

Kristin Sarbeck

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Subject: FW: April 19, 2006 Newsletter



# VENUES**today**

"The news behind the headlines"

Dear Kristin,

April 19, 2006 VOL. V, Number XIII ISSN 1547-4143

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## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Our strap line in ads (to promote the new venue in Milton Keynes) is 'Just like Wembley. Only different'." — *Rob Hallett, senior vice president international, AEG, on advertising the change of venue because Wembley Stadium won't be ready in time to host the planned Bon Jovi concert*

"We don't have suites and carpeted lobbies, but the bands don't care about that anyway. Whether it's a new team dressing room or an old team dressing room, it's still a team dressing room." — *Gene Felling, manager of the Forum, Inglewood, Calif., for SMG on marketing a 39-year-old concert venue*

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**VENUE NEWS**

***Under-construction Wembley Stadium, London***



**WEMBLEY STADIUM  
CONSTRUCTION DELAY  
SCATTERS BOOKED EVENTS**

Major United Kingdom sporting fixtures and massive concerts scheduled to take place in the \$1.3 billion (U.S.) Wembley Stadium from May onwards have been relocated after executives involved with the United Kingdom's biggest sporting venue admitted the site wouldn't be ready for a grand opening until 2007.

John Giddings, managing director of Solo, the festival promoter that is managing the Rolling Stones' European tour, said: "It's disgraceful. Every other country has managed to get their main stadia ready in time. Why not us? It's embarrassing for the U.K."

Giddings could not comment on the financial implications of relocating a concert: "I can't go into contractual details," he said.

However, he did say that in the case of the Rolling Stones' relocation to the southwest of the capital at Twickenham Stadium, "we were very lucky because we are only

moving around London. Other groups are moving to Milton Keynes (outside London.)”

Costs and efforts to relocate included press, radio and TV advertising to let everyone know about the new arrangements, said Giddings. “It’s painful. It’s a complicated process.”

On a positive note, Giddings added that extra tickets were now available as “Wembley didn’t have a seating plan so we found there were still some tickets unsold which we can now sell.”

Giddings was adamant that “Wembley should never have taken the bookings unless they were sure they could deliver.”

Asked whether he would plan further concerts at Wembley Stadium next year, Giddings said that he “wouldn’t touch it with a bargepole again unless I saw it up and working.”

Rob Hallett, senior vice president international, AEG Live (UK) Ltd., concurred. AEG Live was to promote Bon Jovi at Wembley Stadium. “It was hugely disappointing.

“We went on sale last year but (recently) were getting the feeling that things weren’t going well at Wembley so we made contingency plans,” Hallett said. “Relocating is a logistical nightmare, but we got the message out and went on sale for Milton Keynes the day after the announcement by Wembley Stadium.

“At the end of the day, it’s not about a building. Fans buy tickets to go and see Bon Jovi, not a venue,” Hallett said, putting his good spin on it. “Our strap line in ads (to promote the new venue in Milton Keynes) is ‘Just like Wembley. Only different’.”

The Football Association, which had hoped to hold the FA Cup Final at the new national stadium in May, has blamed delays on construction work, which has been handled by the Australian company Multiplex.

“March 31 was the date when Multiplex in the U.K. told its shareholders that they would have the ground ready [for safety checks inspection] by the end of June,” an FA spokesman said.

“The statement’s misleading,” added the spokesman, “because when they say the ground’s ready for testing, the FA still needs three months to run test events. Even if they were ready by June, it would still mean we have to miss major fixtures [sporting events].”

Heading the list of casualties of the delay is the FA Cup final, traditionally held in May. In addition, there were three post-World Cup England football matches to be hosted at Wembley as well as the Community Shield, the Rugby League’s Challenge Cup final.

The last major match played by the English national football team in Wembley was in 2000.

Giddings said that concert promoters were not really caught by surprise by the announcement. “We could see it coming. When we heard that the FA was moving their Wembley fixture to Cardiff (Millennium Stadium) you start to worry.” Besides Bon Jovi and the Rolling Stones, a Robbie Williams concert was also scheduled for the hallowed northwest London venue.

Asked to confirm a 2007 opening, the FA spokesman said the FA was shying away from setting other dates to avoid further speculation about missed deadlines.

A spokesman for the Wembley National Stadium, the stadium's owners and a subsidiary of the FA, was also reluctant to pin down future dates: "We will announce an opening date once we have 100 percent certainty from Multiplex."

The U.K. press reports local observers are speculating that Multiplex may lose between \$130 million and \$174 million on the original \$569 million fixed price contract based on penalties of about \$244,500 per day.

Multiplex formally advised Wembley Stadium in a statement that it was "entitled to substantial and legitimate extensions of time under the terms of its construction contract which will extend the contract completion date until at least September 2006."

Multiplex admitted it had to make some rectifications in March, including securing a rafter and defects to part of the drainage system. The company added that half the pitch was ready for topsoil and grass and that they had handed over up to 60 percent of the roof for final roof sheeting.

Commenting on the potential developments between Wembley and Multiplex, Giddings said: "I'm sure it will all end up in court for a long period of time."

The following events have been relocated:

- FA Cup final May 13 to the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales.
- FA Community Shield Aug. 13 to the Millennium Stadium.
- Rugby Football League Challenge Cup Final Aug. 26 to Twickenham.
- England's friendly international on Aug. 16, as well as the Euro 2008 Qualifiers against Andorra on Sept. 2 and Macedonia on Oct. 7, to Old Trafford, the stadium of Manchester United.
- Bon Jovi, June 10 –11 June) to Milton Keynes National Bowl.
- Take That, June 24–25, to Milton Keynes Bowl.
- The Rolling Stones A Bigger Bang World Tour, Aug. 20 and 22 to Twickenham Stadium.

Alternative arrangements for Robbie Williams's Wembley dates Sept. 14, 15, 16, 18 & 19 are yet to be announced.

The new Wembley Park Tube station to support the new Wembley Stadium, was opened on March 27. Improvements increase the station's capacity by 70 per cent in the main ticket hall, allowing an extra 15,500 people (up from 22,000 to 37,500) to use the station every hour. Wembley Park is part of Transport for London's five-year \$17.4 billion Investment Programme. — Ali Qassim

*Interviewed for this story: FA spokesman, 00 44 0207 745 4545; Wembley National Stadium, 00 44 208 795 9000; John Giddings, 00 44 207 384 6644; Rob Hallett, 00 44 336 2630*

### **Rendering of the Kansas City Performing Arts Center**



### **SHOVEL GOES IN THE GROUND THIS FALL FOR LONG- AWAITED KANSAS CITY PAC**

On Thursday, the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan

Kansas City Performing Arts

Center (MKCPAC) approved a fall, 2006 groundbreaking for a new \$326 million venue. The city's first performing arts center will house the Kansas City Ballet, the Kansas City Symphony and the Lyric Opera. A firm date for groundbreaking will be chosen in the coming months, and the venue is projected to open in the fall of 2009.

Fund raising efforts thus far have raised more than 70 percent of the estimated amount needed to complete the project, including a \$40 million operating endowment.

The venue, designed by Boston's Moshe Safdie, features two shell-shaped structures the equivalent of 16 stories. One section will be home to a 1,800-seat hall for opera and ballet performances and the other will house a 1,600-seat concert hall for symphony performances. Both halls will also host visiting regional, national and international entertainment. Additionally, "Celebration Hall," a multi-use venue, will provide space for public and private events, performances, educational programs and other gatherings.

The late Muriel McBrien Kauffman began pursuing the project back in 1994. After she died the following year, her daughter Julia continued working on securing donations for the center. According to Dave Lady, president of the Kauffman Foundation, which is currently coordinating the project, land was purchased for the venue in 1999. "The Kauffman Foundation initially pledged \$80 million, and last November we created a steering committee of 30 people from Kansas City to try to secure \$45 million in donations," he said.

Although fundraising has been slower than hoped, Lady said it has not been beyond what was expected. "These centers take a long time, but we hope to raise the necessary \$326 million," he said. In addition to a \$47 million commitment from the city of Kansas City, the latest round of pledges includes \$3 million from the Sprint Nextel Foundation, \$1.2 million from Great Plains Energy and \$1 million from The Sosland Foundation. An aggressive public fundraising campaign is planned to raise the remaining funds.

Lady said the land was chosen after sites were evaluated, and studies were done to help determine the size of the venue. "We have a fabulous piece of land to build the center on that includes incredible vistas and is contiguous to downtown," he said.

Project manager Ken Dworak of Land Capital Corp., based in Overland Park, Kan., who has been working on this project for the last 10 years, says the design and shape of the concert hall is what makes it unique. "This is a vineyard-style hall, which wraps the audience around the orchestra," he said, comparing the design to Los Angeles' new Walt Disney Concert Hall. "European halls are built like this. It offers pure, natural sound, but doesn't have the adjustability of other venues." This means musicians are tuned to the hall rather than vice versa.

The theater also features staggered balconies and a screen covering the stage house in place of the traditional mast. "These are designed to be both aesthetically and acoustically pleasing," Lady said.

J.E. Dunn Construction Co. of Kansas City has been selected as the general contractor for this project.

Lady said an executive director for the new center will be chosen this fall and will create programming and an events schedule. "The ballet, opera and symphony will be the resident operations, so other shows and events will be worked around their schedules," he said.

Currently, these performances are held at Kansas City's Lyric Theater. "We don't know yet what will happen to that theater once the performances move to the new MKCPAC," he said. — Lisa White  
*Interviewed for this article: Ken Dworak, (816) 520-8233; Dave Lady, (816) 932-1007*

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#### **PHOTOS FROM IAAM DISTRICTS IV AND VII, BOISE, IDAHO**

Among those gathered for the International Association of Assembly Managers Districts IV and VII convention in Boise, Idaho, March 31—April 3, are these happy groups. Left to right, photo one shows Chris Carpenter, San Mateo (Calif.) County Event Center, and Lori Leyba Kramer, Portland (Ore.) Center for the Performing Arts. Photo 2 includes Geoff Carns, Ticketmaster Seattle; Radar Hennen, Feld Entertainment; Jyo Singh, KeyArena, Seattle; and John Fuhrmann, Neal S. Blaisdell Center, Honolulu. In the third photo are Robert "Bo" Emery, Williamson County Tourism and Pavilion, Marion, Ill.; Brenda Pennington, IAAM; and Andy Green, Redding (Calif.) Convention Center and CVB. And finally, both from Taco Bell Arena at Boise State University are Lisa Cochran and Leslie Pass.

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## BOOKINGS



### HOT tickets

#### BILLY JOEL, ELTON JOHN TOP OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM

**HOT TICKETS** is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to **Venues Today** e-newsletter. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since March 28, 2006. 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:* \$6,856,592; *Event:* Billy Joel; *Venue:* **Wachovia Complex, Philadelphia**; *Attendance:* 93,955; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$39.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Feb. 14 -March 30; *No. of Shows:* 5
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,262,638; *Event:* Luis Fonsi; *Venue:* **Coliseo De Puerto Rico, San Juan**; *Attendance:* 24,041; *Ticket Range:* \$90-\$25; *Promoter:* Tony Mojena Entertainment; *Dates:* April 7-8; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,135,877; *Event:* Coldplay; *Venue:* **United Center, Chicago**; *Attendance:* 16,461; *Ticket Range:* \$81.50-\$41.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* March 30; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,081,985; *Event:* Coldplay; *Venue:* **Wachovia Complex, Philadelphia**; *Attendance:* 16,777; *Ticket Range:* \$80.50-\$36; *Promoter:* Electric Factory Concerts; *Dates:* April 6; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$905,587; *Event:* Kenny Chesney; *Venue:* **Ford Center, Oklahoma City**; *Attendance:* 14,809; *Ticket Range:* \$65.50-\$55.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, The Messina Group; *Dates:* April 1; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 10,001 - 15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$718,213; *Event:* Luis Miguel; *Venue:* **Cox Arena at Aztec Bowl, San Diego**; *Attendance:* 8,118; *Ticket Range:* \$110-\$55; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* April 9; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$508,060; *Event:* Queen; *Venue:* **Cox Arena at Aztec Bowl, San Diego**; *Attendance:* 6,030; *Ticket Range:* \$126.50-\$41.50; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* April 1; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$362,548; *Event:* Snoop Dogg; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 4,853; *Ticket Range:* \$85.65-\$52.71; *Promoter:* Dainty Consolidated Entertainment; *Dates:* April 11; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$255,742; *Event:* Taste of Chaos; *Venue:* **Long Beach (Calif.) Arena**; *Attendance:* 10,860; *Ticket Range:* \$25.25-\$19.25; *Promoter:* Goldenvoice, Live Nation; *Dates:* March 30; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$231,994; *Event:* Fall Out Boy; *Venue:* **Selland Arena, Fresno, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 8,239; *Ticket Range:* \$29-\$18.99; *Promoter:* Another Planet Entertainment, Nederlander; *Dates:* March 31; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 5,001 - 10,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$397,995; *Event:* The Strokes; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 12,246; *Ticket Range:* \$32.50; *Promoter:* House of Blues Concerts; *Dates:* March 30-31; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$346,435; *Event:* Bob Dylan; *Venue:* **Aladdin Theatre, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 3,571; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$65; *Promoter:* In-House; *Dates:* April 7; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$314,670; *Event:* Dream Theater; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 5,828; *Ticket Range:* \$65-\$40; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Radio City

Entertainment; *Dates:* April 1; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$281,430; *Event:* John Mellencamp; *Venue:* **Chevrolet Centre, Youngstown, Ohio**; *Attendance:* 5,759; *Ticket Range:* \$50-\$40; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* April 11; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$272,320; *Event:* Nine Inch Nails; *Venue:* **Aladdin Theatre, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 7,019; *Ticket Range:* \$42; *Promoter:* Andrew Hewitt; *Dates:* April 1; *No. of Shows:* 1

### **5,000 or Fewer Seats**

1) *Gross Sales:* \$6,642,075; *Event:* Elton John; *Venue:* **The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 40,026 *Ticket Range:* \$250-\$100; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West, In-House; *Dates:* March 28-April 9 *No. of Shows:* 10

2) *Gross Sales:* \$610,426; *Event:* Little Women; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 16,587; *Ticket Range:* \$55-\$19; *Promoter:* Broadway in Atlanta; *Dates:* March 28-April 2; *No. of Shows:* 8

3) *Gross Sales:* \$587,730; *Event:* Jerry Seinfeld; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 9,135; *Ticket Range:* \$77-\$47; *Promoter:* JS Touring; *Dates:* April 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$408,990; *Event:* Juan Gabriel; *Venue:* **Dodge Theatre, Phoenix**; *Attendance:* 4,924; *Ticket Range:* \$105-\$55; *Promoter:* Elias Entertainment; *Dates:* April 9; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$343,371; *Event:* Beauty and the Beast; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 9,573; *Ticket Range:* \$76-\$10; *Promoter:* Atlanta Ballet; *Dates:* April 6-9; *No. of Shows:* 6

*Compiled by Kristin Sarbeck, HotTickets@venuestoday.com--*

### **'HEAVY' SIGHS IN KNOXVILLE AS MCGRAW/HILL SHOW CANCELLED**

The Soul2Soul II Tour with Tim McGraw and Faith Hill had to cancel its April 23 date at Thompson-Boling Arena in Knoxville, Tenn., because of the weight of the production.

According to Tim Reese, arena manager, the production for the Soul2Soul II tour weighed in at 132,000 pounds; the arena was cleared to hang 100,000 pounds from its ceiling.

"We were scheduled so early on in the tour that they were just putting the production together as the tour was being booked," Reese explained. "Once we got all their production in line, and we saw the weight distribution and weight totals, we contacted them about our concerns."

He went on to say that this was the only time they have had to cancel an event because of weight issues at the arena, but "we had to understand our limitations and insure the safety of those in attendance."

Thompson-Boling Arena is 17 years old, and Reese said a lot of the newer venues would have capabilities different from this one. "We are in the process of looking at fairly significant renovations in our building and at that time we will address weight limitations and other enhancements," he said.

Part of the problem with the production for the Soul2Soul II Tour is the fact it is in the round, playing to all sides of the building. "There is a significant amount of weight involved, because instead of two jumbotrons you have four; instead of two PA's you have four," Reese continued.

The show had sold 9,000 tickets at the time the cancellation was announced. While there is not another arena in the area that can hold the show, there are several area cities that are hosting Soul2Soul II where McGraw-Hill fans might go to see the concert. One of these is Rupp Arena in Lexington, Ky., which has the show scheduled for May 14.

"We have offered and tried to work with people in the Knoxville market," said Carl Hall, director of arena management at Rupp. "From what I understand, the promoter is working in the Knoxville area to let them know that there are still tickets available for the show here."

"We will do fine with ticket sales," Hall says of the 20,000-seat arena. "Our challenge was to sell in our area because Columbus and Cincinnati went on sale before us, so people from our market bought into those shows. It will be a great show, and any empty seats will be masked off with a curtain."

He said there were no structural limitations at Rupp similar to the ones at Thompson-Boling Arena. "We had our structural engineer come down and do research on it. The challenge for the production is because it's in the round, and a lot of people have huge scoreboards or center hung speaker clusters in the middle of the ceiling. Our screens are in each corner, and our speakers are smaller so there's not as much weight. We can do up to 160,000 [pounds]. We had to make one or two minor modifications, but that wasn't a problem."

The Soul2Soul II Tour kicks off this Friday and Saturday (April 21-22) at Nationwide Arena in Columbus, Ohio. It continues on to Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Ill. for six shows, April 28-30. Already 850,000 tickets have been sold for the 70 concerts in 46 cities. — Vernell Hackett

*Interviewed for this story: Tim Reese, (865) 974-0953; Carl Hall, (859) 233-4567*

### **Chris Martin of Coldplay at the Forum**



### **THE FORUM GETS ITS GROOVE BACK**

Scoring the opening three shows on Madonna's Confessions tour is just another sign of a growing phenomenon, the rebirth of the 39-year-old Fabulous Forum of Inglewood, Calif. "The Forum has come back to life," said Gene Felling, manager there for SMG. "We've completely restructured the management staff and our vendors and contractors and it's starting to pay off. We've put a lot

of shows in the building in the last few months."

Felling, who arrived back on the scene six months ago, having started his career at the

Forum decades ago, has booked nine shows in the first half of the year, a "dramatic improvement" over 2005. He's also had a month of rehearsals for the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Unconfirmed reports from other sources are that Madonna is also rehearsing there, though confidentially agreements prevent any discussion of the matter.

On the administrative side, Felling said he has a new vendor providing cleaning and conversion, Event People. "They do the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, and came highly recommended," he said.

"We put our crowd control contract out to bid and we've awarded the contract to Contemporary Services Corporation, and they're doing a really good job. They've been in the building two or three weeks," he said.

The Forum concessions operations have been revamped. Aramark continues as the provider, but a big effort has gone into "some higher level service and some cost savings," Felling said. Food and drink per caps for the big events are up to \$10-\$12, "a substantial increase from what it was." The menu now includes things like turkey sandwiches and the addition of portables has doubled the 45 permanent points of sale.

"The Forum Club is back and alive and kicking. It's hard to squeeze in anymore," Felling said. "Unless it's a private party, it's open to the public. It's like the old days; we have to stand there with a clicker to count people in and make sure we don't exceed the capacity."

Those improvements and AEG, which has an exclusive booking agreement with SMG for the Forum, and Felling's contacts from years in the business, and SMG's corporate support have all worked to turn the building around, Felling said. Coldplay sold out Feb. 4 with 15,000 attendance; the Stones were an instant sellout March 6; and the Red Hot Chili Peppers were a resident team for a month there.

"We worked with Bill Rahmy, their production manager. He and his crew were great to have in the building," Felling said.

The Forum has been owned by Faithful Central Bible Church for six years now and the owner holds Sunday services unless the building is otherwise booked. That makes the rebirth of the Forum as a strong concert venue more interesting.

"We did work it where the Chili Peppers stage was an end stage set up. On Sundays, the church plays in a half-house set up, so we just brought in a second stage and set it up in front of the Chili Peppers. The church has a big curtain that cuts off the house to 7,500 seats. We did church service Sunday morning, then took down the curtain and the Chili Peppers came back Sunday afternoon to continue their rehearsals," Felling said.

They wanted a rehearsal building where they could hang their entire show, he said, which is more and more an issue with the big arena shows. "These shows are getting bigger and bigger. The Stones hung 135,000 pounds," Felling said.

"Also, while the Peppers were in the building, we did a reggaeton show on March 26. That was a challenge, because they played on the Peppers stage and used part of their sound and lights on Saturday. Sunday morning we moved church in and did church and Sunday afternoon the Chili Peppers came back.

"The next week, on April 1, we did a half house show, an R&B package, that did about

4,500 tickets. The Chili Peppers were still in the building on the end stage. So we set up the church set up, which was the half house stage and sound and lights, and the show played there, then church, then Chili Peppers continued. It was quite a challenge for the operations crew."

The very -accommodating Chili Peppers rehearsed there March 8-April 5. They loaded out in 10 sea containers being shipped to Barcelona.

Madonna is booked for May 21, 23 and 24 to open her world tour. The first two shows sold out in one hour and 20 minutes, Felling said. The third show was announced Monday and goes on sale Friday (April 21). "We expect it to sell out just as quickly." Tickets, base price only, range from \$350 to \$55. It's a 270 degree show, so capacity is around 14,000, he said.

And, they've nearly sold out a couple of Pearl Jam shows July 9-10, a Live Nation promotion. TNA promoted the Stones and Madonna.

The booking arrangement with AEG "basically says they have to co-promote. If a show wants to play here we refer them to AEG [Susan Rosenbluth] and they make the co-promote deal. We've seen it works very well. We wouldn't have gotten any of these show had we not chased these acts and brought them in," Felling said. The winning formula is relationships and reputation. Felling has been in the business a long time; the Forum is a legend with great acoustics, 18,000 seats, reputation, heritage and history. "The bands want to play here. Every time we get a show, it brings in additional shows," Felling added.

"We don't have suites and carpeted lobbies, but the bands don't care about that anyway. Whether it's a new team dressing room or an old team dressing room, it's still a team dressing room. We give them good food, good crews, a good deal, good ambiance and we make their life easier. It's starting to pay off. Shows are starting to come back."

Felling does still have a wish list. It's one step at a time and he has his eye on the next prize. "We need the return of the family shows. We need the return of boxing, motorsports and rodeos. The concerts are nice and if we can base the business on the concerts, the rest will be great, but it's one thing at a time. The family shows book 12-18 months out; the concerts book 3-6 months out. The logical thing was to go for the short-term impact and now we want to grow the business to other events." — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Gene Felling, (310) 330-7308*

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## MARKETING

***From left, at the O'Connell Center, Gainesville, Fla.: Jeff Chenery, Justin Brady, Lionel J. Dubay, Renee Musson, Lynda Reinhart, Catherine Cake, and Darius Dunn with the Siemen's NCAA Division I Men's Basketball trophy***



### CHAIRS, FLOORS AND DEAFENING ROARS HIGHLIGHT FINAL FOUR CHAMPIONSHIP

It's a marketing dream come true for the Stephen C. O'Connell

Center, Gainesville, Fla., home to the University of Florida's Gators basketball team, which won the National Collegiate Athletic Association men's basketball tournament April 3 in Indianapolis. It started with a remote home game set up that very night, attended by a loud and happy 6,000 fans.

Lionel Dubay, manager of the O'Connell Center, had expected between 2,500 and 3,000 to show up for the big-screen view of the final away game against UCLA from the Gators home arena. One would suppose local fans would be at bars, restaurants and friend's homes. The O'Connell does not serve alcoholic beverages. And the fact the doors were opening was a last-minute decision, promoted through public service announcement. The only incentives were the fact Gators cheerleaders would be on hand, the first 1,000 would receive the obligatory orange T-shirts and the arena would be filled with fellow Gators fans.

The arena was staffed as it would be normally, including the concessions stands. Fans lined up for a wristband to get into the section designated for the Rowdy Reptile Section, Dubay said. CBS had a TV truck on hand and did broadcast live shots of the fans at home during and after the televised game. Per caps for Boston Culinary Group, which handles the concessions, were the usual, about \$2, Dubay said. Next time, he might consider talking to Pepsi about a souvenir cup.

The biggest takeaway this year from those that were there, however, was the roar of the crowd, Dubay said. "We set the basketball floor up and made it a regular game experience. We had some cheerleaders here to cheer the crowd on during timeouts. When the final second ticked off the clock and the Gators won, it was deafening here — the loudest I've ever heard at any event. Louder than 12,000 people in the building upsetting Kentucky in a basketball game at home. It was incredible. You would have thought they were playing here live."

The cost to set up the building and open the doors for the remote game was \$10,000-\$12,500, Dubay said. University Police services were billed separately.

"It came so fast. You don't have a whole lot of time to put something like that together," Dubay said, reflecting back.

That event was followed up April 7 with a hometown celebration at the arena which drew 10,000 fans. This time, the day featured a basketball floor of a different sort. Per NCAA policy, the National Championship team has the opportunity to purchase the basketball floor used in the final game. The university Athletic Association took that option, at a cost of about \$70,000, Dubay said.

They chose to unveil it April 7. The floor, manufactured by Connor Sports Floors, was delivered to O'Connell Center Friday morning and the crew set it up, sans hoops, with a stage at one end. The floor was covered in black plastic, which was torn back at the appropriate moment to yet another appreciative roar of the crowd. It will be sent back to Connor for a new design prior to the next season, Dubay said.

The university also exercised the option to buy the folding courtside chairs, manufactured by Specilaized Seating, used at the final game. Dubay personally purchased one, which he may give to an upcoming charity auction for Stop Children's Cancer, hopefully with the coach's signature.

In a further marketing effort, the university is also selling replicas of those chairs at the school bookstore. Jordan Hergott, national sales, Specialized Seating, said this is the first time that eight-year-old company has provided chairs for the NCAA men's basketball tournament, and, he believes, the first time replicas have been available to

fans. Specialized Seating is also selling them on its own Web site, [www.sit123.com](http://www.sit123.com).

Specialized Seating also manufactured chairs for the first and second round NCAA regional sites with a 100th year anniversary logo. "In years past, they had put slipcovers over the chairs [at regional site venues]. We took it a step further and did a special chair for each site with a 100-year logo and for the women's sites, we did a 25th anniversary chair," Hergott said. With 12 sites for men's basketball and 12 sites for women's, and two final four sites, they manufactured and are re-selling about 1,200 folding chairs directly related to the tournament plus replicas through a retail program for the fans. The replicas with team and final four logos are selling for \$140 to \$295, depending on the chair quality, Hergott said.

The chair program has proven to be a great marketing tool for the firm. "We've been featured in several articles," Hergott said, including an article in *USA Today* that advised 'you can still get a seat for the Final Four,' and in several TV interviews. They promote themselves as the official NCAA supplier of chairs. "There's no better stage to portray your seating than the NCAA tournament," he said.

The April 7 celebration at O'Connell Center featured the coach and the team and the roar of the crowd.

"The two highlights of the evening were the unveiling of the Final Four basketball floor which was used in Indianapolis for the tournament and the announcement that all four starting sophomores (Corey Brewer, Taureen Green, Joakim Noah and Al Horford) along with junior starter Lee Humphrey will be returning next year. There was a lot of speculation following the championship game that a couple of the Gator players might enter the NBA draft. Joakim Noah set a NCAA Tournament record of 26 block shots and a single game record of six block shots. The Gator Nation is extremely excited to have everyone coming back next year plus a strong recruiting class coming in," Dubai declared.

Dubay is anticipating the hoopla will translate into more sellouts for Gators games next season. The university ticketing department is enmeshed in processing football season right now, so the results won't be determined until season tickets for basketball do finally hit the streets in a couple of months, but Dubai is optimistic.

"We pretty much sold out all of our 2005-06 home SEC games as well as a couple of pre-season games. Winning the NCAA Basketball Championship, which is the first for the Gators and the first by a Florida school, should make tickets a premium for next season," Dubai said.

The arena seats 11,800 for basketball. Non-league games, except big rivalries, drew 6,000-7,000 last season. Dubai would like to see the entire 16-18 home games sold out...with a waiting list." That will be a great experience. We have that with Kentucky and Florida State games, a rivalry, but not on a consistent basis."

Now he's pulling for a repeat. "The O'Connell Center has a chance to be home of two National Championships," he noted. The Lady Gator Gymnastics team housed in the Center recently won the NCAA South Central Regional and will compete April 20 in Corvallis, Ore., in the NCAA Session II Meet to qualify for the Super Six Championship on April 21.

And to add to his marketing nirvana, he's celebrating O'Connell Center's 25th anniversary. The O'Connell Center opened in December of 1980.

Add a fairly good concert season. The Black Eyed Peas performed April 14. "It's a good

spring if you do half a dozen shows in a secondary market," Dubay said, adding "Go Gators." — Linda Deckard  
*Interviewed for this article: Lionel Dubay, (352) 392-5500; Jordan Hergott, (847) 309-8401*

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## **SHORT TAKES**

### **FACES AND PLACES: TULLY, DUTCHER, RODEMS MAKE CHANGES**

Mike Tully has resigned his post as vice president of business for Delaware North Co.'s Sportservice. He has been with the firm for six and a half years. His departure date is April 21. Tully plans to stay in the Chicago area. Jim Rodems is no longer general manager of the Stockton (Calif.) Arena for International Facilities Group. The firm is

seeking a replacement. And Bill Dutcher, who replaced Bob Wagoner as interim manager of the Metrapark, Billings, Mont., is no longer interim. He has the permanent job.

*Contacts: Mike Tully, (708) 829-3014; Stockton Arena, (209) 948-3311; Metrapark, (406) 256-2407*

### **PS&E PULLS OUT OF FREEDOM HILL**

On April 13, 2006, Palace Sports & Entertainment notified Hillside Productions that the Palace will no longer manage and operate Freedom Hill. Hillside Productions recently filed a lawsuit in Macomb County Circuit Court against Macomb County and the Macomb County Parks and Recreation Commission as a result of longstanding issues between Hillside and the County. It now appears unlikely, based on the lawsuit and other factors, that Hillside Productions will meet the conditions required for closing on an agreement between Hillside Productions and PSE Hillside LLC, a separate company in which The Palace has an interest. In light of this uncertainty, The Palace ceased management of Freedom Hill and has turned over management to Hillside Productions along with all existing contracts for the upcoming season. Through legal counsel, PSE Hillside LLC has advised Hillside Productions that it is not terminating its agreement for the purchase of Freedom Hill and expects Hillside Productions to honor its obligations under that agreement.

*Contact: Jeff Corey, (248) 377-8204*

### **OWNER CHANGES IN PHOENIX ANNOUNCED**

Jerry Moyes and Steve Ellman announced an agreement regarding the Phoenix Coyotes, Glendale Arena, Arizona Sting and the Westgate City Center. The agreement calls for Moyes to assume majority ownership control of the Phoenix Coyotes National Hockey League (NHL) franchise, the Glendale Arena and the Arizona Sting of the National Lacrosse League. Ellman and his development team will assume majority ownership control of the 223-acre, 6.5 million square foot Westgate City Center development that is scheduled for a Phase One grand opening later this year. Hockey legend and Coyotes Managing Partner and Head Coach Wayne Gretzky will retain his ownership interest in both ventures. The deal is expected to be formally completed in the coming weeks.

*Contact: Rick Braunstein, (623) 772-3200*

### **CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS**

The Stadium Managers Association which met in Hollywood, Calif., this year is not associated with the International Association of Assembly Managers as erroneously indicated in our March 2006 magazine. In addition, Frank Russo is with Global Spectrum, not Global Entertainment (Venues Today, April 2006), and Pete Kranske was vice president and COO but not co-founder of Contemporary Services Corporation (VT e-newsletter, April 12). Damon Zumwalt founded and continues to own CSC.

*Contact: (714) 378-5400*

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## **HELP WANTED**

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

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### **Clarín - Customer Service Representative/Inside Sales**

Seating manufacturer seeks a personable individual to handle inside sales & customer

service. Candidate should have at least 2 years inside sales/customer service exp in the arena & convention center markets. Responsibilities incl quoting, customer service, generation of leads and sales support. Bachelor's degree desired. Base salary & bonus package. [Send resume to HR@clarinseating.com](mailto:Send_resume_to_HR@clarinseating.com) or Fax: 847-234-9001. EOE.

### **Venue Management Recruiting Group - various positions**

Mgt Recruiting services co., specializing in the Entertainment & Sports facility industry is seeking qualified mgt candidates & various level positions AVAILABLE NOW around the country. Candidates sought for all aspects of venue operation and mgt incl: General Mgt, Event Mgt, all levels of Food & Beverage Mgt and Facility Maintenance/Engineering. Send resume & a brief introductory letter to [recruiter@409management.com](mailto:recruiter@409management.com). All submissions will be maintained in strict confidence. Our commitment to confidentiality is paramount to our work. EOE

### **Venues Today - Reporter/Editor**

Immediate opening. Sports and live entertainment trade magazine in Orange County, Calif., is seeking a qualified business journalist to write stories and assign and edit freelance copy. Some travel. A small firm with international readership. Two to three years editorial experience required. F/T, health benefits, EOE. E-mail resume to [Linda@venuestoday.com](mailto:Linda@venuestoday.com) or fax to: (714) 378-0040.

### **Hobby Center for the Performing Arts - Box Office Manager**

Train, direct, schedule and coordinate all ticket office staff. Oversee daily reports and reconciliation. Prepare event audits. Ticket setup and inventory control on paciolan and ticketmaster systems, including web-based sales. Full time including evenings, weekends and holidays. Previous box office experience at a supervisory level required. Please send resume to [leslie.bradford@hcpa.com](mailto:leslie.bradford@hcpa.com) or fax 713-315-2402

### **Georgia Dome, Atlanta - Assistant General Manager**

Do you have the ability to see and understand the big picture but can focus like a laser on details? Do you have the ability to inspire others to achieve excellence? Please apply for the position of Assistant General Manager of the Georgia Dome. Click on [www.gwccajobs.com](http://www.gwccajobs.com). Deadline is April 27th.

[Click on www.gwccajobs.com](http://www.gwccajobs.com)

### **Overland Park (Kansas) Convention Center - Director of Event Services**

Global Spectrum seeks a skilled, detail oriented and customer service focused individual for the position of Director of Event Services for the Overland Park Convention Center. Click below to apply or for more information. The Overland Park Convention Center and Global Spectrum maintain a drug-free work place. EOE

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### **Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, Atlanta - Managing Director**

CEPAC, currently under construction, will feature a 2,750 seat main theater & a 10,000 sq. ft. ballroom. The Managing Director will oversee all aspects of the Centre's

operations including: admin, development of mktg & communications materials, artistic programming and production, facility staffing, training, maintenance, and development. Req 10 yrs, PAC senior mgt experience. CEPAC/HR, 2 Gallleria Pkwy, Atlanta 30339; fax 770-989-5080.

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