

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

# Venues TODAY

Dear April,

December 5, 2007 VOL. VI, Number XXXVIII ISSN 1547-4143

Welcome to your *Venues Today* weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. Congratulations to the 2007 Venues Today Hall of Headlines winners: Wes Westley, Brad Parsons and Bruce Mactaggart, Larry Wilson and Ken Young. Look for their stories in our Year-End issue which will be in your mail early next week. For further information or to subscribe to *Venues Today* visit [www.venuestoday.com](http://www.venuestoday.com).

---

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The internet is like a truck — it's hard to slow down once it gets moving." — Ben Farrell, manager for Garth Brooks on the artist's five sell-out shows at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. All 80,000 tickets for the event sold in under an hour.

---

## IN THIS ISSUE...

- **Garth Brooks Plans Triple-Header For Fire Victims In So Cal**
  - **Fair Managers Grapple With The Pros & Cons Of Private Management**
  - **Shreveport Fair Rethinks Its 2008 Schedule**
  - **Fairs Develop Diverse Strategies For Battling Gangs**
  - **Hot Tickets: 11 Of Top 20 Promoted By Live Nation**
  - **NFR Adds Live Country Music To Programming Mix**
  - **Carnivals And Fairs Coordinate On Labor, Safety And Operational Issues**
  - **Live Nation Teams With Costco To Sell Lawn Seats For Shed Shows**
  - **Short Takes**
  - **Help Wanted**
-

HELP WANTED ADVERTISEMENT

**NIAGARA**  
CONVENTION & CIVIC CENTRE  
NIAGARA FALLS CANADA

\$100 million project consisting of a 232,000 sq. ft. facility  
located 500 yards from the Falls to open in 2010

**President &  
General Manager**  
of the Niagara Convention & Civic Centre  
in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada

For details please see :  
[www.fallsconventions.com/executivesearch](http://www.fallsconventions.com/executivesearch)  
deadline for resumes is January 11th @ 5pm

---

**VENUE NEWS**

*Garth Brooks*



**GARTH BROOKS PLANS TRIPLE-HEADER FOR FIRE VICTIMS IN SO CAL**

Garth Brooks is back in a big way.

The number-one selling solo artist in U.S. history is breaking records again with a recent announcement for five sellout concerts at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Brooks sold out 80,000 tickets to the five concerts in 59 minutes — a record for Los Angeles. All tickets were priced at \$45 with service charges included and although Staples Center officials

wouldn't release exact grosses for the shows, they said the event was seeking to raise about \$10 million for "The Southern California Fire Relief Campaign," a charity for first responders of the Los Angeles and San Diego County wildfires in October.

The charities will be receiving matching funds from the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper, the event's media sponsor.

Staples Center General Manager Lee Zeidman said he thinks it's the only time an artist has sold out five concerts scheduled to be played over two days, or held a triple-header at an arena. The concerts will be held on Jan. 25 at 6 and 10 p.m. and Jan 26 at 1, 5 and 9 p.m.

Tickets went on sale for the five concerts on Dec. 1 through Ticketmaster with 80 percent of the tickets selling via internet and the remainder at call centers, explained Zeidman. Unsure how well the tickets would move, Zeidman said AEG officials and Brooks' management only put up one concert for sale at a time — once one concert sold 11,000-to-13,000 tickets, they would put the next concert up for sale until they sold out all five events. The first concert sold out in about seven minutes.

"As far as I could tell, there were no glitches during the on-sale," Zeidman said.

Brooks' Manager Ben Farrell said the Southern California market has always been strong for the country music artist.

"He's got a pretty solid following in Los Angeles and Orange County. He's played shows at the Forum (Los Angeles) and the Arrowhead Pond (now the Honda Center in Anaheim, Calif.)," he said, later adding "The internet and Brooks are like an unstoppable force. The internet is like a truck — it's hard to slow down once it gets moving."

The next challenge is now staging the five concerts so close together. Zeidman estimates each performance will run about two hours, leaving the staff about an hour to clean up before the next group of concert-goers arrive to attend the next show.

"At any time, we're going to have about 20,000 people entering and exiting the building at the same time," said Zeidman. "All the meanwhile, we'll be trying to clean over 1 million square feet and stock 55 concession stands and 165 suites."

Staples Center staff are still coordinating the logistical challenge, which will require the facility to use every available exit in the building to ensure the arena empties in about 10-to-15 minutes. As the patrons are leaving, work crews will be waiting in strategic places to clean seating sections, prepare suites and re-stock concessions. Zeidman said concessionaire Levy Restaurants will develop a special Garth Brooks menu for suite-holders, offering a limited number of menu items to prepare the kitchen for the high-volume event.

Zeidman said the biggest challenge will be educating the patrons about entering and exiting the event. The internet on-sale gave Staples Center employees access to about 80 percent of attendees and the facilities' marketing staff will use e-mail to communicate instructions on parking and which doors to enter at the facility.

"We didn't sell a lot of pre-sold parking during the on-sale, so we're going to use the e-mail data to resend parking offers," he explained.

January is going to be a very busy month for the Staples Center. A faith-based

conference is scheduled at the nearby Nokia Theatre on the same days as the Garth Brooks shows. On the Sunday following the concerts, Staples Center has a 12:30 p.m. Lakers game that might be nationally televised. Zeidman said January might turn into a record month for the facility.

"We only have two dark days the entire month and they have very strong holds," he said.

In February, the Staples Center hosts the Grammy Awards.

As for Brooks' own stamina, Farrell said he has no doubt that the performer will be able to execute three shows in one day — an unprecedented feat.

"Brooks is a powerful force and he challenges himself like no one I have ever seen," he said.

After the concert, Brooks has no plans to launch a tour, Farrell said. "I think he just wants to go back to being a dad." — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: Lee Zeidman, (213) 742-7255; Ben Farrell (323) 938-3563*



*Mike Evans, Dean Dennis, Charlie Smith, Wayne McCary, and Marv Witt.*

## **FAIR MANAGERS GRAPPLE WITH THE PROS & CONS OF PRIVATE MANAGEMENT**

LAS VEGAS – If the shoe fits, private management may be the way to go for some of North America's state and county fairs, though there is still grassroots resistance to the idea in many camps.

The apparent growth of acceptance of that option in an industry that is steeped in local politics and community connections was a topic of discussion at the International Association of Fairs & Expositions convention here Nov. 26-29. Charlie Smith, HOK Smith+Forkner, chaired the well-attended panel on "Private Fairgrounds Management:

Is it in Your Future?" that consisted of fair managers Wayne McCary, Eastern States Exposition (The Big E), West Springfield, Mass.; and Marv Witt, National Western Stock Show, Denver; and private management firm reps Mike Evans, SMG, and Dean Dennis, Global Spectrum.

McCary's fair, founded in 1916, is governed by 165 trustees representing six New England states, who elect an 18-member board of directors. The 175-acre fair, one of the Top 50 in North America per *Venues Today* 2007 report (see *Venues Today*, December issue), receives no state subsidy and pays West Springfield in excess of \$1 million a year in taxes and fees for service. It drew 1,227,000 people in 2007.

In his experience, having operated both an arena and a fair, McCary sees considerable differences. "Arenas are event-driven; fairs are more culture-driven," McCary pointed out. "That's why most fairs employ traditional management."

Because they have an altruistic mission, "too often we make decisions nodding to culture rather than the bottom line," he said. He argued it is important to protect the culture of the fair industry and to seek expertise through advice from peers and involvement in trade associations and other forums, rather than opting for private management in most instances. "It's a passion; it's not just a job, which is the success of the fair industry."

SMG currently has four fairgrounds on its roster of clients, Evans said, listing the Montana State Fair, Great Falls; California Mid-State Fair, Paso Robles; Silver Spurs Arena at Osceola County, Kissimmee, Fla.; and Colorado State Fair, Pueblo. Evans emphasized that that group, four of over 200 accounts worldwide, is not all about management of the facility or the fair. Each selected from a list of private management services. For instance, SMG handles booking only in Paso Robles, and year-round operations but not the fair in Pueblo.

"You can't look at privatization as all encompassing. It's a menu of services," Evans said.

He countered McCary's culture comments with the fact that private management is local and responsive. Private management contracts are administered by local boards and trustees and SMG's general manager is responsible to the local leader and the local mission and goals, he said.

The advantage of private management is the depth of expertise and diversity of services, Evans continued. "We buy more Zambonis than anyone else; there are economies of scale," he said of the leverage private management brings.

On the more personal level, private management firms have career advancement opportunities for skilled fair management and an involvement in those same associations and forums the fair manager can tap. "We have two people on the IEBA board," he said, referring to the International Entertainment Buyers Association. "Where do you go in your career?" he asked the fair managers in attendance.

Private management offers leverage and resources, Dennis agreed. Global Spectrum has 67 facilities as clients, managing 7,200 events and handling \$379 million in gross ticket sales. The numbers give private management firms clout.

Though Witt manages the Denver show, he referred more in this debate to his experiences at the Larimer County Fair, Loveland, Colo. The property, but not the fair, is managed by Global Spectrum, including the Budweiser Events Center at The Ranch. Witt and his family participate in the Larimer County Fair as exhibitors.

"We view it as family; our passion is livestock," he said. The Witts attend 15 major shows in the U.S. and "our worst experience was Larimer County at the Ranch," he declared.

He pointed his finger at private management or at least the attempt to mix private year round management with local fair management, resulting in miscommunication and poor services. Picking from the menu of services can result in "not-my-job" leadership, he said. "Someone has to step forward."

Dennis emphasized that Global Spectrum does not manage the fair and horse show, and is contractually limited in what it can do during the two-week fair. The firm was hired to run the Budweiser Events Center, which Witt admitted is a "great hockey facility."

That said, Dennis said the firm does have a lot of fair expertise now and is slowing being invited by the county to become more involved in the Loveland fair. "We now do their marketing for them."

He came back to the overall issue of a menu of services. There are different boxes contracts fall in – economics, oversight, depth of resources, booking networks, and systems, training and career growth. "It's a 'new box' perspective," he said of private management. "We streamline our goals to your goals."

McCary noted there would be no need for private management at the Big E, "but you can't have blinders on." He sees where sometime he might draw on firms like SMG or Global Spectrum for consulting or special projects.

Witt resisted even the menu of services, noting that if private management comes in and sells sponsorships for the fair, part of that money goes back to Philadelphia, referring to headquarters for SMG and Global Spectrum.

"Someone makes a commission on any sale," Evans responded. "We often work on less commission than people who generally sell sponsorships."

As to booking talent, "I defy anyone to say they have the same leverage as a company the size of ours. We buy \$25 million worth of talent; that gives us leverage," Evans added.

And both company reps touted their experience with livestock just from arena events and equestrian center clients. "There's nothing in the live industry that we don't deal with," Evans said.

"I've never seen one shoe that fits every foot," McCary said. There could be a need in the future for private management input at any fair, he suggested.

Both Dennis and Evans said they anticipate growth for their companies in the fairs and festivals market. – Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Wayne McCary, (413) 737-2443; Marv Witt, (303) 297-1166; Mike Evans, (215) 592-6640; Dean Dennis, (215) 389-9597; Charlie Smith, (865) 694-5485*



***Scenes from the State Fair of Louisiana, Shreveport.***

**SHREVEPORT FAIR RETHINKS ITS 2008 SCHEDULE**

A record 405,478 people attended the Oct. 25-Nov. 11 State Fair of Louisiana, Shreveport, a blessing Chris Giordano, fair manager, attributed to busloads of school kids taking advantage of free weekday admission from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

He estimated that over eight weekdays, 60,000 kids came through the gate, mostly on fieldtrips. The best news is that unlike a few years ago, when the kids arrived pretty much penniless, parents stuffed their pockets with spending money this year.

Add the local people in the area who come to the fair for lunch because the gate is free, and the formula is working, Giordano said.

However, another formula seems to be failing – closing on Mondays and Tuesdays. “When we first did it a few years ago, it worked well,” Giordano said, “but now I think I’m going to be pressed to open on Tuesdays for the livestock sale.”

The schedule now is for kids to show their animals Friday-Sunday and then go home. Those who qualify for the market sale return on Wednesday. That has become a major inconvenience for some. Giordano is therefore rethinking it, considering Tuesday sales, but he still resists Monday openings. “Mondays have always been a terrible day.”

But Monday is a good day to reorganize and clean up, he added.

This year’s fair was also a good one for the carnival, Lowry Carnival Company, which brings in rides from Crabtree Amusements to supplement the midway. Giordano said they grossed \$1,150,000, breaking the old record of \$1,127,000 in 2003 and up 26 percent from a year ago.

Weather was a factor to the good, of course, and a pay-one-price promotion, offering admission and rides for \$28 every day of the fair continues to be well accepted. Those same wristbands are only \$25 at Brookshire’s Grocery, which sells all the advance tickets for the fair. Regular adult admission was \$5 in advance at Brookshire’s and \$8 at the gate. The fair pays Brookshire’s a service fee for handling all the off-site ticket money.

Food and drink concessionaires rent space on a flat fee basis, \$65-\$100 per front foot. Non-food exhibitors pay \$40-\$60 a front foot.

The theme this year was Thrills, Squeals and Ferris Wheels. The carnival brought in

three or four wheels to bolster the theme. The marketing budget was \$250,000, Giordano said.

The talent budget was \$150,000. That's never been a big draw for the Shreveport fair, Giordano said. With five casinos nearby and competing arenas, paid shows would not work.

The year-round operating budget for the fair is \$3.5 million, of which Giordano spent \$2.9 million. The fair budget is \$2 million and he spent \$1.6 million. The State Fair of Louisiana is a non-profit and not a state-run fair.

But he hopes to get some help from the state to renovate Hirsch Coliseum. With the arrival of CenturyTel Arena in Bossier City, La., the coliseum has lost most of its business. He has managed to rent it to Tekken, a video game producer, from November to March for a four-month film shoot. Tekken is paying all expenses and nominal rent of \$20,000 a month.

The second biggest income of the year, the Independence Bowl, is the other big coliseum payday, grossing about \$300,000 and serving as party and tailgate space for the football game at the nearby Independence Bowl.

Dates for the 2008 fair are set for Oct. 23-Nov. 9. – Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Chris Giordano, (318) 635-1361*

## **FAIRS DEVELOP DIVERSE STRATEGIES FOR BATTLING GANGS**

LAS VEGAS — Before a fair can take on gangs, they have to acknowledge that they have a problem. This can be the biggest stumbling block for most events, said Martin Svrcek, executive director of the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair in Gaithersburg, Md.

Developing a strategy to combat gangs "means you first have to admit that you have a problem," a task that can be difficult for a fair board to declare and a wary general public to swallow, Svrcek said during a workshop on gang prevention at the International Association of Fairs and Expositions here Nov. 27.

"Once you admit there is a gang problem, you are forced to fight an uphill battle against public perception that could take several years to overcome," he said. The alternative, however, is letting your event be slowly taken over by gangs and violent incidents.

It took the Montgomery County fair almost six years to acknowledge there was a problem, he explained. Incidents began to increase in 1989 and stepped up through the early 1990s with increasing fights and weapon issues on the fairgrounds. Even police were hesitant to label the groups as gangs, instead referring to them as "Organized Youth Groups."

By 1995, the problem of violence was getting out of control, the fair's carnival area was rumored to be unsafe throughout the local community and families were becoming reluctant to attend.

Ignoring the problem also took a toll on the State Fair of Louisiana, said the event's General Manager Chris Giordano, who runs the event in inner-city Shreveport.

"We had a reputation with some concessionaires as an event that had no control over our interior," he said of the fair, which was sullied by a deadly shooting in 2004. "It was devastating for the fair. The media reported that it happened inside the fair, although that wasn't actually the case."

Giordano said the biggest improvement his fair made was closing at 10 p.m. instead of midnight.

"We found that nothing good ever happened after 11 anyway," he said.

In Montgomery County, additional law enforcement officers were assigned to work the fairgrounds, about 70 in total, and gangs were separated to opposite sides of the fairgrounds — misbehaving gangs were escorted out through opposite ends of the facility.

"At best, we were just managing the problem and the resources we needed to deal with the issue were staggering," Svrcek said.

Eventually, his team had to develop a plan to decrease gang presence at fairs, something he dubbed "pro-active controls." Working with the State Legislature of Maryland, a law was passed authorizing county officers to enforce anti-trespassing statutes at the fairgrounds. Individuals who were identified as gang members — either through previous criminal convictions, gang affiliation, symbols or self-identification — could be cited for trespassing and evicted from the fairgrounds. Members of the county police's Gang Task Force held uniformed and undercover patrols at the fair to also look for potential gang members.

In 2004 when the campaign was first started, seven trespass notices were issued. In 2005, 40 uniformed officers (down from 70) patrolled the fairgrounds and 12 trespass notices were issued. By 2006, the number of trespass notices skyrocketed to 53, but the number of officers required for patrolling the fair dropped to 35.

Svrcek said the program was successful, but by the beginning of 2007, several minority-rights groups, along with representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union, began to challenge the trespass system as potentially discriminatory and unconstitutional.

"Eventually we sat down with the interested groups and created a revised policy that was consistent throughout," he said. "Since it's such a sensitive issue, we realized that it was important to get community involvement. We had to be as inclusive as possible."

After the input was gathered, the fair's operations manual was revised to include the banning of gangs from fairs, and signage was posted in both English and Spanish that gang behavior would not be tolerated. The definition of gang activity was also tightened with input from the county and state attorneys.

Sometimes, reaching out to the community can also prove to be an effective tool, said Brian May, deputy general manager of the California State Fair in Sacramento. After several years of growing violence, the fair launched an outreach campaign called "Cool It Down," which targeted young people in malls, schools and other places where kids congregate. The program was a success, leading the fair to institute a second program called "Step It Up," which involved a local dance team preaching messages of non-violence to young people.

The fair also hired probation officers to patrol the fair and monitor parolees and repeat offenders.

"We wanted the gang members to know that their probation officers were in the vicinity and if they slip up, they're going back to jail," May said. — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this article: Martin Svrcek, (301) 926-3100; Chris Giordano, (318) 635-1361; Brian May, (916) 263-3061*

## CORRECTIONS

In our Nov. 21 e-newsletter, we misidentified a photo. In the panel on Finding a Niche in a Small Market, the moderator at the right was Dr. Kim Mahoney of Ohio State University, who subbed for Dr. Robin Ammon, who was unable to attend. We regret the error.

---



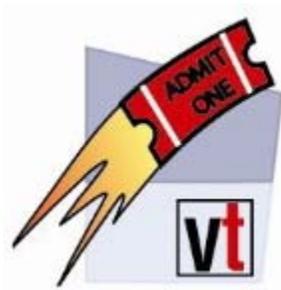
### Advertise in our Spotlight on Vegas!

In February '08 we will publish our first **Spotlight on Las Vegas**. How do you stand out in that world saturated with venues, acts, attractions, events and money? **ADVERTISE** in *Venues Today*! That will also be our annual **Spotlight on university venues** and our annual **Focus on performing arts centers**.

Reserve space by **January 18th** by contacting...

Eastern U.S. \* **Sue Nichols** \* (615) 662-0252 \* [sue@venuestoday.com](mailto:sue@venuestoday.com)  
 Texas \* **Pauline Davis** \* (615) 243-7883 \* [pauline@venuestoday.com](mailto:pauline@venuestoday.com)  
 Mid & Western U.S. & International \* **Rich DiGiacomo** \* (310) 429-3678 \*  
[rich@venuestoday.com](mailto:rich@venuestoday.com)  
[Click here to visit our website](#)

## BOOKINGS



### HOTtickets

#### 11 OF TOP 20 PROMOTED BY LIVE NATION

**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 Nov. 6, 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:* \$6,255,510; *Event:* Justin Timberlake; *Venue:* **AcerArena, Sydney, Australia**; *Attendance:* 58,788; *Ticket Range:* \$497.31-\$88.06; *Promoter:* Frontier Touring Company; *Dates:* Oct. 31-Nov. 1,13; *No. of Shows:* 3
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$3,372,431; *Event:* The Police; *Venue:* **Philips Arena, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 30,264; *Ticket Range:* \$227-\$52; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Nov. 17-18; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$3,210,760; *Event:* Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band; *Venue:* **Verizon Center, Washington**; *Attendance:* 35,808; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$65; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Nov. 11-12; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$3,127,860; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Bell Centre, Montreal, Quebec**; *Attendance:* 31,525; *Ticket Range:* \$133.34-\$48.89; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Nov. 14-15; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$3,072,570; *Event:* Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band; *Venue:* **TD Banknorth Garden, Boston**; *Attendance:* 33,289; *Ticket Range:* \$97.50-\$67.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Nov. 18-19; *No. of Shows:* 2

#### 10,001-15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,150,787; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario**; *Attendance:* 9,762; *Ticket Range:* \$133.36-\$47.17; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Nov. 19; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,042,648; *Event:* Trans-Siberian Orchestra; *Venue:* **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 21,999; *Ticket Range:* \$51-\$41; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Dec. 1; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$437,312; *Event:* Trans Siberian Orchestra; *Venue:* **Dunkin Donuts Center, Providence, R.I.**; *Attendance:* 9,086; *Ticket Range:* \$51.50-\$39.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-house; *Dates:* Nov. 20; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$427,734; *Event:* James Taylor; *Venue:* **Mandalay Bay Events Center, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 5,861; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$45; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Andrew Hewitt, In-house; *Dates:* Nov. 10; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$386,592; *Event:* Brad Paisley; *Venue:* **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 10,578; *Ticket Range:* \$46.50-\$29.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Nov. 17; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 5,001-10,000 Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,863,583; *Event:* Vicente Fernandez; *Venue:* **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 17,904; *Ticket Range:* \$165.50-\$67.50; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Nov. 9-11; *No. of Shows:* 3

2) *Gross Sales:* \$556,473; *Event:* Findlay Toyota Las Vegas Invitational; *Venue:* **Orleans Arena, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 8,377; *Ticket Range:* \$168-\$94; *Promoter:* Basketball Promotions Inc.; *Dates:* Nov. 23-24; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$506,475; *Event:* Stevie Wonder; *Venue:* **Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.**; *Attendance:* 7,664; *Ticket Range:* \$100-\$75; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-house; *Dates:* Nov. 16; *No. of Shows:* 1

4) *Gross Sales:* \$493,679; *Event:* George Lopez; *Venue:* **Event Center at San Jose (Calif.) State University**; *Attendance:* 9,638; *Ticket Range:* \$54.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live; *Dates:* Nov. 24-25; *No. of Shows:* 2

5) *Gross Sales:* \$361,800; *Event:* Mary J. Blige; *Venue:* **Nokia Theatre L.A. Live**; *Attendance:* 4,892; *Ticket Range:* \$95-\$75; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Goldenvoice; *Dates:* Nov. 20; *No. of Shows:* 1

### 5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$867,933; *Event:* Neil Young; *Venue:* **Chicago Theatre**; *Attendance:* 7,089; *Ticket Range:* \$157-\$57; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Nov. 12-13; *No. of Shows:* 2

2) *Gross Sales:* \$407,004; *Event:* Neil Young; *Venue:* **Northrop Auditorium, Minneapolis**; *Attendance:* 4,767; *Ticket Range:* \$132-\$57; *Promoter:* Live Nation, Mr. Chan Presents; *Dates:* Nov. 8; *No. of Shows:* 1

3) *Gross Sales:* \$373,683; *Event:* Johnny Mathis; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 5,725; *Ticket Range:* \$75-\$47; *Promoter:* Atlanta Landmarks; *Dates:* Nov. 23-24; *No. of Shows:* 2

4) *Gross Sales:* \$343,175; *Event:* Dirty Rotten Scoundrels; *Venue:* **Devos Place, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; *Attendance:* 6,410; *Ticket Range:* \$62-\$27; *Promoter:* Broadway GR; *Dates:* Nov. 20-25; *No. of Shows:* 8

5) *Gross Sales:* \$288,116; *Event:* Ozzy Osbourne, Rob Zombie; *Venue:* **The Joint, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 1,907; *Ticket Range:* \$500.50-\$150.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Nov. 24; *No. of Shows:* 1

*Compiled by Rob Ocampo, HotTickets@venuestoday.com*

***Inside the Cowboy Corral at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo at Cox Pavilion, Las Vegas***



**NFR ADDS LIVE COUNTRY MUSIC**

## TO PROGRAMMING MIX

After 20 years of successfully hosting the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, co-producer Pat Christenson of Las Vegas Events said he would like to see the NFR evolve beyond a championship rodeo into a full-scale country festival.

Last year, LVE held the Cowboy Corral, a VIP area for rodeo committee members and sponsors in the Cox Pavilion. They also had an outside concert for rodeo patrons, with country music stars provided by the Academy of Country Music. This year, those two have become one, with the ACM presenting 10 acts inside the Cox Pavilion.

"We wanted to provide a better environment for the acts and our fans, and bring them inside," Christenson said.

The pre-event hospitality concert, still called the Cowboy Corral, is free and open to all ticket holders. Fans can arrive early, have some food and drinks and enjoy country performers like LoCash Cowboys, Flynnville Train and Lady Antebellum.

"The Academy is thrilled to participate by bringing these artists to NFR fans," said Michelle Goble, director of membership and events for the Academy of Country Music. "It's a win-win which provides exposure for new talent in front of an audience that is traditionally very receptive to the country genre."

For Christenson, the event is pure value add. It also helps solve a logistics problem with traffic, by giving some fans a reason to show up early.

"We average 17,500 people a night at NFR," Christenson said. "We oversell by 500 tickets a night, and have sold out 20 straight years in a row. We have a waiting list of 3,000 and have strict guidelines for passing on tickets."

The doors to Cowboy Corral open two-and-a-half hours before the rodeo begins. There are no seats in the performance area, and the area holds 1,500 people, so fans can come and go, allowing them to also enjoy the ProRodeo Zone, the Wrangler NFR's exclusive fan interactive area, and other interactive activities sponsored by Dodge, Justin Boots, U.S. Smokeless Tobacco and others.

The acts are all provided and paid for by ACM. They can sell memorabilia – all of that is handled by Thomas & Mack Center – and LVE does not take a cut. The acts do not get a cut of the concession sales.

"We also use a VIP hospitality area inside the pavilion," Christenson said. "It is cordoned off for sponsors, with access by wristbands."

With only about 150 people using this area, Christenson said color-coded wristbands are as high-tech as the wristbands need to be.

The budget for the concert is around \$100,000 for room rental, bar set up and staffing.

As the concert progresses, the fans move into the rodeo area.

"During the rodeo, people are in their seats," Christenson said.

If a fan is one of the unlucky ones with an oversold seat, they can watch the rodeo from the Cowboy Corral.

From a marketing standpoint, they are trying to spread the word of the Cowboy Corral

to ticket holders to help calm traffic. This year, they will offer free shuttle buses to the venue (in previous years, the bus ride was \$5) and everyone on the bus gets a flyer. During the rodeo, the announcers talk about the concerts.

"We are not really marketing outside the rodeo, since there are only Mad Dash 30 seats, standing room only," Christenson said.

Each year, the rodeo sells these special "find a Seat" tickets offered on a "no show" basis with tickets potentially available for all 10 Wrangler NFR performances. The Mad Dash 30 tickets allow the bearer entrance onto the concourse at the Thomas & Mack Center.

The bearer must then find an open seat in the balcony, where he may sit for the duration of the rodeo, unless the original ticket holder claims that seat. If an open seat cannot be found within 30 minutes after the rodeo starts, the bearer may view the performance from the televisions located on the concourse or simply ask for a refund at the Thomas & Mack Center Ticket Office.

"The Mad Dash 30 Ticket program provides another opportunity for rodeo fans to witness the spectacle and pageantry of the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, the most prestigious rodeo in the world," said Christenson.

"Thousands of rodeo enthusiasts come to Las Vegas each December to enjoy everything that the Wrangler NFR experience has to offer, and we're glad that we can offer another chance to be part of the action."

For LVE, a private non-profit who produces 50 events a year at neutral sites, like Thomas & Mack Center and the Speedway, value-added is the way to build a rodeo into the greatest country festival of the year.

"If you look at other country festivals, they have a huge midway. Our midway is The Strip," Christenson said. "We created an anchor, a reason to come to Vegas. It's not just a sold-out rodeo, it's the NFR Cowboy Christmas Gift Show with 400 vendors. There are 20 acts, like Brooks & Dunn and Charlie Daniels playing in showrooms and stages around town. There's dining and shopping. It's one heck of a party." — Liz Boardman

*Interviewed for this story: Pat Christenson, (702) 260-8605*

## **CORRECTIONS**

In our Nov. 21 e-newsletter, we misattributed a quote on the Celine Dion tour to Jeffrey Mann. The quote should have been attributed to Sean Saadeh. We regret the error.

---



### The 2008 Fairs & Festivals Resource Guide is underway

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.

**New in the 2008 edition** (as supplied to Venues Today):

- \*\*Multiple contacts listed - such as General Manager, Director of Marketing and Talent Buyer
- \*\*Carnival Company used by Fair or Festival
- \*\*Concessionaire
- \*\*Listing of major Booking Agents
- \*\*Listing of major Carnivals

Don't miss your chance to be included in this comprehensive guide. **Advertise Today!**

Reserve space by 1/15/08 by contacting:

Eastern U.S. \* **Sue Nichols** \* (615) 662-0252 \* [sue@venuestoday.com](mailto:sue@venuestoday.com)  
 Texas \* **Pauline Davis** \* (615) 243-7883 \* [pauline@venuestoday.com](mailto:pauline@venuestoday.com)  
 Mid & Western U.S. & International \* **Rich DiGiacomo** \* (310) 429-3678 \*  
[rich@venuestoday.com](mailto:rich@venuestoday.com)

[Click here to visit our website](#)

---

## MARKETING

*Back row, from left, Bob Johnson, Outdoor Amusement Business Association; Wayne McCary; Doug Lofstrom; Andy Schoendienst; and, seated, Jerry Aldrich; and Patty Sullivan.*



ride responsibly, fairs and carnivals share a lot of common concerns. During the International Expositions convention here, Bob Johnson of the Outdoor Amusement Business Association discussed what carnivals are doing for fairs that turned into a mutual admiration event.

Wayne McCary, Eastern State Exposition, West Springfield, Mass., was most concerned with immigration law, "one of the most emotional issues across America today."

"It has nothing to do with illegal aliens," he emphasized. The workforce effected, many come from Asia and travel with carnivals and circuses, work in the U.S. on temporary visas and for various businesses, proving to be a reliable labor pool for a seasonal business. The employer invests in the employee to complete the paperwork, above and beyond their salary. "It's a major investment."

For several years, the U.S. government has allowed the recreational industry to bring in a temporary and necessary labor pool, but the bill allowing them visas, H2-B, may not be passed this year, partially because immigration is such a hot button now. "It is one of the most critical issues in our industry," McCary declared, adding that it first impacts carnivals but will trickle down to affect all labor in recent years has raised the bar for our industry. It's important for the fair industry to know what this will have."

The OABA has engaged a lobbyist to dog the Congress on this issue, "but it is safe to say we will win," McCary said. He encouraged fair managers to join the fight and write, call and lobby the Congress.

Patty Sullivan, president and CEO, Eli Bridge Co., called on fair managers to take action to educate the future carnival riders of America. She has developed a program for teaching kids, admitting she was inspired by a tragedy involving one of her company's rides.

"Seventy-five to 90 percent of ride accidents are caused by the patron, and we can do something about it," she said. This is a 100 percent legitimate educational tool, just as teaching kids what to do on a ride is crucial, and it's free, she said. Best of all, "little kids still listen to us."

She recommended booking it into schools the last two weeks of the school year, closest to the fair time. The tools, including an eight-minute video and handouts, are available through OABA for \$10.

"I get phone calls from parents about what kids say after taking the class," she said, citing a boy who scolded his sibling for wearing flip flops to the fair. "They learn to wear shoes that stay on their feet. They also learn the importance of safety belts and the reason for height restrictions."

"It's great PR," Sullivan added, saying she has received a lot of good press about the program during fairtime.

Doug Lofstrom, Orange County Fair, Costa Mesa, promoted the OABA/IAFE Best Practices manual for fairs and carnivals. It addresses issues and serves as a launching pad for forums on such issues as the pros and cons of fairs closing on Mondays and/or Tuesdays, which many now do.

In 2002, the San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, closed Mondays, followed by the Orange County Fair, Costa Mesa, Calif., in 2003; and then the Arizona State Fair, Phoenix, and the Los Angeles County Fair, Pomona. "If you want to explore it further, talk to those organizations," Lofstrom advised.

The Orange County Fair closed on Mondays and added a week in 2003, he said. But on Mondays, they keep a full team on from public relations, who all took another day off. The first week the first year, 65 families came to the fair on Monday, despite the publicity, and they were met by the public relations team, given passes to return and free tickets to Knott's Berry Farm or Disneyland for that day. The next Monday, 38 families showed up. By the last Monday, it was just four. "We got the word out."

The economic reasons were to spread the crowd, which happened, Lofstrom said. It was also a production day, giving them a chance to change over livestock without disrupting the fair. The carnival used the day to energize its employees with a trip to the beach or the park.

Recognition is also important for carnivals, which lead to discussion of another OABA program, the Circle of Excellence. Jerry Aldrich, president, Amusement Industry Consulting, said to date 29 carnivals, 17 food concessionaires, 21 game concessionaires and 20 independent ride operators have achieved the Circle of Excellence accreditation following an audit and visit from OABA consultants. After two years, the audit is repeated and then it will be updated once every five years, Aldrich said.

The results are totally confidential and if an operator does not receive the accreditation, they are advised what to do to comply the next time. The judges look at everything from the appearance of the rides to the ticket box locations to music levels to signage and management participation.

The auditors look at whether menus are handwritten or professionally made, what worker living conditions and uniforms look like, whether employees are aware of their environment and adequately trained and whether pre-employment background checks are performed.

A carnival operator who has achieved the Circle of Excellence certificate from OABA has been thoroughly checked, Aldrich assured fair managers in attendance. It is one of the vital issues with best practices.

Andy Schoendienst, Luehr's Ideal Rides, discussed the Best Practices document in more detail. The forum that created the document looked at communications, financial formulas, operations, and legal, legislative and liability issues and ethics. The Circle of Excellence was one result and there will be more.

The ultimate goal of all the programs, from audits to education, is "repeat customers," Schoendienst emphasized. That's the bottom line. – Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Wayne McCary, (413) 737-2443; Patty Sullivan, (217) 245-7145; Andy Schoendienst, (618) 407-3044; Jerry Aldrich, (407) 239-6336; Doug Lofstrom, (714) 708-1543*

## LIVE NATION TEAMS WITH COSTCO TO SELL LAWN SEATS FOR SHED SHOWS

Live Nation has announced a plan to begin selling gift cards for its amphitheatres through Costco.

The exclusive retail deal includes two general admission lawn tickets to any 2008 venue owned and operated by Live Nation—priced at \$39.99 per package. In addition to the offer, which will be available at 263 Costco stores nationwide, users will also get six free song downloads from the new Live Nation music download page, supplied by Puretracks. Live Nation joins the National Football League, movie theater chains and various Broadway shows that offer tickets via Costco.

“This is an opportunity to reach out to new customers and expand the market reach of amphitheaters into a demographic that might not understand concert-ticket pricing,” said Live Nation’s Vice President of Ticketing Nathan Hubbard. “There’s some misconceptions about the price of concert tickets within the general public. Many are hesitant to purchase tickets because of fears that tickets are crammed with extra cost. This gift certificate allows buyers to receive an all-inclusive ticket purchase without having to spend extra on service charges.”

The gift card deal comes within weeks of an expected announcement by the company, unveiling its new ticketing platform for its U.S. concert venues. The company announced in August that it planned to end its long-standing relationship with Ticketmaster and create its own platform. The new system would allow Live Nation to capture its own customer data and create a unified branded ticket experience with greater control over ticket surcharges.

Live Nation has also been aggressively positioning itself to expand into new business areas that tap into the live-concert experience. It recently announced the \$79 million acquisition of Signatures Network, one of the world’s biggest concert-T-shirt companies. That followed other acquisitions, including UltraStar Entertainment LLC and MusicToday LLC, which run fan-club and e-commerce Web sites for musicians.

Despite the expansion, Live Nation has seen a drop in stock price as concerns about the sagging amphitheatre business continue to loom. According to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino announced during a shareholders meeting that profit margins for amphitheatres were stagnant at four percent and declining. Attendance continued to decline and amphitheatres in most of the U.S. were mostly dormant during winter months.

The company was increasingly challenged to sell lawn seats at its amphitheaters, especially for audiences at older demographics, which might be hesitant to sit on a blanket in grass during a concert.

The new gift cards are partially designed to fill that void and provide some additional marketing information to the company. After purchasing or receiving an Amphitheatre Concert Pack card as a gift, consumers register as Live Nation ticket club members [livenation.com/amppack](http://livenation.com/amppack), and sign up to receive regular email notifications when new concerts are scheduled in their local area for the 2008 season. When a show of interest pops up, registered music fans simply enter their PIN code on the back of the card to redeem their two general admission lawn tickets. — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: Nathan Hubbard, (310) 867-7100*

---

## SHORT TAKES

### FACES & PLACES: H.C. ROWE TO HELM COLOSSEUM

**H.C. Rowe** has been hired as executive director for the Colosseum at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, according to a release from AEG Live Las Vegas. Rowe began his career at Las Vegas' Thomas and Mack Center in the early 1980's, and served as stage manager for the Frank Sinatra European Tour in 1987. He also directed events and entertainment at Vegas properties such as Mandalay Bay Events Center, Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino, and the Aladdin Hotel and Casino. He recently served as booking director for the newly opened Pearl at the Palms for Live Nation in Las Vegas.

*Contact: Christi Reynolds, (702) 866-1451*

### MORE FACES & PLACES: RENO, ROSEN, OAKS MAKE NEWS

**Rick Reno**, the chief executive officer of the **Crown Center**, Fayetteville, N.C., has resigned to become general manager of the Randy Parton Theatre in Roanoke Rapids, Va. Reno headed the Crown complex since June 2001...**Brian Oaks** is interim general manager of the **Prairie Capital Convention Center**, Springfield, Ill., the post which is being vacated by Tom Margedant at the end of the year...**Fred Rosen** has been named CEO, in addition to his former title as chairman, of **AudienceView Ticketing**, Toronto. Former CEO and AudienceView co-founder Kevin Kimsa becomes president and COO.

### IRWIN CENTER PLANS PHOTO EXHIBIT FOR 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

To celebrate its 30-year anniversary, the Frank Erwin Center is launching "Inside the Arena: Three Decades of Legends." The photo exhibit showcases the acts that have come through the Frank Erwin Center doors such as Liberace, Tina Turner, Tom Jones, KISS, B.B. King, Madonna, Aerosmith, John Denver and more. Also featured are special athletic figures and sports moments in Frank Erwin Center history including Jody Conradt's 700th and 800th career victories, the first NCAA Women's Final Four sellout and the victory that made Rick Barnes the all time winningest coach in UT history.

*Contact: Laura Montez, (512) 471-3678*

### PROTEST IN ORLANDO OVER FOOD CONTRACT

The concessions contract at the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, is being protested. Centerplate won the bid, but Aramark and Levy Restaurants, the runners up, are challenging the process. The contract is worth approximately \$300 million. The bids now go back to the procurement committee and final selection is probably delayed until January.

*Contact: Linda Stewart, Orange County Commissioner, (407) 836-7350*

### SMALL NEW YORK PAC APPROVED

Preliminary approval for a 618-seat theater at the Foothills Performing Arts Center, Oneonta, N.Y., was granted by the city Planning Commission. Original plans in 2002 called for a \$37 million theater complex, including a 1,200-seat theater. That project was deemed too ambitious after city officials visited other PACs. The new version of the project would cost \$9 million-\$10 million and could open by summer 2009. The PAC already consists of a 10,350-square foot scene shop finished in 2005 and performance space under tent.

*Contact: Peter Macris, (607) 431-2080*

## HELP WANTED

For more information or to submit listings, e-mail April Parnell, Director of Marketing & Sales at: [april@venuestoday.com](mailto:april@venuestoday.com)

### [CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE FULL EMPLOYMENT LISTINGS BELOW](#)

**Nokia Theatre L.A. Live - Director - Events and Production** - The NOKIA Theatre L.A. Live Director of Events and Production is...

**Agganis Arena, Boston - General Manager** - Boston University seeks a qualified candidate to be the Assistant...

**Live Nation Ticketing, Los Angeles - Director of Client Services** - This position acts as the direct liaison between the venue box...

**Georgia Dome - Security Manager** - Seeking a Security Manager who will be responsible for the overall...

**Melbourne (Australia) & Olympic Parks - Safety Advisor** - Package circa \$70,000 Event and Venue Environment. Melbourne & Olympic Parks is...

**Burnsville (MN) Performing Arts Center /VenuWorks - Executive Director** - VenuWorks, Inc., [www.venuworks.com](http://www.venuworks.com), a fast growing firm specializing in public assembly...

**New Jersey Sports & Exposition Authority (IZOD & Giants Stadium) - Event Marketing Manager** - The New Jersey Sports & Exposition Authority (Meadowlands Sports Complex) is seeking...

**New NFL Stadium - Chief Executive Officer** - Turnkey Sports & Entertainment seeks interested and qualified candidates to be the CEO...

**City of Sydney (Australia) - Outdoor Event Coordinator** - The City of Sydney is seeking an experienced Outdoor Event Coordinator to join the...

### [CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE FULL EMPLOYMENT LISTINGS ABOVE](#)

---

To submit news or information to *Venues Today* contact:

**Linda Deckard**, Publisher, Editor-in-chief  
(714) 378-5400, ext. 22  
[linda@venuestoday.com](mailto:linda@venuestoday.com)

**Dave Brooks**, Senior Writer & Assignment Editor  
(714) 378-5400, ext. 24  
[dave@venuestoday.com](mailto:dave@venuestoday.com)

**Rob Ocampo**, Hot Tickets/Top Stops Manager  
(714) 378-5400, ext. 21  
[rob@venuestoday.com](mailto:rob@venuestoday.com)

For advertising information, contact:

**Sue Nichols**, Eastern U.S.  
(615) 662-0252  
[sue@venuestoday.com](mailto:sue@venuestoday.com)

**Pauline Davis**, Texas  
(615) 243-7883  
[pauline@venuestoday.com](mailto:pauline@venuestoday.com)

**Rich DiGiacomo**, Mid & Western U.S., International  
(310) 429-3678  
[rich@venuestoday.com](mailto:rich@venuestoday.com)

**April Parnell**, Director of Marketing & Sales  
(714) 378-0056  
[april@venuestoday.com](mailto:april@venuestoday.com)

To update your Fair or Festival Listing for the Resource Guide, contact:

**Nazarene Kahn**, Resource Guides Coordinator  
(714) 378-5400 ext. 25  
[resourceguides@venuestoday.com](mailto:resourceguides@venuestoday.com)

---

You are receiving this weekly e-newsletter as part of your annual subscription to **Venues Today**.

Remember that you can also access the **Venues Today** archives as part of this subscription at [www.venuestoday.com](http://www.venuestoday.com). [Unsubscribe](#)



Venues Today  
P.O. Box 2540  
Huntington Beach, CA 92647  
USA



[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.