Architects designed the facility, with emphasis on its distinctive fan-shaped roof made of a translucent cloth-like material, which will let light through. They plan to keep as much of the natural woods in place as possible so that the site retains its park-like atmosphere.

There will be two wide plazas surrounding the venue that will include a smaller stage that will provide entertainment while patrons are coming into the main show. Fox said they have not signed any contracts for food and beverage but he anticipates a “fairly high-end dining opportunity that will focus on fresh food preparation. I imagine there will also be opportunities for local vendors through kiosks at the park. All those details will be fleshed out.”

Fox said the amphitheatre is set in an affluent and fast growing area in north Atlanta, where there is a hunger for arts and culture. “I think the variety of artists we plan for the venue will be very well received,” he said. “I think it will quickly become the place that artists who come to Atlanta will want to play. Of course the artist compound will be first rate – state of the art, which is always important in order to get artists to want to come back. They will have a good experience not only on stage, but while they are in the backstage area. The whole package will be extremely for guest artists who come and play there.”

City officials said that because the facility is built along a north-south corridor with access to four north-south routes, there should be little congestion in the area because of the extra vehicles coming in for events.

Robbie Rokovitz, assistant city administrator for Alpharetta, said the city was already developing the area along the Westside Parkway with the understanding that the amphitheatre would be built there.

Addressing how the amphitheatre will benefit the city’s economy, Rokovitz said they will share in the Fulton County (Ga.) local option sales tax revenue. They will also benefit from concert goers visiting local businesses.

“We anticipate that we will not just attract local residents but regional attendees to the venue as well,” Rokovitz said. “Just a half mile from the facility is North Point Mall, which has plenty of restaurants and shopping opportunities in a pedestrian-friendly

area. There is also access to the theatre from other areas of Atlanta through MARTA (the city's mass transit system)."

The venue will be the summer home for the symphony, which will play 10-12 concerts either with a guest artist or on their own. Fox said they anticipate 32-35 popular shows with today's leading artists and another 20-25 events that will be family shows, community festivals or school presentations and graduations. The amphitheatre season in the area runs mid-April through the end of October.

The organization will continue to promote the concerts at Chastain Park, Fox added, saying this venue will not interfere with any shows at that facility.

"We have a long history of presenting acts on stage," he added. "Certainly there may be rentals from time to time, but for the most part we will book and promote the shows [in Alpharetta]." – Vernell Hackett

Interviewed for this story: Donald Fox, (404) 733-4894; Robbie Rokovitz, (678) 297-6010

CONCESSIONS



Florida's Joakim Noah is hoping to stay alive during their Sweet 16 match-up with Butler at the Edward Jones Dome

BY THE NUMBERS: REGIONAL MENUS FOR THE SWEET 16

The National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament has been reduced from 64 teams to 16 and concessions managers at this year's four regional venues are hoping basketball fans are as hungry for hot dogs and nachos as they are for college hoops.

Aramark is hosting three of the four venues for this year's regionals March 22-25: the HP Pavilion in San Jose, Calif. and the Alamodome in San Antonio, as well as the Continental Airlines Arena in East Rutherford, N.J. which will host the Final Four in 2008.

"This event is very high profile and we just went through several big games including the Alamo Bowl, the Texas A&M versus Army game and the state high school championship," said Tom Caven, Aramark's general manager at the Alamodome. "The city works very hard at hosting this event, and with next year's Final Four, we're putting in a lot of attention to detail. Since we're working with a building that was opened in 1993 without a full-time team, it takes a few extra steps to make this work including installing some nice piping and drape curtains to create the arena configuration."

The Alamodome operation will take about 150 employees, including 3 separate chefs

for the suites and club operations, which are leased to season-ticket holders at the Alamodome.

"They'll do real well, it will be a good eating crowd," Caven said. "We have about 45 minutes in between the first two games. During that time, we'll have about 35,000 on the plaza, especially with the Texas A&M local connection."

Tom Rossford, commissary director for Sportservices' Edward Jones Dome operation in St. Louis, estimated a slightly higher figure for staffing at the facility, especially to handle the company's food carts.

"This year, we're really pushing our Philly cheesesteak sandwiches and carver stations; we expect those to be a big hit," he said.

Hosting these games takes a lot of food and a lot of planning. Below are breakdowns of how much food was ordered for each tournament with per-item prices to match:

EAST REGIONALS — MARCH 23 AND 25

Continental Airlines Arena — 40,000 projected attendance

Vanderbilt v. Georgetown

USC v. North Carolina

ITEMS ORDERED — PRICE PER ITEM

10,000 hot dogs — \$4
 6,000 soft pretzels — \$3.50
 2,500 slices of pizza — \$7.75
 2,000 popcorn bags — \$4.25
 1,500 bags of peanuts — \$4.25
 1,000 orders of nachos (tortilla chips & cheese) — \$5.50
 11,500 bottles of water — \$4
 4,250 gallons of soda — \$5 per souvenir cup

MIDWEST REGIONALS MARCH 23 AND 25

Edward Jones Dome — 50,000 projected attendance

Butler v. Florida

UNLV v. Oregon

25,000 hot dogs — \$3.50
 2,200 popcorn bags — \$2.50
 7,000 pizza slices — \$4.50
 15,000 pretzels — \$4
 10,000 nachos — \$5.75
 25,000 bottles of water — \$4.75
 8,500 gallons of soda — \$4 per souvenir cup

WESTERN REGIONALS — MARCH 22 AND 24

HP Pavilion — 36,000 projected attendance

Southern Illinois v. Kansas

Pittsburgh v. UCLA

8,000 hot dogs*
 5,200 personal pizzas
 4,500 soft pretzels
 2,000 bags of peanuts
 700 pounds of nachos (tortilla chips)
 50 gallons of nacho cheese

12,250 bottles of water
12,000 gallons of soda

*Prices not available by press time

SOUTH REGIONALS — MARCH 22 AND 24

Alamodome — 50,000 projected attendance

Texas A&M v. Memphis

Tennessee v. Ohio State

7,500 hot dogs — \$4
4,500 85-oz. bags of popcorn — \$4.50
3,500 bags of peanuts — \$3.25
2,500 personal pizzas — \$5.50
2,900 soft pretzels — \$3.25
1,755 pounds of tortilla chips — \$5.50
8,200 bottles of water — \$3.75
4,500 gallons of soda — \$4.75 per souvenir cup

— Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Terry Caven, (210) 704-6150; Tom Rossford, (314) 342-5373; Dave Freireich, (215) 238-4078; Pedro Valle, (201) 933-9006 x 14



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SHORT TAKES

CITRUS BOWL TO HOST WRESTLEMANIA IN 2008

The City of Orlando has acquired the rights to present WWE®'s WrestleMania 24 will

take place on March 30, 2008, at the downtown, under-renovation Citrus Bowl. A crowd of more than 60,000 fans from around the world is expected to attend. John Saboor, president of the Central Florida Sports Commission, negotiated the arrangement on behalf of Mayor Buddy Dyer. This year's WrestleMania 23 will be held April 1 at Detroit's Ford Field will host fans from 23 countries, all 50 states and 9 Canadian provinces. Millions more in 90 countries will watch it on pay-per-view. According to figures generated by the Central Florida Sports Commission, WrestleMania 24 is expected to pump an estimated \$25 million into the local economy.

Contact for this story: Gary Davis, (203) 353-5066

TICKETMASTER ANNOUNCES MAJORITY INVESTMENT IN ECHOMUSIC

Ticketmaster is acquiring a significant stake in echomusic, an online fan club and brand management company based in Nashville, with such clients as Kelly Clarkson, Rascal Flatts, Dierks Bentley and Keith Urban. Ticketmaster and echomusic plan to build brand awareness, increase fan memberships and drive ticket sales for their respective clients. The companies will integrate select technologies and resources, and, jointly, will look to enhance their relationship with iLike and IAC properties such as Ask.com and Citysearch to create new channels for music discovery and distribution. Through the agreement with echomusic, Ticketmaster can offer its venue, sports team, and promoter clients enhanced branding, marketing and street team services.

Contact: Ticketmaster's Ed Stewart, (310) 360-2409; Echomusic's Mary Hilliard Harrington, (615) 242-7444

IAAM CREATES JOHN E. CHRISTISON AWARD

The International Association of Assembly Managers will present the first-ever John E. Christison Award to John E. Christison, CFE, president and general manager of the Washington State Convention and Trade Center, Seattle, on June 28 at the IAAM Senior Executive Symposium (SES). The newly-established recognition goes to an individual who has unselfishly given his/her time and talents in such a way that it has significantly contributed to the IAAM Board of Governors and/or the IAAM Senior Executive Symposium. In 1995 during his presidency of IAAM, Christison had the vision to create the symposium, an educational program designed for the experienced facility manager, which has expanded from a one year to a three year program. The SES is held each June at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.

Contact: Kim Cook, (972) 906-7441

NASHVILLE PREDATOR'S HOME IS NO LONGER 'THE GEC'

Nashville, Tenn.'s Metro Sports Authority unanimously approved a proposal by the Nashville Predators to change the name of the Gaylord Entertainment Center to the Nashville Arena effective immediately. The National Hockey League team is seeking a new naming rights partner. Gaylord originally signed a 20-year, \$80 million title sponsor deal with the Predators in 1999, but that agreement was terminated in 2004.

Contact: Hugh Lombardi, (615) 770-2002

AHL FRANCHISE HEADED TO ROCKFORD

The governing board for Centre Events, which manages the MetroCentre, Rockford, Ill., has approved purchase of a dormant Cincinnati-based American Hockey League franchise for \$3.15 million. In addition, according to a report in the *Rockford Register*, Centre Events will pay \$700,000 for the assets and branding of the United Hockey League franchise, the Rockford IceHogs.

Contact: Corey Pearson, (815) 968-5600

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