

April Parnell

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VENUESToday
The news behind the headlines

Dear April,

June 27, 2007 VOL. VI, Number XXI ISSN 1547-4143

Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. This issue is packed with news of events and teams seeking new homes, marketing and martini news out of ALSD and openings and ticket sales around the world. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I don't want concerts. I want incredible shows. This set up allows a concert artist to work with someone from legitimate theater, the movies, or special effects to create something that can't tour. It will be the only place in the world to see this artist, at least doing this show." — *John Meglen, AEG/Concerts West on potential shows for the Echelon, opening in Las Vegas in 2010.*

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VENUE NEWS

Jon Bon Jovi



MORE THAN A HONEYMOON, IT'S A MARRIAGE FOR LONDON AND AEG'S O2

The O2 arena opened in London Sunday night with Bon Jovi, with over 17,000 in attendance, a healthy start to honoring the 1.5 million tickets sold to date for the new 20,000-seat, \$700 million arena complex.

AEG, which owns and manages the venue, and Levy Restaurants, concessionaire, reported per caps of \$11 from concessions and \$135 from catering in the 96 suites, for

an overall food and beverage per cap of \$24.50. Mike Potter, AEG vice president and general manager for O2, said that number reflects the fact Levy and AEG spared no expense to bring the unexpected to the new venue, which is actually a total rehab of the old Millennium Dome.

"I've been in venue management a long time in this country. I think people's expectation of food and drink in venues is pretty low because that's what they've been served up with for too many years. Levy's has come in like a breath of fresh air," Potter said. "We've designed fantastic units on the concourses with a whole range of different types of food, from stir fry to hand carved meat in great sandwiches to a really good fish and chips. People have variety and the quality is fantastic and the service is good; you don't have to queue for hours." Potter's observation was that if there was a wait at all, it was less than three or four minutes.

The O2 opens with 80-90 events on the books before Christmas, Potter said, which goes a long way toward satisfying suiteholder promises. The 96 suites are almost sold out, with lease terms of 3, 5 or 10 years. The cost ranges from 120,000-160,000 pounds a year (\$240,000-\$320,000). The O2 sports no resident team. Suites are sold based on the promise of 150-180 first class events, Potter said. Of the first 150, he said 90-100 will be concerts, 20-25 sporting events, and the rest family shows.

Two thirds of the tickets for shows on sale have already sold, he added. There are some high end numbers for ticket prices, some low like Prince at 31 pounds, 21 pence, but one might assume an average ticket price of 50 pounds, Potter assumed. In that case, AEG would have already taken \$150 million to the bank already, most of that, of

course, earmarked for the acts.

Future bookings include two professional sports matches. The National Hockey League will open its season Sept. 29 and 30 at the O2 with an Anaheim Ducks vs. Los Angeles Kings game, the Ducks being the Stanley Cup champions. The National Basketball Association will make its appearance there Oct. 10 with a Minnesota Timberwolves vs. Boston Celtics game.

The O2 is an official venue for the 2012 Olympics hosting both the gymnastic and basketball events.

"The range of events is incredible," Potter declared, the night of his second concert, Snow Patrol on June 27, on hand for two shows. Other bookings include Andrea Bocelli (June 30), Justin Timberlake (July, 4, 5, 7, 8, & 10), Barbra Streisand (July 18, 22 & 25), Keane (July 21), The Scissor Sisters (July 26, 27 & 28), Prince (21 shows in August and September), The Rolling Stones (Aug. 21, 23 & 26) and Elton John's Red Piano (Sept. 5).

Additional bookings include a World Championship Boxing card feature UK Champion Amir Khan on July 14, an Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC) event on Aug. 9, Disney on Ice Oct. 17-28, 24 shows, and Disney's High School Musical on Ice, Dec. 26-30, 12 shows.

While AEG is obviously using its content clout to fill O2, it is very much an open building, Potter said. He has several dates booked with other promoters.

He did not have the box office totals yet for Bon Jovi or Snow Patrol because the venue's agreement with Ticketmaster is for 50 percent of the inventory. The promoter gets the other 50 percent. It's not an unusual ticketing arrangement in the U.K., he said. "Promoters have cash flow issues as well; they've got to make a living."

AEG has built an entertainment destination in the O2. The venue includes over 20 cafes, bars and restaurants in the 20-acre indoor site. Open daily, guests are encouraged to visit "Entertainment Avenue," which also includes an 11-screen Cineplex, and IndigO2, a 2,300-capacity live music club which will benefit from pre- and post-concert crowds.

The plan is to encourage as many artists as are willing and able to play post-concert shows at the club, something Prince will do. Other headliners for IndigO2 include Jools Holland, Timberland, Joss Stone and Youssou N'Dour.

In November, the 3,000-square foot exhibition hall, The O2 Bubble, opens with the Tutankhamun exhibit. Potter said they expect 2.5 million to visit the entertainment district during that time.

"We're in competition with two other well-established venues, so to put on the books what we have already" is most impressive, he said. "Wembley was built in 1936 as a swimming pool; Earl's Court in 1920 as an exhibition building. This is the first live music entertainment venue built in London since Albert Hall was built in 1871. London was needing a first-class destination," Potter said.

"What we've done is unique. People can come in the afternoon, watch a film, enjoy a nice dinner in a nice restaurant, then go to the arena, then the club scene. You could almost spend 12-15 hours here," he noted, likening it to what AEG is doing this fall at Staples Center when it opens I.a. live in Los Angeles.

The longterm plan is to add a casino at the O2, but Anschutz had lost his bid for that license...it seemed. However, the casino decision has not been ratified by the House of Lords, so it's back to square one and AEG is still in the running. "We're waiting to find out before we make any plans for the future," Potter said.

The space has been carved out for the casino, basically on top of the arena service yard and back of house facilities. "We built it in the first phase because it would almost have been impossible to build it after the decision was made. We probably would have had to close the arena down to complete it." However, he said the space is not an empty void that would be a deterrent to O2 visitors today. "You wouldn't know it was in the building unless I took you up some steps to find it," Potter said.

"We'd like people to come here not just for the one thing, the arena or the club itself, but for the whole facility. If people come to the arena and carry on enjoying themselves, that's what we want them to do," Potter said..

Potter, who has been in arena management since 1981, including 18 years at Wembley and nearly five at Twickenham Stadium, believes the O2 is going to "change the way people view entertainment."

"The way AEG delivers, they don't take the value out of the building by reducing finishes. This building, the finishes are fantastic. AEG has huge ambitions and huge dreams and brings them into reality." — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Mike Potter, 0207-536-2637; Michael Roth, (213) 742-7155

POTENTIAL NASHVILLE PREDATORS SALE HAS A GROWING CAST OF CHARACTERS

The City of Hamilton, Ontario, is not holding its breath until it has a National Hockey League (NHL) team.

For the residents and fans there, it is sort of a been-there, done-that type scenario. This is the second time Jim Balsillie, a Hamilton resident and co-chief executive officer of BlackBerry maker Research In Motion, has thrown his hat into an NHL buyer's ring.

This time he is seeking to purchase the Nashville Predators from owner Craig Leipold for \$220-\$228 million.

Still, while Nashville NHL fans are holding fast to their team and trying to build more support for them, Hamilton residents are also spending time and money, placing deposits on season tickets. Balsillie has already negotiated a rental agreement with Hamilton Entertainment Inc., the nonprofit entity that operates the complex that contains Copps Coliseum, the Convention Centre and Hamilton Place.

"We have an agreement with his company whereby he would manage the entire complex if he is able to secure the sale of the Predators and move them to Ontario," said Terry Whitehead, city councilor with Hamilton and on the NHL Steering Committee.

Whitehead said the Hamilton city council felt this would create a synergy in booking and producing events into the buildings. In addition, the city was looking at having to spend about \$18 million in capital improvements to the center over the next four or five years. This agreement would put that burden upon the new management.

"They just would take over the entire operations of the complex," he said.

Hamilton has been negotiating with Balsillie's Golden Horseshoe Enterprises, which may or may not become the umbrella of the corporation that would actually run the building. This is, of course, if Balsillie actually becomes the owner of the Nashville team.

And, that is truly the question.

Balsillie stepped forward just weeks ago and caused quite a stir in Nashville with his proposal to buy the Nashville Predators. Balsillie sent Leipold a letter of intent, which included Balsillie's significant bid for the team. This offer is still in play. The letter was sent to the NHL Board of Governors, hoping the board would consider the application at the June 20 meeting. This didn't happen because the NHL board stated the application wasn't complete.

In the meantime, Leipold, on June 19, invoked a default clause between himself and the City of Nashville. By doing this, Leipold was putting the city on notice that paid attendance must equal or exceed 14,000 per game next season or the lease between the team and the city would be void and the door would be open for a new owner to move the team.

Nashvillians have rallied and are using grassroots efforts hoping that will result in more season tickets being sold.

But there is also a "liquidated damages" clause in the lease between Nashville and the Predators. Even if the Predators draw 14,000 paid fans this next season, an owner could still try to move the team by giving the city \$27 million. Reports state, however, Balsillie is unlikely to pay that amount to move the Predators.

Then, a new twist was thrown into this ongoing saga. According to Gerry Helper, Predators senior vice president of communication and development, the Predators had actually anticipated a closing date of June 30 with Balsillie. But, after the letter to the NHL fell short of being complete and, more significantly, after the team had not received an actual binding agreement from Balsillie, the Predators, on Friday, June 22, sent another letter to the NHL.

"In that letter, we stated to the NHL that we hadn't taken that next step with a binding agreement," Helper said. "We then asked the league not to do any more due diligence at this time."

Helper said there is due diligence between the buyer and the seller. And, there is also due diligence between the buyer and the NHL, which includes financial issues and other background checks.

"This is something that is done with every application by a prospective ownership to the NHL," Helper said.

Now, the Predators are waiting to see if Balsillie will come forward with a binding agreement, which basically means put down some money.

"But, it is an open field right now," Helper said. "Someone else could come forward with a letter of intent that we would consider."

If that application were approved by the NHL board, a binding agreement could be reached.

Even though the NHL board just met, that doesn't mean any other potential buyer, as well as Balsillie, has to wait until the next meeting. According to Frank Brown, NHL

group vice president and media relations, a vote "on transfers of ownership can be conducted by FAX. That said, there is no timetable on this proposed transition."

A date for the next board meeting hasn't been set, he said.

Meanwhile, a group of businessmen in Nashville have come forward and have expressed an interest in purchasing the team. Other interested parties may also come forward.

"We do, however, still have this letter from Balsillie," Helper said.

In Hamilton, Whitehead feels there is no doubt an NHL team would pack the house. Deposits for season tickets are selling well.

"The last official count I got was about 13,000 tickets already sold," he said. "The last unofficial update I got was closer to 14,500."

The Cops Coliseum seats 17,500, and includes 10 luxury boxes. But, Whitehead said the building was constructed in a way that the roof can be raised to expand seating and the number of boxes. "They were planning on 80 luxury boxes and they have all sold out," Whitehead said. "We want to send a message to the NHL. Hamilton is not going away." — Pam Sherborne

Interviewed for this story: Gerry Helper, (615) 770-2300; Frank Brown, (212) 789-2000; Terry Whitehead, (905) 546-2712

Broward County Fair, currently in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.



BROWARD COUNTY FAIR COULD BE HOMELESS IN 2008

Beth Jarvis hopes that by the time the Broward County Fair takes place in November, she will know whether or not a 2008 event will be feasible.

Construction at the Fort Lauderdale Lockhart Stadium, the spring training facility for the Baltimore Orioles, might put the fair's 2008 date at risk. "They're trying to get their ducks in a row

to renovate," said Jarvis, the fair's manager. "If that's the case, and everything falls into place, it's a possibility that we won't have a location for 2008."

The fair does not have permanent grounds. For nine years, the event was held at Pompano Park race track, but the fair was bumped when slot machines were added. The last fair there was in 2005.

Last November, the fair was held at the Lockhart Stadium. "Things were fine," Jarvis said. "The venue is approximately 40 percent smaller than the venue we had at Pompano, and we did off-site parking on several of our busier nights."

The city worked with the fair to facilitate the parking and the Baltimore Orioles Major League Baseball organization also were helpful, she noted. "The best thing about it was

for us to be able to say we were in Fort Lauderdale, which is the county seat of Broward County. So it seems to make sense."

Finding permanent fairgrounds has been difficult. The fair would need 10 acres for the carnival, livestock events and other fair activities, plus another 10 acres for parking, although off-site parking with shuttle buses would be considered. However, as land prices soar and developers eye the best use for sites, the Broward County Fair always comes up short.

The fair once was close to purchasing property, but a developer ended up building a shopping center. "Land in our area is becoming sparse," Jarvis said. "We're very urbanized."

This year's Broward County Fair will take place Nov. 15-25. Generally, the fair attracts about 300,000 fairgoers, Jarvis said. For the 2006 fair, all indoor events were held in portable tents except for a spelling bee. In that instance, the Orioles allowed the fair to use a hospitality room at the stadium so the students could get away from the noise of the carnival. "Everything else is portable structures," Jarvis said.

The fair's year-round offices are in Hollywood, Fla., with portable ones added on-site during fairtime. Jarvis hopes to know the Oriole's construction schedule by this year's fair so next year's situation can be advertised during the event. Not holding a fair in 2008 is a possibility, with the fair returning to the stadium in 2009 and possibly beyond.

"The Orioles say they like having us at tenants and they would like to make a long-term arrangement, but they can't do that until after the renovations."

Greg Bader, director of communications for the Orioles, said the organization is not commenting on the construction timeline or the future of the fair beyond this year. But he did offer the following statement. "The Orioles are proud to host the Broward County Fair again in 2007. We are excited to be part of an event that is so important to the local community."

Pat Reithoffer's orange unit of Reithoffer Shows plays the Broward County Fair with a short-term contract. The contract is written in such a way that if a 2008 site is not found, the fair board can pull out without consequences, Jarvis said.

Ultimately, the board will make the decision on how to proceed, Jarvis said. "We are the only county of our size that does not have a permanent, year-round fairgrounds," Jarvis said. "We get calls all the time from people who are looking to rent the fairgrounds for antiques shows or they want to put on a concert. They see the Broward County Fair listed and they assume we have a facility that we don't have." – Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this story: Beth Jarvis, (954) 922-2224; Greg Bader, (954) 776-1921

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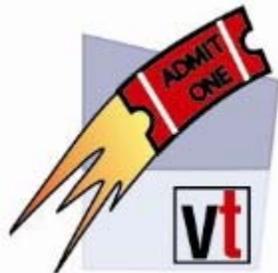
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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

TOOL, STEFANI FILL UP THE TOP FIVES

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 June 5, 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:* \$3,993,156; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia**; *Attendance:* 51,737; *Ticket Range:* \$96.50-\$54.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, The Messina Group, Eagles Stadium Operator; *Dates:* June 23; *No. of Shows:* 1

2) *Gross Sales:* \$2,088,722; *Event:* Guns N' Roses; *Venue:* **AcerArena, Sydney, Australia**; *Attendance:* 23,303; *Ticket Range:* \$125.49-\$82.82; *Promoter:* Dainty Consolidated Entertainment; *Dates:* June 23-24; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,417,196; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Coliseo De Puerto Rico, San Juan**; *Attendance:* 12,997; *Ticket Range:* \$225-\$50; *Promoter:* Jose Dueno Concerts, Lollypop Entertainment; *Dates:* June 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$939,298; *Event:* Gwen Stefani; *Venue:* **Pengrowth Saddledome, Calgary, Alberta**; *Attendance:* 13,957; *Ticket Range:* \$79.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 13; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$874,964; *Event:* Gwen Stefani; *Venue:* **Rexall Place, Edmonton, Alberta**; *Attendance:* 12,637; *Ticket Range:* \$79.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 12; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,250,045; *Event:* Guns N' Roses; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 13,417; *Ticket Range:* \$127.02-\$59.28; *Promoter:* Dainty Consolidated Entertainment; *Dates:* June 19-20; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$479,577; *Event:* Stevie Nicks; *Venue:* **Nikon at Jones Beach Theater, Wantagh, N.Y.**; *Attendance:* 7,095; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$30; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 13; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$470,195; *Event:* Tool; *Venue:* **1st Mariner Arena, Baltimore**; *Attendance:* 9,745; *Ticket Range:* \$55-\$39.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Up Front Inc.; *Dates:* June 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$451,640; *Event:* Tool; *Venue:* **Bi-Lo Center, Greenville, S.C.**; *Attendance:* 9,138; *Ticket Range:* \$52.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 5; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$379,360; *Event:* Tool; *Venue:* **Peoria (Ill.) Civic Center Arena**; *Attendance:* 8,154; *Ticket Range:* \$48-\$38; *Promoter:* Jam Productions, Jay Goldberg; *Dates:* June 20; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$642,288; *Event:* The Fray; *Venue:* **Charter One Pavilion, Chicago**; *Attendance:* 22,130; *Ticket Range:* \$31-\$26; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 12-14; *No. of Shows:* 3

2) *Gross Sales:* \$625,595; *Event:* Jill Scott; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 11,896; *Ticket Range:* \$65-\$45; *Promoter:* MSG Entertainment, CD Enterprise, Festival Productions; *Dates:* June 13-14; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$488,746; *Event:* Stevie Nicks; *Venue:* **Charter One Pavilion, Chicago**; *Attendance:* 6,668; *Ticket Range:* \$121-\$45.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$360,417; *Event:* Tool; *Venue:* **U.S. Cellular Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa**; *Attendance:* 7,548; *Ticket Range:* \$47.75; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* June 19; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$343,529; *Event:* Chicago; *Venue:* **Chastain Park Amphitheatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 5,981; *Ticket Range:* \$59.75-\$39.75; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$991,325; *Event:* Steely Dan; *Venue:* **Beacon Theatre, New York**; *Attendance:* 8,562; *Ticket Range:* \$150-\$50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 10-

13; *No. of Shows:* 3

2) *Gross Sales:* \$325,261; *Event:* Cyndi Lauper; *Venue:* **Auditorium Theatre, Chicago**; *Attendance:* 2,684; *Ticket Range:* \$201-\$56; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* June 12; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$176,624; *Event:* Chicago; *Venue:* **Bank Of America Pavilion, Boston**; *Attendance:* 3,455; *Ticket Range:* \$66-\$29.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 13; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$157,665; *Event:* Deftones; *Venue:* **Roseland Ballroom, New York**; *Attendance:* 6,502; *Ticket Range:* \$25.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* June 8-9; *No. of Shows:* 2

5) *Gross Sales:* \$133,525; *Event:* Nelly Furtado; *Venue:* **Rosemont (Ill.) Theatre**; *Attendance:* 3,134; *Ticket Range:* \$47.50-\$37.50; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* June 12; *No. of Shows:* 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com



John Meglen at the press announcement; aerial view rendering of Echelon, Las Vegas

AEG'S MEGLEN PONDERES THE MAGIC FORMULA FOR NEW ECHELON ROOMS

AEG Live/Concert West's John Meglen is a Las Vegas kind of guy, even though he's based in Los Angeles.

Five years ago, the AEG Live/Concert West's co-CEO and President rolled the dice on a new vision for Vegas – a big name star in a great big room, in a show created by a man who doesn't think small: former Cirque du Soleil stage director Franco Dragone.

Bringing Celine Dion to the 4,098-seat Colosseum with "A New Day," was a gamble that paid off. Over 750 performances, Dion played to 95 percent capacity, and according to press reports, personally grossed half-a-billion dollars.

For Meglen's next trick, the visionary concert promoter will transform the Dion/Franco model into something for a younger audience at the Echelon, the luxury Boyd Gaming casino, hotel, retail and entertainment complex opening in 2010, on land formerly occupied by the Stardust.

AEG Live/Concerts West will book Echelon's 4,000- and 1,500-seat venues.

"The 4,000 seat room will have plush seating, along the lines of the Colosseum, or a great room like that," Meglen said. "The other is a 1,500- or 2,000-seat multi-function room that can house a production, or a TV property, late night comedy or dinner theatre."

Echelon's 87-acre site will include five hotels, with a total of 4,903 rooms. At least 30 restaurants are planned, and there is 750,000 square feet of convention space, another 140,000 square feet of casino space, 200,000 square feet of pools and outdoor gardens and 9,000 parking spaces. There will also be luxury retail, including stores from Europe and South America that don't have a presence in Las Vegas.

The Echelon is part of Vegas's trend toward integrated resorts that offer virtually everything a visitor would need on one property, with plenty of entertainment options to keep everybody happy for their average stay of three and a half days.

"The two properties will offer things to do one or two nights of that stay," Meglen said.

"By the time this opens, there will be an additional 40,000 hotel rooms in Vegas. That's 120,000 to 140,000 hotel rooms that you can't equate to a normal population. They are here to be entertained."

Today, Vegas visitors who venture off the resort can choose from six or seven Cirque shows, Dion, Elton John, Barry Manilow, Toni Braxton or Prince. Dion is the workhorse of the group, logging in 200 shows a year. John and Manilow perform closer to 50, and Prince only plays weekends.

"Headliners are minimal," Meglen said. "There's plenty of room for more."

But he admits few performers can do what Dion does. "It sounds a lot easier than touring, but you need to be mentally prepared," Meglen said. It's also hard to think of many names who could fill 4,000 seats regularly. Elvis is dead, unless you listen to those pesky, persistent rumors. Michael Jackson? The Rolling Stones? Prince? Jimmy Buffett?

Meglen won't say, though he would allow it's possible he'll bring two big acts to Echelon for 100 nights each, or perhaps four for 50 nights each.

"I don't want concerts," he said. "I want incredible shows. This set up allows a concert artist to work with someone from legitimate theater, the movies, or special effects to create something that can't tour. It will be the only place in the world to see this artist, at least doing this show."

As closed-mouth as Meglen is about what it will be, he clearly knows what it won't be.

"I didn't believe in Broadway in Vegas long before the latest front came in," he said. "To see Broadway, you go to Broadway or London, or see the tour in your city, or see a repertory company in your community."

Hairspray and Avenue Q have closed. While The Producers and Spamalot remain, Meglen believes the Broadway believers were mistaken by the success of Mamma Mia, the musical set to Abba hits from the 1970s. He thinks it flew on the strength and nostalgia of Abba's music, rather than on the Broadway production.

And the Echelon shows won't be for families.

"High School Musical won't fly here," Meglen said. "But it's not just a place for old men

who gamble.”

It will appeal to women.

“A few years ago there were few things for women to do in Vegas. Now they come to hit the spas and see the shows,” Meglen said.

It will skew younger than Dion’s audiences.

“The Prince experiment allowed Prince to try out making a room his own,” Meglen said, proving Vegas is getting to be a “hip place,” for a younger, hipper audiences.

It won’t be Cirque du Soleil.

“Celine was Cirque-Franco influenced, and the folks at MGM are very committed to Cirque. It’s a great product,” he said. “The magic is coming in the marriage of unique creative people and touring artists doing things they haven’t been able to do before.”

A few headliners have heard the pitch and couldn’t envision themselves in it, filling 4,000 seats, he said.

“For some it probably doesn’t work, but it gets me excited,” Meglen said. “It’s something new and refreshing.” — Liz Boardman

Interviewed for this story: John Meglen, (323) 930-5706

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MARKETING



ALSD formed a research team with Ron Contormo of Full House Entertainment Database Marketing (from left), James Kahler of Ohio University, Elana Kutz of Turnkey and Bill Dorsey, Executive Director of ALSD; Patti Melcalf from the University of Arkansas and Ashley Grubbs from Georgia Dome make friends with the Phoenix Coyotes mascot.



Kim Reckly from the Olympia Entertainment with Tom Kaucic of event food spirits sponsor Southern Wine and Spirits; Jeremy Wubs of Nortel presents new arena technology during a luncheon at Jobing.com Arena.

BIG SPENDERS REVEALED IN LUXURY SUITE SURVEY

PHOENIX — The Association of Luxury Suite Directors wrapped up their annual meeting Wednesday after four busy days in the hot Arizona desert. Over 400 suite sales directors, food and beverage purveyors and marketing managers attended the conference, which included tours of the Jobing.com Arena and University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz., as well as the U.S. Airways Arena and Chase Field in Phoenix.

Unveiled at this year's conference was a new comprehensive market survey of suite-buying customers identifying which major industries were taking the lead in leasing.

"We've focused on trying to do a real in-depth analysis of standardized business codes," explained ALSD's Executive Director Bill Dorsey. "It's a big project that involved us

calling a lot of suite directors and requesting confidential proprietary information.”

Lead by James Kahler from Ohio University’s Center for Sports Administration and his team of graduate students, along with Elana Kutz of research firm Turnkey, the team was able to initiate a study of 25 major market venues representing all four major sports leagues and over 2,154 clients.

“Our goal was too determine who our clients are with information that will help pinpoint ways to maximize relationships with existing partners and build new relationships with businesses that have a large profit margin,” said Kahler.

Beyond margins, which generally need to run in the 20 percent range, the study found that locality was still an important factor for suite sales, with nearly 49 percent of owners functioning in or around the same city as the anchor team. According to the report, 79 percent of the clientele had businesses that been established before 1990, while 34 percent had been established prior to 1940.

A concurrent survey of ALSD members found sales averaged about \$9.8 million in annual revenue for an average 98 suites, with most suites generating about \$125,000 per year. Most contracts lasted five years, with a building vacancy rate running at about nine percent.

The report also found that most luxury suite teams had 3.2 sales reps, while three sports organizations reporting having staffs with over 10 representatives.

“We’re considering doing a study to show a link between the amount of sales people on staff and return on investment,’ said Kahler. “We want to create something we can bring back to the ownership groups to help them determine the appropriate staffing levels for their organization.”

The main tenet of the Ohio University report was to establish the largest industries participating in suite purchasing, but Kahler said his group found some new developing groups that were purchasing tickets. Just edged out of the top 10 were beer and alcohol distributors, car dealers, casinos, business services companies, marketing firms, printers, machine shops and universities.

“With this information, we’re encouraging sales teams to engage these businesses and increase penetration in all categories,” said Kahler. “Never discount small businesses with high profit margins.”

Below are the top 10 industries participating in suite-leasing as identified by the University of Ohio report:

(10) Telecommunications

38 suite holders identified in survey representing 2 percent of clients

Averaged 1.5 per market

18 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million

26 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

Expect to see telecom sponsorships rise as the industry continues to push forward with sports-marketing activations, although corporate consolidation might reduce the number of major players.

(9) Real Estate

40 suite holders identified in survey representing 2.2 percent of clients

Averaged 1.6 per market

35 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
5 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

"Real Estate firms are great because they have high profit margins and a lot of players in the field," said Kahler.

(8) Accounting and Auditing Firms

44 suite holders identified in survey representing 2.3 percent of clients
Averaged 1.8 per market
20 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
29 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

"They don't typically advertise, so many are looking for a way to stand out" and develop business-to-business relationships, Kahler said. Also consolidation has limited the number of major players in the field.

(7) Management Consulting Firms

44 suite holders identified in survey representing 2.3 percent of clients
Averaged 1.8 per market
25 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
23 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

It's another group expected to grow as more businesses look to outside firms for help, Kahler said.

(6) General Contractors and Homebuilders

43 suite holders identified in survey representing 2.4 percent of clients
Averaged 1.8 per market
18 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
18 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

"This is one of the most segmented industries in the top 10 because of the way the housing boom is divided throughout the country," explained Kahler.

(5) Financial Investment Companies

81 suite holders identified in survey representing 4.3 percent of clients
Averaged 3.4 per market
32 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
11 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

Considered a strong industry player with one of the largest demands for client entertainment.

(4) Insurance

82 suite holders identified in survey representing 4.4 percent of clients
Averaged 3.4 per market
29 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
17 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

This is one of the industries with the strongest local connections to their suites; most apt to purchase suites to support regional market of headquarters and branch locations.

(3) Media Companies

110 suite holders identified in survey representing 5.8 percent of clients
Averaged 4.5 per market
12 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million

22 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

"They're high ranking stems from bundling deals that are usually tied to advertising and coverage," explained Kahler. Television stations control 65 percent of the media deals, newspapers are next at 25 percent and Radio Stations round out the survey at 20 percent.

(2) Attorneys

129 suite holders identified in survey representing 6.8 percent of clients
 Averaged 5.4 per market
 51 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
 3 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

By sheer volume, law firms represent a major segment of suite leasers, although few yield extremely large revenues.

(1) Banks

131 suite holders identified in survey representing 6.9 percent of clients
 Averaged 5.5 per market
 5 percent reported annual sales under \$5 million
 74 percent reported annual sales above \$50 million

Sheer spending power and gross potential make banks and financial institutions an obvious leader in the field. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Bill Dorsey, (513) 674-0555; James Kahler, (740) 593-4666

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CONCESSIONS



Sarah Finch (left) and Jacky Karwowski of Aramark contemplate the perfect cocktail during a competition sponsored by Southern Wine and Spirits; Keith Black of Hoshizaki America shakes it up during the martini competition; Mixologist David Nepove of Southern Wine and Spirits judges the competition.

ALSD BRINGS NEW BATCH OF DRINKS TO PREMIUM MENU

PHOENIX — High-end cocktails were all the rage this year at the Association of Luxury Suite Directors conference. During a session on mixology — the science of bartending and drink creation — Southern Wine & Spirits mixologist Dave Nepove showcased a series of new cocktails being promoted by the alcohol distributor for high-end clubs and suites.

“You go to a ballpark these days and you can’t get a decent cocktail, but you pay \$25,000 for a year’s worth of seats,” he joked during his session. After introducing a series of new drinks, Nepove challenged the 20 participants to a cocktail-making competition using ingredients provided by Southern Wine and Spirits. The winner was a martini created by Sarah Finch and Jacky Karwowski of Aramark, Chris Bigelow of Bigelow Industries, Keith Black of Hoshizaki American and Dave Brooks of *Venues Today* (the writer of this article.) The five-person team won the competition with a drink they called the Garden Berry Martini which consisted of extracted juices from raspberries, blackberries and strawberries, strained and mixed with vodka, ice and berry liqueur.

Nepove said he liked the drink because it took advantage of a growing trend in the spirits industry to develop hand-made drinks from extracted fruits and herbs, like mint.

“There’s no reason your client shouldn’t be able to get a nice product at the bar,” he said. “It’s more burdensome, but it also creates a great showcase when you’re preparing these drinks in front of your customer. They love the show.”

This year, Southern Wine and Spirits announced four new cocktails they are launching in hopes of attracting more business from club level bartenders. The new drinks can retail between \$10 to \$15 per drink. They are as follows:

Zen Pomegranate Press

Ingredients: 1 ounce Zen Green Tea, 1 ounce SKYY Citrus vodka, 3/4 ounce of

pomegranate syrup, 2 ounces of sweet and sour and one cup of ice.

This drink is combined into a shaker and strained into a cocktail glass over ice, then topped with one ounce of club soda and garnished with a lemon corkscrew and mint sprig.

"This drink really needs to be shaken," said Nepove. "Shake it like you mean it. When you're passionate about what you do, your bartenders will be inspired to achieve a high level of service."

Tommy Bahamas White Sand Cosmopolitan

Ingredients: 1 and 3/4 ounces of Tommy Bahamas White Sand Rum, 3/4 ounce of Citronage, 3/4 ounce of cranberry juice, 3/4 ounce of sweet and sour.

This drink should be combined into a shaker with ice and strained into a tall martini glass.

"This rum is extremely smooth," said Nepove. "We're trying to show vodka drinkers that they can enjoy rum and it's not going to overpower them."

Patron Pineapple Martini

Ingredients: 2 ounces of Patron Silver Tequila, 3/4 ounce of Citronage, 1 and 1/2 ounces of sweet and sour.

This drink should be combined into a shaker with ice and strained into a tall martini glass.

"The word martini is a little bittersweet to me because technically the tequila means it's not a true martini," Nepove said. "There's no longer any logic to how we name drinks. I could call this a Pineapple Margarita or an Arizona Pineapple — whatever. Just have fun with it."

Level Spa-Tini

1 and 1/2 ounces of Level Vodka, 1 and 1/2 ounces of sweet and sour, 3 slices of cucumber, 2 lime wedges.

Extract juices from cucumber. This drink should be combined into a shaker with ice and strained into a tall martini.

"I love anything with cucumber in it," Nepove said. "Especially when I get to grind it in front of the client, it's a really big part of the show." — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: David Nepove, (415) 606-3045

OUT WITH THE OLD...AND IN WITH THE NEW



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Photo compliments of Kristin Smith of Beaver Falls, PA

SHORT TAKES

AEG ADDS BRESLER TO HUSTLE BOOKINGS

Veteran venue booking and marketing executive Eric Bresler has joined AEG as vice president, Event Booking and Development. Based in Los Angeles in the organization's downtown headquarters, Bresler will coordinate bookings, track venue availabilities, and manage an overall event database for all of the venues booked and managed by AEG Facilities. In the newly created position, Bresler, who spent the last eight years as vice president, Arena Bookings and Marketing for Miami's American Airlines Arena, will also represent the division in negotiating block bookings and other transactions with promoters as well as event producers and planners. "It allows me to network with the entire industry," Bresler said. Jared Diamond was named vice president of event services and bookings for the Miami building.

Contact: Eric Bresler, (213) 453-8665

SMG'S PRICE IS RIGHT REVEALED

American Capital, Bethesda, Md., released the purchase price for SMG - \$631 million. American Capital Strategies and an affiliate invested that amount in a One Stop Buyout.

Contact: Pankaj Gupta, (212) 213-2009

PAPA JOHN'S DELIVERS FOR LIVE NATION

Papa John's and Live Nation announced a multi-year sponsorship and marketing agreement. Under the agreement, Papa John's is designated the "Official Pizza of Live Nation," with its product to be sold in up to 24 Live Nation outdoor concert amphitheaters this year and 11 additional venues expected to be added over the next three years. The agreement also calls for joint marketing and promotional efforts, including the in-venue distribution of promotional materials and online marketing initiatives by the two brands.

Contact: John Vlautin, (310) 867-7000

PACKERS POST A HEFTY PROFIT

The Green Bay Packers' posted a profit of \$22 million last fiscal year — an increase of \$4 million — according to data released by the team and reported in the media. The Packers reported revenue of \$218 million — an increase of 4.6 percent from \$208.4 million — in the fiscal year that ended March 31. The team continued its longstanding goal of saving enough money to have a year's worth of funds in reserve. The Packers

added \$10 million to their franchise preservation fund, upping the balance to \$125.5 million. Along with the increase in revenue, another reason for the improved profit was a decrease in on-the-field costs. While player salaries and bonuses increased almost \$8 million to \$110.7 million, other football expenses fell from \$33.7 million to \$17.7 million. Overall, operating expenses dipped from \$187.4 million to \$183.8 million. Of that, \$128.4 million went toward the players, coaches, scouts, front-office personnel and other expenses like travel and equipment. An increase in national revenue also helped.

Contact: Jeff Blumb, (920) 569-7201

WILMINGTON CONVENTION CENTER HOTEL BIDS NUMEROUS

Six companies have expressed official interest in building a hotel along with the Wilmington (N.C.) Convention Center, following Armada Hoffler's pull out. The city will interview the prospective hotel developers and a final choice could go before the city council for a vote Aug. 7. SMG will operate the convention center (VT, June 13 e-newsletter).

Contact: Steve Bridges, (910) 341-7830

LIVE NATION DROPPING KANSAS SHED

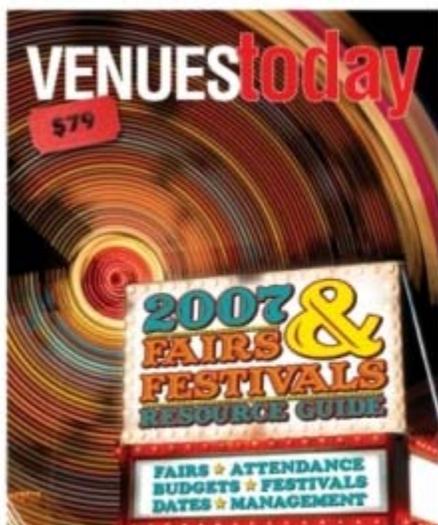
Live Nation has announced it will not renew its lease to manage Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, Bonner Springs, Kansas, after the contract expires Dec. 31. The announcement does not effect this season. Live Nation has managed the venue since early 2006.

Contact: John Vlautin, (310) 867-7000

ACM ANNOUNCES NEW MARKETING TEAM

The Academy of Country Music announced that Lisa Lee and Brooke Primero have joined the staff, forming a new in-house marketing, publicity and creative team. Lee is now senior director of Creative Development, reporting to Academy executive director, Bob Romeo. Primero, also reporting to Romeo, is senior director of Publicity & Marketing.

Contact: Lisa Lee, (818) 788-8000



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