

Kristin

Subject: FW: Feb. 8, 2006 Newsletter



VENUES**today**

"The news behind the headlines"

Dear April,

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Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. VT Managing Editor Natasha Emmons is covering the 32nd Annual Stadium Managers Association Seminar in Hollywood, Calif., this week. Look for coverage in the next e-newsletter and the March magazine. For a full calendar listing, to view archives or to subscribe to *Venues Today*, visit our Web site at www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We had the right to force them to play the entire season in the arena by contract, but the general feeling is that it's more important that they have success with the franchise, enjoy a good season and retain an identity here in New Orleans — then come back with a vengeance in 2007." — Bill Curl, New Orleans Arena, on NBA Hornets staying in Oklahoma City next season

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VENUE NEWS

Oklahoma City embraces Hornets with downtown banners



NBA HORNETS GETTING COMFORTABLE IN OKLAHOMA CITY

Reaction is mixed to the National Basketball Association's announcement that the Hornets will play the majority of the 2006-2007 season in Oklahoma City. New Orleans was hoping to bring the team back sooner.

When Hurricane Katrina decimated New Orleans in September, Oklahoma City offered the SMG-managed Ford Center as a temporary home for the Hornets. The New Orleans Arena, also managed by SMG, wasn't damaged to the extent the neighboring Superdome was, but locker rooms and offices were flooded and the basketball floor was destroyed.

It took just three weeks for the Hornets and the NBA to strike a deal with Oklahoma City, and at the end of January the league announced its intention to exercise the one-year renewal option. The team will play 35 home games at the Ford Center next season and six at the New Orleans Arena.

"It's a guarantee of at least 35 more games, plus pre-season and playoffs," said Ford Center General Manager Gary Desjardins. "Overall it's been a tremendous experience of Oklahoma City, giving us the exposure the NBA fraternity has brought to the city — it's really been a good thing."

Although Hornets owner George Shinn and NBA officials said the team will return to New Orleans permanently, both left enough wiggle room in their statements to cause concern in the Crescent City while fueling hope in the Sooner State.

"While the NBA and the Hornets remain committed to returning to New Orleans, we have agreed with Louisiana and SMG officials that, for now, our collective interests are best served by having the team play the bulk of its 2006-2007 schedule in Oklahoma City," league commissioner David Stern said in a prepared statement. "However, we are hopeful that the team will be in a position to return to New Orleans full time beginning in the 2007-2008 season."

The league said it would negotiate exclusively with New Orleans to host the 2008 All Star Game and would hold its January 2007 mid-year marketing meeting there.

The Hornets have a lease in New Orleans, which could be enforced. But New Orleans Arena spokesman Bill Curl said having the Hornets play in Oklahoma City one more year was a better option than forcing the team to return.

"It was an equitable decision," he said. "We had the right to force them to play the entire season in the arena by contract, but the general feeling is that it's more important that they have success with the franchise, enjoy a good season and retain an identity here in New Orleans — then come back with a vengeance in 2007."

The New Orleans Arena lease requires the team to remain until June 30, 2012; even then, should the team depart, the agreement calls for a \$10 million exit fee. The arena is scheduled to be ready for play in March, when the Hornets play the first of three games there. By next fall, after \$5 million in repairs, the arena would be suitable to again house the NBA franchise, according to plans.

The team moved from North Carolina after the 2001-2002 season when the voters defeated a referendum to replace the aging Charlotte Coliseum. The team was last in the league in attendance and losses were estimated at \$15 million to \$20 million per year.

Anxious to replace the Jazz, which left New Orleans for Utah in 1979, the city attracted the Hornets with a \$10 million renovation of the state-owned New Orleans Arena and millions more in incentives funded by a local hotel tax.

But for the 2004–2005 season, the Hornets averaged only 14,221 fans per home game. Ironically, that was 210 fewer fans per game than the expansion Charlotte Bobcats, who came in 29th before moving into the new Charlotte Bobcats Arena.

This season, the Hornets are averaging 17,958 fans per game at the Ford Center, a 26-percent boost and good enough to move from last place in the 30-team league to 10th. SMG's Desjardins hired 300-400 additional employees to handle the business, most of them part-time.

Steve Stavinoha, director of Food and Beverage for the Ford Center, said Hornets games represent a substantial part of foodservice sales. He said the per cap concessions spending during Hornets games averages \$4.50 to \$5. The per cap during hockey games – Central Hockey League's Blazer's are the arena's other sports tenant – is \$4 to \$4.25. "You're talking almost \$3 million in sales per year — even more with catering," Stavinoha said. "It's huge. It basically doubles what we do here. It would be a big chunk if it leaves."

When revenue passes the \$40 million mark, the Hornets will begin reimbursing Oklahoma City for its costs, such as the office space and arena improvements. The city will get 80 percent of the profits until all its costs are reimbursed. When revenue passes the \$42.5 million mark, the team will share 50 percent of its profit with the city. The city will divide its share with the state and a private investment group. — Ted Streuli
Interviewed for this story: Gary Desjardins, (405) 602-8700; Bill Curl, (504) 587-3663; Steve Stavinoha, (405) 602-8700

CONSTRUCTION FIRM CHOSEN FOR NEW COWBOYS STADIUM

Tulsa, Okla.-based Manhattan Construction Co. will lead a team that includes Texas minority-owned firms Rayco Construction and 3i Construction to build the new National Football League (NFL) Dallas Cowboys Stadium. The \$650 million facility is scheduled to open in Arlington, Texas, in time for the 2009 NFL season. Construction will start in March and is expected to take 40 months.

In addition to restaurants, shops and gathering places, the plan calls for an interactive attraction known as the Cowboys Experience and Hall of Fame. The facility will consist of a retractable roof stadium seating approximately 75,000 patrons, with more than 200 suites, and multiple restaurants and lounges. And at 2 million square feet, the stadium will be about 25 percent larger than most.

Manhattan built the neighboring Amerquest Field (formerly The Ballpark at Arlington), home of the Major League Baseball Texas Rangers, and went on to construct the first retractable-roof football facility, Houston's Reliant Stadium.

"As we've grown as a company it seems we've acquired certain monumental projects," said Leonard Rejcek, Manhattan's president and chief operating officer. "It's a continual progression in our business model and this fits in that significant progression. It's definitely a milestone. It's a large project and it's a high-profile project. The Cowboys are obviously a well marketed brand."

Now Manhattan will build the first football stadium with retractable walls. The end-zone walls will pull back to form plazas, allowing people to flow through the structure end-to-end during some non-football events. The stadium will be home to the Dallas Cowboys, but the City of Arlington also expects it to host large concerts, high school football, NCAA bowl games, and other events.

The new stadium will be adjacent to Amerquest Field and amusement park Six Flags over Texas. "They're really creating a venue that's a 12-month per year venue," he said. "Between baseball, football and Six Flags, there'll be something going on there all year."

Fan entry will come at the structure's midpoint. Manhattan will excavate millions of yards of dirt to set a foundation 40 to 50 feet below the natural grade. That will allow a lower profile for the stadium, improving aesthetics and minimizing wind load concerns. But Rejcek said the primary benefit to burying half the stadium is that it will enhance the fan experience.

"As a consultant, Manhattan has been a part of our organization as we progressed through the development of this stadium project," said Dallas Cowboys owner and general manager Jerry Jones in a prepared statement. "The experience they have in this type of construction is invaluable, having worked right here in Texas on Reliant Stadium in Houston and Amerquest Field in Arlington."

Architectural firm HKS, which designed the stadium, is no stranger to projects in the

Lone Star State either. Projects in the firm's portfolio include Dallas' American Airlines Center and Ameritrust Field. HKS also designed the Indianapolis Colts' stadium. Bryan Trubey will lead the Dallas Cowboys design team for the HKS Sports & Entertainment Group.

Ricca Newmark Design will be responsible for planning the foodservice areas. Architectural renderings of the project are expected to be made public in April. — Ted Streuli

Interviewed for this story: Leonard Rejcek, (918) 583-6900



Tim Worton, left, and Brad Gessner

FACES & PLACES: WORTON & SYDNEY SUPERDOME JOIN OGDEN-IFC; GESSNER RETURNS TO SAN DIEGO

With the announcement it has signed a 10-year management deal for the **Sydney (Australia) SuperDome**, **Tim Worton's** new role at **Ogden IFC** just got more interesting. Worton has been named general manager of Ogden IFC's Australasian Arena Network covering the company's managed arenas in Brisbane, Sydney and Newcastle as well as assisting with such event activity in the company's stadia and convention centers.

Meanwhile, **Brad Gessner** is arriving back at the **San Diego Convention Center Corp.** Feb. 13 as the facility's first director of Conventions and Event Services, a newly created role which supports the expanded convention center agenda.

In other management news, local press reports reveal that **Ron Woodbridge** has resigned his position as general manager of the **Glendale (Ariz.) Arena**, effective Jan. 18, and that **Virginia Anderson**, director of the **Seattle Center**, announced her resignation effective April 3.

And **Ed Micone**, of Radio City Music Hall fame, will lead **UltraStar Entertainment LLC** in artist acquisition and business development. UltraStar specializes in providing marketing and content services to entertainment clients, including co-founder David Bowie. (See more on this move in next week's VT e-newsletter.)

Rod Pilbeam, executive director of Ogden IFC, said the firm has hired Worton "to give us more firepower to handle additional venues," and then announced the deal with the

Sydney Superdome. "We are, as everybody is, more proactive in booking. Tim will be involved with dealing with event producers, perhaps who don't appeal as much to the regular concert promoters who are the main bookers of events into our buildings. He will develop relationships with rodeos, ice shows, truck pulls, stuff that isn't coming down here at the moment, working with a number of venues under our own banner."

The Sydney SuperDome joined the fold Feb. 1 and the entire staff has been invited to cross over as well, including David Humphreys, manager, and Don Elford, marketer. "We've been having a quiet communication with the new owners [Public Broadcasting Ltd.] since they bought it 10 months ago. They've agreed with us they would value our expertise in assisting in managing that business for them," Pilbeam said. Ogden IFC already managed Telstra Stadium, next door to the SuperDome.

The SuperDome marks the 13th building for Ogden IFC. Worton's main perview will be the arenas in Sydney, Newcastle and Brisbane, though he will also book concerts and events into other Ogden IFC venues that cater to arena-type events, like the Brisbane Convention Center and the Cairns Convention Center, Pilbeam said.

Worton will be based in Sydney, where he most recently managed the Sydney Entertainment Center for seven years. This marks his return to Ogden IFC, where he served as general manager and business manager for the firm's Newcastle Entertainment Centre. Worton is the immediate past president of the Venue Management Association – Asia & Pacific and currently chairs the Association's Public Venue Management School.

The SuperDome was built by Abigroup for the 2000 Olympics and has worked hard to find its place in the Sydney entertainment market.

Gessner is also headed back, returning to the San Diego Convention Center after leaving there to be deputy director of the Del Mar (Calif.) Fairgrounds and then, most recently, serving as director of Westworld, Scottsdale, Ariz., a position he resigned a month ago.

Gessner said he had lined up some consulting work in addition to applying for the San Diego job, but was quite pleased to move home again. He never sold his California beach house.

"I was the 12th employee hired by Tom Liegler in 1988," he said, referring to the former manager of the then newly opened San Diego Convention Center. In fact, he had left his job in San Antonio to work for the Sheraton on Harbor Island outside San Diego to lobby for a job at the new center. It took three years. Half of the people he worked with then are still there, which says a lot for the company, he added.

Gessner started in the business in the late 70s as manager of the St. Lucie County Civic Center, Ft. Pierce, Fla., then opened up the Sun Dome at the University of South Florida with Mike Barber in 1980. He moved to San Antonio for four years managing the Hemisfair Arena and Municipal Auditorium, working for Joe Madison and Eddie Garcia.

"Then I went to Southern California with a goal, kind of like I did this time," he said of his decision to hang around a convention center site before they even broke ground. "I was with the Sheraton for three years; Liegler hired me, and I worked there over seven years."

Gessner was one of 95 applicants for the job this time, according to Rudy Johnson, general manager of the San Diego Convention Center. It is a new position, created due to reorganization which has the SDCC overseeing sales and marketing and event and

convention services duties that, two years ago, were the responsibility of the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"I do feel the San Diego Convention Center is an incredible organization. I am extremely impressed with what Carol [Wallace] and her team have been able to do," Gessner said. "We were always proud."

"We've had a major organizational restructure because of two steps; two years ago we took the sales and marketing effort in-house and last July 1, we brought in-house the convention services piece of that — housing, convention staffing, restaurant, concierge services — as well as convention services on-site like site visits, coordination of hotel rooms, etc.," Johnson said. "Since July, the housing piece has been internal and resting in our sales and marketing department. January first, that responsibility was given to me, so we created a brand new department and a new position."

They also promoted **Dee Anne Snyder** Jan. 15 to assistant director of convention services, answering to Gessner. She had been a senior event manager.

"This will finalize this phase of the reorg," Johnson said. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Rod Pilbeam, 61-73-265-5888; Brad Gessner, (480) 502-3002; Rudy Johnson, (619) 525-5140

BEAUMONT CIVIC CENTER SLATED FOR DEMOLITION IN JULY

The 30-year old, 6,500-seat Beaumont (Texas) Civic Center will be demolished in July, the result of a combination of potential new downtown development, increased competition, and a final blow — damage from Hurricane Rita.

Kyle Hayes, Beaumont city manager, made the final decision, one which the City Council will ratify when it OKs the demolition contract in May. Demolition will cost approximately \$350,000, Hayes said. The City Council must approve any contract for more than \$25,000.

But they are already aware of the plan and on board with Hayes' thinking. "We have two other venues in the city that are civic-center-type facilities, much newer than ours," he said, referring to the three-year-old Ford Park complex and Montagne Center at Lamar University.

Most importantly, the civic center is "adjacent to the Neches River and we're trying to allow for riverfront development. This is the only spot for a hotel or condominium. We contacted hoteliers 45 days ago to see what interest is out there and to make something happen," he said. He points out the number of businesses downtown, including banks and law firms, that would make use of convention space in a hotel and to the entertainment district already established a block from the Beaumont Civic Center, including an \$18 million rehab of an old warehouse that is now restaurants and retail. The city has paved downtown sidewalks with brick, added decorative lighting and clamped down on code enforcement to make downtown attractive to developers, he added.

The actual damage during Hurricane Rita to the civic center totaled about \$225,000, mostly damage to the roof, he said. "That was part of the consideration, but the key was to allow riverfront development to occur and it never will with that building sitting there." He is aware that all civic centers of this genre lose money, but this one is outdated and "we're competing with a brand new facility run by Jefferson County and the taxpayers of Beaumont are supporting both. It would be better to get some private

investment down here.”

At the same time he is considering new construction as well, including a meeting space/banquet facility, which will be part of his capital program proposal to be introduced in the next two months. What Beaumont doesn't need is “a 30-year-old, outdated big arena for concerts and athletic events...If we didn't have the Montagne Center or Ford Park, no doubt we'd leave this facility here. It's well maintained. It's just old, but with the other locations plus the property the building sits on, it's better long term to have private investment along this riverfront.”

Mark Arrington, technical services director for the Beaumont Civic Center who is in charge while Claudie Hawkins is on temporary, personal leave, said bookings at the civic center are good from now through closure. The cut-off date for booking events is June 15 and Hawkins is working to relocate trade shows and expos that had long-term commitments.

This is actually the second time demolition has been proposed, the first being two years ago, so some events had already relocated, Arrington said.

The fate of Fair Park, which housed the South Texas State Fair that is now held at Ford Park, is also on the table, though it has a number of lucrative equestrian events and will remain open at least through May of 2007 “to give equestrian users time and to develop additional equestrian business to warrant keeping it open,” Arrington said. “We have to do research and we'll get together in a few weeks and see where we stand.”

Beaumont Civic Center opened in 1979. Its five meeting rooms are booked at least 70 percent of the time and the civic center arena typically hosts two or three major events every week, though not many concerts, Arrington said. Sesame Street Live has played the building for over 20 years and is their main family show.

“We're like every other building in small markets. We have an operating loss every year, not a plus. We're looking at how effectively we do our mission and serve our community, and one of the barometers is operating loss,” he said. “We lose about \$500,000 a year, some of which is offset by our portion of the hotel/motel tax. When it's all said and done, between the tax and our revenues, there's a \$200,000 difference for the Civic Center, Julie Rogers Theater, Fair Park Coliseum and another building we run.” The civic center has no debt service. The bonds that built it are long since retired.

Bottom line, “you have to deal with some hard realities. It costs X number of dollars to run a city and you either have to have more money or you have to cut back on services. I don't envy the city manager at all. He's making some tough decisions. The other place is newer. Events can move out there,” Arrington said.

The total annual operating budget for the Beaumont Civic Center is \$1.8 million plus clearing account items that are taken in and dispersed out. With that clearing account, it's about \$2.5 million, Arrington said. The Julie Rogers Theatre, across the street from the Beaumont Civic Center and under the same city management team, will remain open, though it has been closed for repair since Hurricane Rita, having taken on a foot of water. The repair and renovation bill there is \$2.5 million and the plan is to open it next season, Arrington said.

City management in nearby Port Arthur, Texas, is also debating the fate of its 2,500-seat civic center, much more severely damaged by the hurricane. That decision awaits insurance claims and politicking. Beaumont's plan is apparently firm.

The venue most likely to benefit from closure of Beaumont Civic Center is the SMG-managed Ford Park. Allan Vella, manager there, said that venue, too, took a hurricane hit, with \$1 million worth of damage to the amphitheater at the complex, the Ford Pavilion. But it has never closed, serving as a shelter and as a rallying point for 3,000 first responders after the big storm. The South Texas State Fair, an entire hockey season and two concerts were cancelled this year because of the hurricane and the resulting economic turmoil in the region.

But business is coming back up to speed, Vella said. He has a strong March and high hopes for a positive impact when Beaumont Civic Center is gone. His 7,500-seat arena will not get some events that have historically been downtown, but other events, like Sesame Street Live are good candidates. He will meet with them when they are at the civic center in April, Vella said.

SMG has been aggressively soliciting Beaumont Civic Center business. "We're generating some of those calls ourselves," he said. There 's a playbook for being a shelter now; Vella is working on the playbook for picking up abandoned business. "We try to be keenly aware of what events have taken place there and what we believe we can accommodate and secure that business as quickly and efficiently as possible."

There were "too many buildings for this market, Port Arthur, Beaumont, Montagne and us," Vella said. "We're a market of 350,000. We can't generate enough business to keep us all happy and healthy." — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Kyle Hayes, (409) 880-3708; Mark Arrington, (409) 838-3435 Ext. 203; Allan Vella, (409) 951-5401

Coming Soon - Our Spotlight on FLORIDA VENUES!

In our **APRIL** issue, we spotlight the sunshine state and find out what keeps customers coming back for more. We'll highlight the top money making venues and look at what new venues are in the works.

This will also be our 2nd INTIX quarterly issue, full of advice and firsthand reports from attendees and award-winners at the INTIX convention in Boston.

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BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

NEW YORK & VEGAS TAKE THE 5K-10K CLASS

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 Jan. 10, 2006. 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:* \$5,871,898; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Air Canada Centre, Toronto**; *Attendance:* 65,690; *Ticket Range:* \$109-\$58.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Jan. 21-30; *No. of Shows:* 4
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$1,387,755; *Event:* Aerosmith; *Venue:* **BankAtlantic Center, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 14,532; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$55; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-House; *Dates:* Jan. 19; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$1,287,057; *Event:* Aerosmith; *Venue:* **St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla.**; *Attendance:* 13,148; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$55; *Promoter:* Live Nation, In-House; *Dates:* Jan. 17; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$1,204,593; *Event:* Bon Jovi; *Venue:* **Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul, Minn.**; *Attendance:* 15,531; *Ticket Range:* \$89.50-\$49.50; *Promoter:* AEG Live, Concerts West; *Dates:* Jan. 27; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$1,176,555; *Event:* Aerosmith; *Venue:* **Philips Arena, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 11,904; *Ticket Range:* \$125-\$55; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Jan. 15; *No. of Shows:* 1

10,001-15,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,579,500; *Event:* Arturio Gatti vs. James Damgaard; *Venue:* **Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall**; *Attendance:* 10,996; *Ticket Range:* \$300-\$50; *Promoter:* Caesars Atlantic City & Main Events; *Dates:* Jan. 28; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$622,070; *Event:* INXS; *Venue:* **Mandalay Bay Events Center, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 8,890; *Ticket Range:* \$80.25-\$47.25; *Promoter:* Fantasma, Metropolitan; *Dates:* Jan. 28; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 3) *Gross Sales:* \$316,835; *Event:* Backstreet Boys; *Venue:* **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; *Attendance:* 4,866; *Ticket Range:* \$65.11; *Promoter:* Frontier Touring Company *Dates:* Jan. 28; *No. of Shows:* 1
- 4) *Gross Sales:* \$162,232; *Event:* IFMA Freestyle Motocross FMX; *Venue:* **Selland Arena, Fresno, Calif.**; *Attendance:* 9,851; *Ticket Range:* \$22-\$5; *Promoter:* Live Nation Motor Sports; *Dates:* Jan. 27-28; *No. of Shows:* 2
- 5) *Gross Sales:* \$100,285; *Event:* Indoor Midget Auto Racing; *Venue:* **Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall**; *Attendance:* 5,312; *Ticket Range:* \$27-\$20; *Promoter:* Len Sammons Productions; *Dates:* Jan. 20-21; *No. of Shows:* 2

5,001-10,000 Seats

- 1) *Gross Sales:* \$1,046,836; *Event:* Chinese New Year Gala "Myths and Legends"; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 14,046; *Ticket Range:* \$195.50-\$44.50; *Promoter:* New Tang Dynasty; *Dates:* Jan. 20-21; *No. of Shows:* 3
- 2) *Gross Sales:* \$685,659; *Event:* Rain; *Venue:* **Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York**; *Attendance:* 9,675; *Ticket Range:* \$145.50-\$55.50; *Promoter:* Trinity

International Organization LLC; *Dates:* Feb. 2-3; *No. of Shows:* 2

3) *Gross Sales:* \$626,189; *Event:* Beauty and the Beast; *Venue:* **Aladdin Theatre, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 3,800; *Ticket Range:* \$100-\$31; *Promoter:* BACI Management; *Dates:* Feb. 1-5; *No. of Shows:* 7

4) *Gross Sales:* \$464,300; *Event:* The Same Song; *Venue:* **Radio City Music Hall, New York**; *Attendance:* 5,408; *Ticket Range:* \$193.50-\$53.50; *Promoter:* East West International Cultural Exchange; *Dates:* Jan. 23; *No. of Shows:* 1

5) *Gross Sales:* \$355,020; *Event:* Ricky Martin; *Venue:* **Aladdin Theatre, Las Vegas**; *Attendance:* 5,768; *Ticket Range:* \$85-\$45; *Promoter:* Live Nation; *Dates:* Jan. 27; *No. of Shows:* 1

5,000 or Fewer Seats

1) *Gross Sales:* \$774,246; *Event:* Annie; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 20,507 *Ticket Range:* \$55-\$20; *Promoter:* Theater of the Stars; *Dates:* Jan. 25-29 *No. of Shows:* 7

2) *Gross Sales:* \$651,234; *Event:* Lord of the Dance; *Venue:* **Cliffs Pavilion, Southend-on-Sea, England**; *Attendance:* 12,440 *Ticket Range:* \$57.92-\$26.73; *Promoter:* 3A Entertainment, Jack Utsick Presents; *Dates:* Jan. 17-22 *No. of Shows:* 8

3) *Gross Sales:* \$616,634; *Event:* Lord of The Dance; *Venue:* **Plymouth (England) Pavilion** ; *Attendance:* 12,480; *Ticket Range:* \$57.83-\$26.69; *Promoter:* 3A Entertainment, Jack Utsick NE Presents; *Dates:* Jan. 24-29; *No. of Shows:* 8

4) *Gross Sales:* \$587,776; *Event:* Larry the Cable Guy; *Venue:* **Paramount Theatre, Seattle**; *Attendance:* 14,942; *Ticket Range:* \$39.25; *Promoter:* Outback Concerts; *Dates:* Feb. 1-4 *No. of Shows:* 6

5) *Gross Sales:* \$502,127; *Event:* Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; *Venue:* **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**; *Attendance:* 15,097; *Ticket Range:* \$47-\$17; *Promoter:* Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; *Dates:* Feb. 2-5; *No. of Shows:* 5

Compiled by Kristin Sarbeck, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

Rendering of Wembley Arena renovation



LIVE NATION MOVES FURTHER INTO UK MARKET WITH NEW DEALS

Live Nation has signed a 15-year deal to manage and promote events in London's famed Wembley Arena through a deal brokered by its subsidiary, Hamsard. The live entertainment company struck the deal with Wembley London Limited, a subsidiary of Quintain Estates and Development PLC at a time when the venue is undergoing a \$60

million rehab. It is expected to reopen in April.

"Wembley Arena is one of the great icons of live entertainment," Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino said in a statement. (Live Nation refused requests for further comment on the deal.) "We're thrilled to add Wembley Arena to our roster of globally operated venues and know that we can continue to keep the brand of this magnificently restored venue in the highest light." The first show after the refurbishment will be a concert by British electro-pop icons Depeche Mode on April 2, 2006.

As part of the deal, Wembley announced plans to host more than 200 concerts and events a year on its grounds, many of which will be promoted by Live Nation. The refurbished venue will be overseen by Live Nation's CEO of Music (UK) Paul Latham. Though it is one of the largest venues in England, Wembley is not Live Nation's first long-term management deal for an arena in the UK, as it has management deals in place with Hallam FM Arena in Sheffield and several other regional theaters in the UK.

Just after the announcement of the Live Nation deal for Wembley, the arena announced that it had reached a new multi-year deal with Ticketmaster, which will be its preferred ticketing provider effective March 1, 2006. Under the deal, Wembley will use Ticketmaster's AccessManager ticket authentication system, as well as the ticket downloading/printing technology ticketFast.

There are 50 events already confirmed for 2006 and many more scheduled.

Even as work continues on Wembley, Live Nation announced that it has been chosen, along with Gaming International Ltd. as one of the preferred developers for the redevelopment and management of London's Milton Keynes National Bowl. The bid from the pair includes plans to increase the stadium's capacity from 65,000 to 75,000, installing a new arch stage and building a Bowl Pavilion suitable for staging indoor events year-round.

The combination of the European gaming giant and the U.S. based concert and promotions leader was the key to the winning bid, according to Alan Bates, senior regeneration manager for the Milton Keynes Partnership, a government agency that owns the land being redeveloped. The selection of Live Nation as a development partner was made through a formal bid process involving the land owner, Milton Keynes Partnership, and planning authority, Milton Keynes Council.

"From our point of view, the consortium of Gaming and Live Nation coming together was a very powerful partnership for us in assessing who we should work with over the next several years to make sure the Bowl took form to the best of its potential," said Bates. "It gave us confidence to have the world leader in live entertainment working to give a spark in Milton Keynes and attract international artists. The Bowl has been successful in the past and that is what we want to ensure in the future"

Without the combination of Gaming and Nation, the pitch for the Keynes redevelopment would not have been as strong, Bates explained. The deal was being hashed out before Clear Channel Entertainment spun off Live Nation in late 2005 and the name change had no effect on the bid process or the final deal. The 125-year terms of the deal are akin to a lifetime contract, with the Partnership holding the rights to sell the land surrounding the arena, according to Bates.

"It's structured so we will hold the arena itself in perpetuity, but we had to put a limit on the lease in legal terms," Bates explained. "That enables the consortium to go after people to invest in the arena and one of the things we are looking to have people invest in heavily is increasing the capacity."

When the arena increases its seating by 10,000 to 75,000, Bates said it will put Keynes in the top four of capacity for UK arenas behind Hyde Park, Knebworth and the new Wembley. Bates would not disclose the financial terms of the deal, but added that it is not merely to bring events to an expanded stadium.

"It's a 30 hectare [74 acre] site and it will be developed with a four-star, 120-room hotel and a new skateboard park that will be used for demonstration during the 2012 Olympics and for the local people to use," Bates said. "There will also be a new greyhound stadium with an attached 2,000-capacity indoor arena for smaller events and for use by the local community." A big emphasis of the plan, according to Bates, is increasing access to the area for the local community, because the Bowl is currently cut off from locals. The plan is to open the area up to local events four or five times a year and have an inviting mix of cafes, restaurants, bars and cycling and walking trails.

Current plans call for the first bits of improvement to begin taking place on the grounds over the next 6-12 months, during which time the Bowl will remain open for events, including an upcoming June 3 show by shock rocker Alice Cooper and Deep Purple promoted by the new consortium. The changes to the Arena's capacity and stage will begin in late 2006 to early 2007, paving the way for it to be open for the summer 2007 season for at least four different acts, some playing two- or three-day stands. In addition to the 10-12 days of rock shows per year, Bates said there are plans to deck the arena out as an ice arena during December and January for use by the general public and to possibly hold a major Hindu religious festival on the grounds once a year.
— Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Alan Bates (011) 44 1908 353636; Ray Yeung, Brainerd Communications for Live Nation, (212) 739-6735

Garda Belts vs. Atomic Bombshells, Feb. 4 (Photo by Tony Nelson)



ROLLER DERBY HEATS UP WITH NEW TV SHOW

With the A&E television station's new reality show profiling the life of women in roller derby, which debuted last month (www.aetv.com/rollergirls/), the sport's popularity is expected to skyrocket.

There are other signs that the sport of female roller derbies is growing. In the past, the Minnesota RollerGirl's

four league teams mainly played each other. Now, all four teams will be heading west at the end of this month to join 19 other sister leagues from across the country in the nation's first-ever Dust Devil female roller derby tournament. Taking place Feb. 24–26 at Bladeworld Indoor Sports Center in Tucson, Ariz., this tournament will determine the national championship team.

Admission is set at \$15 or \$30 for a three-day pass.

The Minnesota RollerGirls league was established in August 2004 by Mary "Head Trauma" Donnelly with a team of six women. The amateur, all-women flat-track leagues now has four teams — Atomic Bombshells, Dagger Dolls, Garda Belts and Rockits — and a total of 60 players. "I was looking for a fun, social sport when I started the league," Donnelly said. "I played hockey in college, moving from Los Angeles to

Minnesota. When I began reading about the Texas RollerGirls, I decided I wanted to start a league here."

She invested \$700 start-up money into the project. Skaters who wanted to be involved simply paid \$30 per month for six months to skate at the Cheap Skate Roller Rink in Coon Rapids, Minn. These days, the potential players, amateur skaters from a variety of professions ranging in age from 21 to 47, participate in tryouts. "We had 100 girls try out for 30 open spots last season," Donnelly said. The 2006 season runs from September through April.

When the Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul was chosen as the home of the league's monthly roller derbies in March of 2005, the Minnesota RollerGirls became the country's first amateur women's roller derby team to perform in a professional venue rather than a rink. "The RollerGirls and the St. Paul Sports Council got together to discuss the RollerGirls' interest in St. Paul and a bigger venue than the skating rink they were currently playing in," said Jim Ibister, vice president and general manager of the St. Paul RiverCentre and 44,800-square-foot Roy Wilkins Auditorium, which was built in 1932. "When we all got together, we discovered that the Wilkins Auditorium was a perfect match."

"We have more flexible times to utilize the auditorium," Donnelly said. "With this venue, we are able to hold most of our bouts on Friday and Saturday nights, and we are able to more easily accommodate practice times with skaters' diverse work schedules." She added that the league received many requests from fans to move to a more centralized location and saw its relocation to Wilkins Auditorium as an opportunity to deliver upon the request. "Despite being in a much larger space with a capacity of more than 5,000 seats, the bouts are just as intimate as they were during the league's inaugural season."

The shows attract a diverse audience, ranging in age from infants to seniors. But the majority of the fans are between 20 and 40 years old. The monthly two-hour derbies typically attract crowds of 2,000. Local bands play at half time.

The league handles most of its own grassroots marketing, which mainly consists of hosting its own Web site, handing out posters and flyers at local events like festivals and block parties, and ticket giveaways by its sponsor, public radio station 89.3. "We have no marketing budget at all," Donnelly said. The team also holds fundraising parties throughout the year.

"The facility picks up more of the traditional marketing elements, such as [their] facility Web site, Xcel Energy Center in-game advertising during [National Hockey League] Wild and [National Lacrosse League] Swarm games, reader boards, marquees and print ads," Ibister said.

Game costs are covered by a number of sponsors, including Pabst Blue Ribbon, Minnesota Public Radio 89.3 and Station 4, which is a local bar. "Our sponsors help pay for venue costs," Donnelly said. "Team members do not get paid and are responsible for the cost of their own uniforms and equipment." All game proceeds go to local charities, such as the Minnesota Crisis Center, Minnesota Aids Project and the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Ibister wouldn't reveal exact figures, but said venue recoveries and charges are kept low. "The event is more of an extension of venue marketing than a true revenue generation vehicle," he said.

Tickets for games at the auditorium are priced at \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door

for general admission. Children aged 9 and under are free. There also is On-Track seating available for \$16 a ticket, where fans can sit on the floor 4 feet away from the track. This seating is limited to ticket holders 18 years of age and older.

Donnelly said, due to the excitement and entertainment it offers, this sport's popularity is definitely growing. "We were one of America's first rollergirl leagues, and now there are 50 to 60 leagues across the country," she said. — Lisa White
Interviewed for this story: Mary Donnelly, (612) 239-4353; Jim Ibister, (651) 265-4801

MARKETING

XX Olympic Winter Games tickets



FLURRY OF LAST-MINUTE TICKET SALES FOR WINTER OLYMPICS

ROME — With just days to go, ticket sales for the XX Olympic Winter Games in Torino to be held Feb. 10-26 are on track to meet targets, according to organizers TOROC.

As of Feb. 7, approximately 730,000 tickets had been sold, according to Giorgio Lauretta, director of ticketing.

With a value of \$72.85 million (U.S.), this puts the organizers firmly on track to meet their target budget of \$76.44 million, equivalent to sales of 815,000 tickets, by the end of the games. "We'll definitely make the budget," said Lauretta. "I remember Athens [Olympics] reached its budget four days before the end [of the event] and I think we'll beat that, but we'll definitely make it."

Although tickets have been on sale since November 2004, only 580,000 of the 1 million tickets available had been sold by Oct. 24. Recent sales have been boosted by increased press and TV coverage and the torch relay, as well as by the opening of a main ticketing center in Piazza d'Armi and of box offices in the Olympic villages of Torino, Bardonecchia and Sestriere on Feb. 1.

Since the opening of the box offices, organizers have noticed a change in consumers' purchasing habits. "Until a few days ago, 50 percent of ticket sales were online, now more tickets are being sold through the box offices," Lauretta said.

Today (Feb. 8), another 15 box offices were set to open near all sports venues in a bid to spur last-minute sales. And there will be a small block of tickets to be sold during the games.

In addition, 42,000 tickets have been sold at a cost of \$3.58 per ticket to schools in Torino and Piemonte.

Of the tickets already sold, approximately 380,000 have been purchased overseas from 45 different countries, notably the United States, France, Germany, Holland, Japan and Norway, with the rest going to Italy.

By discipline, male sports have in general proved more popular at the box office than female, said Lauretta. "Curling has also sold better than I would have expected whilst sales of sports that are less well-known in Italy such as ice hockey and skeleton have

fared less well," he said.

Ticket sales account, however, for only a small portion of TOROC's overall \$1.41 billion budget for the Olympics. The bulk of the income will come from television rights, which account for \$56.13 million, and sponsorship, \$501.61 million. Fifty-seven companies are now signed up to sponsor the event including the event's main sponsors: the Fiat Group, banking group SanPaolo, telecommunications firms Tim and Telecom Italia, and Regione Piemonte.

A budget shortfall of \$48.97 million is expected to be made up by lottery funding totaling an estimated \$28.66 million with the balance provided by The City of Torino and the Region of Piemonte.

In other news, security measures have been stepped up with the Italian Government committing 15,000 people to the event. In addition, 18,000 volunteers will be on hand throughout the games.

Some 1 million spectators are expected to attend this 20th edition of the Winter Olympics in total, along with 2,500 athletes, 650 judges and referees, 6,000 guests of sponsors and 10,000 media representatives.

In Italy tickets can also be purchased at all branches of the Banca Sanpaolo and its affiliates, TicketOne box offices, and via Telecom Italia's 1254 service. — Michele Howe
Interviewed for this story: Giorgio Lauretta, 00 39 011 11 2006; TOROC media representative, 00 39 334 112 4916

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SHORT TAKES

GREAT WHITE BAND MANAGER PLEADS GUILTY

Dan Biechele, manager of Great White when 100 people died in a fire at the Station , West Warwick, R.I., Feb. 20, 2003, plead guilty Jan. 31 to 100 of the 200 manslaughter

counts filed against him, according to Superior Court Judge Francis J. Darigan Jr. of Providence. The pleas was to be formally entered and accepted Feb. 7. Sentencing follows after victims and families have time to enter sentencing statements. Thomas Brody, Biechele's lawyer, would not discuss negotiations leading up to the plea. A fireworks display, a standard part of the show, ignited a foam wall and flames quickly consumed the nightclub, injuring more than 200 people. Club owners Jeffrey A. and Michael A. Derderian were each charged in December 2003 with 200 counts of involuntary manslaughter, two per fatality. No date has been set for the Derderians' trial.

Contact: Superior Court, Providence, R.I., (401) 222-3250

BUD & UNITED CENTER STRIKE 10-YEAR DEAL

Budweiser and Bud Light, the Official Beers of the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Hockey League (NHL), will be the exclusive beer sponsor of the Chicago Bulls, Chicago Blackhawks and the United Center as part of a 10-year deal starting with the 2006-2007 season and lasting through the 2015-2016 season. Anheuser-Busch will be the alcohol beverage partner for Bulls over-the-air television, both teams' radio broadcasts and promotions, the building's exclusive malt beverage advertiser, in-arena signage and in-game presence for all events and games, and rights to conduct a variety of consumer promotions around each sponsorship.

Contact: Brian Eaton, Anheuser-Busch Inc., (314) 577-3914

CARIBBEAN BASEBALL SIGNS WITH MLBAM FOR WEB

The Caribbean Baseball Confederation has signed a 3-year partnership agreement with MLB Advanced Media (MLBAM), the interactive media and Internet company of Major League Baseball, for MLBAM to manage, host and develop the Confederation's interactive rights. They have jointly developed with MLB.com the Spanish and English language Web sites. As part of the agreement, the entities will offer fans the opportunity to connect with leagues and teams from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Venezuela and Mexico who make up the Alianza Latina de Beisbol. Alianza Latina de Beisbol is a joint venture between the Caribbean Baseball Confederation and Altus/B2Z Entertainment. As a result of the partnership, Altus/B2Z Entertainment has acquired the marketing, broadcast, event, licensing and interactive media rights for the Caribbean Baseball Confederation exclusively.

Contact: Jim Gallagher, MLB.com, (212) 485-3182

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