

# VENUES**today**

The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

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Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. We wish the best for arena managers hosting NBA and NHL playoff games and look forward to a busy concert season this summer. For more coverage, look out for our May issue of *Venues Today*. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit [www.venuestoday.com](http://www.venuestoday.com).

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## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Some of the key lessons we learned were that [WUSA] set its expectations with a lot of exuberance in terms of how successful it'd be ... which just really exceeded reality."  
— *Tony Antonucci of the now defunct Women's United Soccer Association who is now working with several MLS owners to start a new women's league.*

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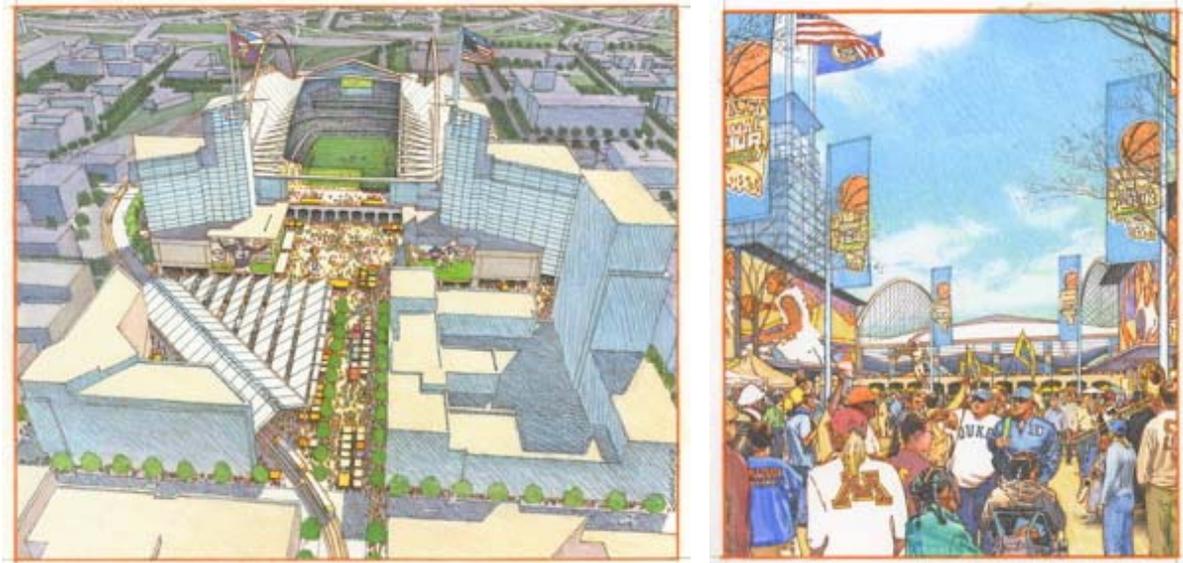
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## VENUE NEWS



***Schematics of the proposed new Metrodome Stadium Site***

### **MINNESOTA VIKINGS MOVE CLOSER TO NEW STADIUM**

The Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission (MSFC) in Minneapolis has taken the first step in the process of building a new retractable-roof facility — a facility with an approximate price tag of \$954 million.

The commission staff presented its recommendation in an interim report on redevelopment of the Metrodome stadium site. The report, presented April 16, is based on extensive research into current and future stadium costs, ancillary development potential and the program needs of the Minnesota Vikings. The Commission voted unanimously to receive the report and directed the staff to continue to move forward toward the next phase of the project.

“The next phase will be to begin speaking with our members of the legislature,” said Steve Maki, director of facilities and engineer, MSFC. “Our legislature only has about three weeks left to this session, but we will begin the conversations.”

Both the MSFC and the Minnesota Vikings feel it is time to start looking toward the future, the next generation. The Vikings are also starting the process of gaining fan support by providing a chance for them to comment on their Web site.

“It is our number one business issue,” said Lester Bagley, Vikings vice president of public affairs. “It is something we have been focusing on. We think it is the right approach to develop the broader area around the stadium and to include the stadium. We also think it will keep our organizations competitive. We have been at the bottom of the league as far as revenues.”

The Vikings have indicated they will commit hundreds of millions of dollars to the redevelopment. The Vikings aren't, however, interested in renovating the current building.

“I think the Metrodome, even though it has served well over the years, leaves a lot to be desired for fans for a game day experience,” Bagley said. “But the Commission is

making the case for this retractable roof building to offer things beyond just what we need.”

The Metrodome held its first event in April 1982. Some improvements needed to the building are wider concourses, more restrooms, more points of sale, and upgrades to suites and club seats.

The Commission had selected ROMA Design Group through a request-for-proposals to create the vision of the stadium and a surrounding development and neighborhood. The vision knits together a redeveloped downtown, with the stadium as the anchor. Other components include adaptive reuse of historic buildings, entertainment facilities, new in-town live/work neighborhoods, and revitalizations of other areas.

“The costing of the stadium was done by Turner Construction, based on a program for a typical stadium from HOK Sports,” Maki said.

The reason a retractable roof was chosen was to give the city versatility and year-round use.

The vision of the stadium has a seating capacity of 65,000. The breakdown of costs for the building is: \$616 million for stadium and hard costs; \$200 million for the retractable roof; \$58 million for parking development; \$9 million for land cost of right of way; and \$69 million for escalation to an early 2010 construction start.

The report also included costs of similar stadium projects to demonstrate the \$954 million is in line. It gave these examples: Detroit, 2002, fixed-roof new, \$471 million; Seattle, 2002, open-air new, \$465 million; Chicago, 2003, open-air renovation, \$590 million; Glendale, 2006, retractable-roof new, \$458 million; Indianapolis, 2008, retractable-roof new, \$932; Dallas, 2009, retractable-roof new, \$932 million; and New York, 2010, open-air new, \$1.7 billion.

The report proposes to completely demolish the current building.

“This makes sense because the infrastructure already exists,” Maki said. “The University of Minnesota is building a new football stadium that is expected to be completed for the 2009 season. If this goes ahead, the Vikings could play the 2010 and 2011 seasons in that stadium. The new one would be ready in 2012.” — Pam Sherborne

*Interviewed for this story: Steve Maki, (612) 332-0386; Lester Bagley, (952) 828-6500*

### ***The Dunkin Donuts Center is going through some major renovation***



#### **THE DUNK MIXES CONCERTS AND CONSTRUCTION**

There are Monster Trucks in the Dunkin Donuts Center in Providence these days, but it's not an event. They're construction vehicles, and they're sharing the space with Elton John, the WWE Smackdown, and other shows on the schedule.

Last June, the Dunkin Donuts Center – known to locals as The Dunk – began an ambitious \$62 million renovation. The Rhode Island Convention Center Authority

(RICCA), The Dunk's owner, is making much-needed upgrades, including 20 new luxury boxes, and improvements to restrooms, safety, and the food court.

And they decided to keep the venue open, in order to keep in the sights of Live Nation and AEG, even though it would extend the project's timeline from 16 months to 3 years.

"We haven't really passed on anything," said Lawrence J. Lepore, executive director of the Dunkin' Donuts Center. "Live Nation and AEG know our schedule better than I do, and we're constantly communicating."

To keep The Dunk in the minds of the promoters, managing company SMG has run ads in trade magazines featuring a photo of a baby and the slogan, "About to be reborn. Open during labor."

To maintain the balance, Lepore and RICCA Project Manager Kerrie L. Bennett meet weekly with Steve Duvel, the construction manager for Gilbane, Inc., the company overseeing the renovation. They look long-term, at schedules and bookings for the next one to two months, and at the short term, like what streets will need to be closed and how that will impact performances in the next one or two weeks. When shows are moved in, construction tries to work outside, to avoid the dust and noise.

During the meetings, construction plans are pinned to the wall, and the two sides lay out their plans for the week, making their cases for who gets what access, and when, to spots like the parking lot and loading dock.

"The biggest challenge is the load-in," said Lepore. "In the past, we had plenty of parking for the trucks and buses. Now we have to find parking downtown."

In Providence, which still has roads dating back to the 1600's, that's no easy task. Inside, there are compromises as well.

The building had to be brought up to Rhode Island's ultra-tough fire codes, put in place after the Station Nightclub Fire in nearby West Warwick killed 100 and injured 200 in 2003. To avoid a major drop in capacity, firewalls were built to separate interior hallways from outdoor construction sites. Dozens of temporary doors were installed to add methods of egress, and temporary handrails, staircases and concrete platforms were erected, even though they'll be torn down without ever being used, unless there's an emergency.

"The new fire codes are a major piece of the renovation," said Bennett. "That portion will cost \$7- to \$8-million."

Meanwhile, new luxury suites, to be outfitted with theatre-style seating, wet bars, refrigerators, wireless Internet and cable, are being constructed in two phases, north and south, in order to preserve exit doors. The decision means demolition equipment and trucks filled with concrete and steel will be making two trips to the venue.

The lobby will also be completed in chunks, with a new façade, entrance and lobby area opening this fall, and the new box office and guest services area waiting until the Fall of 2008.

The Dunk still had to drop their capacity from 14,000 to 10,800 for construction. When construction is finished, in December 2008, they will remain slightly below 14,000 capacity.

"We're losing a few seats to the luxury suites, but the income should balance out in the end," Bennett said.

When deciding which bathrooms to renovate and when, Gilbane had to maintain potty parity, so they wouldn't leave female patrons stranded in long lines. When they're finished, restroom capacity will be increased by 57 percent.

The Dunk closed last summer while Gilbane demolished and rebuilt the entryway, removed 751 seats, and installed the temporary walls. They'll close again from May to November of this year, the biggest break in the action, to complete half of the lobby, the luxury suites, and the new pedestrian bridge that links the convention center with The Dunk.

Bennett, Lepore, and management company SMG, aren't worried.

"It's usually fairly quiet in the summer," Bennett said.

Part of the motivation behind the short-term pain is the chance to make The Dunk profitable. It's been losing about \$1 million a year, but the events there bring an estimated \$25 million in economic impact to downtown Providence between wages and patron spending at parking lots and area restaurants.

When they're done, Bennett is convinced the Convention Center/Dunkin Donuts Center duo will be a world-class entertainment complex that will be more appealing to larger meetings, conventions and assemblies.

"Plus, everybody wants to play the new place," Lepore said, adding that upgrades to the stage, including a new rigging curtain, locker rooms and dressing rooms, will be more attractive for the artists as well. — Liz Boardman

*Interviewed for this story: Larry Lepore, (401) 331-0700; Kerrie Bennett, (401) 458-6000*



***Pennywise at the Starland Ballroom (Photo credit: Mark Sullivan); Charlie Smith; Dave Forkner***

**WEEKLY RUNDOWN: AEG STRENGTHENS ITS PLACE IN NYC MARKET; LIVE NATION OPENS CLUB FOR POPULAR MUSIC MAG; SKINNER, SMITH, CROOKS AND STRAFACCI ON THE MOVE**

**ACQUISITIONS: AEG Live** has added a new piece to its share of the New York Metro

market, recently acquiring the **Starland Ballroom** in Sayreville, N.J. The new property is part of a NYC buying spree by AEG that includes **Red Bull Park** in Harrison, N.J. and the **Poland Spring Arena** at the Ritacco Center in Tom's River, N.J. Couple those venues with agreements to book the **Prudential Center** in Newark, N.J., the **Highland Ballroom** in Manhattan and AEG Live's **Nokia Theatre Times Square**, and it appears that AEG is building a pretty comprehensive collection of facilities in the market.

"As AEG has expanded in the NY market; we have been looking at all the different pieces we have put together to service artists of all sizes," said the company's VP of Talent for the Northeast Division **Mark Shulman**. "This is such a great venue for developing artists and so many bands play there, both nationally and locally. We want to be able to know that no matter what an artists needs are at a particular time, we will have an appropriate place for them to play."

Shulman said AEG will continue to work with previous owner **Concerts East** to book the theater, which can accommodate crowds from 600 to 2,600. Shulman said the look of the theater is sleek and sophisticated, with dark woods, roughened black trim and lacquered mahogany and cherry wood bars and floors.

Besides building a presence in the New York market, Shulman said the facility fits in with a strategy to grow AEG's mid-level venues inventory for its national tours including the **Palladium Ballroom** in Dallas, the soon-to-be-opened **Nokia Theatre** in Los Angeles and the **Ogden** in Denver.

"It's a gradual process and right now we're working to make sure all the strategic pieces come together," Shulman said.

**NAMING DEALS:** Following up the successful opening of its Fillmore club in New York City, **Live Nation** is hitting its sophomore stride with another building in the marketplace, **Blender Theatre at Gramercy**.

The building takes its name from **Blender Magazine**, a popular music publication owned by **Dennis Publishing**. The group also own **Maxim Magazine** and **The Week**.

Company spokesperson **Drew Kerr** said it was the first deal of its kind for the publishing group, but it has produced live music events in the past and Live Nation seemed like a natural fit.

"It's relative to brand development — the right partner, venue and timing simply presented itself," he said. "We've worked with Live Nation many times before at Blender Sessions concerts in Atlanta and South By Southwest, so we had a nice relationship. They showed us this new venue and we decided this would be a great partnership. It was a "perfect storm of elements and opportunities."

As for marketing opportunities at the facility, Kerr said the magazine was looking at several different options.

"We'll be a marketing and promotional partner, in the sense that the theater will be promoted and live on Blender.com," he said. "There'll be a show schedule in the tri-state regional issues of Blender. We'll also use the theater for our own Blender events."

The theater opens Thursday night with an invite-only performance by Wolfmother. Other acts slated to play the facility this year are Rufus Wainwright, Grant Lee Phillips, Pretty Girls Make Graves, The Knitters, Lacuna Coil, Bebel Gilberto and Jedi Mind Tricks.

**FACES: VETERANS FORGE A NEW IDENTITY:** **Charlie Smith** said his decision to be

"acquired" by **HOK Sport Venue Event** ascertains "there will be a legacy" for his decades of work designing fairgrounds, equestrian centers, exhibition centers and rodeo arenas.

Smith and partner, **David Forkner**, along with office manager **Gail Carr**, officially begin working for HOK May 21. They are sewing up details for current clients at Bullock Smith & Partners, where they were founding partners in 1984. Smith was chairman. Forkner served as director of planning.

Bullock Smith & Partners will continue to do business, with two of the founding six partners still on board. They are Steve White, Nashville, and Ken Moffett, Knoxville. The other two founding partners left awhile ago, including Bullock, who started his own firm. Smith said he debated a name change when Bullock left, but his consultant advised he ask his 10 favorite clients what to do. He called clients like Wayne McCary, Eastern States Exposition, West Springfield, Mass., and the answer was don't change the name. Now, years later, he will be leaving the name behind after all.

Smith and Forkner will open HOK/Smith+Forkner's office in Knoxville, Tenn. All projects that started with Bullock Smith & Partners stay with Bullock Smith & Partners, Smith said. He is looking forward now to the next wave of projects.

"It's a wonderful fit," he said of the alliance with HOK. He has worked with them and sometimes bid against them for 15 years. The decision to join forces was mutual, he said.

Smith and Forkner will still make the rounds of fair meetings. Smith said he would attend the International Association of Fairs & Expositions spring managers conference in Topsfield, Mass., this weekend, and he just returned from the Florida Federation of Fairs meeting.

"I plan to work for the next eight to 10 years," Smith said, but he's looking forward to simplifying life a little, working with the support of a big firm versus scrambling for work building churches, hospitals and parking garages to support the two offices of a small one. Bullock Smith & Partners was 34 people; HOK is more than 400.

Prior to founding Bullock Smith, Smith and Forkner worked together at MHM Architects.

**David Skinner** is forming a new private management firm, **Focus Management Group (FMG)**. He will remain in Tupelo, Miss., for now. He had been executive director of the BancorpSouth Arena there for the past year, a job he left three weeks ago.

Skinner started his career in this business in 1977 with another FMG, Facility Management Group, which was started by his father, Denzil Skinner. When that FMG was sold to Spectacor Management Group, now SMG, Skinner was COO of FMG. He left the business for awhile, having signed a non-compete, but returned to facility management in 2000 at the Knoxville (Tenn.) Expo Center, before moving to Tupelo.

The new FMG Corp. will focus on management of buildings in tertiary markets or small buildings in major markets, he said. The web site, [www.fmgcorporatiion.com](http://www.fmgcorporatiion.com), should be up and running within a month, he said. He will concentrate on contracting venues east of the Mississippi for now.

**Les Crooks** is making a move, but keeping it close to home. **SMG** has chosen Crooks to serve as the new general manager of the new **Northern Kentucky University Bank of Kentucky Center**, Highland Heights, a 10,000-seat venue slated to open in

the fall of 2008.

Crooks has served in several capacities at SMG, joining the company as marketing manager for the RiverCenter Baton Rouge (La.) in 1999. Most recently he worked as the General Manager of the Eastern Kentucky Exposition Center in Pikesville and helped hold the first concert ever at the Churchill Downs racetrack.

Also on the move is **Barry Strafacci**, a 25-year veteran of the convention and exposition center management business, who has been chosen as the new general manager for the **Global Spectrum**-managed **Harborview Center** in Clearwater, Fla.

Strafacci, who has operated convention facilities in the United States and Asia, will continue his responsibilities as a Global Spectrum regional vice president, working on special projects, including overseeing the design, construction and opening of new convention centers and exposition facilities for the company. He will also oversee all day-to-day operations of the Harborview Center, where he served as the convention center's first General Manager in 1996.

Strafacci succeeds former general manager **Isabelle Blainey**, who was named the company's new National Director of Sales. – Dave Brooks and Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Mark Shulman, (973) 476-7915; Drew Kerr, (212) 849-8250; Charlie Smith, (865) 389-3636; David Skinner, (662) 891-7293;*

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### 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](mailto: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.

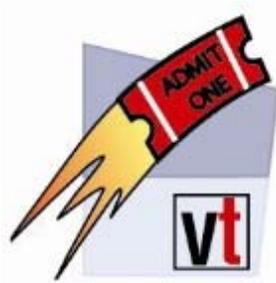
The winners will be selected by a vote of *Venues Today* subscribers, staff and advisors. We appreciate your participation and look forward to hearing your nominations.

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

[linda@venuestoday.com](mailto:linda@venuestoday.com)

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## BOOKINGS



**HOT**tickets

### BEYONCE FINDS HER DESTINY IN SYDNEY

**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 April 3, 2007. To submit reports, e-mail [HotTickets@venuestoday.com](mailto:HotTickets@venuestoday.com) or fax to (714) 378-0040.

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

#### 15,001 or More Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$4,034,585; *Event:* Red Hot Chili Peppers; *Venue:* **AcerArena, Sydney, Australia**; *Attendance:* 45,300; *Ticket Range:* \$117.15-\$83.65; *Promoter:* Michael Coppel Presents; *Dates:* April 16-19; *No. of Shows:* 3
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,227,011; *Event:* Beyonce; *Venue:* **AcerArena, Sydney, Australia**; *Attendance:* 13,476; *Ticket Range:* \$111.97-\$86.14; *Promoter:* Michael Coppel Presents; *Dates:* April 21; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,139,040; *Event:* Josh Groban; *Venue:* **MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 11,700; *Ticket Range:* \$131.25-\$68.25; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Andrew Hewitt, In-house; *Dates:* April 7; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,052,660; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Greensboro (N.C.) Coliseum Complex**; *Attendance:* 16,680; *Ticket Range:* \$66.50-\$56.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, The Messina Group, Varnell Enterprises; *Dates:* April 19; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$974,879; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Fargodome, N.D.**; *Attendance:* 16,631; *Ticket Range:* \$68-\$58; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Police Productions LLC, The Messina Group ; *Dates:* April 14; *No. of Shows:* 1

#### 10,001-15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,297,035; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Jacksonville (Fla.) Veterans Memorial Arena**; *Attendance:* 19,582; *Ticket Range:* \$64.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Mischell Productions, The Messina Group; *Dates:* April 21-22; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$839,436; *Event:* Beyonce; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 8,849; *Ticket Range:* \$109.88-\$80.01; *Promoter:* Michael Coppel Presents; *Dates:* April 22; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$483,192; *Event:* Dave Matthews with Tim Reynolds Acoustic Concert; *Venue:* **Mullins Center, Amherst, Mass.**; *Attendance:* 8,958; *Ticket Range:* \$55; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 21; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$351,300; *Event:* John Mayer; *Venue:* **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; *Attendance:* 6,125; *Ticket Range:* \$53.87-\$38.60; *Promoter:* House of Blues Canada; *Dates:* April 22; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$274,486; *Event:* Andre Rieu; *Venue:* **Jacksonville (Fla.) Veterans Memorial Arena**; *Attendance:* 5,050; *Ticket Range:* \$60-\$40; *Promoter:* Andre Rieu Productions, Frans Neus, PBS; *Dates:* April 20; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$327,250; *Event:* The Killers; *Venue:* **Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, San Francisco**; *Attendance:* 8,866; *Ticket Range:* \$38.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$317,555; *Event:* Paquita La Del Barrio; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 4,968; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$297,500; *Event:* Muse; *Venue:* **Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, San Francisco**; *Attendance:* 8,781; *Ticket Range:* \$35; *Promoter:* Another Planet Entertainment, Live Nation; *Dates:* April 9; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$276,855; *Event:* John Legend; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 5,981; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$30; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 6; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$216,922; *Event:* Andre Rieu; *Venue:* **Constant Convocation Center, Norfolk, Va.**; *Attendance:* 4,499; *Ticket Range:* \$60-\$40; *Promoter:* Andre Rieu Productions; *Dates:* April 17; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$406,028; *Event:* Chicago Live!; *Venue:* **Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 6,437; *Ticket Range:* \$67-\$47; *Promoter:* In-house; *Dates:* April 20-22; *No. of Shows:* 5

2) *Gross Sales:* \$242,193; *Event:* Ray Romano, Brad Garrett; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 4,073; *Ticket Range:* \$77.50-\$40.50; *Promoter:* Steve Litman Presents; *Dates:* April 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$179,480; *Event:* Ultimate Doo-Wop Show; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 3,352; *Ticket Range:* \$59.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* Steve Litman Presents; *Dates:* April 14; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$167,150; *Event:* Harry Connick Jr.; *Venue:* **Benedum Center, Pittsburgh**; *Attendance:* 2,493; *Ticket Range:* \$79-\$36.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 11; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$164,586; *Event:* The Killers; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 4,570; *Ticket Range:* \$43.50-\$37.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* April 22; *No. of Shows:* 1

*Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com*

## TICKETMASTER SUES STUBHUB OVER SKYNYRD TOUR

Ticketmaster has filed a lawsuit against StubHub in hopes of stopping the secondary company from selling tickets for the upcoming Lynyrd Skynyrd tour.

The legal riff sets up a showdown between the two ticketing powerhouses:

Ticketmaster, looking to protect its dominant market share and exclusive ticketing agreements versus StubHub, recently acquired by eBay and hoping to prove itself as a legitimate partner in the live music and entertainment business.

At issue is whether StubHub can legally work with artists to officially sell front-section seating on its auction-style website in venues with a Ticketmaster contract. On March 19, StubHub announced plans to serve as the "Official Premium Ticket Provider" for all 20 dates on the Rowdy Frynds Tours. Promoter John Ruffino of Red Mountain Entertainment and Ross Schilling from Vector Management secured the tickets for the online auction-site, requesting each participating venue release several rows of seats to the artist. Managers at many of the participating venues said they had no idea the tickets would later wind up on StubHub.

In its lawsuit, Ticketmaster alleges that StubHub unlawfully interfered with Ticketmaster's exclusive ticketing contracts for certain venues on the tour. The suit also alleges that StubHub, Ruffino and Schilling misled some facilities about their plans for the tickets and intimidated others by "making it clear to Ticketmaster's clients that if they refuse to provide a stated quantity of premium tickets to sell or auction to the public via StubHub, Ticketmaster's clients might not be considered as venues for future live entertainment events," according to the lawsuit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court.

Ticketmaster claims that its reputation as the "Best Available Seats" provider has been compromised and has asked that StubHub be ordered to pay back all of the money it has acquired through the allegedly "unlawful and improper business practices," along with punitive damages and a permanent injunction barring future improper sales.

Both sides were relatively mum on the issue, citing policies not to speak about ongoing litigation. Ticketmaster would not release any official comment; StubHub chose to keep their thoughts rather short.

"StubHub believes the lawsuit filed by Ticketmaster is without merit and intends to vigorously defend itself against these unsubstantiated claims," said company spokesperson Sean Pate.

It's a customary practice and not uncommon for these types of tickets to make their way to secondary sites — what's unusual is the very public way that Ruffino and StubHub marketed the partnership with media buys and a significant web campaign.

Ticketmaster's lawsuit came on after the ticketing giant unsuccessfully tried to prevent participating venues from releasing tickets to the promoter.

"When Ruffino and Schilling requested the tickets, I didn't know what he was doing," said Steve Maples of the Von Braun Center in Huntsville, Ala. in the April issue of *Venues Today*. "Besides, it's really up to the band to decide what they want to do with the tickets," he said, later adding "I think this is a Ticketmaster problem and they need to deal with the promoter and band management on this issue."

Other venues on the tour reported a range of responses from Ticketmaster. David Olsen of the RBC Center in Raleigh N.C, said his building has received veiled legal threats from Ticketmaster about releasing the tickets, including warnings that knowingly handing over tickets that might end up on the secondary market "could imply a building's violation of their Ticketmaster agreement." He said he released the tickets anyway,

How successful Ticketmaster will be in their lawsuit against StubHub is anyone's guess, especially since StubHub doesn't have a contractual agreement with Ticketmaster to

break.

"They're essentially asserting that the potential for profit is inducement, which might not hold up well in court," said economist Craig Depkin of the University of Texas at Arlington who has written extensively about the effects of the secondary market on the concert business. "It's like saying that you're suing my stock broker because he's inducing me to go ahead and sell stocks on the market."

Depkin said he sees the lawsuit is likely part of a larger campaign by Ticketmaster to discredit StubHub as a legitimate ticketing company and competitor. Ticketmaster has always taken a strong position against the secondary market, even rolling out a forum on its website where visitors can share their own stories of being "scammed" by scalpers.

"If StubHub only works with scalpers and ticket resellers, it's easier for Ticketmaster to spin this narrative that StubHub is illegitimate and wrought with risks," Depkin said. "But now that StubHub is striking legitimate deals with artists and venues, it becomes harder for Ticketmaster to spin their story. All of the sudden Ticketmaster finds itself competing with a large company marketing itself as a new official ticketing provider. I think that's really going to bother a lot of people at Ticketmaster." — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: Sean Pate, (415) 222-8442; Craig Depkin, (817) 272-2761*



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## MARKETING

***WSII players Mia Hamm and guest player Angela Hucles celebrate the first goal of the game as their Washington Freedom battles the Boston Breakers at the National Sports Center in Blaine, Minn., in 2004.***



### WOMEN'S SOCCER REBORN INTO NEW CONTENT FOR SOCCER STADIUMS

After a five-year hiatus, professional women's soccer is scheduled to make a come back next April and provide a new source of content to the country's growing inventory of soccer venues.

A new Women's United Soccer Athletes (WUSA) league is due to start its regular season with eight confirmed ownership groups bringing women's players to several soccer-specific stadiums around the country beginning in April 2008

Initial investors, including AEG Live, are considering spending \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year to own a team, a figure that includes players' salaries – a marked difference from the WUSA's defunct predecessor. Ownership groups must also pay an undisclosed start-up fee.

The new league was born out of the Women's Soccer Initiative Inc. (WSII), headed up by Tonya Antonucci, who will

now help oversee the new league.

"Some of the key lessons we learned were that [the former league] set its expectations with a lot of exuberance in terms of how successful it'd be ... which just really exceeded reality," Antonucci said.

She said the "exuberance" could have been understandable considering the former WUSA came on the heels of the United States women's team dominating the FIFA World Cup in 1999.

This time the new league has tossed the stand-alone model and aligned itself with ownership groups that have a stake in Major League Soccer teams and soccer-specific stadiums like the Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif., and Pizza Hut Park in Frisco, Texas.

"We learned from the WNBA – we plan to share overhead, share resources and are attracting owners that either own or control or have strategic partnerships with a facility," Antonucci said. "The economics start to look much better that way."

The previous league, which suspended operations in 2003, had a standalone business model, inflated players' salaries and inflated budgets. The WUSA budget was \$40 million for five years and the league spent \$57 million in its first year alone, Major League Soccer senior spokesman Dan Courtemanche said. Former general manager and president of Major League Soccer's Chicago Fire Peter Wilt has committed to bringing a women's team to Toyota Park, Rosemont, Ill., which has 20,000 seats dedicated to soccer.

But Wilt doesn't have to attract 20,000 fans to the stadium in order to come out ahead. With a youth soccer contract from an Illinois' women's soccer league guaranteeing him the equivalent of 5,000 season tickets, he'll only need to sell another 3,500 tickets per game to get the team where he'd like it to be.

"Attendance is going to be the key revenue driver for this league – not television, although there will be some national as well as local television coverage, which will be important for advertisers and sponsors," Wilt said.

The new league offers venues a chance to add at least 10 more dates to stadium schedules.

"That will help drive revenue to the stadium operators and owners," Wilt said. "These facilities, while called soccer-specific, should be called soccer-centered. They can't make it just on the MLS schedule, they need additional programming – having 10 extra dates per year with the women's league will be significant."

The most important measures of success will come from ticket sales and media exposure, said Premier Partnerships' John Alper, the firm's vice president of marketing.

"Ultimately tickets are what makes the world go round for any sport, the more people they have in the stadium, the more sponsorships you have, the more concessions you sell," Alper said. "With that, then you attach the attention of local media, which would be more apt to cover the games and write more about it if the stadiums are filled out."

The league's primary audience will be families, especially those with young girls, and it's this group Antonucci said would garner unique sponsorship deals.

"Not too many sports are reaching the audience women's soccer is reaching – young girls and young adult women and, it's become cliché, but the soccer moms," Wilt said. "Through athletics there are not a lot of opportunities for sponsors to reach that audience."

Major League Soccer has discussed selling partnerships and handling broadcasts for the league, Courtemanche said.

"Ultimately the goal for all of us in soccer, specifically Major League Soccer, is to continue to grow the profile of the sport in North America," Courtemanche said. "The more popular the women's game is, the more it will directly benefit Major League

Soccer. Ultimately when Major League Soccer owners are operating a successful entity, and that includes first and foremost a soccer team, but second if they have a women's team or X Games of Edgefest or other events, it helps the bottom line."

Women's Soccer Initiative Inc. announced April 18 it had added two more ownership groups to the original six investors announced in February – Sky Blue Soccer in the New Jersey and New York market and the returning Boston Breakers.

Teams are also scheduled to play in Washington D.C., Los Angeles, St. Louis, Dallas, Chicago and one undetermined market.

AEG will have its Los Angeles team play at the Home Depot Center where the MLS Galaxy plays. St. Louis attorney Jeff Cooper will head up that franchise and Jack Hanks and Brent Covalli will have its Dallas team play at Pizza Hut Park, where the MLS's FC Dallas play.

Discovery Channel founder John Hendricks, an investor in the original WSII, will put his hat in the ring again with a team in Washington, D.C.

This time around the WUSA has much more conservative plans than its predecessor, but teams hope to break even in the first year.

"One thing that's interesting about women's soccer – it's one of the few sports a dad can take his daughter out to the game and they both enjoy it," Major League Soccer senior vice president of marketing and communications Dan Courtemanche said. — Amanda Pennington

*Interviewed for this story: Tonya Antonucci, (408) 394-9051; Dan Courtemanche, (212) 450-1225; Peter Wilt, (414) 828-5425; John Alper, (972) 380-1505*

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## SHORT TAKES

### OAKLAND COLISEUM WINS ENERGY CONSERVATION AWARD

Oakland Coliseum Joint Venture (OCJV), the property management group responsible for the Oracle Arena and McAfee Coliseum facilities, successfully and significantly decreased energy use on spare the air days resulting in a PG&E Demand Bidding Program Outstanding Achievement Award. The award is given in recognition of top echelon performance in Pacific Gas & Electric Company's Demand Response Programs that help secure California's energy future. Participation in this program is voluntary on a day-by-day basis and in no way interferes with scheduled events. Notice for this Demand Response Bidding is given 20 hours in advance and will specify the hours to reduce energy, usually between 12 p.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays. During the 2006 summer season, 10 program event dates were declared and the Oracle Arena/McAfee Coliseum participated in seven. The historical data for four of those seven events in a random sampling shows that the McAfee Coliseum exceeded PG&E's goal by 2,100 percent with an average reduction per day of 8,500 KWh.

*Contact: Jennifer Cooke, (510) 383-4930*

### BOBCATS SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT SELECT TICKETMASTER

Bobcats Sports and Entertainment has selected Ticketmaster as the exclusive authorized ticketing provider for all events held at the Charlotte Bobcats Arena, effective May 3. Under terms of the multi-year agreement, Ticketmaster will provide the arena with comprehensive event ticketing technology, data management, season subscriber seating services, and a fully-integrated system to enable the arena to communicate event information and marketing programs to its patrons. Charlotte Bobcats new and renewing season ticket holders can access the Ticketmaster AccountManager system, which enables season ticket holders to manage their accounts and tickets entirely online, as well as forward their tickets to others using the Ticket Forwarding feature and TicketFast online delivery service. Further, the arena will utilize Ticketmaster's integrated patron communication system.

*Contact: Cindy Carrasquilla, (704) 688-8817*

### THE PEARL OPENS AT THE PALMS

The Palms Casino Resort, Las Vegas, opened its \$80 million Pearl Concert Theater April 21 with Gwen Stefani in the kick off of her 2007 tour. Celebrities in attendance included Luke Wilson, Paris and Nicky Hilton, Bruce Willis, Panic! At the Disco, Nicolette Sheridan, and Tommy Lee. Following the concert guests were escorted to Moon nightclub in the resort's Fantasy Tower. The Pearl seats 2,500.

*Contact: Alissa Kelly, (702) 696-1999*

## **IOWA FAIR TO SHOWCASE MIDAMERICAN WIND TURBINE**

Erection of one wind turbine at the Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, will help publicize MidAmerican Energy's plans to nearly double its capacity to produce electricity in Iowa with wind turbine power. The lone turbine at the fairgrounds - which is expected to be completed before this year's fair - could provide electricity equal to one-quarter of the amount used by fairgrounds operations in a year, according to Gary Slater, the fair's chief executive. The plans must be approved by the Iowa Utilities Board. The turbine will be built in part with money from a MidAmerican program that invited customers to voluntarily support the construction of renewable energy sources in Iowa.

*Contact: Gary Slater, (515) 262-3111*

## **US CELLULAR STRIKES NAMING DEAL AT MEADOWBROOK**

Meadowbrook Musical Arts Center, Gilford, N.H. has signed a multi-year sponsorship agreement with U.S. Cellular. As part of their sponsorship agreement, US Cellular establishes naming rights to Meadowbrook's state-of-the-art pavilion that covers 3,200 seats and the concert stage, which will now be known as Meadowbrook US Cellular Pavilion.

*Contact: R.J. Harding, (603) 293-4700*

## **GRETCHEN WILSON RETURNS HOME FOR THE ILLINOIS STATE FAIR**

The grandstand concert lineup for this year's Illinois State Fair, Springfield, features an Illinois native, Gretchen Wilson. The lineup also includes Martina McBride, Chris Daughtry and Sugarland. A teen-pop show will feature Corbin Bleu, co-star of the Disney Channel movie "High School Musical" and Drake Bell of Nickelodeon's "Drake & Josh." Wilson was born and raised in Pocahontas. She's slated to perform on opening day of the Aug. 10-19 fair. Tickets go on sale April 28.

*Contact: Dennis Morris, (217) 785-3482*

## **HIGH SCHOOL PAC OPENS IN CALIFORNIA**

A new \$15 million performing arts center at Kennedy High School, La Palma, Calif., opened April 21. It will be the second performing arts center for the Anaheim Union High School District, which has used Cook Auditorium at Anaheim High School for its approximately 37,000 students.

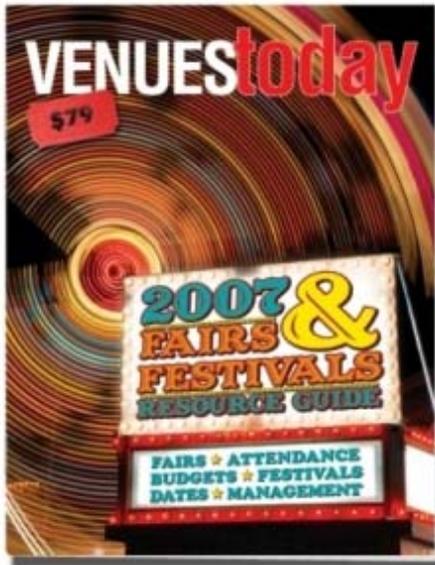
*Contact: Kennedy High School, (714) 220-4105*

## **NELLY FURTADO GETS LOOSE**

Nelly Furtado will bring her Get Loose Tour to the United States for 17 concerts, starting May 30 in Hollywood, Fla., at the Hard Rock Live at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. The Get Loose Tour started in Europe with 23 shows over five weeks. The next leg crossed her native Canada, starting in Victoria, B.C. Furtado will be backed by four dancers and her six-piece band. Announced dates end at the Paramount Theatre, Oakland, Calif., June 21.

*Contact: Bryn Bridenthal, (805) 462-9648*

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