

**April Parnell**

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**VENUESToday**  
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. This e-news is chock full of original stories on deals, moves, hot tickets and top stops. For more news coverage, look out for our June 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

"If a member needs to step up to the bar and order their own drink, we have failed." — *Angela Drummond* of the new Collaborations premium dining club opening at the Verizon Center in Washington.

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## VENUE NEWS



*Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis; Music Director Osmo Vänskä*

### TUNE UP SET FOR MINNESOTA'S ORCHESTRA HALL

The Minnesota Orchestra Board of Directors has approved the first step toward a \$90 million renovation of Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis; the symphony's home since the building was constructed in 1974.

The renovation includes an improved lobby, new 150-seat upstage choral loft and more flexible acoustics. The venue will remain open throughout most of the renovation project, slated to begin in 2009 and run until Fall 2011.

"This is a watershed decision for the future of Orchestra Hall and the Minnesota Orchestra," said Minnesota Orchestral Association (MOA) Board Chair Paul D. Grangaard, in a statement. "We are blessed to own a good hall located in the heart of a vital downtown, but we've known for some time that our venue would require substantial improvements to enhance the concert-going experience for audiences and to modernize and expand our capabilities in the auditorium."

No architect has been selected, nor have renderings been developed, but a Renovation Committee, made up of Board members, is being chosen, and the outline of key needs and priorities has been established.

The group has even raised more than \$13 million for the project, despite the Minnesota Orchestra running a deficit of \$582,000 in 2006.

According to Gwen Pappas, director of public affairs for Minnesota Orchestra, the symphony was able to reduce their deficit from a 2005 high of \$1.19 million to \$582,000 with a combination of aggressive cost cutting moves, and the hiring of a high-profile music director, Osmo Vänskä, who joined the Orchestra in 2003. He is

under contract through 2011. For fiscal year 2007, which begins in August, the Orchestra expects to have a balanced budget for the first time in many years.

"Vänskä is a huge part of our success," said Pappas. "The chemistry between him and the orchestra is spot on — we're in what many people call the 'Golden Age of the Minnesota Orchestra.' With that kind of strength, it propels all kinds of things."

The balance of the \$90 million will come largely from fundraising, though the Orchestra would also seek some public financing, Pappas said.

The renovation will expand the lobby, which currently houses only one-third of the auditorium's capacity, creating a crowded space, with long lines and long waits for refreshments and restrooms.

"The Orchestra Hall was built on the cheap in the 1970's, at the end of a major recession," said Richard Marshall, co-principal viola for the orchestra, as well as the acting campaign manager for the orchestra's development office. "The money was spent on the hall, not the lobby."

The building's life expectancy was 20 years. Thirty years later, the customers need as much attention as the world-renowned orchestra.

"People stand in line all of intermission to get drinks, then have two minutes to throw it down before they go back to their seats," Marshall said. "We were losing concessions, and there was no place for parties, or catering."

They originally planned to move the foundation of the building, but that was big money. "We had sticker shock," said Marshall.

Instead, they decided to use the existing infrastructure, expanding onto MOA land on the north end of connecting Peavey Plaza, a city-owned park with angular waterfalls and a reflecting pool. The multi-story annex flows into the renovated lobby, enclosing second floor space that had been a cathedral ceiling in the 1970's design.

There will be more restrooms, more refreshment areas, and a third-party operated bistro café with indoor and outdoor seating. The space will be designed to offer panoramic city views, Marshall said, and the new annex will be used by the Orchestra and by renters, for educational events, entertaining and meetings.

"We hope to create a small outdoor amphitheatre in Peavey Plaza," said Marshall. "Every day lunch hour will be the center of entertainment for street performers, plays, rock, jazz and small orchestra performances."

The performance space will also be renovated.

Orchestra Hall is renowned for having brilliant acoustics for symphonic music — designed by Cyril Harris, a prominent acoustician — but onstage, musicians can barely hear one another.

"For the audience, the acoustics are great, but the brass and winds on the back wall of the hall have to play early, noticeably early," Marshall said. "Some of them have spent 20 years playing ahead of the beat."

When they host pops performers, like B.B. King, k.d. lang, and Manhattan Transfer, who use amplification, or speakers using a microphone in the space, the sound bounces too much, causing distortion which makes audiences complain they can't understand

what's being said or sung. To remedy this, large removable sound absorption panels will be placed throughout the auditorium during pop concerts. They will be removed for the orchestra, allowing for the natural, lively acoustic of Orchestra Hall.

"When the hall was built in 1974, the sole purpose was as a concert hall," Pappas said. "Classical performances are still top priority, but with a lively pops program, and other presentations, we have some issues to make it a better all-purpose hall."

By adding a permanent choral loft upstage, the renovation will also bring performers closer to the audience. When the programming doesn't require a chorus, the loft will offer 150 patrons "the best view in the house" seats directly behind the musicians and facing the conductor. The addition will also push the stage forward. The auditorium renovations will include new seats and improved sightlines.

Backstage and onstage improvements will be made to the sound and light board, and to the heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems. And in a move likely to spark debate among the world of symphony orchestras, they will add onstage video capabilities.

"We see it as parallel to the addition of superscreens with translations in opera," Marshall said. "The younger generation is optical/visual. We're trying to listen to those needs."

Marshall said video screens are becoming a must for pop and rock concerts and corporate events, and the addition only opens up more uses for the venue.

"Minneapolis is a hotbed of culture," Marshall said. "We want to be a destination for arts events, and a place where donors can experience performances with comfort and ease."

Since Orchestra Hall opened in 1974, more than 10 million people have attended more than 4,000 concerts. — Liz Boardman

*Interviewed for this story: Gwen Pappas, (612) 371-5600; Richard Marshall, (612) 371-7106*

### ***Sioux Falls (S.D.) Convention Center***



### **GLOBAL SPECTRUM LANDS CONTRACT TO MANAGE SIOUX FALLS**

Global Spectrum and its food subsidiary Oventions Food Services has been chosen to manage, operate and provide food services to the 60,000-square foot Sioux Falls (S.D.) Convention Center. The Philadelphia-based management firm won the contract in a competitive bid process, replacing former operator John Q. Hammonds.

Under the terms of the deal,

Hammonds will continue to operate a hotel adjoining the facility, while SMG will continue to manage the adjoining Sioux Falls Arena.

"When I looked at this account, I knew that I very much wanted to get back into this marketplace," said Frank Russo, Global Spectrum's senior vice president of business development. Russo used to work with Ogden, which had managed the convention center until it was purchased by SMG.

"This facility has a big upside potential and is exactly the type of model we specialize in, which is secondary markets," Russo said.

The facility is the fourth convention center Global Spectrum will manage in the Midwest region. Global Spectrum also operates the Duke Energy Center in Cincinnati, Ohio; the Century Center in South Bend, Ind. and the Hy-Vee Hall in Des Moines, Iowa.

Global Spectrum will take over the facility on July 2 and has a four-person team on the ground preparing for the transition, including Global Spectrum's Brett Mitchell, vice president of convention centers. Russo said Global Spectrum has selected a manager to run the facility and has submitted the position to the city of Sioux Falls for approval. He said he wouldn't be able to make an announcement until after the position was approved.

Under the terms of the deal, Global Spectrum will jointly book the facility with the Sioux Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"They will focus on long-term business including projects that are over 18 months out, while we focus on the short-term business," Russo said. "We plan to immediately incorporate Ovation into our bookings and begin to plan a lot of food and beverage-themed events. Our goal is going to be to get bookings way up.

Russo said Global Spectrum plans to sink about \$450,000 into the facility for capital improvements, mostly focusing on enhancements designed to generate revenue. Part of that investment also includes increased signage, new graphics and a planned cyber-café where users can tap into a wireless network and order coffee and snacks.

"We want to create a space where people can really enjoy themselves," Russo said. — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: Frank Russo, (860) 712-0452*

***Rena Wasserman (far right), general manager at the Greek Theatre, Los Angeles thanks a group of LA Fire Fighters for battling the May 8 Griffith Park fire.***



**WEEKLY RUNDOWN: GREEK REOPENS AFTER FIRE; SMG REPORTEDLY SOLD; DALE ADAMS HEADS TO JERSEY; CARLSBURG INKS DEAL WITH LIVE NATION FOR BEER RIGHTS IN THE U.K.**

**OPENINGS:** The **Greek Theatre** in Los Angeles reopened its doors

Friday after closing for 10 days and seeing three of its concerts relocated across town to the **Gibson Amphitheatre** in Universal City.

The park was forced to close after a devastating wild-land fire swept through surrounding Griffith Park, forcing the evacuation of the Greek, along with the temporary closing of the Griffith Observatory, the Los Angeles Zoo and the Gene Autry Museum. The Los Angeles Fire Department used the Greek's parking lot as a staging area to battle the blaze; none of the structures in the park were damaged in the blaze.

The Greek reopened Friday night with a performance by **Harry Connick, Jr.** showcasing songs from his new album of New Orleans-inspired music "Oh My, NOLA," and the companion album of instrumentals by his big band, **Chanson du Vieux Carre**.

Before the concert got underway, Greek Theatre General Manager **Rena Wasserman** paid tribute to the Los Angeles Fire Department for their part in battling the blaze, inviting 18 firefighters on stage to a standing ovation before the crowd.

"We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the fine work of these brave men and we want to do everything we can to thank them for their service," she said during an emotional ceremony. Members of the Fire Department were also given free tickets to the **WAR / Tierra concert** on May 26 and 27 as a thank-you from the band.

The fire now brings a total smoking ban at the Greek and the surrounding Griffith Park, said Greek Theatre spokesperson **Vanessa Kromer**. Patrons are no longer allowed to smoke anywhere on Greek Theatre property, including the parking lot.

"It's a little challenging because we're an outdoor concert venue," Kromer said. "It will take some time to enforce."

Kromer said Greek Theatre staff have placed signs all over the venue and posted an announcement on their website. The venue has also included the ban in the video loop reel that plays on the theatre's two screens before performances.

**ACQUISITIONS:** It has been reported but not confirmed that **SMG** has been sold to a capital investment company. It had been owned by **Aramark** and **Hyatt Corp.'s Pritzger family**. **Wes Westley**, president and CEO of SMG, was traveling and could not be reached by VT presstime Wednesday. He is the sole official spokesman on the deal.

Headquartered in Philadelphia, SMG provides facility services to over 200 public assembly facilities including arenas, stadiums, performing arts theatres and convention and trade centers. With facilities across America, and in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Canada, Europe and the Middle East, SMG controls over 1.5 million entertainment seats worldwide and manages more than ten million feet of exhibition space.

Another big acquisition has gone public. **ISS Group** has acquired **Sanitors Inc.**, which provides cleaning services for a wide variety of businesses, including sports and entertainment venues. Sanitors chief at the firm's San Antonio headquarters, Darrell Glover, is to remain at the helm of U.S. operations. Sanitors has annual revenues of \$320 million. ISS Group, based in Copenhagen, Denmark, has annual revenues of \$10 billion and provides facility services in 50 countries. Sanitors will be renamed ISS Facilities Services Inc.

**FACES: Dale Adams** is the new general manager of the under-construction **Prudential Center**, Newark, N.J., home of the New Jersey Devils of the National

Hockey League, for **AEG**. Adams had worked for SMG as general manager of the **Coliseo de Puerto Rico** in San Juan, where his second in command, **Jochi Davila**, has been promoted. Thom Connors is senior VP of Latin America for SMG.

Adams left San Juan May 11 and has spent the last week familiarizing himself with the New York/New Jersey marketplace. "My first priority is to get events to come to the venue," Adams said of Newark. He faces the issue of existing longterm contracts with the plethora of buildings, old and new, in the marketplace, but he also has AEG's clout. "We can be competitive," he declared. The Prudential Center is part of the revitalization of Newark, he added.

Besides the New Jersey Devils, the new arena will be home floor for Seton Hall basketball. It will open with Bon Jovi in October. American Idol Live is also booked.

New staff also includes **Kevin Morgan**, vice president of sales, who will oversee sales for both AEG New York, which includes Red Bull Park, and the Prudential Center, Adams said. He had worked for Washington Sports and Entertainment's Verizon Center, Washington, D.C.

Adams' resume includes his start at the Lakeland (Fla.) Civic Center, followed by four years with Feld Entertainment; and a jump to what was then LMI out of Houston, for which company he managed Pontchartrain Center, New Orleans. He managed the Mullins Center at UMass for Ogden; then went back to Feld for six years as director of North American tours before joining SMG three years ago.

**CONCESSIONS:** Beverage-maker **Carlsburg UK** and **Live Nation** have teamed up together in a three-year deal to make **Tuborg Beer** the official brew of the promoters' U.K. festivals.

Events will include the **Download Festival** in **Donington Park**; the **02 Wireless Festival** at **Hyde Park** in London and **Harewood House** in **Leeds**, **Hard Rock's Hyde Park Calling**; **Global Gathering** at **Long Marston Airfield, Stratford-upon-Avon**; and **Escape into the Park, Singleton Park**, Swansea.

Tuborg will also gain exclusive pouring rights in 31 Live Nation venues, as well as access to internal marketing campaigns and personalized bar spaces. The beer will be available in cans and on draft and sponsorship continues the Carlsberg and Tuborg relationship following the agreements to sponsor **Wembley Stadium** in London and the **Glastonbury Festival**, Scotland.

"This is a great partnership between two well-respected brands, leading the way to providing our customers with an even better experience on their night out," said **Jim Campling**, VP of marketing for Live Nation in an email interview. "Tuborg has a massive presence at music festivals in Europe so we're looking forward to continuing this connection and developing it further in the UK over the years to come." — Dave Brooks and Linda Deckard

*Contacts: Vanessa Kromer, (323) 817-6108; Rena Wasserman, (323) 644-5018; Somna Maraj for Sanitors, (212) 704-8175; Alison Rock for SMG, (215) 592-6619; Dale Adams, (973) 522-4810; Jim Campling, (44) 400 0688*

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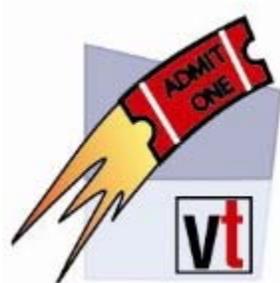
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## BOOKINGS



### HOTtickets

#### COUNTRY RULES FROM ARKANSAS TO AUSTRALIA

**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 May 1, 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:* \$954,376; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Alltel Arena, North Little Rock, Ark.**; *Attendance:* 14,789; *Ticket Range:* \$68.25-\$58.25; *Promoter:* AEG Live, The Messina Group, Varnell Enterprises; *Dates:* May 19; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$905,158; *Event:* Keith Urban; *Venue:* **AcerArena, Sydney, Australia**; *Attendance:* 10,290; *Ticket Range:* \$98.71-\$70.72; *Promoter:* Chugg

Entertainment; *Dates:* May 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$553,880; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Mizzou Arena, Columbia, Mo.**; *Attendance:* 9,593; *Ticket Range:* \$69; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Police Productions, LLC, The Messina Group; *Dates:* May 18; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$371,708; *Event:* Heaven And Hell; *Venue:* **Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Ill.**; *Attendance:* 7,444; *Ticket Range:* \$52-\$42; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* May 5; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$209,561; *Event:* Heaven And Hell; *Venue:* **Wachovia Complex, Philadelphia**; *Attendance:* 4,923; *Ticket Range:* \$49.50-\$16.66; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* May 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 10,001-15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,156,865; *Event:* Crusty Demons; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 18,914; *Ticket Range:* \$79.62-\$43.43; *Promoter:* Rush Sports; *Dates:* May 18-19; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$917,478; *Event:* Tool; *Venue:* **Cox Arena at Aztec Bowl, San Diego**; *Attendance:* 17,999; *Ticket Range:* \$52.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* May 2-3; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$873,173; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Cajundome, Lafayette, La.**; *Attendance:* 10,478; *Ticket Range:* \$68-\$58; *Promoter:* AEG Live, The Messina Group; *Dates:* May 20; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$396,375; *Event:* Tool; *Venue:* **Tingley Coliseum, Albuquerque, N.M.**; *Attendance:* 8,558; *Ticket Range:* \$49.50-\$37.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* May 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$336,666; *Event:* The Killers; *Venue:* **Sears Centre, Hoffman Estates, Ill.**; *Attendance:* 10,202; *Ticket Range:* \$33; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* May 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$627,290; *Event:* George Lopez; *Venue:* **Nokia at Grand Prairie (Texas)**; *Attendance:* 11,240; *Ticket Range:* \$60-\$45; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* May 4-6; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$450,651; *Event:* John Legend; *Venue:* **Chastain Park Amphitheatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 6,700; *Ticket Range:* \$69.50-\$38.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* May 4; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$419,017; *Event:* Bjork; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 5,946; *Ticket Range:* \$81.50-\$56.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, MSG Entertainment; *Dates:* May 2; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$405,416; *Event:* Ricky Martin; *Venue:* **Dodge Arena, Hidalgo, Texas**; *Attendance:* 5,987; *Ticket Range:* \$86-\$46; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-house; *Dates:* May 7; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$380,399; *Event:* Tool; *Venue:* **Tucson (Ariz.) Convention Center Arena**; *Attendance:* 8,149; *Ticket Range:* \$49.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation;

Dates: May 6; No. of Shows: 1

### 5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$450,201; *Event:* Sleeping Beauty; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta;** *Attendance:* 12,479; *Ticket Range:* \$90-\$15; *Promoter:* Atlanta Ballet; *Dates:* May 3-13; *No. of Shows:* 10

2) *Gross Sales:* \$337,429; *Event:* Steely Dan; *Venue:* **Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Fla.;** *Attendance:* 4,047; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$69.75; *Promoter:* In-house; *Dates:* May 14-15; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$277,341; *Event:* Bill Cosby; *Venue:* **Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland, Ore.;** *Attendance:* 4,482; *Ticket Range:* \$59.50-\$53.75; *Promoter:* Steve Litman Presents; *Dates:* May 13; *No. of Shows:* 2

4) *Gross Sales:* \$209,770; *Event:* Morrissey; *Venue:* **Paramount Theatre, Oakland, Calif.;** *Attendance:* 3,017; *Ticket Range:* \$85.50-\$47.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* May 1; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$204,024; *Event:* Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat; *Venue:* **Morris Performing Arts Center, South Bend, Ind.;** *Attendance:* 5,432; *Ticket Range:* \$51-\$26.50; *Promoter:* Broadway Theatre League of South Bend, Inc.; *Dates:* May 4-5; *No. of Shows:* 3

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, [HotTickets@venuestoday.com](mailto:HotTickets@venuestoday.com)



***The Pit Crew Challenge set up at the Charlotte (N.C.) Bobcats Arena.***

### **NASCAR REACHES OUT TO ARENA CROWDS IN CHARLOTTE**

A NASCAR event inside an arena?

That's exactly right. And, this event, the NASCAR NEXTEL Pit Crew Challenge, held May 16 at the Charlotte (N.C.) Bobcats Arena, drew its largest crowd yet since its debut three years ago.

"It gets bigger and bigger every year," said Cindy Carrasquilla, brand communications director, Bobcats.

This third annual Pit Crew Challenge drew 6,050. That meant double the number of fans watched Ryan Newman's Alltel Dodge team beat out the other teams for the fastest

times as they changed tires, gassed up the engines, and sent the cars on their way.

"We sold out the bottom bowl," said Jay Howard, JHE Production Company, Charlotte, producer of the event. "Everyone was very pleased. "

The event is directly related to the NEXTEL All-Star Challenge NASCAR race, which took place on May 19, at the Lowe's Motor Speedway, Concord, N.C. It featured 24, seven-member pit crew teams from across the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series "pitted" against one another.

The winning team received \$70,000 and bragging rights during the following race.

Thirteen drivers attended, including Jimmy Johnson, Jeff Gordon and Kasey Kahne. That was also double the number that showed up last year.

Pit crew teams on hand included those for drivers Bobby Labonte, Brian Vickers, Carl Edwards, Casey Mears, Clint Bowyer, Elliott Sadler, Greg Biffle, Jamie McMurray, Jimmie Johnson, Kasey Kahne, Kurt Busch, Kyle Busch, Martin Truex, Matt Kenseth, Ryan Newman, and Jeff Gordon.

Howard has put together ancillary NASCAR events in an effort to bring more awareness to NASCAR and possibly lure new fans. For the past 11 years, JHE has produced an outdoor festival prior to the Coca-Cola 600, also at the Lowe's Motor Speedway. That race is set for May 27.

"These ancillary events are a great way to pull NASCAR out of the race track and introduce it to different people," Howard said.

This outdoor festival takes up about 12 blocks in downtown Charlotte. Streets were closed off at 9:30 this morning (May 23) and Howard said it will take all night to set up. It will open at 11 a.m., May 24, and run for three days.

"It's huge," he said. "We will have 100,000 people down here every day."

Attendance has been building for the pit crew challenge. Like everything else, Howard said, it takes time. This year, they included more media exposure. The day before the challenge, they held a media event where local media tried their hands at becoming a member of a pit crew team.

"On an operational standpoint, there is nothing we will change for next year's event," Howard said. "We had six sponsors, all we could have. All these sponsors say they will be back next year."

Those sponsors were Nextel, Craftsman, Motorola, Bank of America, Checkers Rally's and Visit NC, North Carolina's tourism division.

The pit crew challenge has traditionally drawn a large walk-up crowd on the day of, but this year, since they decided to sell reserved seating instead of general admission, most tickets were pre-sold. That did seem to work better. Tickets ranged from \$15 to \$25. The highest-priced, first five rows sold out.

It takes two days to load in the event and four days to load out. The event lasts for two and one-half hours.

Howard isn't planning to actively seek other destinations for this particular NASCAR ancillary event.

"But, I never say never," he said. "Who knows, we might decide to have others."

JHE Production Company, an event production and management company, has about 60 full-time employees.

"This market has been tremendously supportive of this event," Howard said. "Even the Bobcats. How many arenas can say they have a NASCAR event in their building?" — Pam Sherborne

*Interviewed for this story: Jay Howard, (704) 455-8888; Cindy Carrasquilla, (704) 688-8815*

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### **I AM WOMAN...HEAR ME ROAR!**

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## **MARKETING**

### **PREDATORS GO LOCAL, FIND IDEAL PARTNERSHIP IN SOMMET GROUP**

In Music City, the Nashville Arena has played musical chairs with its name.

In 1996, when the venue opened, it was named the Nashville Arena. In 1999, Gaylord Entertainment made an \$80 million, 20-year deal for naming rights to the home of the National Hockey League franchise the Nashville Predators, but they stopped making payments in 2003.

In 2005, the Predators announced the agreement had been terminated, but the Gaylord name would remain until they found a new bidder.

On May 18, the name changed again, as the Predators penned a multi-year deal with

the Sommet Group, a business services provider based in suburban Nashville. The venue is now the Sommet Center (pronounced so-may.)

Sommet Group is a Franklin, Tenn.-based, family-owned collection of companies offering human resources administration, payroll processing, and other business functions for small and mid-sized businesses.

The name changes haven't seemed to hurt business. Since last November, 784,861 guests have attended 80-ticketed events — including college basketball, 37 Nashville Predators home games, and concerts by Martina McBride and Brooks and Dunn — making the attendance among the highest for arenas in the first quarter of 2007.

"We're very excited," said Brian Whitfield, managing partner of the Sommet Group. "We started as a sponsor last year, in a small way."

He said the Predators management assured them they'd work hard for the company, every day.

"I took that with a grain of salt," Whitfield said. "But they did that and more." The Predators were constantly coming to Whitfield with ideas and programs to help them reach new clients.

"They'd give us networking opportunities, chances to take clients and prospective clients on junkets with the team," Whitfield said. "They'd even fly clients to meet the team on the road."

The programs helped Sommet Group grow by well over 100 percent. In return, these opportunities introduced small and mid-sized businesses to the Predators, and helped them expand their fan base and ticket sales, in a time when the National Hockey League is having a slump nationwide.

"The Predators have increased attendance eight to nine percent," said Gerry Helper, senior vice president of development for the Nashville Predators.

"But we still have a long way to go in a non-traditional hockey market."

Helper said area youth have a "tremendous interest" in hockey, so the future looks good. The trick is bridging the crowd until those fans are old enough to be buyers. One of those strategies is to build corporate interest.

Reaching businesses through Sommet is more cost effective for the Predators than trying to reach them one by one.

With the partnership working for both sides, Sommet Group signed on as the title sponsor for the playoffs. When the Predators didn't last long, Whitfield didn't complain. "I told them I'd put what I would have spent on the playoffs into next year's deal, and things started growing from there," Whitfield said.

The deal gives Sommet Group prominent inside and outside signage, and those business development opportunities. The Sommet Center name is also displayed on the exterior of the building, to all visitors of downtown Nashville.

"Our second scoreboard since 1996, a new Jumbotron, will be installed in August," Helper said. The Sommet name will be prominently displayed there, as well.

The two companies are also teaming up to help the community. Through the Predators

Foundation, they will upgrade technology in underprivileged communities and schools. That fit is a natural, Whitfield said.

"One of our businesses, IT Express, offers business computer services," Whitfield said. "We know how to do these things really well."

At the suggestion of a Sommet Group employee, they will also place Internet-ready computers in nursing homes, so residents can stay in touch with their families.

"In today's world, computers are how generations communicate," Whitfield said. "People in nursing homes are often lonely, and this gives them another connection with the outside world."

Sommet Group will also send their tech support staff – who Whitfield said have "great personalities" – into the nursing homes to teach the residents how to use the computers. Over the next few years, Sommet Group hopes to raise their profile, locally and nationally, with the naming rights deal.

"We have as much business outside Tennessee as inside it," said Whitfield. "We've purposefully stayed under the radar for the past four years, while we grew." But now, he said, it's time to come out in a big way, and to start making a name for themselves – and the best way to do that is with the Sommet Center. — Liz Boardman

*Interviewed for this story: Gerry Helper, (615) 770-2344; Ken Anderson, (615) 770-2315; Cate Lewandowski, (615) 297-7766; Brian Whitfield, (615) 297-7766*

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## **CONCESSIONS**

### **VERIZON CENTER LAUNCHES COUNTRY-CLUB APPROACH TO PREMIUM INVENTORY**

A group of Washington business consultants are teaming up with the Verizon Center to create an ultra-premium dining and viewing center at the arena marketed to the city's

top business establishment.

The club will be called Collaborations and is being launched by Washington business consulting firm SiloSmashers; named for their ability to smash the vertical structures (i.e. silos) that stifle efficiency in the workplace. Using the new club at the Verizon Center as a model, SiloSmashers hopes to soon create a network of country-club-style premium spaces at facilities across the U.S. for members to use while traveling.

"The idea is to develop a business club for peak performance networking for the top executives in the Washington, D.C., area. We're really looking to build an environment of people who are prominent," said SiloSmashers' CEO Angela Drummond. "A major element of Collaborations will be fine dining within a sports environment. Executives love to go to nice restaurants, they love to go to sports events and they love to build a business environment."

Admission to the invitation-only club will range from \$50,000 to \$350,000 annually, with the typical membership averaging about \$250,000 for four-people, explained Collaborations President Bruce Higgins. The new club will be in a 5,000-square-foot space on the third floor Lexus Suite Level of the Verizon Center and is planned to be opened by the beginning of the 2007/2008 basketball season.

Officials with Washington Sports and Entertainment, which manages the Verizon Center, said the new facility is a good fit for the arena, which is seeing an increase in demand for premium seating access for lobbyist and corporate interests.

"We're always searching for creative and exclusive ways to provide outstanding benefits to our clients," said Washington Sports and Entertainment Chairman Abe Pollin. "Our facility has become a destination for businesses throughout the region to host and entertain their clients and the new Collaborations club will provide a first class space for some of the region's top companies."

Drummond emphasized that the space will be a departure from the typical premium suite experience and feel more like a country club, decorated in dark mahogany and plush leather chairs. The layout of the club has not been finalized, but Drummond explained the space will include a large dining area, a viewing area and business and conference spaces.

Levy restaurants will handle food services for the space, which will be divided between chef stations with small items like lobster cocktails that will be included in the membership. Larger meals will be served in a private dining setting and will cost extra.

"In fact our a la carte menu will change for every event because one of the things we hear from our clientele is that they're sick of the same food," Higgins said. "The food will be very premium and very seasonal."

Clients can even reserve their own table for the entire season that exclusively belongs to them, as well as access to a food locker to store extremely high-end items like wine and spirits.

The high-end food will come with high-end service, explained Drummond, who said Collaborations would be well staffed with returning employees who are trained to learn the individual tastes of the clientele.

"Our waiting staff will be taught to know what our clients want and need. We envision creating a profile of each client outlining their favorite drinks and food preferences, as well as food allergies," Drummond said. "We're looking at very heavy staffing per

person. If a member needs to step up to the bar and order their own drink, we have failed."

Membership to Collaborations includes access to every single event at the Verizon Center, which hosts the National Basketball Association's Washington Wizards, the Women's National Basketball Association's Washington Mystics, the National Hockey League's Washington Capitals and Georgetown's men's basketball team, as well as concerts.

The club is also set to include access to conference rooms with the latest in high-tech communication including video-conferencing and wireless devices that can instantly charge the lithium batteries in cell phones and PDAs once the user enters the room. Higgins said the facility will also offer a concierge service with access to local golf courses, limo services and private jets. Members will have their own private parking spaces at the Verizon Center, as well as access to a full range of seating inventory including some courtside seats than can be purchased through the concierge.

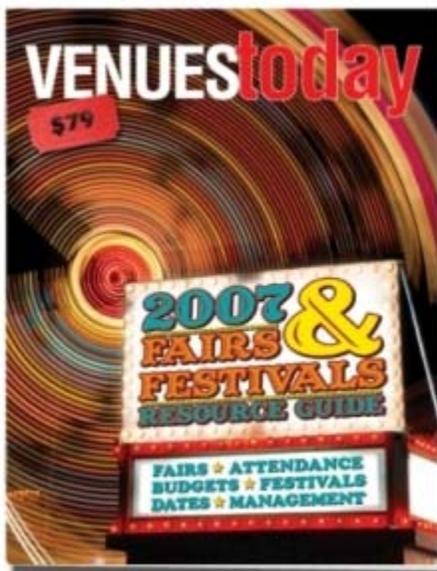
Collaborations will be governed by a board of directors consisting of members who nominate and sponsor other members interested in applying to belong to the club.

"We're duplicating the country club concept at the premium sports level," explained Drummond, "It's going to be so exclusive that not many people are going to get in because there's not going to be much turnover."

Ultimately, Drummond said she would like to roll out the Collaborations model into other sports facilities across the U.S. Her firm has patented the design of the club and envisions a network of Collaborations clubs at sports facilities across the U.S.

"We're looking very broad, not just at NBA facilities, but all types of sports," she said.  
— Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: Bruce Higgins, (703) 797-5700; Angela Drummond, (703) 797-5600; Abe Pollin, (202) 661-5000*



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## SHORT TAKES

### HOUSTON THEATER GROUP LAUNCHES WEB 2.0 TICKETING INITIATIVE

Theatre Under The Stars of Houston has launched a new initiative to increase its Web 2.0 presence with online communities, including MySpace and MyCityRocks HOUSTON in conjunction with their ticketing provider Paciolan. Under the new initiative, Theatre Under The Stars will market performances like Spamalot and Dreamgirls to younger audiences using specially created ticketing platforms for Internet communities and integrate music, video and blogging technologies.

*Contact: Cliff Kurtzman (281) 480-3770*

### TICKETNETWORK LAUNCHES QUALITY ASSURANCE INITIATIVE

Secondary ticketing provider TicketNetwork announced it has launched a new online mechanism that enables venues to report mislabeled events, ticket printing errors, lost tickets and double-sold tickets to TicketNetwork to forward to thousands of ticket sellers. Representatives from venues, event producers and primary ticket companies can report errors in issuing tickets or in any event listing on the TicketNetwork exchange by going to the TicketNetwork home page and filling out the Event and Ticket Problem Reporting Form.

*Contact: Viveca Woods: (646) 418-6934*

### ARAMARK HIRES CHEF ATWELL TO TOP SPOT

Aramark has named Andrew Atwell as its new executive chef for the Las Vegas Convention Center. Atwell is responsible for executing all food, beverage and catering operations, as well as overseeing 3 kitchens and a team of 50 chefs and cooks at the 3.2 million square-foot convention center. Most recently, Chef Atwell oversaw the culinary operations at two raceways, the Las Vegas Motor Speedway and Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, Calif. catering for up to 150,000 customers daily during national events.

*Contact: David Freireich (215) 238-4078*

### NBC AND MSG ANNOUNCE PLANS TO TELEVISION CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

NBC and Madison Square Garden Entertainment announced the first-ever televised special to celebrate 75 years of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. NBC will offer viewers a chance to see the holiday show in a one-hour production from the Great Stage of Radio City Music Hall. Co-Hosted by 'The Today Show's' Matt Lauer and Meredith Vieira, and executive produced by "60 Minutes" creator Don Hewitt, the special will air in early December.

### TOOL SELLS OUT IN RECORD TIME AT COPPS COLISEUM

Tool sold out a July 9 show at Copps Coliseum, Hamilton, Ont., in 20 minutes, prompting addition of a second show June 24. Tickets go on sale for that show on Friday. This is a record sellout time for the Canadian venue.

*Contact: Alipa Mirza, (905) 546-2566*

### CHRISTCHURCH BALL SEASON SWINGS INTO ACTION

Over the next few months, more than 5,000 people will attend a ball at the Christchurch Convention Centre, Christchurch Town Hall for Performing Arts, Westpac Arena or Jade Stadium, all located in Christchurch, New Zealand. The four locations,

run by venue management company Vbase, will host six school balls, three annual charity balls, as well as the University of Canterbury Engineering Society's annual soiree.

Contact: *Janelle Frost (027) 521 7156*

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## HELP WANTED

For more information or to submit listings, e-mail April Parnell, Director of Sales & Marketing at: [april@venuestoday.com](mailto:april@venuestoday.com)

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**Colorado Springs World Arena - Division Manager – Facility Services** - The Division Manager is responsible for the overall management, direction...

**The Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre - 2 positions - Catering Manager and Technical Supervisor** - The Brisbane Entertainment Centre is Queensland's premier concert, entertainment and ...

**QPAC, Australia - Senior Team Leader** - As one of Australia's leading performing arts centres, QPAC is...

**Colorado Springs World Arena - Division Manager – Facility Services** - The Division Manager is responsible for the overall management, direction...

**Washington State Convention & Trade Center - Vice President/Deputy Operations Officer** - The Washington State Convention & Trade Center is seeking a...

**MCC, Melbourne, Australia - Communications Manager** - The MCC is a private club with 97,000 members and is...

**Showbiz, Australia - Ticketing Executive** - Showbiz is Australia's leading specialty ticketing and event packaging company...

**Australian Technology Park Conference & Exhibition Centre - Event Manager** - We are seeking a service based professional to join the team...

**Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel, PRC - Ticketing System Manager** - The Venetian Macao-Resort-Hotel is a US\$2 billion world-class...

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