



VENUES**today**

The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

April 18, 2007 VOL. VI, Number XIII ISSN 1547-4143

Welcome to your *Venues Today* weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Dave and April are back from the IAAM Districts 4, 6, and 7 combined conference in Las Vegas. For more coverage, see our May issue of *Venues Today*. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The last six years have shown they beat each other up. We want to correct that balance." — AEG's Sims Hinds on the competition between Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul, and the Target Center, Minneapolis, which AEG Facilities Inc. will manage as of May 2.

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June is Family Show month at *Venues Today*. Whether you want to show off your family show package or thank one for an awesome run, get your message to the right people by advertising in our annual **Focus on Family Shows** issue in **June**. That issue will also contain our **Focus on Concessions**, with bonus distribution everywhere: EAMC Conference in Dallas, Association of Luxury Suite Directors in Phoenix, and the joint IAAM/NAC convention in Salt Lake City.

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VENUE NEWS



The refurbished Target Center bowl; the downtown destination setting.

AEG LOVES TARGET CENTER; MINNEAPOLIS LOVES AEG

In selecting AEG Facilities Inc. to manage the Target Center, the city of Minneapolis hopes to reduce, and eventually eliminate its operating losses at the 17-year-old venue, though in the short term it will pay more, said Pat Born, city CFO.

For AEG, the new contract, which takes effect May 2, fits the model it has fashioned for its facility management division, focusing on major markets with major league teams and a viable upside. It is a pleasure to sign a longterm management contract, added Sims Hinds, senior vice president, Development/AEG Facilities-Anschutz Entertainment Group, of the 18-year deal.

The deal is unusual in private contract management, at least for the oft-contracted Target Center, because it has been nearly totally public. The contract terms and development can be accessed online by clicking [here](#)

Born noted that AEG was the only company of the three submitting proposals, which included SMG and Global Spectrum, that was willing to cap the city's downside. The city's operating losses, which have been running \$2 million a year, are to be capped at \$1,750,000 in 2008; \$1,687,500 in 2009; \$1,625,000 in 2010; \$1,562,500 in 2011; and \$1,500,000 in 2012. Following attainment of the city's maximum reimbursement amount as outlined, the revenue sharing includes: the next \$250,000 to AEG; next \$500,000, 25 percent to AEG, 75 percent to the city; next \$500,000, 35 percent to AEG, 65 percent to the city, etc.

"AEG put us in the best position to achieve our two objectives: to revitalize and rebrand this building. It will be 17 years old this year and it's very important to the economic vitality of downtown Minneapolis. Second is to minimize our financial operating support in the building. AEG agreed to capping our contribution at a diminishing amount over the period. And they agreed to make a \$2 million capital investment and do other things to bring new energy back to the building. The other two companies are excellent, but they were not willing to make the financial commitment we wanted," Born summarized.

The city will continue to shoulder the debt service of \$6 million a year and the outstanding debt of \$68 million on the Target Center, but there is some movement afoot to get state aid for both the Target Center and the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Steve Mattson, who will continue as Target Center executive director under AEG, sees this as a bright spot in a long list of management companies that have operated Target Center since it opened in October 1990 with Ogden Entertainment at the helm. Ogden worked for the Minnesota Timberwolves of the National Basketball Association. In 1995, the team was sold to a new owner and the building was sold to the city. In 2000, Ogden's contract was turned over to Aramark, which ran it for three summer months

before selling the contract to SFX, which was then sold to Clear Channel. In 2004, Clear Channel wanted out and Midwest Entertainment was formed by the team owners to manage the venue. Mattson and a good portion of his staff of 35 fulltimers have been on board the entire time and will make the transition to AEG on May 2.

"The problem the last two management groups, Midwest Entertainment and Clear Channel, ran into is the model we manage versus the competition in the market," Mattson explained. "The model is set up in a way for the manager here to thrive off the non-games — concerts, family shows, the high school tournaments. The day Xcel Center came into the market as a viable competitor, the shows were split and the margins on the shows became even more split."

Hinds concurred, saying "the dynamic in Minneapolis/St. Paul is that the year before Xcel opened, Target Center did 45-47 shows. In 2006, Target Center and Xcel combined did 46-47 shows. And the two buildings have competed by lowering the rates. The number of events and number of people going to events has stayed constant, but the net left behind has dropped dramatically."

"The last six years have shown they beat each other up. We want to correct that balance," Hinds said.

AEG's plan is to run an open building, encouraging all promoters to play Target Center. AEG is also open to promoting its tours in St. Paul when that circumstance best suits the artist. Hinds said the open-building concept has worked well at Staples Center, Los Angeles, an AEG owned and operated venue; and that pre-opening contracts play out similarly in Kansas City at the Sprint Center and in New Jersey at the Prudential Center. AEG Facilities also inked a deal this month to lease the Hartford (Conn.) Civic Center, beginning July 1, and, again, the door will be open.

AEG will also invest \$2 million in amenities to be determined, but generally agreed to be related to the guest experience and the artist experience. The bowl was upgraded to the tune of \$8 million less than four years ago. A project will start in two weeks that will add 900 seats to the lower bowl for a concert configuration, Hinds said.

The "plan" is to institute a "long gradual process" that will afford the Target Center more events, extra marketing tools, and improved fan experience and experience for acts, road crews and production crews. "Maybe over the course of time, more money can be left behind," Hinds said.

He said AEG's facilities management division is not the usual private management approach. "The MO for us, where we will differentiate ourselves from what Global Spectrum and SMG are doing, is we are interested in the Top 40 or so markets in the U.S. and similar markets overseas — long term deals in major markets. We are willing to take some financial risk, but we can back it up with the touring concerts we can control. You are not going to see us chasing tax code deals where you can only get a three-year contract and it has to be a fixed fee and the fixed fee caps the incentive. We are interested in long term deals with appropriate reward for risk."

Born said the city of Minneapolis found that approach a fit. "Target Center is in the middle of our entertainment district downtown. It is nearly adjacent to a baseball park being built for the Minnesota Twins, to open in 2010, and near a brand new light rail line and suburban train line that will start in two years time. It makes our entertainment district what it is...It's clear Xcel and Target compete for entertainment events, but both are critically important for economic viability in both cities."

Aramark has the concessions contract at Target Center; EMI, the merchandise. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Steve Mattson, (612) 673-1363; Sims Hinds, (336) 841-0371; Pat Born, (612) 673-3375



Trey Bell of the Everett Events Center led a lively discussion during the arena roundtable. He's pictured here with Tayra Lagomarsino of Orleans Arena, which hosted the meeting, and Phil Misiura of Ticketmaster — Las Vegas; Old friends Marvin Witt of the National Western Complex in Denver catches up with Charlie Thomas of the Bramlage Coliseum in Manhattan, Kan.



Michael Enoch has moved to Las Vegas and is continuing to expand Live Nation's partnership with IAAM to host chapter meetings at House of Blues clubs. He's pictured here with Melissa Rosen of Precision Dynamics Wristbands; Inside the Orleans Arena, host to this year's meeting

IAAM's DISTRICT 4, 6 AND 7 GATHER FOR POW WOW IN LAS VEGAS

LAS VEGAS — When it comes to entertainment, there is nowhere in the U.S. that does it bigger and better than Las Vegas, the location of IAAM's District 4, 6 and 7 combined meeting. From April 13 to 16, venue managers, their staff and sales personnel gathered at the Orleans Hotel and its attached Orleans Arena, which served as a backdrop for the event.

About 205 participants pre-registered for the conference, which included a full day of core-track training on Administration and Fiscal management, Sales and Marketing, Facility Services and Operations and Leadership. With stadiums making a poor showing at this year's meeting, the most lively discussion took place at the arena roundtable, moderated by Trey Bell, the Everett (Wash.) Events Center's assistant general manager for Global Spectrum.

Bell said the Everett Events Center is looking at a proposal to switch from halogen light bulbs to a more environmentally friendly format that uses much less energy.

"As far I can tell, we're the first building to do this and I was wondering if anyone else had tried something similar before," Bell said. No one had implemented the new system, which will be paid for with government funds, but the question prompted a large discussion about relationships with local authorities and governments. The only thing that seemed to stay the same across the board was that nothing was the same.

When it comes to hiring police, Bell said his company was expected to pay an overtime rate to officers and to police management, which usually included a sergeant or in some cases, a lieutenant. Chuck Walters at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas said his facility pays the going rate for police, while Michael Dils at Cox Arena in San Diego said he usually paid the hourly rate, but that wasn't necessarily a good thing.

"Since we are a campus at a state university, we fall under the authority of the state and can't receive fire marshal inspections from local authorities," he said. "That means we have to use the state fire marshal, who lives several hours from the campus. Whenever we need an inspection, we have to pay her an hourly rate from the minute she leaves her house to the minute she returns at night."

All the news wasn't so dreary. Live Nation's Michael Enoch is back in his hometown of Las Vegas working as the company's director of venue design and construction, heading up the expansion of the House of Blues brand as well as efforts to expand the Fillmore brand. He said his company is pushing forward with plans to extend chapter meetings in U.S. cities with House of Blues clubs.

Orleans Arena Operations Director Damian Costa showcased the 9,500-seat building on a series of tours of the self-managed facility, which also hosted the closing reception. The Orleans Arena is home to the Las Vegas Wranglers ice hockey team, as well as the Gladiators Indoor Football team. With concerts, Costa estimated the arena held about 180 events per year.

"We're definitely going after the locals crowd, and what's nice about being aligned with a hotel and casino company is that we can have those extra amenities to really improve our overall experience," he said. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Trey Bell, (425) 322-2607; Michael Enoch, (702) 632-7610; Michael Dils, (619) 594-3533; Damian Costa, (702) 365

WEEKLY RUNDOWN: STUBHUB MAKES DEAL WITH SUPERFLY FOR JAZZ FEST EVENT; VETS GROUP SUES TO STOP U OF M RENOVATION

TICKETING: StubHub is flexing its ticketing muscle again, recently announcing a partnership with **Superfly Productions** to auction tickets to its upcoming **Superfly New Orleans Jazz Fest**. StubHub will auction off VIP Fan Experience packages on the site and limited edition Jazz Fest memorabilia.

Superfly New Orleans Jazz Fest runs concurrently during the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, from April 28 to May 5.

"The series was created 11 years ago to fulfill an intense demand for nighttime music events during the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival," said Superfly organizer **Richard Goodstone**. "Since that time we've become a premier destination for music fans attending the New Orleans series and in many cases, we're offering some of the top talent during the festival. It only made sense to partner with StubHub to connect fans that want a premier experience at this year's festival.

This year's festival includes shows by the Radiators at the Riverboat Cajun Queen, with regular tickets selling for \$50 apiece; The Greyboy Allstars also performing at the Riverboat Cajun Queen with tickets at \$40; Ween at the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center at \$36; Govt. Mule at the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center at \$36

and the North Mississippi Allstars at the Riverboat Cajun Queen selling for \$35.

Secondary tickets for the premium packages on StubHub are more than double the ticket price, ranging from \$200 to \$125 per person. Most packages include meet-and-greets, access to top VIP viewing areas, autographed posters, CDs and 10 drink tickets.

"We've done a similar program for them before and we find the premium packages work really well," said Sean Pate, corporate communications director for StubHub.

LEGAL: A disabled veterans group has sued the **University of Michigan** in federal court, asking a judge to halt the ongoing upgrades and plans for a \$226-million renovation of Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor because it believes the plans violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Michigan chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America claims U-M has failed to add enough seats for disabled fans or accommodate their needs for accessible restrooms, concessions and parking at Michigan Stadium.

The complaint was filed by Clark Shuler, 49, of Ann Arbor, a 15-year season ticket holder for the school's football program. In the suit, he claims the ramps to the bathrooms are too steep and he's got poor options when it comes to finding seating.

University spokeswoman Kelly Cunningham said the stadium is ADA compliant and considered the law in drawing up plans for the renovations.

"The university cares deeply about providing accessible seating for our fans. In fact, increasing the number and location of accessible seats has been a priority for the university from the very inception of the expansion project," Cunningham said.

Richard Bernstein, the Farmington Hills-based lawyer for the group, said the suit - filed in U.S. District Court in Ann Arbor - came only after attempts to negotiate with the university reached an impasse.

"It's upsetting that it actually had to come to this," said Bernstein, who asked Judge Sean Cox to issue an injunction to stop the upcoming renovation and force the school to make the stadium more accessible. The university has 20 days to respond to the suit.

Michigan Stadium currently has 90 wheelchair-accessible seats, all of which are in the end zone. The upcoming renovations would bring the number of accessible seats to 282 with some on the east and west sides of the stadium, along with accessible luxury boxes and those already in the end zone, Cunningham said. That is about a quarter of 1 percent of the stadium's current capacity of 107,501 fans. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Richard Goodstone, (212) 375-9652; Sean Pate, (415) 222-8442; Richard Bernstein, (734) 332-8699; Kelly Cunningham, (734) 936-5190

A CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



I'm pleased to announce our first *Venues Today's Women of Influence Awards*. We will honor five women who have made a difference in the sports and entertainment venue industry in our **August 2007 issue**.

We are seeking nominations from subscribers (only). To qualify, the nominee must hold an executive position in the sports and entertainment industry or its suppliers. She should be a leader, mentor and role model to others.

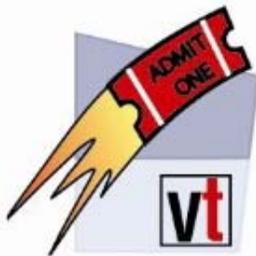
Please submit your nominations for our 2007 Influential Industry Women Awards to linda@venuestoday.com or fax them to (714) 378-0040 by **May 15**. Include the name of the woman, her title, affiliation and location, and a brief description of the accomplishments that prompted your nomination.

The winners will be selected by a vote of *Venues Today* subscribers, staff and advisors. We appreciate your participation and look forward to hearing your nominations.

Sincerely,
Linda Deckard
Publisher and Editor-in-chief
Venues Today

linda@venuestoday.com

BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

CHILI PEPPERS GRILL BRISBANE

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 28, 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*: \$2,962,169; *Event*: Delirium; *Venue*: **American Airlines Arena, Miami**; *Attendance*: 31,240; *Ticket Range*: \$125-\$39.50; *Promoter*: Live Nation, Cirque du Soleil; *Dates*: April 4-7; *No. of Shows*: 5
- 2) *Gross Sales*: \$1,434,762; *Event*: Justin Timberlake; *Venue*: **Continental Airlines Arena, East Rutherford, N.J.**; *Attendance*: 19,766; *Ticket Range*: \$92-\$56; *Promoter*: AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates*: March 29; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 3) *Gross Sales*: \$1,084,780; *Event*: Eric Clapton; *Venue*: **The Palace Of Auburn Hills (Mich.)**; *Attendance*: 12,563; *Ticket Range*: \$125-\$55; *Promoter*: Live Nation, Palace Sports & Entertainment; *Dates*: April 5; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 4) *Gross Sales*: \$1,083,290; *Event*: Eric Clapton; *Venue*: **Qwest Center Omaha (Neb.)**; *Attendance*: 14,570; *Ticket Range*: \$85-\$47.50; *Promoter*: AEG Live; *Dates*: March 31; *No. of Shows*: 1
- 5) *Gross Sales*: \$1,038,313; *Event*: Rod Stewart; *Venue*: **ARCO Arena, Sacramento, Calif.**; *Attendance*: 12,162; *Ticket Range*: \$126.75-\$55; *Promoter*: AEG Live, Another Planet Entertainment, Concerts West; *Dates*: March 31; *No. of Shows*: 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales*: \$1,981,759; *Event*: Red Hot Chili Peppers; *Venue*: **Brisbane**

(Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 20,994; Ticket Range: \$114.51-\$81.06; Promoter: Michael Coppel Presents; Dates: April 13-14; No. of Shows: 2

2) Gross Sales: \$637,313; Event: Rod Stewart; Venue: **Save Mart Center at Fresno (Calif.) State**; Attendance: 9,752; Ticket Range: \$96.75-\$55; Promoter: AEG Live, Another Planet Entertainment, Concerts West; Dates: March 28; No. of Shows: 1

3) Gross Sales: \$582,507; Event: Il Divo; Venue: **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; Attendance: 7,468; Ticket Range: \$110.61-\$44.25; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: April 12; No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$434,080; Event: Andre Rieu; Venue: **Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall**; Attendance: 8,637; Ticket Range: \$65-\$45; Promoter: Andre Rieu Productions; Dates: April 15; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$382,060; Event: Caged Fury Fighting Championship; Venue: **Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall**; Attendance: 6,865; Ticket Range: \$250-\$35; Promoter: Amflex LLC; Dates: April 13; No. of Shows: 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$300,470; Event: Hot 97: Caroline's April Fool's Day Comedy Show; Venue: **Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York**; Attendance: 5,518; Ticket Range: \$75-\$45; Promoter: Josephine Samuel & James LLC; Dates: April 1; No. of Shows: 1

2) Gross Sales: \$253,783; Event: Evanescence; Venue: **Nashville (Tenn.) Municipal Auditorium**; Attendance: 6,859; Ticket Range: \$37; Promoter: Outback Concerts; Dates: March 28; No. of Shows: 1

3) Gross Sales: \$226,508; Event: Evanescence; Venue: **Sovereign Center, Reading, Pa.**; Attendance: 6,324; Ticket Range: \$37.50-\$35; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: April 2; No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$204,029; Event: John Legend; Venue: **Bren Events Center, Irvine, Calif.**; Attendance: 4,655; Ticket Range: \$55.50-\$29.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: April 3; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$190,590; Event: Snow Patrol; Venue: **Agganis Arena, Boston**; Attendance: 6,557; Ticket Range: \$30; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: March 28; No. of Shows: 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$681,790; Event: The Light in the Piazza; Venue: **Keller Auditorium, Portland, Ore.**; Attendance: 15,480; Ticket Range: \$78-\$27.50; Promoter: Broadway Across America; Dates: April 10-15; No. of Shows: 8

2) Gross Sales: \$630,671; Event: The Flying Dutchman; Venue: **Keller Auditorium, Portland, Ore.**; Attendance: 12,216; Ticket Range: \$151-\$45; Promoter: Portland Opera; Dates: March 24-31; No. of Shows: 5

3) Gross Sales: \$266,018; Event: Diana Ross; Venue: **Chicago Theatre**; Attendance: 3,455; Ticket Range: \$99.50-\$34.50; Promoter: Jam Productions; Dates: April 14; No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$186,874; Event: Larry the Cable Guy; Venue: **FirstTier Event Center, Kearney, Neb.**; Attendance: 5,085; Ticket Range: \$36.75; Promoter: Outback Concerts; Dates: March 29; No. of Shows: 1

5) *Gross Sales*: \$182,590; *Event*: John Legend; *Venue*: **Chicago Theatre**; *Attendance*: 3,354; *Ticket Range*: \$67.50-\$42.50; *Promoter*: Jam Productions; *Dates*: April 13; *No. of Shows*: 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com



VENUEStoday

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Our May Issue is our 3rd annual Focus on Australasia and will also be our salute to the Grad Institute at Oglebay. Bonus distribution will go to the VMA's annual meeting and trade show on the Gold Coast, Australia.

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MARKETING



Screen Shot of the Rose Quarter's new search toolbar

ROSE QUARTER HARNESSSES CUSTOMER CELL PHONES, INTERNET

The Rose Quarter in Portland, Ore., and its management company Global Spectrum are jumping into high-tech marketing with two initiatives to reach potential customers through text-messaging and customized search engines.

The text-messaging program sends pre-sale information, event notifications, ticket auctions and discounts via cell phone text messages. The Rose Quarter has also developed a specialized web browser tool bar, similar to a Google or Yahoo! toolbar that can be downloaded for Internet Explorer. Instead of providing general web searches, the Global Spectrum-powered toolbar provides quick access to everything Rose Quarter, including the Portland Trail Blazers of the National Basketball Association, Winter Hawks of the Western Hockey League and the LumberJax of the National

Lacrosse League.

Both programs are free and easy to get started, and complement the existing RQ Cyber Club, which sends Rose Quarter news and special offers by e-mail.

Rose Quarter includes the 20,000-seat Rose Garden, the 12,000-seat Memorial Coliseum, 6,500-seat Theatre of the Clouds, 40,000-square foot Exhibit Hall and Rose Quarter Commons.

"These days, you can't assume people are getting the message from traditional means – print, radio and television, billboards," said Eric Blankenship, Global Spectrum director of Marketing for Rose Quarter. "E-mail is now a given, but we asked, 'what's another way?'"

Rose Quarter has been building an e-mail database since 2005, and began collecting cell phone information last year. When they decided to launch the text messaging program, they had 5,000 e-mail addresses in the database.

"We decided to do it now, when the database was relatively low, and use it to build it," Blankenship said.

Patrons who signed up for text messaging, or downloaded the toolbar, during the first week in April were offered a special pre-sale opportunity for the Tim McGraw & Faith Hill Soul2Soul Tour 2007. The couple's 2006 tour was the most highly attended event at the Rose Quarter, at over 23,000 people.

"We went from 5,000 e-mail addresses to 175,000 e-mail addresses," Blankenship said. "And we sold \$25,000 worth of tickets in a six-hour timeframe [through text messaging]."

Rose Quarter is the first Global Spectrum venue to venture into text message marketing. Blankenship said they planned to start small and local, so they could optimize the strategy, and then roll it out to other venues.

While they aren't the first to roll out a tool bar, they are ahead of the curve for sports and entertainment venues. It was designed with buttons that are functional for the user – a search engine, local weather, quick links to sports and concerts. The toolbar has the ability to send scrolling messages, which offers pre-sale information and traffic updates. They also offer contests and special online auctions only for toolbar users. In the future, Blankenship said, sponsors will be part of the offering, too, another way they will add value for current clients.

A local information technology company set up the processes, but it's managed in-house. "It was low in cost, under \$2,000, and required very little time or effort," Blankenship said.

Blankenship and Scanlon said because patrons "opt in" to receive the text messages, patrons don't feel they are being "spammed" by the information. They also haven't heard complaints about privacy concerns, or underage users.

"Text messaging is a younger demographic," said Blankenship. "We are giving them information, but since they don't have credit cards, they can't buy."

"They aren't making the purchase, but [the younger demographic] is driving many of the purchases," said Scanlon. "I can imagine a kid going to his parents with Rolling Stone pre-sale information he got in a text message."

The privacy policy is clearly spelled out when patrons enroll in the programs. Rose Quarter doesn't share information with sponsors or other third parties.

They're already looking for other ways to maximize the channel.

"During the McGraw/Hill concert, we might send patrons a message offering them 10 percent off a t-shirt or concessions, or offering them a chance to buy Alan Jackson tickets at the box office, which will be open late, after the concert," said Mike Scanlon, general manager of Rose Quarter. Weather and traffic issues can also be sent by text during the concert.

"Eventually, patrons may be able to buy tickets from their phone and scan it at the door, rather than presenting a ticket; or they load food credits for the concession stand into it," Blankenship said. "We're always looking for the next technology thing." — Liz Boardman

Interviewed for this article: Eric Blankenship and Mike Scanlon, (503) 235-8771

BONHAM GROUP RELEASES NEW SPONSORSHIP STUDY

A recent report by the Bonham Group reveals that sports sponsorships are more powerful than once imagined, perhaps having even more impact than the commercials that air during games.

The revelation could have an important impact for the multi-billion-dollar sports sponsorship industry, adding legitimacy to the claim that sports fans often develop intimate relationships with consumer-companies that sponsor the sports programs they love.

"We've found that what happens with sports sponsors is that loyal fans begin to impart the positive elements of the sponsoring brand image with their positive image of the sports team," said Bonham Group researcher Mark Friedrich. "When you align with elite organizations, in a sense, you also become an elite organization."

Research for the Bonham Group's report titled "7 Sports Business Myths," released on Wednesday, was a result of a number of consumer-driven polls mostly dealing with differences in sponsorships and television/print advertising. Most interesting is the report's claim that sponsorships are more credible than advertising. According to the report, nearly twice as many U.S. consumers believe there is too much advertising than believe there is too much sponsorship in sports.

"There is a much less obvious agenda with sponsorship. You're not sending a message of 'we're better,' you're really just getting your name out there," Friedrich said. "It leaves the image up to the person being most affected by the branding effort."

The Bonham Group's report follows the best year ever for sports-sponsorship. Companies reported \$956 million to be spent over 20-years in naming rights deals; just a portion of the value of the 16 major naming rights deals completed in 2006 since many companies and teams don't report the values of their sponsorships. The biggest deal was Citigroup's bid to name the home of Major League Baseball's New York Mets. Scheduled to be completed by Opening Day 2009, Citifield cost the financial institution \$400 million over 20 years. Earlier this year, the New Jersey Devils completed a naming rights deal with Prudential Financial for the naming rights to their new facility, valued at \$105.3 million.

Friedrich said many fans support the giant naming rights deals because they understand their importance in financing new stadium development and player recruiting. In one survey where Bonham Group interviewed 2,000 sports fans, the report found that 80 percent of consumers believed that corporate sponsors were "very important" to both the National Football League and Major League Baseball.

More importantly, the report found that up to 50 percent of fans state they are more likely to conduct business with a sponsor due to its sponsorship of a particular sport.

"In fact, more than half of consumers feel that they are personally contributing to a sponsored property when they buy a sponsor's product," said the company's marketing Vice President Shawn Bradley.

Of course there's a downside as well and teams have to be very careful when picking which companies they want to work with. The Texas Rangers recently dropped out of a contract with lender Ameriquest for the naming rights to their ballpark following major cutbacks by the company. The Houston Astros landed their second naming rights deal after the disgraced Enron Corporation bowed out of the agreement following their high-profile collapse.

"There's been an education in the market from the early iteration of naming rights," said Brian Schechter, a sports business analyst at Kagen Research. "Teams have been very clever in how they've used naming rights. They're also doing more due diligence, avoiding the Enrons of the world and not suffering the consequences when these companies take a hike."

The Bonham report also ranked the most popular sports leagues in the U.S. According to the report, the National Football League remains the most popular sport in the U.S., with three-fourths of consumers professing interest in the sport. NFL is followed in order by Major League Baseball, college football, college basketball, the National Basketball Association, NASCAR and the Professional Golf Association. At the bottom of the list were Monster Trucks, Major League Soccer and the National Hot Road Association.

In terms of viewership, the report found that the NFL has more than twice as many female viewers than any other women's sport including professional basketball, golf and hockey. It also found that over 68 percent of sports fans follow one-or-more sports leagues.

"When corporations are creating a sponsorship portfolio, they need to keep in mind the redundancy of fan bases, seasonality and other issues," Bradley said. "This fan crossover is a critical consideration." —Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Mark Friedrich and Shawn Bradley, (303) 592-4290; Brian Schechter, (831) 624-1536



CONCESSIONS



Tropicana Field

**TROPICANA FIELD
UNVEILS MORE
UPDATES**

In an effort to draw baseball fans to Tropicana Field, the Tampa Bay Devil Rays unveiled an \$8 million makeover before the April 6 home opener.

It's a second year of changes for the St. Petersburg, Florida-based Major League Baseball franchise, purchased by principal owner Stuart Sternberg at the end of the 2005 season. Last year, Tropicana Field underwent a \$10 million renovation to make the domed stadium friendlier and more energetic. They offered free parking, cleaner bathrooms, and added club level seats and a party deck. Everyone who interacted with fans went through intense customer service training.

Between the renovations and good buzz about the new ownership, the Devil Rays boosted attendance by 20 percent, raised season-ticket sales by 20 to 25 percent, and boosted TV ratings by 12 percent. They also increased both the number of new stadium visitors and the number of repeat visits.

But there is still much work to do. Despite the increase in door receipts, the franchise has some of the lowest attendance numbers in Major League Baseball. Last season, the attendance average hovered at 17,000 per game, in a stadium with a capacity of 43,000.

"Last year, the changes were targeted at fan experience," said Rick Vaughn, vice president of communications for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. "We focused on treating people like they've never been treated here before."

While the changes did bring up fan morale, the renovations didn't help on the field – the Devil Rays finished last season with a 61-101 win-loss record, and the team continues to have "significant cash losses."

Team President Matthew Silverman has said they anticipate at least two more unprofitable seasons, but have the patience to make the proper investments and wait for the returns. The investments included this year's \$8 million renovation.

"This year, the changes are visually dramatic," Vaughn said. "The resurfaced playing field is brighter and looks more like grass, and we've had lots of positive fan feedback on the new scoreboard.

The new scoreboard, three times the size of the previous one, spans most of the right field stands. It has three video screens, providing highlights of pitching match-ups, pitch speeds and other game day statistics. The main display board has four rotating advertising boards.

"It's not only much bigger and technologically advanced, the graphics are superb," Vaughn said. "And it's framed in an old-style Tampa look."

The playing field was resurfaced with FieldTurf Duo, a product that not only looks, but plays, more like real grass. The Devil Rays are the first baseball team to install Duo, the newest version of artificial surface.

Outside spaces were given a face-lift as well, with 200 native trees and 5,000 shrubs and groundcover added to the area leading to the main entrance.

In an effort to maximize visitor dollars, and continue to welcome new fans, there are updated seating and concession areas, new menu items, and a new merchandise store.

The renovations are a partnership between the Devil Rays and Centerplate, the concessionaire. The design and construction was done by M3, a Seattle-based subcontractor for Centerplate.

Team Store

Large vertical banners depict Devil Ray players and an illuminated logo is suspended

from the second story ceiling. The interior has been transformed with oversized images of favorite Devil Rays players, and large plasma screens with baseball-related videos.

"We added high-end, non-traditional merchandise, like Devil Rays branded skateboards, poker chips and a jet ski," said David Urso, retail-marketing vice president for Centerplate.

The store offers a comprehensive selection of Devil Rays memorabilia, with a greater selection of goods for women and children. "Women are buying more [licensed goods,] and we are responding to that market," Urso said.

The Ted Williams museum, which is adjacent to the store, has been increased by 7,000 square feet. It's free to all Devil Rays' ticket holders.

The Sand Bar Bullpen Beach

A redesigned party area, once the site of the visiting team's bullpen, called floridasbeach.com's Sand Bar Bullpen Beach offers seating a mere 18-inches from visiting pitchers.

"It wraps around the left field foul pole, so the people watching the game there are at the same level as the left fielder," Urso said.

The area is decorated with wood-toned decking, and teak furniture in a tropical beach look that complements the area's sponsor, floridasbeach.com, the website of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"It will appeal to groups who can enjoy the look and feel of an upscale beach resort while they watch the game," said Urso.

The area is one of a handful of naming rights deals within the park. Vaughn said the team recently inked a deal with Whitney Bank for the upscale club area.

Right Field Street

"In the Right Field Street, the Devil Rays have created a timeline of 100 years of baseball history," Urso said. With a bright comic book and baseball card art look, fans can learn about great players with ties to St. Petersburg, like Ted Williams and Wade Boggs. The concession stands are themed to match the era on the timeline, working from 1907 to the present. At interactive stations, fans can have their picture inserted in the front page of a newspaper, or experience the science of baseball in an exhibit sponsored by the local Children's Museum.

First and Third Base Concessions

While hot dogs, peanuts and nachos remain on the menu, the concession areas now offer local cuisine like filet of grouper sandwiches and whole turkey legs. Beers of the World offers an Old World-style pub atmosphere for fans to watch the game.

"This is a redesign of the concession area, not a complete redesign of the menu," said Urso. He said the area had not been touched since the stadium was built 10 years ago, and looked its age.

While the team is spending money freely on upgrades, some fans worry that they are focusing on the wrong thing: what about the team?

"We aren't spending money on free agent players," Vaughn said. "But we are one of the most aggressive teams in player development."

The team works internationally, setting up recruiting in the Dominican Republic,

Venezuela and Columbia. "We are looking for young guys who are going to stay here and play," Vaughn said. "It may not immediately draw a crowd of people, but they are committed to what they are doing."

The changes – both on and off the field - have sparked curiosity, at least. For the fifth time in the franchise's 10 year history, opening day sold out. — Liz Boardman

Interviewed for this story: David Urso, (203) 975-5941; Gael Doar, (203) 975-5941; Carmen Molina, (727) 825-3137; Rick Vaughn, (727) 825-3137

TAKE NOTE OF THESE IMPORTANT APPROACHING DEADLINES



* In **August**, we will announce our first annual **VENUES TODAY WOMEN OF INFLUENCE AWARDS**. We will honor five women who have made a difference in the sports and entertainment industry. To qualify, the nominee must hold an executive position in the sports and entertainment industry. She should be a leader, a mentor and a role model. Please send your nominations to: linda@venuestoday.com or fax to: (714) 378-0040. **DEADLINE: MAY 15th.**

*Get your reports squared away for the **Mid-Year Top Stops & Hot Tickets Charts** for the **JULY** issue! Dates covered in the reports should be: 11/16/06-5/15/07. E-mail reports or questions to HotTickets@venuestoday.com or call (714) 378-5400 and ask for Rob Ocampo. **DEADLINE: MAY 21st**

*Hurry and reserve ad space for the **MAY** issue Focusing on Australasia and Saluting the PAFMS Graduate Institute. **DEADLINE: April 20th**

SHORT TAKES

ANAHEIM PICKS ITS OFFICIAL TEQUILA

Anaheim Arena Management, the management company for Honda Center in Anaheim, Calif., has announced an agreement with Cazadores Tequila, making it the official tequila sponsor for Honda Center and the Anaheim Ducks National Hockey League team. Five kiosks on the plaza level will display the Cazadores Tequila name. Signage will also be posted in locations throughout the arena as well as on the upper and lower LED displays. Further terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

Contact: Emily Koch: (714) 704-2400

URI EXTENDS GLOBAL SPECTRUM CONTRACT AT RYAN CENTER

The University of Rhode Island has extended Global Spectrum's management agreement for the Thomas M. Ryan Center and Bradford Boss Ice Arena for an additional four years. Global Spectrum has been part of the URI community since the 2002 opening of both facilities on the Kingston campus. Over the past three years, Ryan Center revenue has increased 23 percent and several Global Spectrum employees have been with the facilities since the first season. They include Kara Russo, Jim Cordeiro, Mike Piacente, Maureen McCarthy, Leah Becki, Dave Laprova and Terry

Butler.

Contact: *Ike Richman, (215) 389-9552*

METROCENTRE GETS EXTREME MAKEOVER

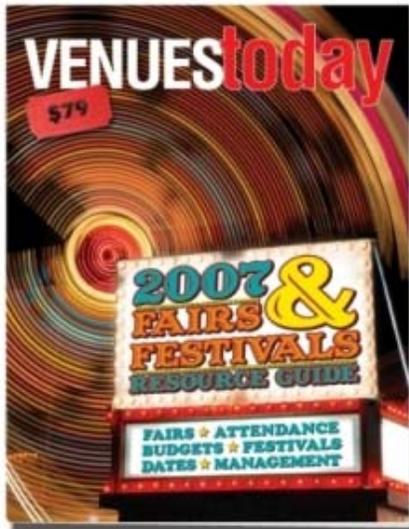
The MetroCentre in Rockford, Ill will undergo \$23 million in exterior and interior renovations. The arena is home to the Rockford IceHogs, the Rock River Raptors, concerts and events such as the US Thunder Nationals and WWE Wrestling. Renovations include a complete exterior facade upgrade and a reorientation of the entrance. High-end changes include the addition of 12 corporate suites, installation of more than 200 Club Seats throughout the arena, and a 300-person upper deck at the south side of the arena. Room will also be made for a new retail space in the arena's northeast corner. Construction is slated to begin immediately.

Contact: *Rebecca Kopf, (815) 282.9976*

AEG LIVE TO HELP BOOK HIGHLINE BALLROOM

AEG Live has entered into a partnership with New York City club owners and promoters the Bensusan Family to present shows at the city's new HighLine Ballroom. The alliance kicks off with the club's opening show on April 30, featuring Lou Reed in a special intimate performance. The Bensusans, who also own and operate New York's Blue Note Jazz Club and the B.B. King Blues club, have been operating as independent promoters in New York for over 25 years. The HighLine Ballroom is planning to present performances by Mos Def, Amy Winehouse, Jonatha Brooke, Spank Rock, Talib Kweli and Disco Biscuits during its opening month.

Contact: *Larry Solters (213) 639-6160*



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