

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

# Venues

## TODAY

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November 7, 2007 VOL. VI, Number XXXV ISSN 1547-4143

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### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

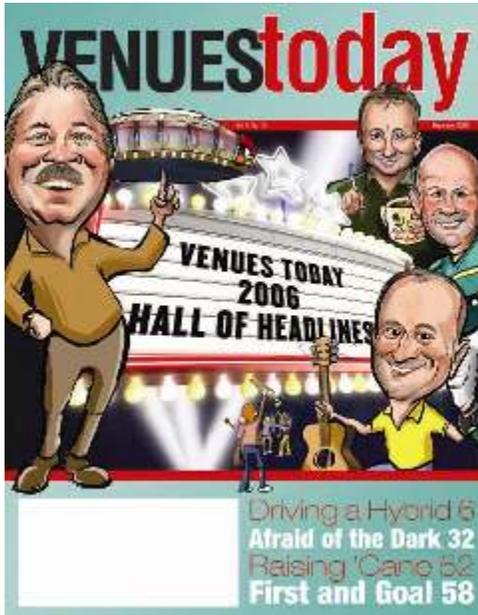
“By the time it was over, everyone was yelling at me. Even the janitor,” — *Antony Bonavita of Stony Brook (N.Y.) University's Sport Complex on a rock concert gone haywire, during a luncheon presentation at IAAM's International Crowd Management Conference in Chicago, Oct. 28-31.*

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## VENUE NEWS



***Miss America Lauren Nelson with Miss Oklahoma Makenna Smith; a competitor in the Oklahoma Strongest Man Contest; family on the midway***  
**MISS AMERICA HELPS PROMOTE OKLAHOMA'S CENTENNIAL FAIR**

Good weather and the fair's centennial helped boost attendance at the Oklahoma State Fair by six percent to approximately 1.1 million attendees.

Fair officials do not release exact figures for the Oklahoma City-based fair that ran from Sept. 13-23, but noted that attendance had climbed over last year's 1 million-plus, which actually was the 100th anniversary of the fair's original 1907 date.

"It's a little convoluted, because last year was our 100th edition of the fair, because when you start in 1907, you get to the 100th fair in 2006," said Scott Munz, the fair's assistant general manager for marketing and public relations.

The dual anniversaries allowed fair officials to maximize on the events, however. This year, the 100th anniversary was used in commercial spots that also took advantage of the fact that the reigning Miss America, Lauren Nelson, is an Oklahoma native and also got her start in the pageant as Miss Oklahoma State Fair in 2005 before going on to win the state and then national titles.

"She was the spokesperson and the face on our TV commercials," Munz said.

Nelson's talent in the pageant was singing, and the fair purchased the rights to Kool & the Gang's "Celebration" and changed the words to fit the fair." So she was singing that and inviting people to come out, and she was on the billboards and on the radio commercials," he said. "She was the crux of our advertising campaign. She's from Oklahoma and so she has a lot of notoriety and Miss America carries a lot of clout."

Going from anecdotal comments he received from people who noticed the commercials, Munz believes they were successful.

"Many people said they were the best commercials we've had in a long time," Munz said. Munz declined to release any budget figures, for marketing, entertainment or the overall fair.

Frank Zaitchik's Spring Hill, Fla.-based Wade Shows placed 100 rides, games and shows on the midway, Munz said. The Hard Rock, a three-axle spinning ride, was new, Munz said, and other popular rides included the Turbo Force and the Mega Drop.

The ride gross was up 10 percent, Munz said. Pay-one-price wristbands were available every day and cost \$20 Monday-Thursday, but were available for \$12 through a Dr Pepper sponsorship on Thursdays, or for \$16 with a marketplace coupon Monday through Wednesday. Wristbands cost \$25 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Munz said.

Loverboy drew well on the fair's free Toyota Stage, as did country singer Trent Tomlinson and Starship featuring Mickey Thomas. Fans can sit at benches, tables and chairs for a capacity of about 2,000, Munz said, but more people than that can hear and watch the concert. "I was about 200 yards from Loverboy and was able to see them to a degree and hear them," Munz said.

Other acts that appeared on the free stage included a festival of regional Mexican music by La Indomable; Building 429, a contemporary Christian act; the two-day Elvis Extravaganza, a national touring Elvis competition with finals that will be in Las Vegas; the Centennial Rodeo Opry with a slate of regional country artists; Con Funk Shun; Ty England; and Superfreak.

The Village People also drew well on the opening day, which featured an admission price of \$1, or 100 cents, in honor of the fair's 100th anniversary. Regular gate admission was \$8 for adults and \$5 for children, and pre-sales, which actually lasted through the first

weekend, offered \$1 off of those prices, Munz said.

The fair also offered three nights of rodeo. The first night was called "Bulls & Brawn" and also featured a performance by country artist Craig Morgan. The subsequent nights featured the seven-event PRCA rodeo, with Gary Allan performing on a Saturday night and the Oak Ridge Boys on Sunday.

Tickets for the events, which took place in the 8,900-seat – for rodeo – Jim Norick State Fair Arena, cost \$22 for box seats and \$18 and \$16 for adults and children.

"Gary Allan virtually sold out," Munz said. "He had singles left." The Oak Ridge Boys also drew well, Munz said.

Other ticketed events included the Oklahoma Strongest Man contest for \$25, \$18 and \$12; the Centennial Expo Supercross Pro/Am competition for \$23, \$18 and \$12; and a monster truck show for \$27, \$18 and \$12, all in the grandstand.

"Disney on Ice Presents Princess Wishes" was available for 10 performances in the arena with tickets ranging from \$14 for general admission, \$18 reserved, \$28 ringside and \$35 for the VIP "Very Important Princesses" section, Munz said.

More and more fairgoers are buying event tickets on-line, Munz said, although the surcharge does not make it worth it for fair admission tickets.

This was the fair's fourth time as an 11-day event, down from 17 days, a change made in 2004, and Munz said even though attendance has remained steady with six fewer days, the cost cuts did not proportionally reflect six fewer days.

"There are still some inherent start-up costs," Munz said. "You've got similar costs to get fired up regardless how long you go." And staffing costs increase per day because of the higher, more compact attendance. "You're really just moving man hours around," Munz said.

Fair officials plan to keep their options open for future fair scheduling, including considering running the fair longer to incorporate an additional weekend but going dark on some normally slow weekdays, especially because the fair takes place after school has resumed for the year.

But the 2008 dates will be Sept. 11-21. "We're not changing anything for 2008 but it's something we're constantly getting feedback on," Munz said. – Mary Wade Burnside

*Interviewed for this story: Scott Munz, (405) 948-6700.*



***Antony Bonavita, JP Hayslip, Frank Poe, Christopher Kostelec and John Arthur came together at ICMC to share their security horror stories and the lessons they learned from the experience.***

#### **FIVE STORIES: LESSONS LEARNED WHEN CROWDS ARE OUT OF CONTROL**

CHICAGO — Artists that demand floor access to all fans. Goth punks stealing contraband and using it to brawl against police. Flying projectiles raining down on your cosmetics convention.

Any venue manager who's hosted a rock concert, a rap show or a high profile event has dealt with rowdy fans and sometimes-chaotic conditions. Those who make it out alive — and with their jobs still intact — often walk away with a valuable lesson. During IAAM's International Crowd Management Conference in Chicago Oct. 28-31 attended by about 250 people, venue managers from across the U.S. shared horror stories about their run-ins with rowdy acts, rioting crowds and the occasional mosh pit during a luncheon program.

#### **Antony Bonavita, Stony Brook (N.Y.) University Sports Complex Taking Back Sunday concert — April 19, 2005**

From the day they booked the concert, Bonavita said he anticipated a rowdy crowd. To stave off potentially dangerous mosh pits, Bonavita worked out a deal with the promoter to only allow the first 2,000 patrons in the 5,000-seat facility access to the floor.

When the band's management arrived, they became enraged to learn that everyone wouldn't be given floor access," he said. "They threatened to walk out if we didn't open up the floor. Of course at this point, the promoter is no where to be found."

Bonavita decided to open up the floor and when Taking Back Sunday hit the stage, "we

lost the crowd in a little over a minute," he said. People were jumping over barricades and creating giant mosh pits that security and local police were hesitant to stop.

"By the time it was over, everyone was yelling at me. Even the janitor," he said. After the incident, police initially wanted a concert ban at the facility, but later backed off.

**Lesson Learned:** Although Bonavita had worked out the terms with the promoter, he said next time he would be more specific about their role enforcing security agreements and interfacing with the artist. "When in doubt, get it in writing," he said.

### **John Arthur, The Arts Centre, Melbourne, Australia Metallica concert — Jan. 28, 2004**

Expecting 40,000 to converge on The Arts Centre's Myer Music Bowl for a 25,000-capacity Metallica concert, Arthur decided to invest in a barricade system to keep ticketed patrons in, and rowdy fans out.

Immediately, Arthur started to have doubts in his fencing. Security had tried to set up bike-rack barricades on sloped ground, which didn't seem very stable, and the mesh fencing they used didn't seem very strong.

As the crowd outside the venue grew, so did the atmosphere of unrest. Alcohol and drug consumption went unchecked, and fights began to break out between rival goth gangs. At one point, outside fans were caught stealing weapons from the contraband bins.

"They used that contraband to attack the police," he said. "We had major unrest."

Two police cars were destroyed in the ensuing riot and police eventually made 25 arrests. Arthur estimates that hundreds of people breached security and went into the concert without tickets. Amazingly, the concert went off without a hitch.

**Lesson Learned:** "We should have had a greater anticipation of the external crowd and known that the fence would not withstand any real assault," he said.

### **Frank Poe, Dallas Convention Center Mary Kay Cosmetics Show — July 25, 2007**

Each July, Mary Kay books the convention center for a month-and-a-half. At about 9:30 a.m., facility GM Frank Poe began to hear a series of loud noises and smell smoke. In search of the cause, he walked into the main lobby to find the glass to his front window harshly shaking and his pre-function space filled with smoke.

His first concern was that he had been hit by a terrorist attack, but he soon discovered that a chemical plant across the freeway had ignited and dozens of metal canisters were exploding, raining burning metallic debris as far as a half a mile away onto construction workers and frightened commuters. One piece knocked a basketball-size hole into a brick wall at the nearby Reunion Arena.

Poe was able to evacuate the show attendees into a secure location, but mistakenly rushed onto a platform to observe the blaze.

"One of my employees saw me and said 'What are you doing? Who is manning the command post?' he explained. "I realized I was in the wrong place."

**Lesson Learned:** “Always follow your emergency plans, even if you’re supposed to be in charge of them,” Poe said.

**JP Hayslip, Contemporary Services Corporation Philadelphia  
Radio festival featuring Eminem at RFK Stadium, Washington — May 25, 2002**

After a long day of performances, and a late start by headliner Eminem, the 90,000 people who gathered for the festival sponsored by station WHFS grew impatient. When the rapper finally took to the stage, the crowd surged forward, crushing dozens of people. Five people had to be taken to the hospital after the show and one man suffered a heart attack.

“Eminem urged people to move back, but he was unsuccessful,” Hayslip said. “At one point we had to halt the performance so that paramedics could move in.”

The problem, Hayslip said, was that many people were stuck in the surging crowd with no way to get out and no way for security personnel or medical staff to help them.

**Lesson Learned:** After the concert, CSC staff began implementing a T-barricade for most large shows. Placed at the rear of the concert, the barricade provides a way for fans to quickly exit rowdy areas while allowing security personnel to control who gets in.

**Chris Kostelec, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb  
Student move-in day — Aug. 4, 2006**

Kostelec was working to move students into the school’s dormitories, when he noticed some strong storm clouds move in. By 1:30 p.m., the weather had turned into torrential rain and Kostelec observed seven lightning hits in a matter of minutes. A tornado reportedly touched down near the campus, just 10 miles away.

“We had contingency plans in place to deal with this type of issue,” he said. “If you don’t have a plan, you don’t have a hope.”

But other agencies had plans, too — plans that contradicted his. The weather situation was quickly upgraded to a federal emergency. The Red Cross had its own plans for how the school’s public buildings would be used in an emergency and had attempted to designate several university evacuation centers for different uses — and different evacuees.

**Lesson Learned:** “Don’t just learn your plan. Make sure you know everyone else’s plan as well,” he said. — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: Antony Bonavita, (631) 632-7020; John Arthur, (61) 3 9281 8149; Frank Poe, (214) 939-2755; JP Hayslip, (215) 236-8760; Christopher Kostelec, (815) 752-6811*



***Scenes from the South Carolina State Fair. Right, South Carolina State Fair staffers model costumes that were entered into competition and on display in the Moore Building in the Home and Craft Department.***

### **RECORD SPENDING MARKS HOME-HUGGER ECONOMY AT S.C. STATE FAIR**

Spending was at an all-time high at the South Carolina State Fair, Columbia, said Gary Goodman, general manager. Attendance was 480,358, up 10 percent at the South Carolina State Fair, Columbia. Last year's fair drew 435,952.

"From a standpoint of prices, they were consistent last year on admission, rides and pretty much on the food – they had not jumped in major categories," Goodman said of the Oct. 10–21 fair. "So that was very good. It was apples to apples."

At \$3,063,710, the ride gross exceeded \$3 million for the first time, and the record food gross was \$3,392,930, up nearly \$400,000 over last year.

Some other fairs have reported robust spending as well, and Goodman chalks it up to high gas prices and patrons taking advantage of activities close to home.

"People are putting more emphasis on entertainment at a fair and making it a major part of their annual plan for entertainment," he said. "They are willing to set aside the money for that."

According to surveys, 76 percent of the fair's patrons attend from a 35-mile radius, so the gas prices were not a deterrent.

To help entice attendance, the fair nearly doubled its talent budget this year, offering higher quality acts. Goodman said the strategy paid off.

Last year's budget for entertainers' fees was \$300,000, and this year, that number rose to \$500,000. To compensate, officials did away with the mix of free and reserved, ticketed seats and, instead, charged for all 5,068 seats in the Pepsi Grandstand. In recent years, about 3,000 seats have been free and 2,000 ticketed.

"Our attendance (at the concerts) had been waning with the talent budget we had," Goodman said. "We just could not bring anybody in that had any kind of star power. We felt like we're either going to have to do this or forget the grandstand and go in a different direction."

Three acts sold out – Daughtry, Josh Turner, and the Jonas Brothers. Four acts – Sara Evans with Craig Morgan, MercyMe, Omarion and Ruben Studdard, and Third Day – all had about a 78 percent cumulative attendance, Goodman said. Tickets for Daughtry and Evans cost \$15, while the rest were priced \$10.

In past years, the negative cash flow from the concerts has been in the \$200,000 range, and was \$225,000 last year, Goodman said. This year, that number will be under \$100,000. "If you can decrease the negative cash flow, that's like increasing money," he said.

Goodman said he plans to continue tinkering with the strategy to get to at least a break-even point. "We have an 18,000-seat arena (The Colonial Center) that sells some of the same acts we have for \$45," he said. "I don't want to get into a competition with them, and I want to keep the fair affordable. We had some backlash (for not offering free seats), but you could tell by the number of tickets that it was well-appreciated."

Los Angeles-based North American Midway Entertainment provided 74 rides on the midway, including the new Swing Tower, which was one of the top-grossing rides, Goodman said. Other popular rides included the No. 1 Sky Glider chair lift ride, the Polar Express, the giant wheel, the Crazy Mouse roller coaster, the Fireball and the Niagara Falls flume ride.

Goodman was impressed with NAME's professionalism, including the fact that the carnival now brings all employees with them instead of hiring some locally. "I would have to say that it was the best-looking show and the customer service by their staff was out of this world," Goodman said. "We had compliments."

The carnival began a no-smoking policy for employees in the kiddieland section, and patrons also joined in and refrained from smoking.

NAME's contract was up after this year and Goodman informally had considered some other carnivals, but after this year, officials decided to stick with the show. "We saw improvement last year and wanted to see if it continued to improve and it did," he said. "We voted to sign a new contract with them."

Pay-one-price wristbands were available on seven of the 12 fair days, and cost \$16 in advance and \$20 on the grounds, not including admission. Gate admission cost \$7 or \$5 in advance, with an all-time price for senior citizens of \$5 and ages 2-5, \$2.

The overall fair budget is \$5.6 million and Goodman expects the gate gross to exceed \$2 million, but he did not have all receipts back.

Sponsorships were up by \$25,000 for a hard dollar number of \$351,000, Goodman said.

The marketing budget remained steady at \$200,000, but fair officials spent \$25,000 updating the Web site and making it more user-friendly and informative. All radio and television ads, plus the few print ads the fair took out, directed patrons to the Web site.

"We made it a true information center, and it paid dividends," he said. "We were able to cut down on questions that were called in here, and it gave people accurate information any time they wanted it. That was our big marketing scheme."

Next year's dates will be Oct. 8-19. – Mary Wade Burnside

*Interviewed for this story: Gary Goodman, (803) 799-3387*



***Turner Madden during an legal update at ICMC in Chicago***

**PAT-DOWNS TOP THE LIST OF LEGAL ISSUES AT ICMC**

CHICAGO — A recent judicial decision to uphold the National Football League's pat-down policy following a fan lawsuit against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers is a green light for stadium operators to continue the practice. However, venue operators should follow specific guidelines when conducting the pat-downs, explained Turner Madden, outside general counsel for the International Association of Assembly Managers

during IAAM's International Crowd Management Conference in Chicago Oct. 28–31.

Madden filed an amicus brief in support of the Tampa Bay Sports Authority arguing that Plaintiff Gordon Johnston — represented by the American Civil Liberties Union — consented to the searches when he purchased the tickets. A three-judge panel of the U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the team and overturned a preliminary injunction blocking the searches.

While the ruling supports venues managers' rights to search patrons, it also paves the way for guidelines on how the searches should be conducted, explained Madden. Searchers should use hand-held detection tools like portable metal detectors, when conducting the searches.

"They're more professional and less intrusive. I also believe they detect weapons much easier," he said. "They protect the screeners from puncturing themselves with needles or knives."

Madden also recommended each screener ask permission to conduct the search — although those who refuse would not be granted access to the facility. Pat-downs should be same sex — males pat down males, and females pat down females. Each ticket should have the proper terms for entry and season ticket holders should be mailed advance notice of the pat-downs, while signage should be posted in the parking lot, well in advance of reaching the security perimeter, advising of the pat downs.

"It gives people a chance early on to return to their car if they have any banned items," Madden said.

Most importantly, remove or minimize any signs of "state action" during searches by hiring private security firms to conduct the pat downs. State entities are held to a higher standard when it comes to searches, he said.

"In some instances, courts will find that a state-sanctioned search can be a violation of the Fourth Amendment," Madden said. "And make sure to seek competent legal advice for the creation and implementation of pat-down procedures. Each jurisdiction will have its own rules and limits."

Besides the pat-down issue, Madden said venue managers face a handful of additional federal issues in the coming months. The Department of Justice is expected to release its updated Americans with Disabilities Act regulations by February or March. Large stadiums and facilities will likely see a reduction in their required wheelchair seating, Madden said, although smaller facilities like theaters and performing art centers could see their requirements slightly increase.

Madden also said that the Department of Homeland Security was finalizing regulations that would limit facility liability in the event of a terrorist attack to the coverage provided by their terrorism insurance. To fall under the guidelines, the facility would have to pass an anti-terrorism audit — IAAM is currently in discussions with federal authorities to potentially create the guidelines internally and even administer the audits, but those discussions are ongoing, Madden said.

Finally, federal courts are reconsidering the distance that protesters must adhere to when picketing events, explained attorney Carla Varriale. In the wake of several high profile animal rights protests at circuses and rodeos, courts have reconfigured the required distance in which the protesters are allowed to demonstrate based on the event schedule.

A federal judge ruled that the Arena at Harbor Yard in Bridgeport, Conn., could restrict protestors to 80-foot distances from the event entrance when children are present. On non-event days, protestors are allowed to demonstrate within 40 feet of the facility.

“Regardless of what is decided, we’re seeing that animals rights activists are becoming more emboldened,” she said. – Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: Turner Madden, (202) 349-2050; Carla Varriale, (212) 488-1598*

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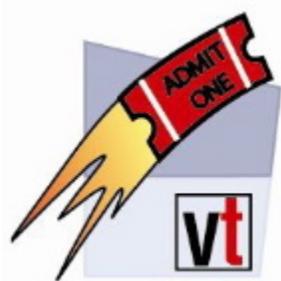
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**HOT TICKETS** is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to *Venues Today* e-newsletter. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since Oct. 9, 2007. To submit reports, e-mail [HotTickets@venuestoday.com](mailto:HotTickets@venuestoday.com) or fax to (714) 378-0040.

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

#### 15,001 or More Seats

1) Gross Sales: \$2,582,000 - Event: Van Halen - Venue: Air Canada Centre - Toronto



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