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Venues

TODAY

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Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Look for the chance to vote on our Hall of Headlines nominees for 2007 early next week. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“If you don’t integrate the ticket company, you lose out on a lot of data. Ticketing is about lifetime spend, loyalty and cross promoting.”— *Derek Palmer of Tickets.com on the importance of including the ticketing company in sponsorship marketing during a panel at the International Entertainment Buyers Association meeting in Nashville, Oct. 14-16.*

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The 2008 Fairs & Festivals Resource Guide is under way

This is our third edition of the Fairs & Festivals Resource Guide and it will be better than ever. Every edition has the most updated information possible and bonus features include such perennial favorites as the Top 50 Fairs in North America, a chart of equestrian center and fairground improvements under construction (all printed in the *Venues Today* magazine) and our unique Talking Points - which illuminates what makes movers and shakers in the industry tick.

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 - **Listing of major Carnivals

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VENUE NEWS



Enjoying an ice cream cone at the fair; the new Texas Skyway lift; A burro to be proud of at this year's fair.

FRIED FOODS BRING ENCORE ATTENTION TO TEXAS FAIR

For the second year in a row, the State Fair of Texas posted a record year, selling \$29 million worth of coupons for rides and food, nine percent over last year's previous all-time high of \$26,590,382.

Good weather, good food sales and a new, permanent lift ride – installed as part of the Dallas-based Fair Park's plans to offer more year-round events and a summer mini-theme park – all boosted the Sept. 28–Oct. 21 fair.

"We definitely had an impact with the new Texas Skyway," said Sue Gooding, director of public relations and marketing, of the \$5 million Austrian-made Doppelmayr aerial gondola ride that takes riders 1,800 feet across the park.

"We're a historic park with a great visual from above, so bringing the gondola ride, which allows people to get on with strollers and wheelchairs, was a huge hit," Gooding said.

Last year's coupon take was a 6.43 increase over the previous all-time high set in 2003 at the fair, which does not calculate exact attendance numbers but gives an estimate of 3 million-plus during 24 days.

The Texas Skyway was the No. 1 ride on the independent midway, said Rusty Fitzgerald, director of operations. The ride has 35 cars with eight passengers per car, and often was full. A round trip cost 12 50-cent coupons, or \$6.

"We ran it at capacity sometimes and there were many days when it was crowded," Fitzgerald said. "It was by far the top grosser."

The Texas Skyway will be one of about eight permanent rides, said fair president Errol McKoy, in an effort to prepare for when the Dallas Area Rapid Transport light rail extends out to Fair Park. "We hope by 2010 to operate part of the midway at least through the summer months as part of a mini-theme park," McKoy said. "We're looking at 30 rides, not all permanent, for the complex."

About eight would be permanent rides and 22 would be leased, McKoy said.

The light rail is scheduled to extend to Fair Park in time for the 2009 fair, Gooding said.

In addition to bringing a new demographic to the grounds, it also will help during the fair on certain days, such as when Texas plays Oklahoma at the 80,000-seat on-grounds Cotton Bowl, and the parking lots max out.

"It will be a huge plus for us," Gooding said. "It will definitely help with parking and traffic flow on heavy days, especially when you are talking about adding 80,000 football fans."

The third annual Big Tex Choice Awards played a big part in the fair's marketing campaign, and a print-out map of food joints that fairgoers could get from the Web site allowed everyone to find the deep fried dish of their desires.

Once again, vendor Abel Gonzalez Jr., whose invention of fried Coke last year caused a media stir and won him first place during the Big Tex Choice Awards, took home the top prize, this time for Texas Fried Cookie Dough.

Last year, Gonzalez's dish earned him a spot on the "Today" show; this year, he was on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" when the show's Ross the Intern traveled to the fair and tried all the contest dishes for a segment.

Plus, "We were the recipients of seven minutes out of Jay Leno's monologue," Gooding said, in addition to the visit from Ross the Intern. "That definitely got us attention."

The food contest, which also featured a winner for most creative, the Levy brothers with Fried Latte, was held on Labor Day prior to the start of the fair. Then, the winners were used in commercials to promote the fair. "The food takes on a life of its own," Gooding said.

Food sales accounted for an estimated \$18 million of the \$29 million in food and ride spending, said Ron Black, senior vice president of food services and novelties.

Customers can choose among more than 200 food locations, and the fair featured 26 new items, seven of them finalists from the food contest, Black said.

In addition to Texas Fried Cookie Dough and Fried Latte, other finalists included Fried Chili Frito Burritos, Fried Sweet Potato Pie, B.W.'s Original Fried Banana Pudding and Fried Peach Cobbler on a Stick, "which was one of my favorites," Black said.

"We don't require it be a fried food to be in the contest, but it seems like that's the preponderance of items," he continued. "They are quickly done and they are very popular, because people pay little or no attention to their diets during the fair, which is a good thing once in a while."

In addition to the Texas Skyway, the top 10 ride list was rounded out by the Texas Star Ferris wheel; the Crazy Mouse roller coaster; the Love Bug Himalaya; the Super Slide; the Flume; the Pirate Boat; the Bubble House Funhouse; the Sleigh Ride; and the Zillerator Coaster, Fitzgerald said. Twenty-nine different operators provided 83 rides on the midway.

Gate admission to the fair cost \$14, \$1 more than last year, Gooding said, and fairgoers could buy advance tickets for \$12.50 at Kroger supermarkets as well as on-line.

"It had been a couple of years since we had a price increase, and we brought in more

entertainers," Gooding said.

Appearing on the free Chevy Main Stage were the Jonas Brothers, who brought in the biggest crowd with an estimated 20,000, Gooding said.

Other performers included Billy Ray Cyrus, Lonestar, Miranda Lambert, Jason Aldean and Boyz II Men. McKoy declined to release any budget figures but said the entertainment budget was increased over last year, not only for the musical performers but also for other acts and for exhibits such as "Baseball As America" in Fair Park's Museum of Nature & Science, a traveling show by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum that will remain up through the end of the year.

Another popular exhibit is the State Fair Fall Garden Exhibition, Gooding said, in which landscapers carve out designs in more than 100 garden beds.

"That's just grown by leaps and bounds," Gooding said. "The fairgoers have really grown to appreciate it, and each bed is identified by the company that designed it, so they get lots of referrals." – Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this story: Sue Gooding, Errol McKoy, Rusty Fitzgerald, Ron Black, (214) 565-9931.

BROKER BOTS BLAMED FOR CRIPPLING WORLD SERIES ONSALE

Just one day after a crippling attack by hackers, the Colorado Rockies sold out their remaining 52,000-seat inventory for Games 3, 4 and a possible Game 5 in about two-and-a-half hours Tuesday on a Paciolan-powered ticketing platform. While the system seemed to operate correctly after Monday's attack, it appeared the public relations damage from the widely publicized incident would have a lasting effect.

Local editorial writers were quick to point the finger at both Paciolan and the Rockies, with the Denver Post dubbing the incident "Crocktober!" When Rockies spokesperson Jay Alves emerged for a press conference hours after Monday's meltdown, he was met with jeers and boos from dozens of Rockies fans. When the sale did successfully go through, only about 16,000 fans out of 750,000 were able to get tickets.

How did the Rockies first appearance at the World Series turn into such a public relations nightmare?

Company officials are describing Monday's attack as unprecedented show of force by hackers, flooding Paciolan's system with over 8.5 million hits in just about 90 minutes. As a result of the fiasco, only about 500 tickets were sold on the first day.

Despite early reports that hackers crashed the system, Paciolan is now confirming that company officials voluntarily took down the system after realizing it could no longer differentiate between legitimate buyers and scalpers using sophisticated bot software to buy up droves of tickets. While Paciolan has software that helps them identify scalpers using bots and block their ticket requests, it's often powerless from preventing the software from connecting to their systems and clogging up their connection.

"We saw an attack in volume and type that we had never experienced before," said Dave Butler, CEO of ticketing company Paciolan.

Paciolan officials said their system was hit with a three-pronged attack from hackers, although they are unsure if the attacks were coordinated. Paciolan first experienced what is commonly referred to as a Denial-of-Service (DoS) attack — typically an attempt to flood company servers with so many page hits that the system becomes overloaded with requests and crashes or is rendered so slow, it's ineffective. Hackers and malicious programmers can employ programs that utilize hundreds of computers, often without the users' knowledge, to overload a computer server.

"The analogy I often use to describe this is a traffic jam," said Ben Wingrove of eTix. "You have so many lanes going in and out of your server. When cars start to back up, you can add more lanes, but sometimes you can't build lanes fast enough. And then if there is an accident, everything stops and no one can come in or out."

Butler said his computer servers were also hit by a SYN attack, a complex DoS attack that manipulates the way a computer establishes a connection with the connecting service. Those two attacks, coupled with the thousands of requests from scalpers using Bot software to buy up tickets, proved too much for the Paciolan computers.

"This is a challenge we face in the online world. We have successfully managed it for years, but this time it was too much for our systems to handle," Butler said. "This isn't anything new. We've gotten much better at dealing with the bad guys, but it's still a cat and mouse game."

Paciolan hasn't released information on who might have led the attack against their system, but Derek Palmer of Tickets.com said DoS can come from anywhere.

"At the end of the day, you could have something as crazy as an 11-year-old kid sitting in his basement, trying to take your server down," he said.

It's very common for ticketing companies to face DoS attacks during on sales, he said, and events like the World Series are popular targets for hackers looking to boost street cred.

"Automated scripts and malicious attacks are a daily occurrence that we have to deal with, that's why you have to build your applications and infrastructures in a way to handle these types of issues."

The team is also facing a lot of criticism regarding its onsale system. Unlike its American League opponent, the Boston Red Sox, which organized a ticket lottery a day before it actually clinched a World Series spot, the Rockies opted to push forward with a general public onsale.

Paciolan enables ticketing operations for four other teams besides the Rockies — the Arizona Diamondbacks, New York Mets, Philadelphia Phillies and the San Diego Padres.

Paciolan's own partners said they weren't concerned with the impact of the attack and planned to move forward with their own ticketing operations.

"I read about them happening every day," said Fred Maglione of New Era Tickets, a Comcast-Spectacor system powered by Paciolan. "There's no purpose in these attacks other than to disrupt someone's business. These guys are criminals." — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Dave Butler, (949) 823-1648; Ben Wingrove, (919) 653-

0501; Derek Palmer, (714) 327-5560; Fred Maglione, (610) 854-1100

CFL GETS PUSHY ABOUT POSSIBLE BILLS GAME IN CANADA

The Buffalo Bills may be coming to Canada to play ball, and Canadians are getting territorial.

Last Thursday, the National Football League announced plans to play a preseason game at the Rogers Center (formerly known as the Skydome) in Toronto next year, as well as a preseason and regular-season game the year after. The Bills are capitalizing on what they call "the northern sector of our market," according to team spokesperson Scott Berchtold.

By expanding north of the border, the Bills will be able to lure Canadians back to Buffalo, N.Y. to attend NFL games, since the drive only takes about 90 minutes. Buffalo's market is small while Toronto is a rich, untapped territory.

"Beginning in 2008, the team plans to increase its focus on the northern sector of its market. We hope to capitalize on the increasing interest of fans in the Canadian market by playing a regular season game in Toronto," said Berchtold. "The support of the Canadian fan base has helped the Bills achieve its recent sellout streak which has enabled the Bills games to be televised locally in the Western New York market."

The announcement sparked discussion that the expansion could mean a loss of market share for the Canadian Football League. Right now, the Toronto Argonauts provide the Greater Toronto Region and the Rogers Centre with its only live football experience. As the CFL is already dwindling in popularity, some CFL fans and sports enthusiasts see the NFL's move as a threat.

The Bills' lease agreement at Ralph Wilson Stadium expires in 2013 and the team is currently in talks with county officials about developing a new facility in the area, said Berchtold. The current lease agreement with the Ralph Wilson Stadium allows the Bills to play up to 50 percent of their regular season games away from home – an opportunity for them to explore greener northern pastures.

But Mark Cowan, commissioner of the CFL says it's all just speculation. "We're still in discussions with the NFL right now. We've had a strong relationship between the CFL and the NFL for the last 10 years. It's really early right now in terms of specifics of what we can do together."

The plan to play games in Toronto is still awaiting the NFL Governors' vote. But if it goes through, Cowan said there will be some challenges.

"I think there will obviously be some scheduling issues [at the Rogers Center] that we will have to address. Once the deal is actually approved, then we will have the talks about proper scheduling and how we can potentially help out both leagues."

Cowan said it's also too early to predict any marketing schemes. "Right now, we're just trying to figure out what the NFL's going to do, and then we will make sure the CFL can continue to thrive and prosper with these kinds of initiatives happening in Canada."

The NFL owners are scheduled to meet and discuss the initiative today and tomorrow. Until then, it's still a Canadian game. — Lianna Shen

Interviewed for this story: Mark Cowan; (416) 322 3168; Scott Berchtold, (716) 648-1800



Letrice Vines and Wesley Wyatt; a Sunday crowd.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE FAIR COOKS UP RECORD ATTENDANCE

RALEIGH, N.C. — Wesley Wyatt, manager of the North Carolina State Fair, Raleigh, needed 87,000 the last Sunday of the Oct. 12-21 event to break the attendance record. He blew it out.

With an attendance of 98,433, the last day, the fair-weather fair drew 858,611, up from 785,956 last year and 846,724 in 2000, the old record. Wyatt credited weather — both extreme heat before the fair which gave people air-conditioned cabin fever and comfortable temperatures during the fair which brought them out in droves. The fair only had two days of rain and even that, given the drought in the Southeast, was reason to celebrate.

Wyatt also cited unique entertainment, such as Paula Deen, a Food Network star, who sold out the 5,000-seat Dorton Arena, as one of the reasons for the increase. Tickets were \$20.

The fair spent about \$500,000 on talent for Dorton Arena. The goal is to get the money back from the paid arena shows. The fair converted to an all-paid lineup in 2002 and it has worked well, Wyatt said. Mike Pleasant is the director of talent.

The lineup included MercyMe, \$10 admission, also a sellout; Sara Evans, \$15; Ruben Studdard, \$10; Josh Turner, presented by Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, \$10, sold out; Kellie Pickler, \$5, sold out; Deen; Anthony Hamilton, \$15; Steven Curtis Chapman, \$10; Daughtry with Day of Fire, \$20, sold out; and Trace Adkins, \$20.

Free entertainment was another hit, Wyatt said. The Wells Family Bluegrass show was a new offer. "Bill Jones has always done a nice job for us as a juggler," Wyatt said. The Raggs Kids Club Band drew well also. The Keith King Bicycle Stunt Show is another homegrown, popular event. Tickets were \$7 in the grandstand.

Powers Great American Midways, a North Carolina carnival owned by Corky and Debbie Powers, provided the midway for the second year. Wyatt said the fair board was very pleased with the operation. The decision to renew or bid again will be made in the next 30 days, he said.

The carnival pays the fair on a per cap basis. This year it was \$5.30 per paid attendee. Wyatt said about 88 percent of the total is usually paid attendance. The fair's share of the gross was not a record, because the per cap has been higher in the past.

Food and ride revenue accounts for 12-15 percent of the fairtime revenue, Wyatt said. Three-fourths of the food vendors are from North Carolina. They also pay a flat fee of \$140 per front foot. Nonprofits pay \$120 a front foot. The fair should gross about \$1 million from food rentals, Wyatt said.

Capital improvements this year included renovation of the Scott Building parking lot at a cost of \$1.6 million. A lot of that space is used for carnival trailers and concessionaires. The capital improvements budget was about normal, he said. The fair spent \$4 million in 2006, \$6.5 million in 2005; and \$500,000 in 2004. In 2008, he expects to invest another \$2 million in infrastructure, including water and sewer lines.

The fair currently grosses 25-30 percent of its revenue during the off season, Wyatt said, but that has to increase. Currently, the North Carolina State Fair's annual budget is \$12 million, of which \$9 million is generated at fairtime. A weekend flea market brings in \$832,000 a year.

Dates for 2008 will be Oct. 17-26. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Wesley Wyatt, (919) 821-7400, ext. 4554



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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

THE BOSS AND SIR ELTON RULE TOP 5

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 Oct. 2, 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:* \$3,616,172; *Event:* Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band; *Venue:* **Wachovia Complex, Philadelphia**; *Attendance:* 38,229; *Ticket Range:* \$98-\$68; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Oct. 5-6; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$3,300,087; *Event:* Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band; *Venue:* **United Center, Chicago**; *Attendance:* 35,697; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$65; *Promoter:* Jam Productions; *Dates:* Oct. 21-22; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,486,040; *Event:* Elton John; *Venue:* **Qwest Center, Omaha, Neb.**; *Attendance:* 17,017; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$55; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Goldenvoice; *Dates:* Oct. 8; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,401,205; *Event:* Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band; *Venue:* **Hartford (Conn.) Civic Center Coliseum**; *Attendance:* 15,290; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$65; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Metropolitan Entertainment Group; *Dates:* Oct. 2; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$1,222,115; *Event:* Elton John; *Venue:* **Sprint Center, Kansas City, Mo.**; *Attendance:* 17,503; *Ticket Range:* \$87-\$47; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Goldenvoice; *Dates:* Oct. 18; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$937,669; *Event:* Linkin Park; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 10,818; *Ticket Range:* \$86.71; *Promoter:* Michael Coppel Presents; *Dates:* Oct. 22; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$453,531; *Event:* Detroit Pistons vs. Denver Nuggets; *Venue:* **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 11,423; *Ticket Range:* \$250-\$19; *Promoter:* Detroit Pistons; *Dates:* Oct. 17; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$256,841; *Event:* Bob Dylan; *Venue:* **Verizon Wireless Arena,**

Manchester, N.H.; Attendance: 4,682; Ticket Range: \$65.50-\$29.50; Promoter: Live Nation, Clear Channel Radio, In-house; Dates: Oct. 5; No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$238,190; Event: Bob Dylan; Venue: **Petersen Events Center, Pittsburgh;** Attendance: 4,930; Ticket Range: \$69.50-\$29.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Oct. 11; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$228,295; Event: The Cheetah Girls; Venue: **Giant Center, Hershey, Pa.;** Attendance: 6,250; Ticket Range: \$39.50-\$29.50; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Oct. 22; No. of Shows: 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$490,748; Event: Widespread Panic; Venue: **Budweiser Events Center, Loveland, Colo.;** Attendance: 11,925; Ticket Range: \$42.50; Promoter: Live Nation, Bill Bass Concerts; Dates: Oct. 12-13; No. of Shows: 2

2) Gross Sales: \$406,829; Event: Avenue Q; Venue: **Tucson, (Ariz.) Convention Center;** Attendance: 10,419; Ticket Range: \$58-\$11; Promoter: Nederlander, Broadway In Tucson; Dates: Oct. 16-21; No. of Shows: 8

3) Gross Sales: \$360,906; Event: High School Musical; Venue: **Newcastle (Australia) Entertainment Centre;** Attendance: 11,877; Ticket Range: \$44.70-\$25.03; Promoter: Phil Collins; Dates: Oct. 5-6; No. of Shows: 3

4) Gross Sales: \$359,531; Event: Daddy Yankee; Venue: **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.;** Attendance: 4,717; Ticket Range: \$129.75-\$74.75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Oct. 6; No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$271,473; Event: Lynyrd Skynyrd, Big and Rich; Venue: **Carolina Entertainment Complex, Marion, S.C.;** Attendance: 7,781; Ticket Range: \$55-\$10; Promoter: Frank J. Russo; Dates: Oct. 6; No. of Shows: 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$680,046; Event: Camelot; Venue: **Keller Auditorium, Portland, Ore.;** Attendance: 16,375; Ticket Range: \$65-\$20; Promoter: Broadway Across America; Dates: Oct. 2-7; No. of Shows: 8

2) Gross Sales: \$420,164; Event: The Wedding Singer; Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta;** Attendance: 10,490; Ticket Range: \$55-\$19; Promoter: Broadway Across America; Dates: Oct. 16-21; No. of Shows: 8

3) Gross Sales: \$313,766; Event: Ricky Martin; Venue: **Jackie Gleason Theater, Miami Beach;** Attendance: 3,636; Ticket Range: \$251.50-\$10; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Oct. 10-11; No. of Shows: 2

4) Gross Sales: \$292,278; Event: The Ghosts of Celilo; Venue: **Newmark Theatre, Portland, Ore.;** Attendance: 9,605; Ticket Range: \$50-\$21.50; Promoter: Artists Repertory Theatre; Dates: Sept. 28-Oct. 14; No. of Shows: 14

5) Gross Sales: \$255,288; Event: Phil Lesh and Friends; Venue: **Riviera Theatre, Chicago;** Attendance: 5,802; Ticket Range: \$44; Promoter: Jam

Productions; *Dates:* Oct. 5-7; *No. of Shows:* 3

Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

MARKETING



Kathy Armistead; Mark McCormick; Marcie Cardwell; Paul Kalbfleisch; Derek

Palmer

SPONSORS ARE PART OF THE TOURING FAMILY IN TODAY'S WORLD

NASHVILLE — Sponsorships have become partnerships and those only work if the match is mutually beneficial, such as Brad Paisley's Bonfires and Amplifiers tour with its ever-present Hershey's s'mores. A panel on "Integrated Corporate Partnerships: The New Sponsorship Model" made that connection clear during the International Entertainment Buyers Association gathering here Oct. 14–16.

For instance, the deal with Hershey's put Paisley's name in stores that don't sell his music — convenience stores, grocery stores — where impressions were important to Hershey's, noted Kathy Armistead, William Morris Agency, which books Paisley.

"We have to create depth, content," added Marcie Cardwell, Creative Artists Agency. It's meet and greets, album watches, interactive CDs and press conferences. Jeep was invested in the Tim McGraw/Faith Hill tour; Echo Music was keen on LeAnn Rimes. "You need to know the demographics," Cardwell said.

Mark McCormick, representing Hershey's, said the firm saw a huge increase in sales this year and could tie the blips to concert activity, calling the Paisley sponsorship a smashing success. Concert-goers sampled s'mores and Paisley built Hershey's into his music video.

Paul Kalbfleisch was on the panel for BlackBerry, which sponsored John Mayer's tour. For BlackBerry, "it was important to reach out to a newer audience," he said.

Which is all good if one remembers to include the ticket company in the loop, added Derek Palmer, Tickets.com. "If you don't integrate the ticket company, you lose out on a lot of data. Ticketing is about lifetime spend, loyalty and cross promoting." That's an important gateway for any sponsor or act.

McCormick noted dealmakers should remember to tie in the local brand as well as the national, further expanding the circle and the commitment. For Hershey's, if the band or venue brings in the local Kroger, for example, "we can work together." It helps the national sponsor to cross-promote with pertinent local businesses.

"I believe there are real brands and artificial brands," Kalbfleisch said. "Real brands are part of our lives. We're not just hitting people with ads." BlackBerry has reinvented itself from a business product to a lifestyle brand, and acts can help raise awareness of that brand. "Ideally, that's where we're trying to go," he said. He advised venue and act management to "figure out what the brand's priorities are and figure out how to pass through."

The Times Union Center in Albany, N.Y., did a stellar job of that with Price Chopper, a big retail outlet in the area. They were already a venue sponsor, but they enhanced the deal when they became a ticket outlet and campaigned with a "milk, eggs, bread and tickets" approach, Palmer said.

Cardwell recommended remembering it's important to keep the relationship going for the "reveal," sending act reps on the road to ensure the success of the sponsorship and report back.

"It's all about personalized content," Palmer added. "You want to make the right offer to

the right person at the right time.”

And timing is critical. “Three months is a BlackBerry year,” Kalbfleisch said. And the demographic they are trying to reach is also at warp speed. “Kids behavior is decidedly different. It’s group thought,” he said. “They want to participate, not be marketed to.” And that’s the target for the BlackBerry Pearl, the firm’s first device with a camera. A promotion allowing them to take a picture in Times Square in New York and put it up on the screen instantly was a huge success. They wanted to see their mug on the big screen and they wanted it now.

Bottom line, though, “the artist has to believe in and love their BlackBerry” for a sponsorship to work, Kalbfleisch added.

Hershey’s is working on 2009 budgets now, McCormick said. Next summer is pretty much loaded in. “When you deal with packaged goods, the biggest hurdle is working in front of artists and venues,” he said.

Cardwell suggested those seeking tour sponsors first find out what the act is trying to accomplish. Do they want to go from one truck to two trucks, buy a bus, add to production? “Lay your cards on the table and show them it’s only worth what someone is willing to pay. “You can end up with a number everyone can work with,” she said. “I never say, ‘this is what it’s worth.’” It’s negotiable.

Kalbfleisch likes to start with whether the relationship makes sense, “then back up and build out options.” BlackBerry Presents John Mayer was advertised in *Rolling Stone* magazine and *USA Today*. “I use that in bargaining; I’m helping promote John’s tour. It’s a two-way street,” he said.

“It’s not always dollars and cents,” McCormick agreed.

The landscape has changed for the act as well, Cardwell said. “Ten years ago, sponsorship was taboo,” she recalled. Today, it’s integrated into the touring plans as a major partner. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Kathy Armistead, (615) 963-3323; Marcie Cardwell, Paul Kalbfleisch, Derek Palmer, Mark McCormick



Coming Soon - Year End Deadlines!

December will be here before you know it so take a moment to add the following to your "to do" list:

***Contact Rob Ocampo (hottickets@venuestoday.com) to see if you are current on your **box office score** submissions. The year end reports will cover: **Oct. 16, 2006 - Oct. 15, 2007**. This is your absolute last chance to ensure your numbers are accurate!

*****Reserve your ad space now for the year end issue.** This issue fills up quickly so make sure you don't miss out by reserving space early! (P.S. Advertising rates will increase in 2008. Sign a yearly contract with your VT rep now to ensure that you keep the lower 2007 rates during that contract period.)

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CONCESSIONS

A page from Signatures Network's catalog.



LIVE NATION PICKS UP MERCH DEAL ON HEELS OF MADONNA SIGNING

After stealing singer Madonna away from Warner Music Group, Live Nation has inked a deal to acquire Signatures Network, the Material Girl's merchandising company.

Signatures Network holds the rights to license and market more than 125 artists including U2, Kanye West and Bruce Springsteen. Live Nation is reportedly paying \$50 million for Signatures Network.

While he couldn't confirm the acquisition, which was first reported in the *N.Y. Post*, Live Nation spokesperson John Vlautin said his company was working on several initiatives and acquisitions to broaden its offering to artists.

"As the world's leading live entertainment provider, we continue to grow our company in a way that expands the live experience for both the artist and the fan," he said. "We plan to make Live Nation a one-stop-shop for

artists."

Dell Furano, CEO of Signatures Network, couldn't comment specifically about the acquisition, but estimated total revenues for the tour apparel business were in the "\$1



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