

Kristin Sarbeck

Subject: FW: March 22, 2006 Newsletter



VENUEStoday

The news behind the headlines

Dear Kristin,

March 22, 2006 VOL. V, Number X ISSN 1547-4143

Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. For a full calendar listing, to view archives or to subscribe to *Venues Today*, visit our Web site at www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We would still have gone down the same route, but it would have given headaches to the command staff, because now you're on national TV and you need to ask them to go to commercial and not come back for two hours." — Lt. Robert McManus, San Diego State University Dept. of Public Safety, on what would have happened if a bomb scare had happened during a game

IN THIS ISSUE...

- False Alarm Provides Good Incident Response Test for Arena
 - Historic El Paso Theater Reopens After Renovations
 - Wristbands Replace Timecards & Drinking-Age I.D. Schemes
 - Hot Tickets: Bon Jovi Gives Touring a Good Name
 - Added Seating, Mats, Touch Maps Make Venues Paralympic Friendly
 - Dodgers' New Loyalty Program Appeals to Shoppers
 - Philharmonic Discovers Lucrative Web-Based Opportunity
 - Ethnic Baseball Audience Brings Eclectic Tastes to Park
 - Short Takes
 - Help Wanted
-

ADVERTISEMENT

**Satisfying appetites
and budgets everywhere.**

[Click
here to
visit
our
website](#)

VENUE NEWS

Cox Arena during bomb scare



FALSE ALARM PROVIDES GOOD INCIDENT RESPONSE TEST FOR ARENA

If it can be said that a bomb scare went off like clockwork, that's what the officials at Cox Arena in San Diego agree happened at 9:30 a.m. March 16 when the venue was evacuated ahead of an NCAA tournament basketball game.

After two police dogs trained to sniff out explosives both indicated hits on something suspicious in a food cart, the building on the San Diego State campus was emptied out nearly two hours before the day's first game was scheduled to tip-off.

While venue manager John Kolek would not go into the details on the venue's security plan, he said proper protocol was followed when the dogs both hit on the cart. "When we have a double hit like that, we put our emergency plan into effect," said Kolek. "The dogs' handlers make the first assessment, then our incident commander, Lt. Robert McManus from the San Diego State University Department of Public Safety, took action and because two different dogs were involved, we decided an evacuation was warranted."

The dogs, who have bomb-specific training, are typically on hand for events at Cox.

Once McManus was alerted, other local agencies were called in to deal with the situation, from the San Diego Fire and Rescue's bomb unit; to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; and the FBI.

At the time, there were about 1,000 fans waiting outside the gates, as well as 400 patrons and 100 employees inside. The entire evacuation took around 10 minutes, according to Kolek, which is well within the venue's safety parameters.

"Everything went according to plan," said Kolek. "What we learned through this unfortunate incident is that our plan did work well and it was extremely effective." He said the coordination with other local agencies was smooth and that there were no major glitches. The biggest surprise, in fact, was how well it went and how cooperative and understanding patrons outside and inside the building were, Kolek said.

Lt. McManus was planning to meet with the Cox Arena staff and San Diego Police Department this week to have an in-depth debriefing session on the incident and discuss lessons learned. But he agreed with Kolek that things went "like clockwork." McManus said there were a few small things that could be improved upon, such as communication on the ground and getting the word out to people in certain areas of the building.

"There was one location outside the Cox Arena building that didn't get word as fast as possible," McManus said. "They needed to move out, not that they were in immediate

danger, but it was just to be safe.

"We also learned some things from the bomb techs in terms of how they would respond to this situation and the importance of safeguarding their tactics and techniques, which we never considered when evacuating people." The cart was removed from the area in the building where it was found and checked over by the bomb squad. The incident came a week after the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said that non-specific threats had been made on the Internet about potential terror attacks on sports arenas.

McManus said his staff created a larger perimeter than usual around the bomb squad in certain areas so that onlookers couldn't see how they operate. The initial perimeter was large enough, but McManus said it was expanded during the evacuation on the squad's advice.

It was definitely in the security team's favor that the venue had not yet opened to the public, McManus said. If it had, instead of a few hundred people, his staff would have had to evacuate 13,000 people from the venue on live television, which would have been "a different animal. We would still have gone down the same route, but it would have given headaches to the command staff, because now you're on national TV and you need to ask them to go to commercial and not come back for two hours."

While both McManus and Kolek declined to speak specifically about what the dogs keyed in on and where, McManus said the dogs hit separately, in a storage area, on a cart that had a door in it, which raised the bomb squad's anxiety level a bit. Among the theories being floated about what the dogs smelled was that it might have been a new cleaning product that has fooled dogs in other incidents recently, or possibly a Sterno can with a leak. "The dogs didn't make a mistake," McManus said. "They alerted on what they are trained to alert on."

Though the incident altered that day's televised game schedule, Kolek said it didn't have a financial impact on the building or the tournament.

The Cox team had undergone their last full training exercise in December without patrons, and Kolek said they typically train four or five times a year to keep fresh on where people need to go in an emergency and who is responsible for what parts of the building. "And at various times after events, when we're unloading the building, which is essentially like an evacuation, we'll run through emergency planning with the staff as a refresher," he said.

The upcoming round of NCAA tournament games will be under tighter-than-usual security due to the terror warnings, with bomb dogs on site during all the games, restricted access to the floor, bag checks and wandings of all patrons entering the Oakland (Calif.) Arena. — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Robert McManus (619) 594-7874; John Kolek (619) 594-0234

[Have a comment about this article? Click here to e-mail us.](#)

Renovated interior of Plaza Theatre



HISTORIC EL PASO THEATER REOPENS AFTER RENOVATIONS

El Paso's Plaza Theatre Performing

Arts Centre reopened last weekend after the completion of a 20-year, \$38 million restoration project. Through a joint partnership between the City of El Paso (Texas) and the El Paso Community Foundation, the theater was preserved and restored, in addition to being adapted to accommodate current events.

"This is the largest public/private partnership in the state of Texas right now," said Wendy Garrett, director of theaters for the Plaza Theatre, describing the collaboration.

In celebration of its completion, the theater held a marquis lighting ceremony and fireworks display last Thursday for 3,000 attendees. "We literally had to shut the doors to limit the amount of people in the facility," Garrett said.

The city and the foundation also sponsored a ribbon cutting by El Paso's Mayor John Cook, along with a Savor El Paso cocktail reception on Friday night. SMG, which manages the venue and foodservice, provided hand-passed hors d'oeuvres, meat-carving stations and an open bar.

Following this event, the theater presented its first performance since 1986, Riverdance. "We sold out all 2,095 seats," Garrett said.

Designed by architect W. Scott Dunne in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the Plaza Theatre opened its doors in September 1930 and served as a vaudeville house. Among the stars that performed at the venue were Mae West, the Marx Brothers, Ethel Barrymore, John Wayne and Clark Gable.

By the 1970s, the Plaza began gradually deteriorating and closed its doors in 1973.

After years of sitting dormant, the Plaza was threatened with destruction in 1986 to make way for a parking lot. Under a two-month deadline, Board members of the foundation launched a massive public awareness and fundraising campaign to raise the required \$1 million to save it.

A gala benefit was held in January of 1987 featuring actress Rita Moreno, which raised the amount needed to begin renovations. The El Paso Community Foundation donated the Plaza Theatre as a gift to the City of El Paso in 1991. Then, in 2002, the partnership between the city and foundation was formalized and money was raised to begin the renovation.

As part of its restoration, the theater's stage was extended and a 10-story stage house was built. It has retained its Spanish Colonial design, which features a courtyard-like setting in the seating area. "When attendees are sitting in the venue, they feel like they are outside in a Spanish courtyard," Garrett said. "There are twinkling fiber optic stars on the ceiling and plaster castle structures built on either side of the theater rows."

Gary Martinez, president of Martinez & Johnston Architecture, Washington, D.C., who worked on the project, said his firm specializes in restoring venues of this type and adapting them to a broader spectrum of live entertainment. "For this project, we removed the original stage house and added 80,000 square feet of green rooms, dressing rooms and rehearsal spaces," he said.

This adapted the venue for both operas and symphonies. "We've increased the number of dressing rooms and enlarged the orchestra pit to accommodate more musicians," Martinez said. "The symphony shell also is custom-designed to project sound into the hall."

Because the theater is a historic national landmark, it required a specialized sound system. "This is because we weren't able to change the architectural volume of the chamber or the configuration of the ceiling due to the building's historic landmark designation," Martinez said.

Anthony Nittoli headed up the Plaza Theatre's acoustic design for Akustiks in South Norwalk, Conn. He said the theater's \$1 million specialized electronic sound system consists of approximately 80 speakers that are evenly distributed and hidden within the architecture. Other features include EAW speakers, a Crown amplifier, a Soundcraft Console and XPA processing. "We also installed a four-channel technical intercom system and a backstage lobby monitor and paging system," he said.

The main theater seats 2,095 people and features an orchestra pit that accommodates 70 musicians. The adjoined Philanthropy Theater seats 184 and is designed for local performances, business lectures and educational seminars.

A signature element of the plan is the Alcantar Sky Garden, a rooftop patio garden that holds 200 guests for receptions and smaller gatherings. This features an Italian tile floor, ornate fountains and custom-made furniture.

The Oasis, located on the theater's ground floor, serves as the theater's bar and foodservice facility. It is named in honor of Fred Hervey, an El Paso businessman who twice served as the city's mayor and operated a restaurant of the same name.

Other contractors for this project included Byrne-Arrow Construction, ECM International, Evergreene Studios and Schuler Shook.

A full schedule is already in place for the theater. Singer Tony Bennett will be performing on Saturday, March 25 at 8 p.m. Tickets are priced at \$50, \$70 and \$125. Other upcoming performances include An Evening with Colin Mocherie and Brad Sherwood on April 1; the El Paso Symphony Orchestra on April 21 and 22; Oklahoma on April 27; and comedian George Carlin on May 18.

"This project has brought back a cultural and structural icon that is so important to the city," Martinez said. "People were literally crying sitting in the seats after 30 years. This theater has tremendous support from the citizens of El Paso." — Lisa White
Interviewed for this story: Wendy Garrett, (915) 534-0654; Gary Martinez, (202) 329-4943; Anthony Nittoli, (203) 299-1904

[Have a comment about this story? Click here to e-mail us.](#)

Precision Dynamics Corp. SmartBand



WRISTBANDS REPLACE TIMECARDS & DRINKING-AGE I.D. SCHEMES

The days of punching a time clock are just about gone in Philadelphia, where workers at Lincoln Financial Field now scan themselves in and out. And that, says Facility Operations Director Dave

Duemberger, cuts costs, saves time and reduces fraud.

Work crews hired to remove snow from the stadium number 400-1,200 and the job can take as few as four hours or many as 48. Traditional paper timecards left room for error when laborers neglected to fill them out completely. They also created an opportunity for workers to cheat by failing to clock out then claiming more hours than they actually worked. Now, snow removal crews get a bar-coded wristband when they fill out their timecard and the process of clocking in and out happens automatically.

In Jacksonville, Fla., the high-tech wristbands helped prevent underage drinking during a major festival and created a handy marketing mailing list for a minor league baseball team. When Super Bowl XXXIX came to Jacksonville last year, the city's Triple A Suns hosted SuperFest — a pre-event street party that brought football fans together for a three-day, eating-and-drinking binge. State-issued identification cards were scanned upon entry, where false IDs were caught immediately and those of legal drinking age were issued wristbands that verified their status for vendors.

"All the person checking IDs had to do was swipe the drivers' license and it printed out a band that isn't transferable," said David Leathers, director of Food and Beverage for the Jacksonville Suns. "But it also creates a customer database — in our case, a list of baseball fans that are over 21. If we buy a mailing list, only 10-15 percent of the people on it are going to be baseball fans, so this is much better and it pays for itself."

Leathers said the system cost the Suns about \$5,000.

The system simplified alcohol sales for both vendors and patrons, but Jacksonville went even further. The wristbands, loaded with a tiny radio-frequency chip, were also used as a payment system. Kiosks that operate much like an automatic teller machine allowed patrons to load a cash balance onto the bands from their debit or credit card or with cash. Once loaded, paying for food and beverages could be accomplished — literally — with a flick of the wrist. The electronic payment system substantially shortened serving lines, boosting per capita spending by an estimated 10 percent and total sales by about 15 percent.

"We only have eight of the hand-held scanners, so this year we're going to focus their use in our third-floor bar and the suites," said Leathers. "You can definitely see the trend. We have 50 part-time cashiers and with some of them, you just have to give them the cash drawer and hope. But we could set up half the registers to be cashless and greatly reduce our risk of employee theft."

This year, the popular Austin, Texas, South by Southwest — or SXSW — music, film and interactive festivals again used the chip-embedded wristbands, but not as an electronic timecard or proof of age. The bands are used for admission to all the festival venues as a means to prevent counterfeiting.

In 2003, SXSW endured a widely reported scandal that involved the sale of thousands of counterfeit wristbands that had a combined face value of about \$500,000. Although the counterfeiters were ultimately prosecuted, organizers switched to the electronic wristbands the next year.

California-based Precision Dynamics Corp. provided the wristbands, associated hardware and software to the Philadelphia, Jacksonville and Austin venues. The technology is known as RFID, for radio frequency identification.

"All of these are different — they're essentially made to order," said Paula Moggio, PDC

senior marketing communications specialist. "The system we did for the Eagles was created specifically for them."

Because each system is different, there isn't a specific price list, but the RFID bands sell for \$1 to \$1.25 each.

"We have wristbands that can just have barcodes on them, but in these cases, they have computer chips that can be read by a reader from four to six inches from the wrist."

PDC introduced the technology about five years ago, focusing on wristbands for hospital patients. Although healthcare remains a core business element for the company, Moggio said patron management is the next growth area.

"RFID is really taking over supply chains," she said. "I can certainly see it being used for luggage identification at airports, and with pharmaceuticals. But we're focusing on patron management — any venue with a large crowd of people that need to be identified, verified or will be making purchases throughout the site." — Ted Struelli
Interviewed for this story: Paula Moggio, (818) 897-1111 ext. 1310; David Leathers, (904) 358-2846

[Have a comment about this story? Click here to e-mail us.](#)

COMING IN MAY - OUR SALUTE TO **PAFMS**

Public Assembly Facilities Management School at Oglebay is one of the most important education and networking sources for our industry. In May, we will be spotlighting this outstanding school and celebrating its 20th anniversary. Don't miss this opportunity to congratulate the students and thank the teachers of this important school.

Venues Today will match advertising with editorial. Your advertising commitment will decide how extensive this spotlight will be. Also, as a bonus, a portion of the advertising proceeds will go to the IAAM Foundation.

To support PAFMS, reserve your space by April 14th, by contacting:

Eastern Region: Sue Nichols, (615) 662-0252, Sue@venuestoday.com
Central Region: Pauline Davis, (615) 356-0398, Pauline@venuestoday.com
Western Region: April Stroud, (714) 378-0056, April@venuestoday.com

[Click here to view our full editorial calendar](#)

BOOKINGS



HOT tickets

BON JOVI GIVES TOURING A GOOD NAME

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. 28, 2006. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

The **Hot Tickets** this week as reported to **Venues Today**:

15,001 or More Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,573,953; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 14,230; *Ticket Range:* \$157.50-\$52; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* March 11; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,124,277; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Glendale (Ariz.) Arena**; *Attendance:* 14,885; *Ticket Range:* \$85-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* March 9; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$949,108; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **KeyArena, Seattle**; *Attendance:* 12,649; *Ticket Range:* \$86.50-\$48.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* March 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$928,541; *Event:* George Strait; *Venue:* **Freedom Hall, Louisville, Ky.**; *Attendance:* 15,779; *Ticket Range:* \$59.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Varnell Enterprises; *Dates:* March 4; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$863,768; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Rose Quarter, Portland, Ore.**; *Attendance:* 13,240; *Ticket Range:* \$79.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* March 5; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$414,134; *Event:* Brad Paisley; *Venue:* **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; *Attendance:* 8,776; *Ticket Range:* \$51.30-\$42.66; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts Canada; *Dates:* March 14; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$373,545; *Event:* Motley Crue; *Venue:* **Dunkin Donuts Center, Providence, R.I.**; *Attendance:* 6,321; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$35; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* March 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$362,682; *Event:* Larry The Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Patriot Center, Fairfax, Va.**; *Attendance:* 8,702; *Ticket Range:* \$41.75-\$38.75; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* March 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$332,540; *Event:* Nine Inch Nails; *Venue:* **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; *Attendance:* 6,887; *Ticket Range:* \$51.34-\$42.71; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts Canada; *Dates:* March 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$326,744; *Event:* Nickelback; *Venue:* **United Spirit Arena, Lubbock, Texas**; *Attendance:* 8,979; *Ticket Range:* \$39.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; *Dates:* March 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$379,060; *Event:* Nickelback; *Venue:* **Concrete Street Amphitheater, Corpus Christi, Texas**; *Attendance:* 10,000; *Ticket Range:* \$42 -

\$39.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group;
Dates: March 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$256,740; *Event:* Michael Buble; *Venue:* **Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.**; *Attendance:* 6,919; *Ticket Range:* \$60-\$45; *Promoter:* Live Nation;
Dates: March 1; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$255,119; *Event:* Nickelback; *Venue:* **Hard Rock Live, Hollywood, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 6,254; *Ticket Range:* \$44.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, Fastlane Concerts, The Messina Group; *Dates:* March 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$237,875; *Event:* Motley Crue; *Venue:* **MassMutual Center, Springfield, Mass.**; *Attendance:* 3,828; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$45; *Promoter:* Joe Fletcher Presents; *Dates:* March 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$233,810; *Event:* Larry The Cable Guy; *Venue:* **MassMutual Center, Springfield, Mass.**; *Attendance:* 6,366; *Ticket Range:* \$39.75; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* March 12; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,938,800; *Event:* Chicago; *Venue:* **Sacramento (Calif.) Community Theatre**; *Attendance:* 38,818 *Ticket Range:* \$65-\$15; *Promoter:* California Musical Theatre; *Dates:* March 8-19 *No. of Shows:* 16

2) *Gross Sales:* \$887,250; *Event:* Blue Collar Comedy Tour featuring: Bill Engvall, Jeff Foxworthy, Larry the Cable Guy, Ron White; *Venue:* **Warner Theatre, Washington D.C.**; *Attendance:* 11,830; *Ticket Range:* \$75; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* March 16-19; *No. of Shows:* 7

3) *Gross Sales:* \$769,824; *Event:* Little Women; *Venue:* **Tampa Bay (Fla.) Performing Arts Center**; *Attendance:* 13,705; *Ticket Range:* \$67.50-\$20; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-house; *Dates:* March 7-12; *No. of Shows:* 8

4) *Gross Sales:* \$401,672; *Event:* Larry the Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Orpheum Theatre, Boston**; *Attendance:* 8,500; *Ticket Range:* \$47.25; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Outback Concerts; *Dates:* March 10-11; *No. of Shows:* 4

5) *Gross Sales:* \$359,071; *Event:* Mike Epps; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 8,462; *Ticket Range:* \$47.75-\$39.75; *Promoter:* Bay Area Productions; *Dates:* March 10; *No. of Shows:* 2

Compiled by Kristin Sarbeck, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

Curlers Karen Blachford, Sonja Gaudet, Gary Cormack, Gerry Austgarden and Chris Daw of Canada celebrate winning the Gold Medal



ADDED SEATING, MATS, TOUCH MAPS MAKE VENUES PARALYMPIC FRIENDLY

Though on a much smaller scale than its parent event, the Turin (Torino, Italy) Paralympic Winter Games, which came to an end

March 19, still managed to attract a fair amount of interest.

Approximately 80 percent of the total 200,000 tickets available were sold, according to Gianluca Castelli, press representative of the organizing committee. This was slightly more than anticipated. Sales had been expected to come in closer to the 150,000 mark.

The opening ceremony, held at the Olympic Stadium in Turin, fared extra well, selling 26,000 tickets, which was 90 percent of capacity.

By discipline, hockey proved popular, while curling, the surprise hit of the Olympic Games, featured for the first time at the Paralympics, also drew a respectable crowd.

Tickets were priced at \$15 (U.S.) for all events (\$10 for children, the elderly and large groups) with the exception of the ice sledge hockey final, for which tickets ranged in price from \$24 to \$36 (\$17 to \$24 with reductions).

Disabled patrons were given free entry to all events, and at least 50,000 tickets were sold at low cost to schools in Piemonte and the surrounding regions.

Four competition sites were used for the games: Torino Esposizioni (ice sledge hockey), Pinerolo ice rink (wheelchair curling), Pragelato Plan (cross country skiing and biathlon), and Sestriere-Borgata (alpine skiing). The approximately 486 athletes from 39 countries were accommodated at the Olympic villages Sestriere and Torino.

Equipping the venues to host a sporting event for disabled users was factored into the construction and renovation of the sites and as a result relatively few changes were made to the competition sites in between the two sets of games. Time constraints — the Paralympics took place two weeks after the Olympics — were also a consideration.

"We tried to have everything prepared for the Olympics because we had three days to transform the village, for example. On the other hand, we had seven or eight days for the competition sites as we had them available for training. So we had very little time. Without doing everything beforehand, we wouldn't have been able to manage it," said William Marsero, accessibility manager.

"The alpine ski area was the most difficult," he continued. "The routes were almost all accessible, the problem was the mud and snow as the routes were [traversed] by cars, pedestrians, wheelchairs and skiers. To make the system hold up, we placed mats the night before on the snow that stayed rigid throughout the day and which were used by skiers and wheelchair users, and then moved when cars needed to pass."

Minor changes were also made at some of the other sites. At Torino Esposizione, for example, extra rows of seating for disabled people were made available by removing existing seating and replacing it with ramps. Rubber mats were added at Pragelato Plan to help people with sight problems to find their way and volunteers were put on standby to help people at a ramp that was slightly steeper than the legal limit.

More changes were made at the Olympic Stadium in preparation for the opening ceremony, with almost 230 more disabled seats added. Designed with soccer fans in mind, the original seating available for disabled people was insufficient at 70. The number of seats available for the disabled in the presidential stand was also increased, from approximately 25 to 65, and the press stand was adapted for disabled users.

The organizers also had to comply with recommendations from the governing authority

the International Paralympic Committee. "The committee was very worried about the accessibility of the most difficult areas, that is the mountain venues. They also asked us to adapt the routes to provide touchable routes for people with sight problems. All our sites were given touchable routes and touchable maps," Marsero said.

A few problems still occurred during the games. In the Olympic Village, for example, organizers had to provide alternate routes when a historical pavement proved unsuitable for wheelchairs. But there weren't any major problems, according to Marsero. "There were a few cases in the accommodation facilities of corridors being a bit narrow, but the athletes got around fine and there weren't any complaints."

Formal feedback on the facilities will be provided in the form of reports from both the athletes and the organizers. These will be passed to organizers in Vancouver to assist in the preparation of the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games and Paralympic Games taking place in 2010.

The Paralympic Games were held for the first time in Rome in 1960. They take place shortly after the Olympic Games and are held in the same venues as those used for the Olympic Games. — Michele Howe

Interviewed for this story: Gianluca Castelli, 00 39 334 1182999; William Marsero, 00 39 334 1124935

[Have a comment about this story? Click here to e-mail us.](#)

MARKETING

Scott Todaro



DODGERS' NEW LOYALTY PROGRAM APPEALS TO SHOPPERS

The Major League Baseball (MLB) Los Angeles Dodgers recently announced they will roll out a unique fan loyalty program linking members to retail stores, both online and out in the real world.

"We've signed the Diamondbacks and we'll be rolling that out in April. We're in discussions with four other [professional baseball] teams and should roll out two of them in time for the All-Star game in early July," said Scott Todaro, vice president of Sports Loyalty Systems (SLS), creator of the concept.

The concept is new for sports, and goes much further than previous programs. "These were basically rewarding you every time you came to a game. You'd get some low-end premium like a rubber-stamped autograph, but it was very limited because all you were doing was buying a game ticket," Todaro said. Most of those programs have dried up, he added.

The SLS plan allows fans to get closer to their favorite teams by earning points both inside and outside the ballpark that can be redeemed for game tickets, club merchandise or other fan experiences.

Through the new program, consumers can run the gamut of purchases from groceries to gasoline. The participating partner for gasoline is 76, while the participating grocer has yet to be named, though it will be a major chain. "This is really straightforward. Think of how much you spend on groceries. Say you spend \$100 a week. You can get something like 5200 points for that," Todaro said.

With an accumulation of 10,000 points, users are eligible for a game jersey or the "best seats in the house," Todaro said.

Baseball fans prefer "insider" perks over other giveaways, according to Todaro. And fans who accumulate enough points can enjoy such intimate moments as sitting in the dugout or sharing batting practice with the players.

SLS teamed up with Mall Networks to introduce the program. Mall Networks offers more than 250 online merchants that include Expedia, Macy's, Land's End, Overstock.com and Teleflora. Merchants provide additional incentives to fans to shop online that include special offers and bonus points.

Fans can join the program at the ballpark or on the team's Web site. They pay an annual fee of \$19.95, which makes them eligible to receive information from participating merchants.

The idea came from SLS founder Les Otten. "We took a loyalty concept for Canada Air Miles and U Promise, a college savings plan, and adopted it to sports," Todaro said. It took about a year to devise the program and sell it to the Dodgers.

SLS is a customer loyalty company that designs, operates and markets programs for professional sports leagues and their franchises. Mall Networks is a company that connects online retailers to consumer rewards programs. Both companies were formed last year and are based in Massachusetts.

"It's good for the fans, good for participating merchants and good for the teams," said Dave Andre, founder and CEO of Mall Networks. "We believe the Dodgers are the first of many teams that will embrace this program."

Todaro said in addition to the 30 professional baseball teams, the loyalty program will be marketed to other U.S. sports franchises such as basketball, hockey and even football franchises, which may have a more limited potential because there are far fewer games.

Cricket in Britain and soccer in Argentina and professional sports teams throughout Europe are also in the plan. "This type of program works wherever there are fans passionate about sports. It's a worldwide concept," Todaro said.

Why did the Dodgers decide to take the plunge first? "When you have 22.1 million people in your area, you can't pass that up. Los Angeles and New York are huge markets, but frankly, the LA Dodgers were the most aggressive team," Todaro said.

He said a key to the entire program is the loyalty and fanaticism of sports fans. "For this type of program to work, passion is real important. People aren't passionate about groceries but they are passionate about things like golf and travel and sports," he said. — David Wilkening

Interviewed for this story: Scott Todaro, (617) 351-4140; Dave Andre, (781) 862-3255

[Have a comment about this story? Click here to e-mail us.](#)

CDs available on Vienna Philharmonic Web site



PHILHARMONIC DISCOVERS LUCRATIVE WEB-BASED OPPORTUNITY

Since its launch three years ago, the Vienna Philharmonic Web site has been a phenomenal success, selling more copies of the orchestra's 2006 New Year's Concert than any other store in Austria. Last year, the site was turned into a full-fledged CD and DVD e-shop, which within the next two months will have the entire Vienna Philharmonic CD and DVD catalog available for sale.

"For the orchestra, it was more of a supplementary service on the Web site so that people who are interested in the orchestra could buy the CDs directly. Before we launched the e-shop, most people told me that selling classical music nowadays could only be a failure. But 30 minutes after we went online, the orders started coming in," said Elena Waldner, CEO of Juno Ohg, the Austrian company that operates the site, <http://wienerphilharmoniker.waldner.biz/index2.pl?language=en>.

Eighty percent of its customers are from abroad — in particular from Germany, the United Kingdom, United States and Japan. "We ship all over the world. We receive orders from almost all countries in the world — from Iceland, South Africa, India, Vietnam and New Zealand. It is wonderful for us to see how interested people from all over the world are in the music of the Vienna Philharmonic," she said.

The reputation of what is arguably the best-known orchestra in the world has, of course, helped attract visitors to the site. There have not been any particular efforts on the part of the company to promote or market it, although there are very visible links to the shop from the orchestra's home page. "We never did any advertising or the like. The site has so many visitors, so that people become aware of the e-shop," Waldner said.

So what is the reason behind its success? "Due to the crisis of the music industry, many record stores have closed," said Waldner. "It is not so easy for customers to find high-quality classical music CDs and DVDs nearby, so this is a new way."

Apart from recorded material, the site also offers a range of merchandise, which includes books, calendars and baseball caps.

"The Vienna Philharmonic Web site receives between 3 [million] and 4 million page impressions a year," said William McElheney, the orchestra's IT coordinator. "Due to the extreme popularity of the orchestra's New Year's Concert and the chance we offer our Web site visitors to register for concert tickets for the coming year, we have recorded requests from 70,000 individual hosts, 6 million hits or 50 million database queries, within a 24-hour period in the days around the beginning of the New Year. These figures are for the Vienna Philharmonic Web site as a whole — how many of these visitors move on to the e-shop, which is an external site, I can't say."

Sales of CDs and DVDs alone have been in the thousands annually, however.

Waldner's company, which specializes in e-commerce solutions for cultural organizations, also operates Web sites for several other Austrian institutions, including the Vienna Staatsoper, the Burgtheater, the Freud Museum and the Vienna Mozart Year 2006. An Austrian partner company, NCM, does the programming.

As for how this whole Internet venture came about, McElheney said, "The orchestra simply feels that online sales of recorded music are going to be increasing in the future, and we want to make a wide selection of our recordings available to our listeners."

For patrons who haven't embraced the world of Internet shopping just yet, CDs, DVDs and merchandise can also be purchased at the orchestra's ticket office and at the Vienna Philharmonic Museum, both in central Vienna. — Eva Johansson
Interviewed for this story: Elena Waldner, +43 676 9488464; William McElheney, +43 150 56525

[Have a comment about this story? Click here to e-mail us.](#)

FREE HELP WANTED ADS!

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Starting this month, *Venues Today* is offering **free help wanted** listings in the e-newsletter. To submit your listing or for further information, e-mail April Stroud at: April@venuestoday.com. Please look over the submission guidelines before sending (see spec link below).

Just another way that *Venues Today* is YOUR source for information.

[Click here to view the free help wanted guidelines](#)

CONCESSIONS

ETHNIC BASEBALL AUDIENCE BRINGS ECLECTIC TASTES TO PARK

Two World Baseball Classic contests held at Petco Park in San Diego March 18 and 20 gave Delaware North Companies Sportservice chefs an opportunity to get creative, and hit upon some items that will be offered at Sportservice-serviced parks in the future, according to Corporate Executive Chef Rolf Baumann.

"I would say the demographic of the games was 60 percent Asian," Baumann said. "It was odd to go to our ballpark and feel like I was in a different country." Teams playing were Cuba, Korea, Japan and Mexico.

Baumann came up with the ambitious array of offerings for this multicultural sold-out crowd, both for hospitality tents set up outside the venue and for the standard concessions stands and carts, while flying around on planes in about a week's time, he said. He was in constant communication with Major League Baseball, which produced the events.

The tents, which served 1,500, offered interactive chef stations with an Asian theme, Latin theme, European theme and North American theme under Sportservice's Well Bread brand. For \$50, diners could sample the likes of Schezuan chicken satay, roasted

pepper manchango salad, herring baguette and camp fire corn on the cob. Desserts from around the world were also offered.

About 80 percent of the attendees were from outside of the United States, Baumann said. The party organizers brought in dancers and other ethnic entertainment.

Inside the ballpark, the focus was on "street food cookeries," a growing trend based on food carts common in South American and Asian cities. Offerings included fish tacos, sushi, gazpacho (a cold vegetable soup), ropa vieja (braised beef with spicy rice) and Cuban sandwiches, which always sell well anyway, Baumann said. Signage was in five different languages.

Surprisingly, the biggest sellers were sushi and sashimi, Baumann said. They went well in both the carts and fine dining areas.

"I think our traditional American fare didn't sell well. The hamburger was not a big seller," he said. However, the hot dog bucked that trend, with patrons drawn to the long-time baseball park staple. "I was surprised," Baumann said.

Alcohol sales were far off the usual for a large-scale event. Carbonated soft drinks sold best, Baumann said. "I think there was more Coke than anything at the ballpark being sold," he said. He attributed that to a responsible air to the affair, and the presence of many children. "It was not about getting intoxicated and having fun — it was about having fun."

There will be research done on how some of these ethnic foods will sell to other audiences, Baumann said. "But we obviously want to keep the street food concept because that's going everywhere in America," he said. — Natasha Emmons
Interviewed for this story: Rolf Baumann, (314) 578-3122

[Have a comment about this story? Click here to e-mail us.](#)

SHORT TAKES

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY CHOOSES GLOBAL SPECTRUM

Saint Louis University announced that it has selected Philadelphia-based Global Spectrum to manage the its new \$77 million multipurpose arena, which is planned for a March 2008 opening. Capacity will be just over 10,000 for basketball. Terms of the deal have not been set. The university hopes to break ground by September.

Contact: Ike Richman, Global Spectrum, (215) 389-9552

VICKSBURG CVB HIRES COMPASS TO CONSULT

The Vicksburg (Miss.) Convention and Visitors Bureau has entered a two-year agreement (with a one-year renewal option) with Compass of Vicksburg LLC (part of Compass Facility Management) to oversee all aspects of the CVB's operation, including marketing and sales, event production and promotion, and management.

Lawrence Gawronski, (601) 634-4515

DEVELOPER BUYS MOUNTAIN LAUREL CENTER OUT OF DEBT

The troubled Mountain Laurel Center for the Performing Arts in Bushkill, Pa., has been freed from its debt of over \$20 million and will announce its new season in a few weeks, the new ownership group announced. The group, headed up by John Wolfington, plans to build a mixed-use commercial and residential development on the 2,225-acre site. The group is leasing the 2,500-seat Tom Ridge Pavilion back to Pike

County for management and programming.
Contact: Mountain Laurel Center, (570) 426-2080

SPOKANE SELLS NAMING RIGHTS TO EXPO HALL WING

The \$89 million Spokane Convention Center expansion has signed a multi-year deal naming the 100,000-square-foot wing The Group Health Exhibit Hall. As part of that deal, which is worth \$75,000 a year, Group Health also has obtained exclusive advertising rights among health insurance providers, medical providers and hospitals for the Spokane Arena, the company said. The Spokane Public Facilities District continues to pursue the sale of naming rights to the arena, convention center and opera house components of the complex.

Contact: Kevin Twohig, (509) 324-7071

MILWAUKEE'S MARCUS CENTER BREAKS EVEN

The Marcus Center for the Performing Arts in Milwaukee finished fiscal 2005 with a balanced budget. The board of directors reported total expenses of \$4.43 million, covered by earned revenue of \$3.13 million and an allocation of \$1.3 million from Milwaukee County. The center is the home of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Milwaukee Ballet, the Florentine Opera Company, First Stage Milwaukee and a Broadway touring series run by the center.

Contact: Marcus Center, (414) 273-7121

HELP WANTED

Venues Today now offers free help wanted listings in the e-newsletter. For more information or to submit listings, e-mail April Stroud, Advertising/Production Manager at: April@venuestoday.com

Mobiqa - SALES MANAGER- NORTH AMERICA

Mobiqa are the world leaders in mobile ticketing solutions based on the creation, delivery and redemption of barcodes to mobile phones. With a network of partners in 28 countries around the globe we are delivering mobile ticketing solutions across 6 continents. We are looking to recruit an experienced senior sales professional (based in the US) with an excellent understanding of the North American ticketing market probably gained selling for one of the major ticketing solution providers. You will be responsible for growing our revenues in North America both through partners and direct with major venues.

[E-mail helen@mobiqa.com for more information](mailto:helen@mobiqa.com)

To submit news or information to ***Venues Today*** contact:

Linda Deckard, Publisher, Editor-in-chief
(714) 378-5400
linda@venuestoday.com

Natasha Emmons, Managing Editor
(714) 378-5400
natasha@venuestoday.com

For advertising information, contact:

Sue Nichols, Eastern Region
(615) 662-0252
sue@venuestoday.com

Pauline Davis, Central Region
(615) 356-0398
pauline@venuestoday.com

April Stroud, Western Region
(714) 378-5400 ext. 23
april@venuestoday.com

You are receiving this weekly e-newsletter as part of your annual subscription to **Venues Today**.

Remember that you can also access the **Venues Today** archives as part of this subscription at www.venuestoday.com. [Unsubscribe](#)



This message was sent by Venues Today using VerticalResponse's [iBuilder®](#)



Venues Today
P.O. Box 2540
Huntington Beach, CA 92647
USA

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.