

VENUES**today**

The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

March 28, 2007 VOL. VI, Number XI ISSN 1547-4143

Welcome to your *Venues Today* weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Everyone in the office is back this week and clocking long hours to put the April magazine together. Look for our article on Florida Fairs and European venue construction, as well as our coverage of South By Southwest and the Mid-West Fairs Association's annual meeting. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I was personally of that underserved demographic of parents who were clubgoers and had kids and all of a sudden were stuck in their houses for three years without babysitters...As parents, we were jonesing to go back into clubs." — *Sippy Cups band founder/singer Paul Godwin on the creation of the group that plays kid-friendly shows at clubs like the House of Blues.*

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VENUE NEWS



The Sippy Cups

SIPPY CUPS ROCK THE DIAPER SET AT NIGHTCLUBS

A generation of parents raised on rock and roll have plenty of options when it comes to "cool" kids music these days. But, until recently, taking your wee one to a rock show either involved keeping the kid up way too late or subjecting them to language and behavior that might lead to a host of uncomfortable questions.

But for a new generation of kid-friendly rockers, including Dan Zanes, Ralph's World and the Sippy Cups, the rock venues they used to play for adult audiences at night have become daytime outlets for a whole new audience. And for the House of Blues chain, daytime kiddie shows are being developed as a potential growth business that could find the pre-tween set wiggling from clubs to amphitheaters as they grow up with their favorite acts.

The Sippy Cups, whose members carouse on stage amid giant puppets, juggling unicyclists and plate jugglers, play a kind of toddler-friendly psychedelic show that draws in kids and adults alike with songs like "Move Your Pants," "Drinking from the Sky" and "Superguy Returns."

"I was personally of that underserved demographic of parents who were clubgoers and had kids and all of a sudden were stuck in their houses for three years without babysitters, and, when you did get a babysitter, you wouldn't go out to clubs, but

maybe a movie and dinner," said band founder/singer Paul Godwin, an early-childhood music teacher who has composed award-winning scores for stage and film. "As parents, we were jonesing to go back into clubs."

Led by Godwin, the group formed in 2004 when he got together with fellow rockin' dads Doug Nolan and guitarist Mark Verlander for a benefit show, later adding San Francisco singer/songwriter Alison Faith Levy – formerly of the rock band the Loud Family – into the mix. With former Squids bassist Rudy Trubitt on board and ex-Loud Family drummer Jozef Becker along, the band's lineup was complete and last year brought their debut album, *Electric Storyland*.

Godwin said the door to moving beyond community park benefit shows was opened when he heard a San Francisco club called 12 Galaxies had done some kiddie matinee shows. So, he called up the owner – whose girlfriend had a couple of young children – and a concept was born. "It seemed like when we found club owners or music industry people with young kids, they were totally into it," explained Godwin.

With their first major tour now underway, the group is hitting rock clubs for matinee shows, sometimes playing two gigs on the same day, as they will do on April 14, when they hit the House of Blues on L.A.'s Sunset Strip for a morning show, then move on to the HOB Anaheim for a 3:30 show and the HOB in San Diego the next day.

It's a boon for the venues, which are typically empty during the day, providing a fresh revenue stream from an audience that doesn't do nearly as much damage as a grown up, drinking crowd. In fact, the biggest mess these rockers leave behind is typically a trail of goldfish crackers and juice boxes scored from the concession stand.

The Sippies, who honed their multimedia shows while playing afternoon gigs at San Francisco's Rickshaw Shop and Café Du Nord, moved on to the Great American Music Hall in December, where Godwin said they played back-to-back sold-out (500 capacity) shows, charging grown-up prices of \$18 for adults and \$15 for children (babies under 2 get in free).

"Those first shows really hit a nerve, with a lot of parents going, 'you went to Du Nord with your kids?'" said Godwin, the father of a seven-year-old boy. Though expenses for the elaborate shows are fairly high, Godwin said the group takes home about 50 percent of the ticket price, with all concessions profits going to the house. That includes everything from the rider-mandated juice boxes and kid-friendly snacks to beer sales.

Little Big Man Agency's Marty Diamond — whose clients include Coldplay, Snow Patrol and the Arctic Monkeys — said he wasn't looking to get into the kiddie market, but was impressed with the Sippies presentation. "I got involved because Paul reached out and they're the first kid-related act I've ever endeavored to work with," said Diamond, one of the co-creators of the 1990's Lilith Fair festival. "But I did it because I felt like the thought was complete and ... lots of people dove into the kid's market fairly gratuitously, but I felt the Sippies approached it honestly."

Diamond went to see the band perform at the Knitting Factory and was impressed with how they got kids up and dancing and saw how, in a club environment, parents could drop their guard a bit because of their familiarity with the setting. Of course having a Bloody Mary at 10 a.m. while your kid is having a juice box didn't hurt, either, nor did the attention to detail from the band, who augmented the show with coloring stations and gift bags.

Though one of the challenges for Diamond is booking enough shows to take the group on the road full-time during the school year, he's managed to put together an upcoming string of dates that will take the group to Seattle and Portland in May, then to Chicago for Lollapalooza in August and on to the House of Blues in Cleveland. "Resistance is definitely wearing down," said Diamond of reluctance from clubs to book an early-in-the-day kids show. "Some of it has to do with club owners having young

kids of their own and some is just the chance to do alternative programming." Diamond added that he's got "grander" plans for the Cups that he's not willing to discuss at this point.

He's not the only one with big plans. House of Blues Senior Vice President of Entertainment Kevin Morrow sees the Sippy Cups as the tip of the iceberg for a whole new area of business the company is excited to explore. "We played them three months ago in Los Angeles and it was off the hook!" said a clearly excited Morrow. "It was unbelievable. They sold out the show in a house that was scaled to 650 from 1,000 to give the kids room to run around and play."

While he was surprised how quickly the show sold out given that the Cups are not a nationally known quantity with Disney Channel or Noggin exposure, Morrow said it was encouraging, since HOB was already exploring how to get into the kid music game. "We have all these facilities in all these markets that are empty on Saturday afternoons and there's a real hunger for this area of entertainment," he said. "We're committed to doing the Cups across the country and we're thinking of starting up a Saturday afternoon event in all our venues across the country that would be like our gospel brunches."

With what he estimated were 30-to-40 kid-friendly acts that could be booked, Morrow said the weekly afternoon shows could easily be sustained with talent, both local and national, while establishing a new brand for HOB – tentatively called House of Kids – that would groom a new generation of club goers. "Over the next four to six months we're really going to be coming up with a strategy, which is a major initiative," he said. "We're not going to get rich doing this on the club level, but we're in the fan and artist development business and so we're going to develop these acts so that we can take them to bigger places."

The plan, he said, is to grow acts like the Sippy Cups or Ralph's World to the point where they can play bigger and bigger venues, eventually graduating them to amphitheatres like the "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" touring franchise. "Hopefully, we create fans at a younger age and they grow with the act they saw at a club and then they're going to follow that act to the Universal Amphitheater [Gibson Amphitheater at Universal CityWalk]," Morrow said.

The Sippy Cups have already helped HOB overcome one of the initial hurdles in reaching this new audience: the marketing. Instead of traditional avenues, such as flyering in the parking lots of other clubs and strip ads in papers like the "Village Voice," HOB's marketing teams have been advertising in local parent's magazines, flyering in kid's stores, family bookstores and other family hangouts.

For now, the only real downside for clubs and the band is an 8 a.m. load-in time, which hits some bar personnel just a few hours after the end of the previous night's shift, but Godwin said because the show only goes an hour, it makes it easier to double up and knock out two full houses within a six hour period. Plus, he said, "I've played plenty of shows where it wasn't a full house and we pack them in," he said. "A full house is a full house. And our show is a short attention span theater thing anyway, so it has to be really tight and go off on time, so there's no waiting around." — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Kevin Morrow, (323) 769-4723; Paul Godwin and Marty Diamond, (646) 336-8520

The Mohawk Theatre



FORMER MOVIE THEATER TO SEE NEW LIFE AS PAC

The City of North Adams, Mass., continues to peg its future on the

arts. Last week, Mayor John Barrett announced the city would transform the Mohawk Theater, a 69-year-old former movie theater, into a live performance venue, to be called the Mohawk Performing Arts Center.

The Mohawk will continue North Adams' transformation from a dying mill town in the Berkshires to a cultural destination. In 1986, the major employer, Sprague Electric closed, leaving their 13-acre campus of industrial buildings empty. Williams College Museum of Art, based in Williamstown, Mass., was looking for a space to install large art exhibits, and Barrett suggested the Sprague campus.

That project launched the development of the site as the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, or Mass MoCA, which opened in 1999. It's now the city's biggest tourist draw, with 120,000 visitors annually.

Mass MoCA exhibits contemporary visual art, and stages 75 performances year-round, including concerts, contemporary dance, cabaret, dance parties, outdoor silent films with live music, documentaries, and avant-garde theater.

"The Mohawk will be a sister, an adjunct to Mass MoCA," Barrett said. He envisions the 1,000-seat venue offering regional theater festivals, smaller dramatic plays, and performances by nearby college theaters, film festivals, graduations and private parties.

"It's not going to be running on a weekly basis, but it will be used for special functions," Barrett said.

The Mohawk opened in 1938 as an Art Deco movie theater. It went dark for the last time in 1991. The city acquired the building soon after, but it's taken 15 years to start construction.

Renovation of the 1,000-seat venue will run over \$7.5 million, and is expected to take three to five years to complete, mostly, Barrett said, "because of financial considerations."

Despite cobbled together financing, Barrett said they were unlikely to sell naming rights.

"It's been looked at, and if the right offer came along, we'd consider it," Barrett said. "But it's always been the Mohawk."

He added that if an offer did come, it was as likely to be from one of the city's older families than from a major corporate sponsor.

"The biggest challenge at the Mohawk is that there is no stage," said architect James G. Alexander of Finegold Alexander and Associates, Inc., the project's architects. Their previous work includes the restoration of Ellis Island and Boston's Wang Center for the Performing Arts.

The first part of the project will be to develop a stage 42-feet deep, with a 36-foot proscenium and a small mezzanine, as well a 70-foot wide stage house to the back of the existing building. The stage house will have a new loading area, and two levels of production space. The lower level will house dressing rooms, a green room, storage space and rest rooms. The upper level will include the stage, rigging, prop space, and a star dressing room.

"The sight lines for a movie are different for a theater, so we will have to re-slope the floor so the seats have a proper view and put in all new seating," Alexander said. "From the balcony, you couldn't see anything so we have to completely redesign the balcony for sightlines."

As part of the expansion, the back wall of the existing theater will be knocked out, extending the space into what is now the parking lot. The project has received a \$2.2 million federal streetscape improvement grant secured by U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, who represents Massachusetts, which the city will use to reconfigure the parking lot, losing only eight or 10 parking spaces.

The second and third phases will be done together and will involve renovation of the house, lobby and marquee. They will also restore a large Art Deco mural in the lobby. During these phases, the whole building will be hardwired with the latest technology.

Phase one will cost around \$3.2 million, Barrett said. The city has \$2 million ready to spend, with another \$750,000 to \$1.2 million coming from the sale of another city property.

According to the mayor, the city has also secured \$1.1 million in state tax credits, and will be applying for a federal matching grant. — Liz Boardman

Interviewed for this story: John Barrett III, (413) 662-3025; James G. Alexander, (617) 227-9272



The booking agent panel included, from left, Rod Essig; Norb Bartosik; Bonnie Sugarman; Tony Conway; Paul Moore, and Ray Shelide.

MID-WEST FAIR MANAGERS FACE INDUSTRY ISSUES HEAD-ON

NASHVILLE — The dearth of talent willing to perform two shows in one day and the protocol for preventing e-coli outbreaks around petting zoos and farm animals were among topics discussed by managers of major fairs who attended the Mid-West Fairs Association annual meeting here March 23-25.

The association is limited to 35 members, a portion from outside the Mid-West, and each member can invite one guest, so the crowd generally fits around a conference table, albeit a large one. Bob Fox, Mississippi Valley Fair, Davenport, Iowa, succeeded Greg Stewart, Central Washington Fair, Yakima, as president of Mid-West Fairs at this

meeting. Denny Lang, Erie County Fair, Hamburg, N.Y., was elected first vice president; and Phil Hurst, Clay County Fair, Spencer, Iowa, second vice president. The group meets in Tampa March 9-11 next year.

A panel of Music City booking agents was invited to address the group, a nod to the location of this year's event, and they confirmed that the days of fair acts performing two shows a day for a reasonable price are mostly history. The panel consisted of Ray Shelide, Monterey Peninsula Artists; Bonnie Sugarman, APA; Paul Moore, William Morris Agency; Rod Essig, CAA; and Tony Conway, Buddy Lee Attractions. Norb Bartosik, California State Fair and Expo, Sacramento, moderated.

Asked about the two-show booking, Moore said, "The fact is a growing number of acts 'can't' do two shows a day. They are manufactured in studios." They don't have the experience or the chops for such a strenuous schedule. Essig said some can't even perform one full-length show, citing his frustration when told that Katharine McPhee, an American Idol contestant, could only perform five songs live in the early days. His response: "Then she shouldn't be on the road."

All the booking agents confirmed there is a list of people who cannot do a 60-minute show right now. And there's another group that legitimately could not perform two shows because their performances are so physically draining. The whole process has filtered up and down to a point that with inexperience, high-octane performances, or technical requirements, the two-show act is disappearing.

"Of 55 clients we represent, I think we have three that will do two shows," Conway said. "When I first got in the business in Nashville [30 years ago] there were 150 acts in the business total. Now there are 250 with record deals and another 250 that don't have record deals." For the pros, two shows is not a problem, but it's quickly becoming a stigma.

The overhead for touring acts today is "unbelievable," Conway said. Even the new acts that might have been able to go out for \$2,500-\$3,500 a night 10 years ago now cost \$4,000-\$5,000 a night to break even. "Bus drivers are making a lot of money now, sometimes more than the band members," he said of breaking the new acts.

Fairs are competing with sheds, Essig added, and for the big acts, he can't even call fairs because sheds have driven up the costs. On top of that, affordable acts are touring with the major headliners. "Kenny Chesney took all the Sugarland dates," for example, he said. "You have stiff competition with deep checkbooks."

"The touring industry has never been more robust," Moore said, but with the demand, prices go up. "One hundred thousand dollars for an artist was a big offer a few years ago. Now we are getting three or four offers for every date available, which significantly increases prices."

Casinos are also contributing to the upward price spiral. "Tunica (Miss.) has ruined the hard ticket business in Memphis," Essig said. "One (casino) yesterday bought Alan Jackson and with a total sellout, they lost \$180,000. They're fine with that."

The other trend impacting fair talent negatively is the widening of what Essig calls the gap between headliners and so-called B-acts that you can buy for \$50,000 that can sell \$150,000 worth of tickets. "Country music has 12 headliners and we protect them. We stay three weeks apart in every city." Fair on-sales mess with the system, putting a whole list of acts on sale at once and sometimes when an arena tour is coming through.

The only bright spots for fair managers were the facts that it's too expensive to fly now, so fairs may luck out on the routing, and packages are becoming more of a trend for the young set.

On the other hand, Moore said his agency is putting together a kids package now. The

process started in January and now, in March, he's finally got the green light to take offers. The bad news is that he has \$1 million worth of offers he can't confirm and the three managers are juggling TV packages, tours and recording again.

Ryan Wilkerson, Haas & Wilkerson Insurance, offered an overview of the state of that industry, not good news for fair managers either. He spent a good deal of his time on the subject of e-coli, which became an issue at the Central Florida Fair, Orlando; Strawberry Festival, Plant City, Fla., and Big Fresno (Calif.) Fair, among others in the recent past.

It's important to realize e-coli is naturally occurring, it's everywhere, and the best defense is aggressive, well-documented preventative measures. "Signs are your first line of defense," Wilkerson said. "You have to warn consumers." And while some fair managers hesitate to make dire threats, Wilkerson emphasized that "you have to warn consumers that they could be carriers, they have to wash their hands. They have to be told what the risks are."

The handwashing stands and signs are fairly prevalent at petting zoo locations now, but the animal barns are also at risk. Several fair managers said they eliminated concessions in barns and even food carried into barns, controlled access and set up signs, volunteers and hand stations or restroom directions at every exit. Max Mosner, Maryland State Fair, Timonium, recommended fair managers document everything, down to a log-in for the people who clean the barns.

"Eventually, we will get to double barriers in the barns," Wilkerson said, meaning people won't be able to touch the animals and will be confined to clean pathways. Bartosik said Cal Expo recruited UC Davis med school students to inform people visiting the barns of the risks. The Miami-Dade County Fair had one entrance and one exit and double barriers at this year's ag tent, Wilkerson observed. He expected change to occur more quickly now and pending litigation and legislation to turn on the heat. – Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Tony Conway, (615) 244-4336; Ray Shelide, (615) 251-4400; Rod Essig, (615) 383-8787; Bonnie Sugarman, (615) 297-0100; Paul Moore, (615) 963-3000; Ryan Wilkerson, (800) 821-7703

Alex Hodges



FACES AND PLACES: NEDERLANDER PLANS FOR GROWTH WITH HELP FROM HODGES; COLLINS HEADS HOME TO HELM SOVEREIGN

Former House of Blues Executive Vice President **Alex Hodges** is getting back into the game, rejoining longtime colleague **Adam Friedman** of Nederlander Concerts where the pair have big plans to make the independent promoter a regional touring force in the Western United States.

CEO Friedman has hired his longtime friend on as the new Chief Operating Officer at Nederlander, where the pair will work with staff to grow Nederlander into a one-stop shop for artists looking for an independent representative to tour them through California, Nevada, Arizona and Colorado. Nederlander currently operates the iconic Greek Theatre in Los Angeles and the Santa Barbara (Calif.) Bowl, but Friedman said he plans to leverage his extensive artist and venue network to

develop Nederlander as an independent alternative to national promoters like Live Nation and AEG Live.

"There is only one person that is qualified to do this and that person is Alex," Friedman said. "He's been an agent, a manager, an executive and a promoter. He's the only person I know to do them all successfully."

Friedman said the privately-held Nederlander is poised to step in and fill needs of under-served artists looking for an independent promotional voice. With a focus toward quality booking and production, and regional credibility from its operation of venues in the crucial Los Angeles market, Friedman said Nederlander is ready to make its move and plans to begin announcing national tours in a number of months.

"We're at a point where we can really reach out beyond L.A. and help artists to accomplish their goals," he said. "It's not really a matter of just exercising our leverage, but offering an integrated set of services in other markets. The artist is still going to get competitive offers, but now they will also get the benefit of one-stop shopping and quality promotions. It's our attention to detail that has shaped our legacy."

Hodge's hiring is a reunion of sorts with Friedman, whom he worked with for over 10 years at House of Blues. Hodges officially left House of Blues on Feb. 2, less than two months after Live Nation completed their acquisition of the company. He officially returns on April 15 and will be reunited with former House of Blues talent buyer Paola Palazzo and senior vice presidents Ken Scher and Moss Jacobs, with whom he previously worked at Nederlander.

"I'm very excited about making this move," Hodges said. "The direction Adam (Friedman) has set for Nederlander and the quality team he already has set in motion is a terrific opportunity for both myself and this industry. I am very proud to be a part of this."

Friedman said his plan to grow Nederlander as an independent regional touring force throughout the region doesn't mean he won't work with Live Nation and AEG owned and operated venues.

"I do want to say though that there is an incredible amount of seating inventory that is waiting for the talent. We are best positioned to create these partnerships, because unlike companies in other markets, we are not conflicted. We are not locked into the wrong vehicle, just because we own it. We don't have to feed a building just because it's there. We want to get the right artists into the right buildings for the right fans."

Another executive coming back to his roots is **Zane Collins**, who is returning to the Sovereign Center in Reading, Pa. after two years at the Dow Event Center in Saginaw, Mich. Both buildings are SMG-managed facilities and Collins will take the new position once his replacement for Saginaw is found. In Reading, he is replacing **Bob Cavaliere**, who, according to newspaper reports, is moving to SMG Corporate.

Collins previously worked as the Sovereign Center's director of Operations from 2003 to 2004.

"It's a great little market with a very good active building and I'm really happy to return," he said. The move also puts Collins closer to his mother, brother, sister and grandfather, who all live within a few hours drive of Reading, albeit in different directions.

Collins said he plans to get more involved in the local community in his new position, working with the city's own Convention and Visitor's Bureau, as well as its Chamber of Commerce and other groups. The building is also getting a new American Basketball Association franchise, although he couldn't release too many details on the project. The Sovereign Center also houses the Reading Royals of the East Coast Hockey League and the Reading Express Indoor Football League team. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Adam Friedman and Alex Hodges, (323) 468-1700; Zane Collins, (989) 759-1325

The Midway at the Florida Strawberry Festival & Fair



11-DAY STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL BOOKS 23 ACTS IN NEW CONCERT STRATEGY

Officials at the Florida Strawberry Festival & Fair are still trying to decide if a new concert strategy – staging two completely different concerts each day of the March 1-11 event in Plant City, Fla. – is the direction they will want to go in the future.

Getting artists to play two concerts in one day, as they traditionally have done at the fair, had gotten too difficult, said Patsy Brooks, general manager. “A lot of artists only wanted to do one

show,” Brooks said.

So 23 separate acts were scheduled for the 11-day festival, which saw a slight attendance increase to 565,000 over last year’s 550,000. “It cost a lot more,” she said, noting two shows per act costs less, usually a set price, than twice as many acts.

As usual, Brooks declined to release budget figures for her fair. However, in spite of the increased cost as well as the production difficulties in switching the stage set for each show, “we’ll make money on it,” she said. “That’s just on the talent. Everything else is not factored in – the sound, the lighting, all the additional costs. I haven’t got that figured in.”

Tickets for the show range from \$10 to \$30, with Martina McBride pulling in the top price of \$30; Big & Rich next at \$25; and LeAnn Rimes and Montgomery Gentry getting \$20 for their higher-priced ticket. “It’s still very reasonable compared to other concerts,” Brooks said.

Concerts were held on the Chevrolet Sound Stage, an outdoor amphitheater with a seating capacity of 15,000. Country singer Josh Turner drew the best, selling out on the day of the show. “Everybody did well for us, but the one that sold out was Josh Turner,” Brooks said. “He was in the lead from the beginning. He’s going to be a really hot act for the future.”

Other concerts that drew well included McBride, Gretchen Wilson, Montgomery Gentry, Hootie & the Blowfish and Little Richard. “Little Richard did a great show,” Brooks said. “Everybody was pleased with his show.”

The Oak Ridge Boys also drew well and actually performed two shows, the only act to do so.

“The Oak Ridge Boys drew heavily for us here,” Brooks said. “Their 4 o’clock show was almost filled. We had something like 100 tour buses here, which is good for us.” That show took place on the fair’s Senior Day.

Fair officials are still taking stock of all the receipts and how everything worked to determine if this is the way they want to hold concerts in the future. “We’re going to look at this closely,” Brooks said. “What we’re looking at is that a lot of artists only wanted to do one show. A lot of people say you can’t have two big acts on in the same day, but we wanted to see if it was a possibility and evaluate it after it was over.”

Some of the added expenses included extra trips to the airport to pick up all the additional acts that played. “We went to the airport 31 times in 11 days to pick up

artists," she said. "We've got to factor all of that in. We're still getting all the figures."

Brooks was pleased that stagehands were able to change the sets over for each new act. "It worked extremely well for us," she said. "There was concern, 'Could we get two major acts turned over and their equipment in that time?'" For example, Brooks said, George Jones would go on at 4 p.m., play his set, and the stage would be changed over in time for Clint Black's 7:30 p.m. show.

Tampa-based Mighty Blue Grass Shows placed 70 rides on the midway, Brooks said, and were on par with last year.

In a season in which the state of Florida experienced deadly tornadoes, fair officials took note when high winds were predicted for one day and got everybody out of tents and into buildings. "We never got any kind of weather other than high winds," Brooks said. "We didn't get any rain that day."

The first Saturday brought rain, but other than that, the days were dry and temperatures were in the high 80s for the rest of the festival. Gate admission cost \$9 or \$8 in advance, and was not included in the price of the concert tickets for those attending shows, Brooks said.

In marketing, fair officials tried something new with four electronic billboards, which gave them the opportunity to constantly update that day's show information with the artist, time and ticket price, plus a ride special if there was one. "I think that worked well for us," she said. "It's hard to gauge when people are driving by."

Notably, the festival had some visitors who traveled from the Gyeong-Gi province of South Korea just to check out the event. "The government runs festivals in South Korea, and we had 22 people that came over on tour specifically to see the festival," Brooks said. "That was a unique experience, to have them here and to talk to them through an interpreter."

Next year's dates will be Feb. 28–March 9. – Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this story: Patsy Brooks, (813) 752-9194



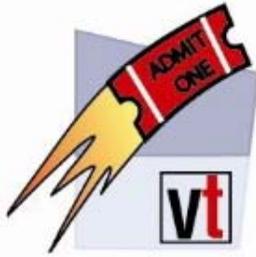
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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

MERLE, RAY AND WILLIE POST AT RADIO CITY

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 March 6, 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:* \$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
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,329,328; *Event:* Rod Stewart; *Venue:* **General Motors Place, Vancouver, British Columbia**; *Attendance:* 13,647; *Ticket Range:* \$109.55-\$47.44; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* March 10; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,325,075; *Event:* Eric Clapton; *Venue:* **Staples Center Arena, Los Angeles**; *Attendance:* 13,613; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Goldenvoice; *Dates:* March 14; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,255,985; *Event:* Eric Clapton; *Venue:* **Pepsi Center Arena, Denver**; *Attendance:* 13,691; *Ticket Range:* \$85-\$55; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Goldenvoice; *Dates:* March 7; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$1,229,564; *Event:* Justin Timberlake; *Venue:* **Joe Louis Arena, Detroit**; *Attendance:* 18,176; *Ticket Range:* \$87.50-\$56; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* March 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$518,451; *Event:* Rascal Flatts; *Venue:* **Spokane (Wash.) Arena**; *Attendance:* 8,677; *Ticket Range:* \$59.75; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* March 7; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$467,479; *Event:* Nickelback; *Venue:* **Gwinnett Arena, Duluth, Ga.**; *Attendance:* 10,188; *Ticket Range:* \$47.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; *Dates:* March 22; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$464,110; *Event:* Nickelback; *Venue:* **North Charleston (S.C.) Coliseum**; *Attendance:* 10,451; *Ticket Range:* \$45.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; *Dates:* March 15; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$457,176; *Event:* Mana; *Venue:* **Patriot Center, Fairfax, Va.**; *Attendance:* 7,963; *Ticket Range:* \$78-\$48; *Promoter:* Cardenas Marketing Network; *Dates:* March 16; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$442,369; *Event:* Blue Man Group; *Venue:* **Patriot Center, Fairfax, Va.**; *Attendance:* 6,774; *Ticket Range:* \$88-\$58; *Promoter:* Emery Entertainment;

Dates: March 9; No. of Shows: 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales: \$647,071; Event: Celtic Woman; Venue: **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; Attendance: 11,247; Ticket Range: \$70.50-\$40.50; Promoter: Madstone Productions, MSG Entertainment; Dates: March 16-17; No. of Shows: 2*

2) *Gross Sales: \$622,450; Event: Machel Montano; Venue: **Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York**; Attendance: 9,292; Ticket Range: \$125-\$50; Promoter: Devonish Promotions; Dates: March 23-24; No. of Shows: 2*

3) *Gross Sales: \$377,866; Event: Merle Haggard, Ray Price, Willie Nelson; Venue: **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; Attendance: 5,961; Ticket Range: \$77-\$42; Promoter: Bowery Presents, MSG Entertainment; Dates: March 22; No. of Shows: 1*

4) *Gross Sales: \$303,291; Event: Lucinda Williams; Venue: **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; Attendance: 5,961; Ticket Range: \$65.50-\$30.50; Promoter: Live Nation, MSG Entertainment; Dates: March 23; No. of Shows: 1*

5) *Gross Sales: \$233,299; Event: Larry the Cable Guy; Venue: **Broome County Arena, Binghamton, N.Y.**; Attendance: 5,588; Ticket Range: \$41.75; Promoter: Outback Concerts; Dates: March 22; No. of Shows: 1*

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales: \$609,300; Event: Sweet Charity; Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; Attendance: 17,108; Ticket Range: \$56-\$19; Promoter: Broadway Across America; Dates: March 20-25; No. of Shows: 8*

2) *Gross Sales: \$282,178; Event: Chicago; Venue: **Morris Performing Arts Center, South Bend, Ind.**; Attendance: 7,410; Ticket Range: \$51-\$26.50; Promoter: Broadway Theatre League of South Bend, Inc.; Dates: March 23-25; No. of Shows: 5*

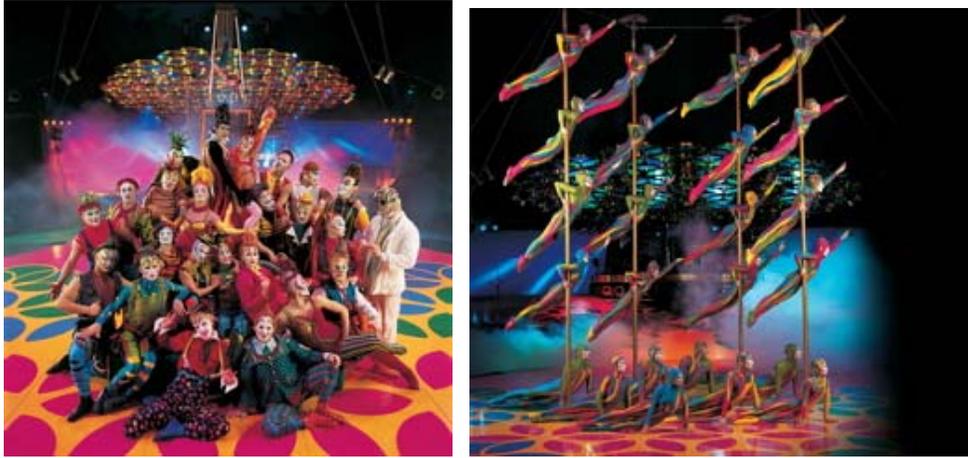
3) *Gross Sales: \$248,017; Event: Meatloaf; Venue: **Hummingbird Centre, Toronto, Ontario**; Attendance: 3,099; Ticket Range: \$149.50-\$56.51; Promoter: House of Blues Canada; Dates: March 14; No. of Shows: 1*

4) *Gross Sales: \$242,350; Event: Larry the Cable Guy; Venue: **Mid-Hudson Civic Center, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.**; Attendance: 5,669; Ticket Range: \$42.75; Promoter: Outback Concerts; Dates: March 24; No. of Shows: 2*

5) *Gross Sales: \$200,775; Event: Contact Crisis 40th Anniversary; Venue: **Majestic Theatre, Dallas**; Attendance: 1,378; Ticket Range: \$225-\$50; Promoter: Contact Crisis Line; Dates: March 24; No. of Shows: 1*

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

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Chinese Pole Dancers; The Cast of Saltimbanco (Photos by Al Seib, 2005 Cirque du Soleil Inc.)

CIRQUE'S SALTIMBANCO MOVES FROM BIG TOP TO ARENAS

You'd think after 14 years on the road under the big top, during which it played to more than 9.5 million people, Cirque du Soleil's "Saltimbanco" wouldn't have much higher to go. But the show is now moving into arenas for a North American summer tour that will bring it to more than 40 cities beginning in July.

The move is part of an experiment by Soleil to expand the lifespan of some of its touring shows by rescaling them to play smaller markets.

"When we tour arenas, we can go into much smaller markets than we visit with the big top, because the infrastructure of the big top is so involved that we have to go into a city for 4-6 weeks and the city has to be able to sustain that many shows," said Cirque spokesperson Chantal Côté. "With arenas, we can go into smaller markets and stay for a few days and do a 6-7 night run, which gives people in smaller cities the chance to see a Cirque du Soleil show live, rather than just watching it on TV."

The dates for the tour will be announced in late spring, though Côté said it will open in London, Ontario at the John Labatt Centre. She said that with "Saltimbanco" having already played just about every major market under the big top, the challenge was to figure out what the next step for the show would be. Though Cirque had never before tried to move one of its shows from the big top to arenas, "Saltimbanco" — which ended its big top run in December with a show in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil — felt like the ideal candidate.

"We have people in cities we haven't been to requesting a Cirque show and since you can't do all of them with the big top, we thought this could be a way of extending the life of the show after the big top run is over," she said. Depending on how the experiment turns out, it could be the blueprint for taking more shows into arenas and, as Côté said, "visit more people with different shows in more places."

The restaging of the show created a number of unique challenges for the crew, including how to present it in a more intimate setting while preserving the artistic integrity of the original. While Côté said not that much will change about the actual show in terms of creative content and the acts it features, the high wire act had to be scrapped due to the space limitations of arenas. Otherwise, it was a matter of restaging the show in terms of movement and choreography and, more dauntingly, rather than the 9 days of set-up time and 2.5 days for tear-down for the big top show, the arena version of "Saltimbanco" will have to set up in just nine hours and strike in two hours.

"You have to keep in mind that with the big top it's not just the tent, but the whole infrastructure of the site that needs to be set up," she said. "Here it's just a technical set up, so it's feasible to do it in nine hours." Besides, with the experience of taking "Delirium" into arenas, Cirque already has a track record with the quick set-up required in such venues.

New performers have been hired to round out the show's troupe, which now numbers 46, including returning performers and new ones who are in rehearsals and training at Cirque's Montreal headquarters. As an example of differences between the two shows, the big top "Saltimbanco" played in six cities per year, with 6 to 7 weeks in each city and 8 to 9 shows a week with 2,500 guests per show. By contrast, the arena program will hit 44 cities and play 6 to 7 days per city, with 6 shows per week to 4,500 guests per show.

Though Cirque said that the tour would be opening at the Labatt Centre, that building's director of marketing, Dave Harris, said he hasn't yet gotten a firm green light on the date. "We haven't gotten the confirmation yet, but we'd be thrilled to have them," he said. "It's our understanding that they're starting here and we'd love to be the ones to open the show, it would be a major feather in our cap."

The five-year-old building in the city of 400,000 hasn't hosted Cirque yet, but it perfectly fits the profile of secondary markets that Cirque is trying to hit with the show. "In Canada, you have big cities like Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, then you have cities like London, which is exactly the kind of market they're talking about," said Harris. "The closest Cirque has come to there it Toronto, which is an hour and a half away and this town is rabidly excited about anything that comes to the building. I think they'd be very excited about Cirque, because the name carries so much weight. I hate to say it, but it's almost a slam dunk, the buzz would definitely be there."

While he's not sure if "Saltimbanco" will be visiting his building this summer, Lee Zeidman, general manager of Los Angeles' Staples Center, said his first experience with Cirque in an arena was a memorable one and he's hoping for a return engagement. "We were fortunate enough to host 'Delirium' last September for seven shows and from a production standpoint it was tremendous," said Zeidman, of the week's worth of shows Staples picked up after another venue had to give up four performances.

Staples, which has also hosted big top shows in its parking lot for a whole summer, has a good relationship with the Cirque production and Zeidman said he was impressed with how different the arena show was from the big top experience. "It was more of a rock show/music experience than the performance/acrobatic show under the big top and it had a completely different feel from that show, so it was nice to have both," he said. — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Chantal Côté, (514) 723-7646, ext. 7326; Lee Zeidman, (213) 742-7255; Dave Harris, (519) 933-9499



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MARKETING

A promotional poster for Hairspray at the Providence (R.I.) Performing Arts Center



BROADWAY MUSICAL OFFERS 'FREE' HAIRCUTS TO PROMOTE THE SHOW

Haircuts and Hairspray seem to go together so officials at the Providence (R.I.) Performing Arts center put them together to market the center's upcoming performance of Hairspray, set for May 4 to 6.

The "Haircut and Hairspray for \$100" promotion will be held 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on April 15. For \$100, patrons can go to the Lobby Lounge, located off the main center lobby, for a haircut by a professional stylist, one pair of tickets, and snacks, juices, coffee, free raffle

prizes and possibly even complimentary manicures donated by future professionals at Paul Mitchell the School, Cranston, R.I.

Thirty dollars of that \$100 will go to AIDS Care Ocean State.

"Our main thrust to this promotion is to heighten the visibility of the performance," said P.J. Prokop, marketing director at the center and originator of the promotion. "At the same time, though, people will be giving to a good cause and getting a haircut. It's a great deal."

Hairspray will run for five performances at the center over the weekend. Tickets range from \$38 to \$65. Seating capacity in the theater is 3,000-plus. The tickets that are part of the promotional package regularly cost \$53 or \$58. Prokop said Hairspray's marketing people had been great in providing discounted tickets for the event and helping them with other parts of the promotion.

"We always encourage our buildings to partner with area salons somehow, but this promotion has taken this a step further," said Sarah Willis, marketing director/press agent for Hairspray, at TMG The Marketing Group. "We keep a running document of some promotion ideas and I definitely plan to add this one to it."

The Providence promotion should just produce a minimum of costs as well. Prokop said the local stylists expected to be on hand are donating their time and the haircuts. Volunteers will help bring in the chairs. The haircuts will be spritz cuts; no sinks will be used.

"So, we only expect to have some nominal costs such as deliveries and pick-ups, things like that," Prokop said. "The whole thing may cost in the few-hundred-dollar range."

She expects to have at least five chairs in the "center salon," but may have more. They hope to have at least one walk-in chair. The future professionals with Paul Mitchell the School will bring in a van and give complimentary manicures. There will be on-site raffles, at no charge, where those participating may win products.

"There will be refreshments and other forms of entertainment," Prokop said.

Some of that entertainment will include one of Providence's local celebrity drag queens named Kitty Litter, a.k.a. Stephen Hartley, development director of AIDS Care Ocean State. Hartley participates in many fundraisers throughout the area, said Paul Hiatt, who handles group sales at the performing arts center and has helped with soliciting participating salons.

"Providence is a small town and people like to get out and do things for a cause," Hiatt said. "Being able to give some of this money to charity is great. It really should be a lot of fun."

Prokop hopes to sell between 100 and 200 tickets, but it is hard to gauge that now. They have just begun promoting the event. They are advertising in one local newspaper, including it in the center's member newsletter, and running ads on the local CBS affiliate which is their media partner.

"Salons are also helping us by using flyers and posters," she said. "This package will be available for the entire week after the April 15 event from participating salons. Patrons can purchase the package, then set up their appointments later with the salons for their haircuts."

Prokop said if potential patrons buy from the box office, the package is a flat fee of \$100. If patrons purchase over the telephone, there will be a service fee.

This production of Hairspray is being produced by NETworks Presentations. Willis said the production played Atlantic City last summer, then began touring in August. It will continue to tour until June, playing San Diego before going to Japan for several weeks. After some time off it will pick up U.S. touring again in September. — Pam Sherborne

Interviewed for this article: P.J. Prokop, (401) 421-2997; Paul Hiatt, (401) 421-2997; Sarah Willis, (312) 475-0327



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SHORT TAKES

JIMMIE FORE RETIRES FROM ERNEST MORIAL HALL

Jimmie D. Fore is retiring from his post as general manager of the Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority, effective April 1. A national search has begun to find his replacement. Fore leaves a legacy of success from a career that has spanned 42 years and included management of facilities in Houston, Chicago and New Orleans. During his 16-year tenure in New Orleans, the center enjoyed peak occupancy and attendance growth and completed its Phase III expansion in 1999, which propelled the center to the sixth largest convention space in the nation. Assistant Manager Rick Compeaux has been appointed as Fore's temporary replacement.

Contact: Sabrina Written, (504) 582-3027

ONE 'SUITE' SELLOUT FOR DUNKIN' DONUTS CENTER

The Rhode Island Convention Center Authority announced that all 18 of the new luxury suites at the Dunkin' Donuts Center, Providence, have been leased and a waiting list for future lease opportunities is now being compiled. The Dunkin' Donuts Center launched its marketing effort for the suites in mid-January, announcing at that time four of the luxury suites had been leased by local companies and two additional suites will be utilized as party suites. The lease agreements are for three years, costing \$50,000 annually.

Contact: Kerrie Bennett, (401) 351-4295

ST. CHARLES CONVENTION BUSINESS ROBUST

More than 22,700 consumers attended events at the St. Charles (Mo.) Convention Center during the first quarter of 2007, an increase of 14 percent over the same period last year, it was announced by Global Spectrum, operators of the venue. The St. Charles Convention Center also exceeded all event and revenue projections in 2006. Local restaurateurs reported good business, increases of up to 20 percent, during convention center events. The St. Charles Convention Center, which opened in April of 2005, has exceeded budgeted expectations in each of its first two years by hosting nearly 700 events through December of 2006.

Contact: Jonathan Frost, (636) 669-3009

GRAVE DIGGER GOES GAMING

Activision Publishing, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Activision, Inc., has signed a multi-year agreement which grants the company exclusive worldwide rights to develop and distribute video games on all platforms based on Live Nation's Monster Jam series. The first game under the terms of the agreement is expected to be available at retail stores worldwide this holiday season. Featured in the game will be 20 of the world's top monster trucks on the Monster Jam circuit, including Grave Digger.

Contact: Denny Hartwig, (630) 566-6305

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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Melbourne (Australia) Exhibition and Convention Centre - Reservations Logistics Manager - The Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre is a world-class...

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The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, Australia - Event Operations Manager - The Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales has an...

The Lakeland Center - Client Services Rep/Event Coordinator - We are seeking an experienced event professional responsible for planning...

The Sydney (Australia) Cricket and Sports Ground Trust - Manager of Security - The Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust manages the Sydney Cricket...

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Washington State Convention & Trade Center, Seattle - Assistant General Manager - This position is responsible for the management and review of...

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