

THE NEWS BEHIND THE HEADLINES : SPORTS : MUSIC : FAMILY SHOWS : CONVENTIONS : FAIRS

Venues

TODAY

Dear Subscriber,

September 26, 2007 VOL. VI, Number XXXI ISSN 1547-4143

Welcome to your *Venues Today* weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Our October magazine is in the mail. Our next e-newsletter will be Oct. 10. And remember, the deadline for nominations for our annual Hall of Headlines Awards is Oct. 1. Let us know who has made a difference in the industry this year in your opinion. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“If the contract has the world ‘exclusive,’ you’ve made a commitment. Form clear contracts and do not get confused with good-guy practices.” — *Jane Kleinberger, chairman, Paciolan, on the ongoing debate about whose ticket is it? as primary and secondary ticket providers slug it out.*

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VENUE NEWS

This photo from the Hells Angels Santa Cruz County chapter website shows merchandise similar to the products being sold at the Santa Cruz County Fair.



SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIR TANGLES WITH HELLS ANGELS

The Santa Cruz County Fair, Watsonville, Calif., is facing a potential lawsuit from a famous biker gang after denying members from a local chapter entry into the fair.

It had been over a year since the Santa Cruz County Hells Angels had first tried to gain entry into the fair, only to be turned away at the gates. This year, on Sept. 15, the group tried again, this time with over 100 motorcycles descending on the facility for a Saturday night at the fair, dressed in motorcycle gear emblazoned with Hells Angels symbols.

"They asked for entrance into the fair in an orderly way, they were declined entry but instructed that if they removed or covered up patches depicting the Hells Angels sign, they would be allowed in the fair," said Steve Stagnaro, the fair's spokesperson. The group refused and were given a refund of their parking fees.

"The whole thing was pretty orderly, well at least orderly as it could be when you have over 100 motorcycles coming and going off the property on a Saturday night," Stagnaro said.

In an ironic twist, the Hells Angels had been allowed to sell merchandise at the fairgrounds for the first time this year. Fair Manager Yvette Jordan said the group applied for a merchandise permit under the name "Santa Cruz Enterprises L.L.C." and gave no indication they were selling Hells Angels apparel.

"I was shocked," said Jordan of learning what the group had intended to sell at the booth. Jordan let the group continue to sell limited Hells Angels merchandise, but told the vendors that customers were not allowed to wear the apparel on the fairgrounds.

"The people in the booth had to be reminded of this several times," Stagnaro said.

The fair is now facing a potential lawsuit from the Hells Angels. A day before the group was denied entry into the fair, its attorney Richard M. Hammock of Canoga Park, Calif. sent a letter to the fair board, explaining the group would be attempting to enter the fair wearing their patches.

"They come in peace, and they do not desire confrontation with anyone," he said. In 2000, Hammock sued the Gilroy (Calif.) Garlic Festival after it denied entry to members of the Top Hatters motorcycle club, arguing that the group had a Constitutional right to display its symbols. That case is currently before the Sixth District Court of Appeals.

Jordan said the fair denied the group entry because it had violated the fair's anti-gang policy, which bans the displaying of insignia or gang symbols from known criminal enterprises. That lists biker gangs identified by a 2005 Department of Justice report, as well as groups and individuals identified by Santa Cruz County's Anti-Gang Task Force.

Also banned from the fair are biker gangs that participated in a 2002 shootout in Laughlin, Nev. — groups with names like the Mongols, the Vagos and the Ghost Mountain Riders.

Jordan said the dress code policy was enacted in 1992 after two gangs clashed on the fairgrounds and one man died from stab wounds. Jordan said the man collapsed in front of the pony ride and bled to death in front of dozens of children and their parents.

“It was horrible,” said Jordan, who’s worked at the fair for 37 years. “No family should have to see that.

Besides the incident with the Hells Angels, the fair had a great run this year, with gate attendance up 3 percent at 39,914 paid attendees for this year. Jordan said that number will likely increase when she gets the final tallies for tickets purchased online.

She estimated the fair brought in a little over \$300,000 at the gate this year, with adult tickets at \$9 and children’s tickets at \$6. While she was still tabulating the food sales for this year, she estimated they were nearly up nine percent, a factor she attributed to great weather. The midway was operated by Brass Ring Amusements of Oroville, Calif., but Jordan said she hadn’t seen any tallies from that organization.

The theme of this year’s fair was “Barn in the U.S.A.” — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Yvette Jordan, (831) 724-5671; Steve Stagnaro, (408) 354-5145



The new Bayfront Convention Center, Erie, Pa., surrounded by water.

ERIE’S CONVENTION CENTER/HOTEL COMBO FILLS THE VOID

With the \$50.5 million Bayfront Convention Center, Erie, Pa., open for business, Casey

Wells, director there, has turned his attention to the new 200-room hotel being built by the Erie County Convention Center Authority and attached by aerial walkway to the center.

When the hotel opens in late April 2008, the Authority will have spent \$110 million on the project. The Bayfront Convention Center is the first convention center ever in Erie County. Prior to its opening Aug. 23, the city and county had made use of the floor of the Louis J. Tullio Arena for exhibits and trade shows.

Bayfront Convention Center incorporates 155,000 gross square feet. There is a 29,000-square-foot great hall and a 14,000-square-foot grand ballroom, 15 meeting rooms and a large pre-function space. It is located on the Sassafras St. Pier in downtown Erie, with a view of historic Presque Isle Bay.

Wells said there are dozens and dozens of events on the books for Bayfront, including five major conventions. The biggest to date is the Pennsylvania State Kiwanis Club convention, which will draw approximately 800 attendees.

In the first full year of operation, calendar 2008, Wells anticipates hosting 131 events. "We'll level off at 225 events. It will take five years for us to find stabilization," he said. "Given this facility, its location, its layout, I'll be extremely disappointed if we don't shoot right through these projections."

Wells oversees operation of four buildings. Besides the convention center and arena, those include The Warner Theatre and the Jerry Uht Ballpark. The other three are not located near the bay, nor should they be, Wells suggested. "There is nothing better for waterfront property than a convention center."

He hired Kevin Molloy to manage Bayfront four years ago, and though it caused some political heat bringing a manager on so early, the wisdom of the decision is reflected in the ease of operation at the convention center, Wells said. Four months ago, during the national search, Molloy ended up going back to his old haunt, Polk County Convention Center, Des Moines, Iowa, and hiring his executive chef, Ismael Aguilar. All concessions will be run in-house.

The operating budget for Bayfront for next year is \$2.3 million, Wells said. Parking is lumped with the hotel, not the convention center.

Since the project's inception in 1999, the Bayfront Convention Center has been a textbook case of getting these venues open, except that it had near total political support all along. Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell helped dedicate the new convention center, calling it the nicest midsize convention center he'd ever been in, Wells said.

The original budget went through a number of stages, Wells recalled, and eventually the project was built on a different site and scale than planned eight years ago. It started at \$32 million, monies approved by then-Gov. Tom Ridge, an Erie-ite, based on the 1999 feasibility study.

Thereafter, it went through design and site changes that upped the ante to \$44 million. "In the past year, after construction had begun and bids came in, the state gave us an additional \$6.5 million for a total of \$50.5 million for the convention center," Wells said.

During the process, the original hotel developer backed out so the Authority took matters

into its own hands, floating a \$47 million bond issue to construct a 200-room Sheraton Hotel, which will be Authority owned. They have hired White Lodging out of Indiana to operate and manage it. It is connected by a skybridge that spans a waterway from 70 feet in the air. The Authority also built a 325-car parking garage, which cost \$7 million.

The hotel project, like others in the state, resulted in lawsuits by hoteliers as unfair trade. It is a profitable business, and for the sake of repaying the bonds, Wells admits, "It certainly better."

"Our pro forma and projections indicate it will provide sufficient revenues to pay for the investment of the bondholders," Wells said. "It is going to have an operating profit beyond debt service, but it's structured so those dollars will accelerate the debt payment. It think it's 20-some years instead of 27.5 years. We're fully guaranteed by the county of Erie, which got us our monies cheaper, but if you look at the pro formas, there are a number of different assumptions made."

He's confident they will hit projections on room nights and percentage of occupancy, but a key to the profit picture for the hotel is cheaper money. "It's becoming more and more common for hotel developers to pull out. Since 9/11, there has been a huge fallout in the hotel industry and banks took some shots to the chin on financing hotel projects. Only now are they starting to feel good about hotels again," Wells observed. "We were able to go out through bonding companies and government, with the guarantees of the county, making the project much more viable."

Both Erie and Lancaster Counties were sued by hoteliers. "The judges in both cases have ruled in the municipality's favor, in a nutshell because the hoteliers couldn't show it would have any negative effect," Wells said. "Convention centers and hotels go hand in hand. You need a hotel to build a convention center and the convention center in itself will drive room nights. Our theory was the whole pie is going to get bigger and there was an unsatisfied demand for hotel rooms in this community which justified new hotel rooms. Both cases, with different hoteliers and different governments, went to the Pennsylvania Superior Court and in both cases the decisions were upheld."

The legal wrangling isn't over. One Erie hotelier is threatening to take the issue to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

The architect for Bayfront is the Convention Center Design Group out of Minneapolis and Barton Mallow Design out of South Hill, Mich. The hotel architect is DRS Architects out of Pittsburgh. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Casey Wells, (814) 453-7117



***The Western Washington Fair,
Puyallup.***

**PUYALLUP FAIR 'JUMPING' GOOD
ALL AROUND**

Better weather than last year – during the opening week and closing weekend – prompted a 4.5 percent attendance increase at the Western Washington Fair, Puyallup, to 1,182,937 over last year's 1,131,276.

Rainy weather on the middle Sunday and Monday kept the increase from being even greater, said Kent Hojem, general manager, but he expects revenues to be up on most if not all fronts.

"The revenues are all trending very strong," Hojem said the day after the end of the Sept. 7-23 fair. "It looks like the carnival will be up a significant amount, and sales at the gate were up quite a bit."

Hojem did not want to make a prediction about overall admission revenues before he gets the presale figures, but the gate admission remained the same as last year, at \$10 for adults and \$8 for senior citizens and students.

Ron Burback's Portland, Ore.-based Funtastic Shows placed 74 rides on the midway, and the ones that did really well included the Jumping, the Big Coaster, the Wild Cat and the Extreme Scream. "The big ones were the ones people really lined up on, but they lined up on all of them," Burback said. "It was just a great run."

The German Huss ride, the Jumping, was new last year, Burback said, and it was the last one to close down the last Sunday of the fair. "Everybody was using up their last tickets on it," he said.

During the week, patrons could buy pay-one-price wristbands for unlimited rides that cost \$25 that included \$3 worth of game tickets, but on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, they bought 85-cent coupons, or a pack of 15 for \$20. Burback declined to give out revenues or what percentage he was up over last year.

Also successful was the PRCA rodeo, which, for the first time, held playoffs in four locations, including Puyallup. That meant that the top contestants in each event and the wild card winners from the Dodge National Circuit Finals Rodeo in Idaho competed. "We were guaranteed the 24 best cowboys in each event," Hojem said. "And I think the

weight of it being a playoff series helped.”

“Golden saddle” rodeo tickets without a concert cost \$27.50; for singer Blaine Larsen plus the rodeo, that price was \$29.50 and for Gary Allan and the rodeo, the price was \$45.50.

Concerts also did well, and although the Northwest Concert Center, the fair’s 10,500-seat grandstand, did not see any sellouts, “The Jonas Brothers came close, and Reba McEntire came close,” Hojem said. The Steve Miller Band also was strong and there were no seats left for the “Weird Al” Yankovic concert, but Hojem did not count that as a sellout because only patrons who sat in the infield were charged, at a \$20 ticket, while the grandstand was free, a set-up that also was used for the Christian band MercyMe.

The McEntire concert had the highest ticket price, at \$79.50, \$59.50 and \$45.50; with Big & Rich in second place at \$70, \$40 and \$36. Other ticket prices were Kenny G with Norman Brown, \$50 and \$35.50; the Steve Miller Band, \$49.50 and \$39.50; Clint Black with Kellie Pickler, \$49.50, \$39.50 and \$29.50; Daughtry, \$45.50 and \$35.50; Howie Mandel, \$40 and \$20; Devo, \$35.50 and \$27.50; KUBE 93 presents Bow Wow, Omarion & Paula DeAnda, \$35.50 and \$20.50; the Jonas Brothers with Everlife, \$35.50 and \$15.50; and KMPS Class of 2007 Emerson Drive & Bomshel, \$15 infield and free.

In the past, booking has been done in house, but with the retirement of former staffer Tom Absher, the fair hired Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) to book concerts, Hojem said. Their agreement prohibits Hojem from disclosing the amount spent on the acts, but he noted that it was more than in the past. “That was a conscious decision, and I think the results bore out the thought processes that led to that decision,” he said.

The fair has a year-round budget of \$21 million, \$18 million of which goes to the fair, Hojem said. The ad budget was about \$1 million and more was done with TV advertising for the concerts. “We were looking at how the concert sales were trending and looking at the overall media package and it just made sense,” Hojem said.

The fair, which has the coveted Web address of www.thefair.com, also launched a new, interactive Web site in August that Hojem said is more in line with promoting presales, which he believes will be up.

Parking revenues also were up and Hojem said a \$1 increase to \$10 on weekends and \$8 on weekdays is only partly responsible. Parking was done more efficiently, especially for the rodeo.

Officials also noticed that fair patrons stayed longer, gauged in part by parking lots filling up earlier and by the increase of parking on nearby streets. “Other than that, I also just observed” longer stays,” Hojem said. “It’s just an educated guess.”

Next year’s dates will be Sept. 5-21. – Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this story: Kent Hojem, (253) 845-1771; Ron Burback, (503) 761-0989.

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begin taking nominations immediately in the following categories: News, Bookings, Marketing & Concessions. Send nominationd to: (linda@venuestoday.com)

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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

MATTHEWS, ALLMAN BROS. RAKE IN THE GREEN

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 Sept. 4, 2007. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

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

15,001 or More Seats

1) *Gross Sales*: \$2,829,250; *Event*: Dave Matthews Band, The Allman Brothers Band; *Venue*: **Piedmont Park, Atlanta**; *Attendance*: 55,000; *Ticket Range*: \$250-\$45; *Promoter*: Live Nation, In-house; *Dates*: Sept. 8; *No. of Shows*: 1

2) *Gross Sales*: \$1,152,715; *Event*: Barry Manilow; *Venue*: **Wachovia Complex, Philadelphia**; *Attendance*: 11,637; *Ticket Range*: \$253-\$13; *Promoter*: Live Nation;

Dates: Sept. 8; No. of Shows: 1

3) *Gross Sales: \$953,519; Event: Dave Matthews Band; Venue: **Ford Amphitheatre, Tampa, Fla.**; Attendance: 19,483; Ticket Range: \$61-\$36; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 12; No. of Shows: 1*

4) *Gross Sales: \$936,945; Event: Mana; Venue: **American Airlines Center, Dallas**; Attendance: 13,430; Ticket Range: \$85-\$45; Promoter: Latino Event & Marketing Services, Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 7; No. of Shows: 1*

5) *Gross Sales: \$902,296; Event: Justin Timberlake; Venue: **Rose Quarter, Portland, Ore.**; Attendance: 12,789; Ticket Range: \$151-\$49.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: May 27-28; No. of Shows: 2*

10,001-15,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales: \$1,040,190; Event: Aerosmith; Venue: **Nikon at Jones Beach Theater, Wantagh, N.Y.**; Attendance: 13,440; Ticket Range: \$130-\$40; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 12; No. of Shows: 1*

2) *Gross Sales: \$560,027; Event: Snow Patrol; Venue: **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; Attendance: 8,466; Ticket Range: \$66.17-\$57.53; Promoter: Frontier Touring Company; Dates: Sept. 19; No. of Shows: 1*

3) *Gross Sales: \$451,508; Event: Brad Paisley; Venue: **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; Attendance: 7,752; Ticket Range: \$63.18-\$47.75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 6; No. of Shows: 1*

4) *Gross Sales: \$333,644; Event: Akon, Rihanna; Venue: **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; Attendance: 6,991; Ticket Range: \$49.18; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 23; No. of Shows: 1*

5) *Gross Sales: \$258,327; Event: Earth Wind & Fire; Venue: **Nikon at Jones Beach Theater, Wantagh, N.Y.**; Attendance: 7,819; Ticket Range: \$66-\$21; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 9; No. of Shows: 1*

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales: \$1,019,737; Event: Alejandro Fernandez; Venue: **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; Attendance: 14,119; Ticket Range: \$130-\$60; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 7-9; No. of Shows: 3*

2) *Gross Sales: \$485,938; Event: Stevie Wonder; Venue: **Charter One Pavilion, Chicago**; Attendance: 6,566; Ticket Range: \$121-\$45.50; Promoter: Live Nation, LN Touring JV; Dates: Sept. 10; No. of Shows: 1*

3) *Gross Sales: \$392,405; Event: WoWoWillie; Venue: **Orleans Arena, Las Vegas**; Attendance: 5,453; Ticket Range: \$125-\$35; Promoter: Jade Productions, Ralp Productions; Dates: Sept. 8; No. of Shows: 1*

4) *Gross Sales: \$386,204; Event: Timbiriche; Venue: **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; Attendance: 5,701; Ticket Range: \$129.75-\$54.75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 12; No. of Shows: 1*

5) *Gross Sales:* \$357,989; *Event:* The Killers; *Venue:* **Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Denver**; *Attendance:* 9,063; *Ticket Range:* \$39.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Sept. 4; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$983,281; *Event:* Stomp; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 23,447; *Ticket Range:* \$56-\$20; *Promoter:* Theater of the Stars; *Dates:* Sept. 18-23; *No. of Shows:* 8

2) *Gross Sales:* \$561,660; *Event:* Tyler Perry's "What's Done in the Dark"; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 11,712; *Ticket Range:* \$50.50-\$44.50; *Promoter:* Peachez, Inc.; *Dates:* Sept. 6-9; *No. of Shows:* 5

3) *Gross Sales:* \$246,850; *Event:* VMA Fandemonium; *Venue:* **House of Blues, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 1,233; *Ticket Range:* \$400-\$75; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Sept. 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$241,026; *Event:* Bjork; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 4,525; *Ticket Range:* \$66-\$38.50; *Promoter:* AC Entertainment; *Dates:* Sept. 17; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$203,543; *Event:* ZZ Top; *Venue:* **Morris Performing Arts Center, South Bend, Ind.**; *Attendance:* 2,539; *Ticket Range:* \$89.50-\$59.50; *Promoter:* Black Cherry Smoke, Pacific Coast Concerts; *Dates:* Sept. 12; *No. of Shows:* 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com



Hellogoodbye (left); Say Anything

MYSPACE TOUR TAPS ITS OWN SOCIAL NETWORK

Most promoters would kill to have a database of 200 million plus users to tap when trying to get word out on an upcoming tour. That's the enviable position MySpace is in as the most popular social networking site (and sixth most trafficked site on the web) prepares to launch its first-ever national branded tour.

The "MySpace Music Tour," the first in what is planned as a series of MySpace produced and branded shows, is slated to kick off Oct. 16 at the Showbox in Seattle, with a line-up that includes up-and-coming punk acts Hellogoodbye and Say Anything, along with MySpace Records artists Polysics and others guests to be announced later. With a topline sponsorship provided by VO5's hairstyling product Extreme Style, the tour will play 30 dates in the U.S. during October and November.

Though Hellogoodbye has already done three tours in support of their 2006 album "Zombies! Aliens! Vampires! Dinosaurs!," the MySpace outing was one they couldn't pass up, according to manager Richard Reines.

"These guys have been a MySpace band since really early in MySpace," he said. "Before we were aware of how much power it had. They had a MySpace page before we signed them about four years ago and their first EP was a free, digital-only thing and MySpace fans started talking about them and helped the band blow up."

When Hellogoodbye did their first tour after Reines signed them four years ago, they didn't have much of a marketing budget, so they mostly promoted the outing on MySpace and all the shows sold out 400-capacity venues.

While Reines wasn't sure the band will necessarily sell more tickets because of the MySpace connection, he's sure more people will be aware of the show thanks to heavy advertising on the MySpace homepage, where he predicted "tons" of kids will find it. "I think kids could care less who the sponsor is, but MySpace is definitely cooler than some car company." The money is not that different for the tour, which will be playing rooms with capacities from 1,500 to 3,500, but with MySpace doing special web pages and blogs for the bands and posting video updates, the increase in traffic should be noticeable.

Tapping into the site's unique, and music-loving, community, the tour will have its own dedicated online community on MySpace, where fans can find and share tour information, purchase tickets and check out exclusive content from the bands. Among the promised behind-the-scenes extras are band blogs from the road, photo galleries and exclusive offers and sweepstakes for site users to win premiums such as hanging out backstage with the bands.

Say Anything manager Randy Nichols agreed with Reines that kids probably won't go to the show just because of the MySpace imprimatur, but the cool factor of the site is a definite bonus. "One of the things that makes MySpace a good sponsor is that it's some place that kids are already going and using and we're not endorsing some product and trying sell something to our fans," said Nichols.

One of the things Nichols is most excited about is the MySpace video crew that will be on the road with the tour, filming behind the scenes and onstage footage that will be shared online with fans. "When bands try to do that it's usually the band running it and it's never that well executed," he said.

If nothing else, the timing is perfect for Say Anything, who have a new album, "In Defense of the Genre," which drops a week after the tour starts, and which will get plenty of promotion on the various MySpace-related sites.

"I can't say a sponsor ever sold a tour – the kids are there because of the bands – but they might think it's cool because MySpace is a part of it," he said. "The difference is if

MySpace is promoting a tour, kids can click on it and listen to the bands and get to know their history in 30 seconds and say, 'I kind of like this,' and then they might decide to go." As for the money Say Anything is earning, Nichols also said it's not that different from what they would normally make, with the usual "bit" of sponsorship money thrown in on top. But, with that "extra bit of awareness" added through the MySpace connection, ticket sales and merchandise could definitely be more robust.

Adding to fans' feeling of being plugged-in to the tour, pre-sale tickets were made available for purchase exclusively on MySpace for MySpace members only on Aug. 31 and the general public a week later. Before the inaugural tour goes out, the second outing has already been penciled in for the spring of 2008, with organizers planning to change up the style of music, sponsors and type of events with every new series offering.

MySpace Executive Director of Promotions and Events Kelley Electa described the tour as the site's first attempt at developing a dedicated tour community that is completely interactive. In addition to the exclusive content on the site and deep links to buy tickets, VO5 will host meet-and-greets with the bands and sponsor giveaways all along the tour."

The tour, which is an outgrowth of sorts of MySpace Records, launched in 2005, is part of a natural progression of taking the MySpace music experience from the online to offline worlds, and, according to Electa, it has been very carefully curated by the in-house staff to make sure the lineup was relevant to MySpace users. "What we're bringing to our users, in addition to the exclusive content, is this dedicated community where they can share their experiences about the tour and connect with other fans online and get excited before they go to the show and keep visiting community after the show to see new video content," she said. "We're developing a 360 degree experience online and offline." — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Richard Reines, (310) 453-4700; Randy Nichols, (646) 292-7400; Kelley Electa, (310) 969-7420.



Turner Madden, Jane Kleinberger; Gary Brosious; Jeff Bowen; John Siehl.

AMC PANEL: WHOSE 'TICKETBUYER' IS IT, ANYWAY?

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The debate seemed to center on the word “exclusive” and the concept, “contract,” as venue managers attacked the perennial question, “Whose Ticket Is It Anyway?” during the Arena Management Conference here Sept. 15-18. Bottom line, most of them wanted the ticketbuyer’s loyalty, forget the piece of paper.

Jane Kleinberger, chairman of Paciolan, was the lone ticketing company panelist. She was joined by Turner Madden, counsel and lobbyist for the International Association of Assembly Managers, who moderated; Gary Brosious, vice president, box office and tickets, Charlotte Bobcats; Jeff Bowen, Sears Center, Hoffman Estates, Ill.; and John Siehl, director, Nutter Center, Dayton, Ohio.

Siehl and Bowen’s former employer, Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, are embroiled in controversy over a block of tickets sold to management of Lynyrd Skynyrd for the Rowdy Frynds tour, which were auctioned on StubHub (VT e-newsletter, April 25, 2007). Ticketmaster subsequently sued StubHub. John Ruffino, Red Mountain Entertainment, who promoted that tour, was not able to join the panel on the advice of his lawyer.

The management company wanted to purchase 100 tickets for the Hank Williams Jr., Lynyrd Skynyrd, 38 Special concert at Conseco Fieldhouse, Bowen recalled. They apparently wanted to auction them online for charity. While Conseco Fieldhouse had a contract with Ticketmaster, that firm did not sell tickets at auction. The venue also had a contract with the promoter.

“The manager could purchase 100 tickets in my box office or from Ticketmaster and pay all the fees. I had to sell to them to him if he wanted to buy 100 tickets,” Bowen said. In fact, Bowen said he went onto a travel site on line and found numerous links to ticketing companies selling show tickets. “They didn’t even have to buy them from me,” he said. “They could have gone to the travel sites.”

The issue goes round and round and every tour deals with it, in Bowen’s opinion. Why is this tour different? he asked rhetorically. In Bowen’s opinion, ownership of the ticket is fluid, but the person who buys the ticket eventually owns it.

Siehl agreed it always has been a gray area. Nutter Center eventually sold the Skynyrd tickets to the manager after three days of investigation and phone calls. “We sold it to management on advice of counsel based on our previous history of doing that for record companies and fan clubs. There was historical precedent,” he said.

What management planned to do with 100 tickets “was not our direct knowledge,” Siehl said. He personally found the whole thing “disheartening,” given that he did what he was told to do, what “appeared to be the letter of the law.”

Kleinberger suggested the “dynamics are changing” for ticketing. “If we have confusion, it’s because our contracts have not been clear or we have not lived according to our contracts,” she said. “We have to be much more clear about what our contracts are. We have to honor our contract.

“If the contract has the word ‘exclusive,’ you’ve made a commitment. Form clear contracts and do not get confused with good-guy practices,” she recommended.

Madden, a lawyer, felt a judge would very likely come down on the side of a contract over

precedent. Siehl countered that while Nutter Center has a contract and sells tickets through the contractor, as it did in this instance, "what happens after that is out of our hands."

"It's that third party piece," that's the issue, Siehl said, adding that in the last four to six years, re-sales have gotten so strong that a lot of other people are making money on tickets and it is simply beyond the control of the facility.

If a building is in violation of a contract because of who buys a ticket, whether it's a manager, a broker, a scalper, or a legitimate concertgoer, "then building managers are in violation of a contract pretty much when they wake up and draw their first breath," Bowen agreed.

It is not only *who* is buying the ticket, but *how*, that has muddied the waters. Michael Marion, Alltel Arena, North Little Rock, Ark., said the Hannah Montana tour tickets are so hot, they have limited online sales to people who can prove they live in Arkansas. And still, "the day Hannah announced her tour, StubHub was selling tickets that don't exist, that are not even out there." Marion said one patron called and said they were selling seats 99 and 100 and she knew there were no such seats in Alltel Arena. Brokers are that confident they will have seats later.

Marion also noted he tried educating the public on the Hannah Montana show, sending known potential buyers "hints for buying tickets for Hannah," one of which was the warning that show was ripe for fraud; another, get there early, show day will be crazy.

Bowen said he'd actually questioned brokers who admitted they will make up seat locations to close early sales.

Kleinberger envisions a day when venues, like airlines, recognize the liquidity value in tickets, and most importantly, know who is in every seat. A last minute airline ticketbuyer might pay \$1,800 for a middle seat while the passenger on the aisle bought in advance and paid \$200. The airline controls that, sells both priced tickets and knows who is in what seat.

"We can take the liquidity out of the market," Kleinberger claimed. "We can control it."

Brad Mayne, American Airlines Center, Dallas, agreed that there is more control to be had. He said his arena attempts to offer value-added packages so the ticket buyer will be motivated to buy direct from the building. Then the issue always comes down to the promoter and act wanting the extra money that is allocated to added-value items, but in the end, the venue is at least "following the individual who bought the ticket rather than the ticket in our database."

"We have to know who our customers are, we want them back," Siehl agreed. And if an attendee buys his ticket from the secondary market and has a bad experience at the venue, perhaps the seat not meeting expectations, it is the venue that takes care of the customer. "Educate the public, that's what we need to do," Siehl said. "They need to know the proper way to buy a ticket; that there's no problem if you follow the rules."

However, the more technology the more confusing it gets, Bowen added. And now there are generally 15 places to buy a ticket at 150 different prices. Where does the education begin when presumption is so much a part of the process?

"It seems daunting and impossible, but it's not," Kleinberger said. Even before 9/11, airlines sold to individuals, and there was very little resale. After 9/11, there is no resale. "In our industry, we can stop delivery of pieces of paper. We can deliver tickets to a drivers license, a student ID or a credit card, things you aren't going to resell or lend to a friend."

"You have the only entity that is authorized to sell tickets," Kleinberger told arena managers. "Take the paper out of the hands of the public."

She pointed to the San Diego Padres who have instituted an electronic will call with a loyalty card tied to it. It's the carrot, not the stick, she said. These are primary ticketbuyers who are rewarded for buying from the team. "If we can take 50 percent out of the hands of secondaries, it's a home run," she said.

Brosius concurred that the venue has "the trusted ticket," and that message needs to get out. In Cleveland, the NBA Cavaliers offer FlashSeats, which has approved resales, the trusted seat, where the primary buyer transfers his ticket with the venue's blessing. That's a start.

The technology exists, Kleinberger said. It's the sociological impact that is the main barrier now. "People have a conviction fit about losing that physical stock (the ticket), but it will happen."

The dynamics are changing in all aspects of ticketing, which brought Kleinberger back to the contract. "If you want secondary market rights, cash comes back off the table. I'm not going to make as much if you want to do secondary. Okay. Money comes off the table. If you don't like a piece of your contract, take it off the table."

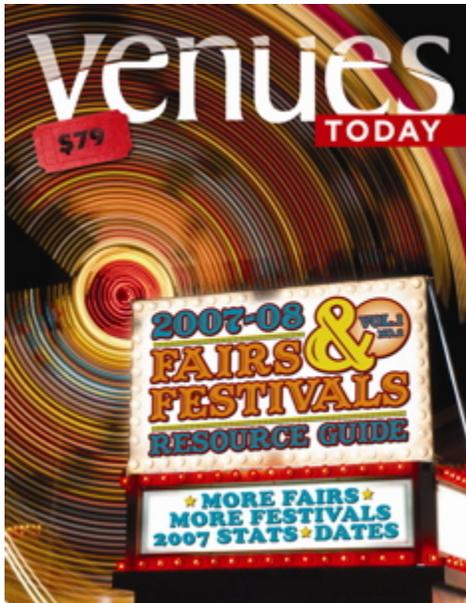
Which led Steve Peters, VenuWorks, to comment, "Whose contract is it anyway? Exclusivity goes both ways." Ticketing companies contract with promoters, venues and even artists; promoters contract with artists, ticketing companies and venues. "We're starting to see conflicts," he noted.

"I look on my contract as gospel," Brosius said. "Then there are secondary contracts, and it's not clear."

Marcia Hart, Asheville (N.C.) Civic Center, brought it all home, with a prime example. The venue had a Ticketmaster contract; AEG had a Ticketmaster contract which was "a better deal than I had, so I let them make the choice. The building stepped out of it. Is something different happening with local versus national contracts?"

Ticketmaster's Mike McGee fielded that one. "National deals are the prerogative of the venue from a contractual standpoint. Your deal overrules the national deal; it's as simple as that." — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Turner Madden, (202) 349-1499; Jane Kleinberger, (949) 823-1679; Gary Brosius, (704) 688-8914; John Siehl, (937) 775-2060; Jeff Bowen, (847) 649-2201



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MARKETING

CAPITALS RISE ABOVE THE CLUTTER WITH ONLINE MAG

Stuck in a crowded media market?

That was the problem facing Nate Ewell, director of media relations for the Washington Capitals of the National Hockey League. The Capitals have to jockey for media position with five other professional sports teams – The Washington Redskins (NFL), Nationals (MLB), Wizards (NBA) and Mystics (WNBA) and the DC United (MLS); three college teams (American University's Eagles, George Washington University's Colonials, and the Georgetown Hoyas), and the nearby Baltimore Orioles (MLB) and Ravens (NFL) and two minor league baseball teams.



"We don't get the coverage we want from the local papers," Ewell said. "And the fans don't get what they want either." To change that, they went Internet three weeks ago with *Caps Today*, a daily e-newsletter for media and bloggers.

Having Vice Chairman Emeritus of America Online, Ted Leonsis, for an owner didn't hurt. Their first move in this direction was inviting bloggers into the press box, rather than ignoring them, or relegating them to a blog-box. "Ted is a blogger," said Ewell. "With his work at AOL, he was on the forefront of user-generated content."

Leonsis, on his blog, Ted's Take, puts it this way. "A blog can be entertaining, it can be informational, and it can be enlightening," he wrote. "But the most important part of a

blog is that it can be activating. It allows others to look at your thoughts and follow your life and then launch their own ideas, comments and perspectives on what you've seen and done."

Caps Today is "an update on practice times and we hit them with a story idea," Ewell said. "It helps them know what's going on."

Recent editions have spotlighted the 10 guys fighting for 6 spots on the defensive line and the team's new look and uniforms. They gather ideas for the e-zine internally about three weeks out, but they keep it flexible, should a winning streak, or a major acquisition or trade, pop up. The e-zine highlights potential stories and extends the legs of stories already out there.

They also include schedule times for practices, media sessions and conference calls, as well as a list of the players' public appearances, and links to broadcast quality audio that radio stations can use in their sports programming and for newscasts.

The key Ewell said is to make it user-friendly for the target market, the media. "It would be too short for our fans, but the media wants something quick and easy," he said.

So far, he said, the reaction has been great.

"It doesn't always lure them here," Ewell said. "But they will respond to it. We are at least in their consciousness." – Liz Boardman

Interviewed for this story: Nate Ewell, (202) 266-2357



Clean up in our annual Dirt issue

November marks our third annual update on the state of dirt shows and rodeos. Coupled with our annual visit to fairgrounds and equestrian centers, this is a perfect time to tour your services to that segment of the industry.

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CONCESSIONS



Niman Ranch Hamburger

CENTERPLATE TAILORS PREMIUM MEATS TO GOURMET TASTES

Centerplate has struck a deal with a network of family farmers to provide premium hamburgers, sausages and hot dogs at seven U.S. venues with Centerplate contracts.

The deal has Niman Ranch supplying select food operations with “environmentally sustainable” meats from animals raised on organic food. Niman Ranch is a network of 500 family farmers across 10 states that meet guidelines for natural livestock products. The meats are being touted as an all-natural, better-tasting offering.

“There’s a restaurant in San Francisco called the Zuni Restaurant that was voted one of the best burgers in the country and they use Niman Ranch beef,” bragged Centerplate’s Corporate VP of Culinary John Vingas, who is helping roll out the new concessions program.

Vingas said the switch to premium meats matches a growing shift in American culture toward gourmet tastes, reflected in the popularity of grocers like Whole Foods and Bristol Farms. Customer awareness about sustainable agricultural practices, along with an increased desire for organic products is also driving demand.

“We see ourselves in the business of experience creation and our approach is to continue to be innovative, whether that means re-creating the existing concessions fare or expanding,” Vingas said, adding that Centerplate is taking an “anti-cookie cutter” approach to its food.

Vingas estimated the new meat items would mean a 15 percent increase in cost and price, “but customers are willing to pay for it,” he said. Adding to the costs are the increased demands on the product, which are considerably more delicate than their frozen counterparts. The shelf life of the raw product is much shorter, as is the time the product can sit under a heat lamp.

“You’re dealing with a different product that has no preservatives. You can’t wrap it in aluminum foil at the end of the day,” he said. “With a product that’s already more expensive, you have to be very cognizant of what you’ve pulled out.”

For now, Centerplate has rolled out the new hamburgers, hot dogs and sausages at the following locations: The plaza level and two barbeque kiosks at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego; the Mile High Club at Invesco Field at Mile High in Denver; the club level of the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans; the food court at AT&T Park in San Francisco; the suites at LP Field in Nashville; the food court of the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York; and the suites at the new soon-to-be completed Prudential Center in Newark, N.J.

"This is a new type of deal for us," said Niman Ranch Spokesperson Jeff Tripican. "We're used to working with higher-end grocery stores and gourmet restaurants. Centerplate approached us with a deal that was atypical of what we normally do."

Tripican said he has no doubt Niman Ranch can handle the volume requested by Centerplate. Niman Ranch currently provides meat to 700 Chipotle locations all over the nation.

"It's not anything out of our ability or scope," he said.

Accompanying the new meats will be customized condiment offerings to fit each location. Besides caramelized onions, cracked pepper sauerkraut, roasted garlic and chipotle grain mustard offered across the country, Northwest residents will be offered wild mushroom and pickled artichoke relish; Bay Area residents, Asian cabbage and coriander cole slaw; citizens of the Big Easy, Creole spice and sweet pepper ketchup and the Northeast, green olives, onion and rosemary aioli.

The condiments will typically be included in the price of the burgers at the club and suite levels, while Centerplate is still working out the price points for its individual concession stands. The infrastructure of the plaza-level concession stands will determine what type of condiment and premium offerings Centerplate can prepare for its customers.

"We have to have the ability to offer the product in a premium environment. It needs to go from grill, to bun, to boat to customer," he said. "It cannot sit, that's a critical component of maintaining the quality of the program — the freshness." — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: John Vingas, (619) 525-5823

SHORT TAKES

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS OPEN NEW PRACTICE FACILITY

The Cleveland Cavaliers of the National Basketball Association have opened their own 74,000 square foot practice facility, designed by Ellerbe Becket. Located in Independence, Ohio, the facility cost \$20 million to build in remote woods surroundings and includes a sports medicine facility, underground parking, XOS powered technological integration for televisions, iPod dockings and video coaching with a team theatre. It also includes two full-size practice courts to replicate game day conditions, with support functions wrapping around the courts.

Contact: Laura Wagner, (816) 842-8111

BEYONCE ADDS CHINA TO HER 'EXPERIENCE'

Emma Entertainment has booked Beyoncé Nov. 5 at the Shanghai Grand Stage in China. The Beyoncé Experience tour kicked off April 10 in Tokyo at the 55,000 seat Tokyo Dome. The concerts in Japan were followed by a 41-city North American tour and a string of European dates. In addition, Emma is also presenting Linkin Park at Hongkou Stadium Nov. 18.

Contact: Robb Spitzer, +86-21-3366-5265

DAVIS CUP RETURNS TO PORTLAND COLISEUM

Memorial Coliseum at the Rose Quarter, Portland, Ore., has been selected to host the U.S. Tennis Association Davis Cup Final between the U.S. and Russia Nov. 30-Dec. 2. Tickets go on sale Oct. 15. This will be the first Davis Cup Final held in the U.S. since 1992. The semifinals last weekend were held in Gothenburg, Sweden, and Moscow. Russia is the defending Davis Cup champion and has won the Davis Cup twice in the past five years. Portland's Memorial Coliseum hosted two previous Davis Cup events in 1981 and 1984

Contact: Erin Schumacher, (503) 963-3848

UNIVERSITY ARTS CENTER OPENS TO THE PUBLIC

The Bell Cultural Arts Center, Olathe, Mo., opens to the general public Sept. 28 with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Students at MidAmerica Nazarene University inaugurated the new \$12 million, 44,000 square foot building which includes the 540-seat Mabee Performing Arts Hall at the start of the fall semester.

Contact: University Events, (913) 782-3750

STAPLES CENTER SETS BOOKINGS RECORDS

Selling out seven concerts in eight days was a first for the eight-year-old Staples Center, Los Angeles. Mana's four shows, Sept. 20-23 were a first for Latin show multiple sellouts. Justin Timberlake performed Sept. 16, 17 and 19. Two Los Angeles Kings pre-season hockey games on Sept. 15 and Sept. 18, added a record in number of categories booked in a week and helped set nine-day food and drink per cap records. Timberlake drew 60,000 fans. Total tickets sold for the week grossed more than \$1.8 million.

Contact: Cara Vanderhook, (213) 742-7273

TICKETMASTER AUCTIONING DION DUCATS

Ticketmaster Auctions are currently underway for each of Oct. 4-14 performances by Celine Dion at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas. Auctions begin on Nov. 5 for each of the performances scheduled Nov. 30-Dec. 15. Premium auctions feature tickets for two front row seats. Additional online auctions will also be conducted via Ticketmaster.com for a variety of other seating locations for the Nov. 30-Dec. 15 shows. These mark Dion's farewell shows of her five-year run as resident artist at the Colosseum.

Contact: Kristine Lingle, (702) 866-1485

PIKE ARTS CENTER NAMES NEW DIRECTOR

Jeff Maess has been named the second executive director in the Pike Performing Arts Center's 11-year history. Maess was executive director of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Indianapolis, a longtime local volunteer ensemble. He was managing director of the Indianapolis Opera during the mid-1990s. Maess, 58, succeeds Don Steffy, the Pike Center's founding director of the Indianapolis PAC. In June, Steffy became executive director of the Indianapolis Children's Choir.

Contact: Jeff Maess, (317) 916-5450

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