

April Parnell

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Greetings April,

Several of you have giving us great feedback on our plans to redesign the VT Pulse. As you might have heard, we are considering eliminating the right column, and integrating the content into a two-column format. Would that work better for you? Please send your thoughts and suggestions to dave@venuestoday.com.

VT NEWS

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

TORNADO HITS ATLANTA VENUES DURING BIG-TIME EVENTS

A tornado ripped a hole through the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta and damaged the roof of the Georgia Dome



Trey Feazell, senior vice president, Philips Arena, Atlanta, was actually sitting in the Georgia Dome as a fan watching Southeastern Conference college basketball when a tornado ripped through downtown Atlanta Friday evening.

"Everyone seemed pretty calm when it happened," Feazell said. "I think they did an incredible job. Once the game was delayed, they kept everyone calm by continuously giving updates."

The game in the Georgia Dome between Mississippi State and the University of Alabama was in overtime with thousands of fans watching.

Katy Pando, spokesperson, Georgia Dome and Georgia World Congress Center, said building officials are still taking inventory of the damage and don't have any financial figures or details about the extent of the damage. She said within 15 seconds of the storm hitting, they were informing the fans what had happened and were keeping them informed by both audio and visual methods.

"We were very fortunate that folks were still in the dome," Pando said Tuesday, noting that was because the game had gone into overtime and fans remained in the

Quote of the Week

"There are more bands here than ever, but when speaking with other booking agents, you get this collective sense of who to catch and who to miss. That's more valuable than any media guide or South by Southwest hand-out."

— John Pantel of United Talent Agency on South by Southwest.

JONAS BROTHERS TACKLE TEXAS

HOTTickets

HOT TICKETS is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to VT PULSE. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since **Feb. 26, 2008**.

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

15,001 or More Seats

1) Wisin & Yandel
 Gross Sales: \$2,398,560; Venue: **Coliseo De Puerto Rico**, San Juan;
 Attendance: 37,689;
 Ticket Range: \$180-\$30; Promoter: No Limit Entertainment Corp.; Dates: March 6-8; No. of Shows: 3

2) Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band



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building. Georgia Dome management then delayed the game for one hour at which point play resumed and the game was completed in The remainder of the conference championship was played at Georgia Tech. Pando said the Dome will reopen March 23 for the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church Easter Sunday service which traditionally draws 30,000 people..

Damage to the Congress Center was worse, involving all three convention halls, A, B, and C, and including roof and water damage. There was a local event set up in the center at the time. Events have been canceled for the Congress Center through this Friday, but are scheduled to carry on with two large trade shows, the Window Covering Expo and the National Propane Gas Expo, next week. "There have been 1,000 workers on site every day since Saturday," Pando said.

Between 500 and 1,000 people were working around the clock to clean up debris caused by the high winds at the complex which also includes the Centennial Olympic Park. The latter still has "glass in the grass" and will be closed a little longer.

Meanwhile, at Philips Arena, late into the NBA game between the Atlanta Hawks and the Los Angeles Clippers, the storm came and went.

"They finished the game and everyone egressed in a normal manner," Fezell said. "We did have some cosmetic damage, but no structural damage. We had some panels blow off the roof."

Reports stated that there was significant damage to other downtown structures including The Tabernacle, Live Nation's downtown music venue, and the CNN Center, hotels and downtown loft apartments.

Live Nation reported that The Tabernacle, Atlanta's 98-year-old landmark music venue, sustained "significant damage" and structural engineers and other experts are currently assessing the overall condition of the building and a timetable for re-opening.

Holli Mattison, media spokesperson for that venue, said there was no event in The Tabernacle at the time of the tornado.

Up and down the coast, venue managers were preparing for the storm which chose Atlanta as ground zero. While Mark Zimmerman, Khalil Johnson and Carl Atkins at the GWCC are cleaning up, Larry Perkins, assistant general manager and arena security contact, RBC Center, Raleigh, N.C., is counting his blessings. He said his building was in the path of the same line of storms that went through Atlanta. Perkins, who also helped to create the Safety and Security Task Force for the International Association of Assembly Managers, said his building was holding a Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference tournament.

"We met with the commissioner of the conference that day and talked to him about our safety procedures," Perkins said. "We had a NCAA event set for Saturday. They had already come out and put tents up. They didn't have time to come back and take them down. I had a crew go out and secure them."

Perkins said he is 30 feet below grade at the arena level. "And, actually, our building is rated at being able to sustain winds up to 140 mph," he said. "But, we do have a lot of glass."

He said they were watching the weather constantly that day. "We had fire, police and medical on hand," he said. "We were in emergency operating mode."

One thing Perkins also does is bring the announcer in on the security meetings.

"If we get spikes in our electric power, we have an

Gross Sales: \$1,608,720; Venue: **Qwest Center Omaha** (Neb.); Attendance: 17,208; Ticket Range: \$95-\$65; Promoter: Jam Productions; Dates: March 14; No. of Shows: 1

3) Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band
Gross Sales: \$1,583,879; Venue: **Xcel Energy Center**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Attendance: 17,002; Ticket Range: \$95-\$65; Promoter: Jam Productions; Dates: March 16; No. of Shows: 1

4) Brooks and Dunn
Gross Sales: \$1,213,733; Venue: **AcerArena**, Sydney, Australia; Attendance: 12,153; Ticket Range: \$114.28-\$86.86; Promoter: Chugg Entertainment, Rob Potts Entertainment Edge; Dates: March 10; No. of Shows: 1

5) Foo Fighters
Gross Sales: \$1,144,734; Venue: **The Forum**, Inglewood, Calif.; Attendance: 30,181; Ticket Range: \$45.50-\$25.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: March 5-6; No. of Shows: 2

10,001-15,000
Seats

1) KISS
Gross Sales: \$815,256; Venue: **Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre**; Attendance: 6,025; Ticket Range: \$206.31-\$122.46; Promoter: Andrew McManus Presents; Dates: March 18; No. of Shows: 1

2) Miguel Bose
Gross Sales: \$465,620; Venue: **Cox Arena at Aztec Bowl**, San Diego; Attendance: 6,860; Ticket Range: \$85.75-\$59.75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: March 2; No. of Shows: 1

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Georgia Dome, Atlanta - Security Manager
Turnkey Sports & Entertainment for Madison Sq. Garden, Las Vegas - SVP of Ticket & Luxury Suite Sales

emergency generator that kicks on within six seconds," he said. "But, to get those generators up to game operation mode, it takes about 18 minutes. We want the announcer to be able to relay this information to the patrons and let them know what is going on. We have power for the television, P.A. system, phones and elevator.

"If we were in the path of the storm and it was imminent, we would direct our patrons to remain inside, and go to the lower part of the arena or to the interior walls," Perkins said. "You are much safer with the stability of the walls." - Pam Sherborne

Interviewed for this story: Katy Pando, (404) 223-4900, Trey Feazell, (404) 878-3005; Holli Mattison, (404) 233-8889; Larry Perkins, (919) 345-6990



It's Spring Cleaning Time!

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BOOKINGS

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST MERGE INDIE ROCK WITH INDUSTRY HEAVYWEIGHTS

Buzz band Justice performs during the C3 and Playboy Party on the second night of South by Southwest (VT Photo)



AUSTIN, Texas — Four daunting days in Austin, Texas, and South by Southwest is a wrap — a fraction of its former bustling-self just hours after the biggest-festival-yet came to an official close on Saturday night. This year, 12,500 registrants watched 1,700 bands at over 80 venues.

As with each South by Southwest festival, the most worthy bands going into the festival are oft-replaced by unknown stars with a smaller cult following in their own markets, supplemented with the squawking of the blogosphere and internet music sites.

"You look at Vampire Weekend and they have a pretty tight show, but they got so big so quick that a lot of people are beginning to resent them and suddenly the hype begins to surpass the delivery," said Eric Niles, a booking agent for Goldenvoice Entertainment, who spent Saturday evening catching one of Vampire Weekend's crowded sets at Antone's. "I think a lot of people have begun looking elsewhere for the hottest new band."

Perhaps that would-be electro-rock outfit called The Ting Tings, who performed a series of packed showcases at SXSW and, in true indie-style, haven't released an album in the United States yet. Other acts drawing significant

3) Thunder Nationals

Gross Sales: \$359,790; Venue: **Van Andel Arena**, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Attendance: 27,809; Ticket Range: \$20-\$17; Promoter: Live Nation Motorsports; Dates: March 7-9; No. of Shows: 4

4) Kid Rock

Gross Sales: \$335,600; Venue: **Bi-Lo Center**, Greenville, S.C.; Attendance: 9,473; Ticket Range: \$45-\$25; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: March 1; No. of Shows: 1

5) Jonas Brothers

Gross Sales: \$335,165; Venue: **Cajundome**, Lafayette, La.; Attendance: 8,012; Ticket Range: \$47.75-\$37.75; Promoter: Live Nation, In-house; Dates: March 2; No. of Shows: 1

5,001-10,000 Seats

1) Borderfest 2008

Gross Sales: \$449,445; Venue: **Dodge Arena, Hidalgo**, Texas; Attendance: 5,076; Ticket Range: \$115-\$65; Promoter: Live Nation, In-house; Dates: Feb. 28; No. of Shows: 1

2) Jonas Brothers

Gross Sales: \$391,650; Venue: **Dodge Arena, Hidalgo**, Texas; Attendance: 5,878; Ticket Range: \$75-\$55; Promoter: Live Nation, In-house; Dates: March 1; No. of Shows: 1

3) Jonas Brothers

Gross Sales: \$298,076; Venue: **NOKIA Theatre at Grand Prairie** (Texas); Attendance: 6,330; Ticket Range: \$49.50-\$39.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: March 4; No. of Shows: 1

4) The Moody Blues

Clarín - Salesperson
for College Market

Melbourne
(Australia) Cricket
Club - Club
Functions
Coordinator

Gwinnett Center
(Conv. Ctr & PAC),
Duluth, Ga -
Assistant Box Office
Manager

AristoMedia/Marco
Music Group,
Nashville, TN -
Marco Club
Connection Member

*VIEW THE FULL
LISTINGS*

buzz this year included Electro-pop outfit Does It Offend You, Yeah?, Soundtrack of Our Lives and Tapes and Tapes, all of whom packed several showcases and brought wrap-around lines for their respective gigs.

"I would say this was one of the strongest South by Southwest yet because the level of talent is really strong," said John Pantel of United Talent Agency, who said one of his favorite showcase bands was a rock outfit from rural Pennsylvania called Lucero. "There are more bands here than ever, but when speaking with other booking agents, you get this collective sense of who to catch and who to miss. That's more valuable than any media guide or South by Southwest hand-out."

And while independent bands dominate the South by Southwest soundscape, established music industry players are increasingly growing their presence at the festival. Austin promoter C3 Entertainment, organizers of Austin City Limits and Lollapalooza, hosted an invite-only party with Playboi featuring electronic music icons Justice and Moby. DirectTV hosted two free showcases for registrants and members of the public, broadcasting the performances on its satellite-television network, while rapper Ice Cube used his Q&A session to announce an all-hip hop television station and music tour with DJ Pooh and Snoop Dogg.

One of the most highly anticipated and squarely disappointing sessions came from Ticketmaster CEO Sean Moriarty. In his hour-long interview with Ethan Smith of the Wall Street Journal, Moriarty opted not to comment on Smith's inquiries about Ticketmaster's proposed investment into AEG, a deal that later appeared to have collapsed without comment from either side.

Also, dodging questions on the company's split with Live Nation, its plans for Paciolan or its reaction to Major League Baseball's alliance with StubHub, Moriarty seemed to only get animated when asked about the potential of the secondary market and dynamic pricing using auction tools.

"It's going to take another five years to get very fluid dynamic pricing applied to wide swaths of inventory," Moriarty said. "The technology is there — I don't think there's any downside. The perceived risk would be that with greater transparency — if people look at a show and a show appears to be a dog — it reflects poorly potentially on the artist, potentially on the promoter, potentially on the venue."

"Ultimately," Moriarty continued, "when you look at what a ticket is — a license to sit in a specific seat at a specific time — and recognizing how much the value may fluctuate, it lends itself to a marketplace approach."

At one point in the interview, Ethan suggested that Ticketmaster was the "bad cop" or "lightning rod" for the rest of the live entertainment industry — promoters, artists and venues who receive a portion of Ticketmaster's service charges, but can then turn around and blame the ticketing giant for high ticket prices.

"I would say that in a world where the brand and your experience in the business is everything, being a lightning rod is not a good service business to be in, because ultimately you've got to provide people with a safe and secure and comfortable experience. To the extent that we're being used as a lightning rod, it comes to the detriment of our brand. That may have been true historically but, as we see the business today, that is not the right way to position the business in any way, shape or form." — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: John Pantel, (310) 273-6700;
Erik Niles, (323) 930-5700; Sean Moriarty, (310) 360-2300*

Gross Sales:
\$252,305; Venue:
**Nokia Theatre L.A.
Live**; Attendance:
3,903; Ticket Range:
\$115-\$45; Promoter:
AEG Live,
Goldenvoice; Dates:
March 11; No. of
Shows: 1

5) Aventura
Gross Sales:
\$247,460; Venue:
**Event Center at San
Jose (Calif.) State
University**;
Attendance: 4,163;
Ticket Range: \$85-
\$45; Promoter:
Marquez Brothers
Entertainment;
Dates: March 9; No.
of Shows: 1

5,000 or Fewer
Seats

**1) Jesus Christ
Superstar**
Gross Sales:
\$616,208; Venue:
**Fox Theatre,
Detroit**;
Attendance: 11,439;
Ticket Range: \$69-
\$22; Promoter:
Magic Arts &
Entertainment,
Olympia
Entertainment;
Dates: March 14-16;
No. of Shows: 5

2) Linkin Park
Gross Sales:
\$350,807; Venue:
**The Joint, Las
Vegas**; Attendance:
4,100; Ticket Range:
\$179-\$73.50;
Promoter: AEG Live;
Dates: March 6-7;
No. of Shows: 2

**3) Michael Flatley's
Lord of the Dance**
Gross Sales:
\$333,065; Venue:
**Broward Center For
The Performing
Arts, Fort
Lauderdale, Fla.**;
Attendance: 5,956;
Ticket Range: \$59-
\$39; Promoter:
Broadway Across
America, In-house;
Dates: March 6-7;
No. of Shows: 3

4) Gipsy Kings
Gross Sales:
\$202,155; Venue:
Chicago Theatre;
Attendance: 2,522;
Ticket Range:
\$92.50-\$47.50;
Promoter: Jam
Productions; Dates:



STADIUMS MARCH MADNESS BRINGS NEW CONFIGURATION FOR TWO REGIONAL TOURNEYS

Plywood covers the floor of Ford Field in Detroit as workers plan to transform the field into a basketball court. The new configuration is an experiment by the NCAA to improve sightlines and create a better television-viewing experience.



NCAA officials are experimenting with a new-look configuration for two of the regional Sweet 16 and Elite 8 matchups in stadiums on March 27-30. Ford Field in Detroit and Reliant Stadium in Houston are both experimenting with the configuration that will improve sightlines and enhance the television-viewer experience.

Unlike past stadium games, which placed the court in one of the end-zones and curtained off a section of the stadium, the new configuration will place the hardwood down the 50-yard-line nearly 27 inches off the ground – to create a staging effect as four teams battle it out for a spot in the Final Four. The configuration will require 110,000 sq. ft. of carpeting and another 80,000 sq. ft. of plywood and plastic to protect the artificial turf. The NCAA has designed a seating system that will run from the permanent seats in the stands to temporary seats stretching down the court and wrapping around the hardwood.

“You’re literally going straight down to courtside. You get to utilize all the best seats in the house, rather than half of the house,” said Shea Guinn, president of SMG-Reliant Park, adding that the facility will have an approximate 45,000-person capacity because of some partial curtaining of the end zones, which will be removed for future NCAA events.

Ford Field will operate at a capacity of 74,000 – shy of its record BasketBowl event in December 2003, which packed in 78,129 fans for a battle between Kentucky and Michigan State.

The other two venues participating in the NCAA Regionals are arenas, the Charlotte (N.C.) Bobcats Arena and U.S. Airways Arena in Phoenix, and will continue to operate within a traditional configuration. The Alamodome in San Antonio, host of the Final Four and the National Championship, will be the last stadium to use the older configuration.

The massive conversion began on March 11 at Ford Field with 100 workers expected to work in 14-hour shifts.

“This is the first time this has ever been done,” said Bob Gardner, Ford Field’s senior director of facility management. “We’re expecting to finish installation on March 25, which is about three days before the games begin.”

March 6; No. of Shows: 1

5) **Katt Williams**
Gross Sales: \$189,891; Venue: **Chevrolet Theatre**, Wallingford, Conn.; Attendance: 4,508; Ticket Range: \$46-\$41; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: March 6; No. of Shows: 1

Compiled by Rob Ocampo
HotTickets@venuestoday.com

SHORT TAKES

>> **COACHELLA PARTNERS WITH AMTRAK** – Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival producer Goldenvoice has partnered with Amtrak to provide a limited number of festival campers with a free train ride to and from this year’s event, which is set for April 25-27 at Empire Polo Field in Indio, Calif. The free train ride, dubbed Coachella Express, will transport 500 festival campers from Los Angeles’ Union Station to a temporary train platform in Indio.
Contact: Stacey Vee, (323) 930-5700

>> **OLYMPIA RENEWS PARTNERSHIP WITH VEE** – Olympia Entertainment has signed a five-year extension with VEE Corporation for Sesame Street Live at the Fox Theatre. Sesame Street Live has performed at the facility for 17 years during its 28-year history, and has made stops at other Olympia facilities, including the Fox Theatre and Joe Louis Arena.
Contact: Mary Beth Lantzy, (313) 471-3224

For Houston, the transition will need to be done in approximately 80 hours because of scheduling with the Houston Rodeo and Livestock Show. "On Saturday night the last concert ends and we will begin the move-out of the rodeo and get the teams in the building to begin their practices on Thursday morning. We'll be working 24 hours, around the clock," Guinn said. "It's a huge endeavor. We'll have 65,000 people at the last concert and we've got to get all the dirt out of the building for the rodeo portion. We've got to get the old seating system out and livestock stalls removed. The rodeo draws 2 million people in 21 days. It's a huge event. We usually allot about 10 days for the move out of the rodeo."

The benefit of having the event so close to the rodeo is that the tournament can utilize the livestock show's eight-sided video board hanging above the court, to broadcast replays and other game content.

Guinn said the new configuration will be a test-run for when Houston hosts another Regional tournament in 2010 and the Final Four in 2011. Detroit will host the Final Four in 2009 and the yet-to-be opened Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis will host the tournament in 2010.

The tournament officially began on Tuesday with a play-in game between Coppin State of Baltimore and Mount Saint Mary's of Emmitsburg, Md., at the University of Dayton (Ohio) Arena, which has hosted the game since 2001.

"When you host the event, you're essentially handing your facility over to the NCAA and that means you have to cover most of your corporate sponsorships," said Bill Thomas, assistant director of Athletic Communications at Dayton, adding that his facility is one of the only buildings allowed to sell alcohol during the tournament.

Neither Reliant Stadium nor Ford Field can sell alcohol during their portion of the tournament. Ford Field officials are even being required to place 47,000 blue labels over their cup holders because they display Aquafina labels. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Shea Guinn, (310) 481-3407; Bob Gardner, (313) 262-2000; Bill Thomas, (937) 229-4635

LIVE NATION ANNOUNCES THREE-DAY BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSIC FEST

Live Nation is launching the three-day Pemberton (B.C.) Music Festival July 25-27, featuring Coldplay, Tom Petty, Nine Inch Nails, and Jay-Z. The event is being organized by Live Nation Canada CEO Shane Bourbonnais in the same Canadian village he lives in and is expecting to power the festival using on-site hydro-electric energy.

Contact: John Vlautin, (310) 867-7127

THE BEAT

FACES AND PLACES

KLAUS JOINS NEDERLANDER/PFM AND VALENTINO SIGNS ON WITH AEG LIVE

Two well-known names in the world of concert promotion announced new affiliations this month.

Bob Klaus, whose tenure with what became Live Nation dates back to Pace Promotions, is the new general manager of the **Durham (N.C.) Performing Arts Center** for a management team that is a collaboration between Nederlander Concerts and Professional Facilities Management (PFM). The 2,800-seat venue opens in December.

Klaus is looking forward to helping position what will be the largest performing arts center in the Carolinas. The \$44 million venture is being funded by the city with \$33.7 million in certificates of participation. The debt service will be \$2.5 million annually.

The city struck a 10-year management/booking deal with Nederlander and PFM four years ago (VT e-newsletter, Nov. 17, 2004), but it has taken this long to get funding in place and construction underway, said Lynn Singleton, PFM president.

According to Scott Misner, who handles publicity for the new center, the deal is a 10-year agreement and the city has no risk for operating losses. The city shares in 60 percent of profits on the backend after administrative services and fees are paid. Those profits are dedicated to a reserve that goes toward future capital improvements.

Klaus said he is currently working out of temporary offices. His professional passion is to create great experiences for the guests, whether that is in an amphitheater or

a performing arts center. The big shows that can't play everywhere will certainly look hard at Durham because of the impressive size of the new venue, he predicted.

Singleton said the partners expect the venue will host 100 shows its first, partial season. They are actually opening ahead of schedule. Nederlander and PFM rolled out the season ticket sales campaign Feb. 28 and as of Tuesday had sold 1,000 subscriptions, Singleton said. Nederlander brought in 3 Mo' Divas to sing snippets from the opening Broadway shows.

Singleton said the collaboration with Nederlander, a first for PFM, has been very easy. "We're both presenting organizations, vertically integrated. We've done other things together. This is not our first date," he said. The performing arts center will host 40 percent Broadway, 40 percent other commercial acts and 20 percent local groups.

John Valentino



Meanwhile, in the wake of the sale of Fantasma to Live Nation following founder Jon Stoll's death (VT e-newsletter, March 12), **John Valentino** has joined **AEG Live**. He will open that firm's Florida office as senior vice president.

Valentino had spent 30 years at Fantasma, working his way up in the organization to a point where he was promoting a lot of events on his own, particularly theater shows.

To arena managers in Florida, who have long done business with Live Nation, AEG and Fantasma, this realignment means more of the same, really. At Amway Arena in Orlando, Allen Johnson counted 28 concerts in 2007, 12 promoted by Live Nation, 7-8 by AEG Live and 3-4 by Fantasma. Now, "I guess the two giants will duke it out," Johnson said. In the end,

Amway Arena will still get about the same number of concerts. "The faces AEG is putting here are familiar to all of us," he said. This move should help them gain a stronger foothold in the Florida market.

Valentino will be joined at AEG Live by fellow Fantasma co-workers George Perley, director of Production; Kathy Bohan, office manager and regional comptroller; and Amanda Ances, marketing manager. - Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Bob Klaus, (919) 618-9980; Lynn Singleton, (401) 421-2997; Allen Johnson, (407) 849-2012



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FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

SAN ANTONIO STOCK SHOW AND RODEO

The rodeo and pig races at this year's San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo



Jan. 31-Feb. 17

Eight attendance record-breaking days at the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo meant a 12-percent increase in attendance over last year.

Sharron Arnold of the marketing department attributed it to the weather. "We had great weather," she said. "It was 75 degrees and no rain."

Of the 21 concerts that played at the 16,500-seat AT&T Center, 13 were sell-outs, including the Jonas Brothers, Alan Jackson and Gary Allan.

Attendance: 1,351,300

Admission: \$5, \$3 for seniors, \$2 for children

Marketing: The department did something new this year and sold \$200 seats for the rodeo and concerts, which otherwise range from \$10 to \$25. The price included a chuckwagon dinner, seats behind the bucking chute and the ability to go down into the dirt to watch the concert from a special commemorative chair.

"By selling those, we were able to be the first rodeo to pay the rodeo contestant fees," Arnold said.

An average of 170 fairgoers a night took advantage of the offer, she said.

Midway: Wade Shows had their best year ever, Arnold said. "They were up 27 percent over last year because of the great weather we had."

Entertainment: Other concerts included Miranda Lambert, Ronnie Milsap, Gretchen Wilson, Brooks & Dunn, Big and Rich, Craig Morgan, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Josh Turner, Los Tigres Del Norte, Sara Evans, Staind, Clay Walker, Joe Nichols and Jason Aldean.

2009 dates: Feb. 5-22 - Mary Wade Burnside

Interviewed for this story: Sharron Arnold, (210) 225-0612

ON THE MENU

CONEXPO-CON/AGG, LAS VEGAS CONVENTION CENTER

Scenes from ConExpo-Con/Agg

March 11-15

Catering Entity: Aramark

Attendance: 142,000 - Said to be largest convention in North America

Food choices at ConExpo-Con/Agg included classic American fare such as hamburgers and cheeseburgers, grilled chicken sandwiches, barbeque pulled pork, beef brisket and baby back ribs.

Following suit with the barbecue culture at the event, Johnsonville brats and Italian sausages with grilled peppers and onions or warmed sauerkraut were available from one of the largest grills in the world, the 65-foot "Johnsonville Big Taste Grill." Fatburger brand hamburgers and made-to-order deli sandwiches with a variety of gourmet spreads and breads were also served. Adding some flavor diversity, Cantonese stir fry, Thai and Vietnamese grill and noodle dishes, and Mexican and Tex Mex entrees were also available to attendees.

A "flying service" with mini meals was made available to exhibit booth attendees with different courses and options. Aramark Executive Chef Andrew Atwell and his staff serviced various high-end events throughout ConExpo-Con/Agg, and served dishes like Dungeness crab cake salad with an ale-braised beef chili served in a sourdough bread bowl, wild Alaskan grilled salmon with a Dill-Béarnaise sauce on English cucumber salad, and decadent Dine Vegas cheesecake martinis with seasonal berries.

After all five days of the event were said and done, Aramark had served 13,000 cookies, 5,000 gallons of coffee, 100,000 bottles of water, 600 bottles of Moët Chandon champagne, 36,000 deli sandwiches, 34,000 hamburgers and cheeseburgers, and 150 pounds of pretzels.

Preparation: While initial planning began as early as May of 2007, more detailed planning began in October of 2007. Aramark General Manager Jim Kohler had Zone managers prepare by having them create and present PowerPoint presentations, which outlined their responsibilities for the event to the entire permanent staff at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

Staffing: Over 700 line staff and 70 managers were used for the event. The



Aramark main kitchen was in operation 24 hours a day for the week leading up to the event.

Final Thoughts: The event was the largest tradeshow ever held in North America, and used over 5.2 million square feet of exhibit space. Managers reportedly walked about 20 miles a day, or 100 miles total in the five-day period. Kohler explained, "Managing the logistics of the event is the biggest challenge." Those logistics included coordinating three kitchens, six warehouses, eight portable refrigerator units, and over 150 sale points while simultaneously serving restaurant/bistro-style plated meals in many of the exhibit structures. "One of [the kitchens] was built from scratch in leased outdoor space that was literally a parking lot and tennis court," Kohler said. - Linda Domingo

Contact: Jim Kohler, (215) 238-4078

Q&A

VIPER ROOM SHOWCASES EXPANSION PLANS AT SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST

Liam and Me performs during the final Viper Room Showcase Saturday at South by Southwest. (VT Photo)



AUSTIN, Texas - Once synonymous with the Los Angeles rock scene, the Viper Room is planning a major expansion following its February purchase by Harry Morton.

The son of Hard Rock Cafe founder Peter Morton and owner of the Pink Taco Restaurants has hired former House of Blues executive Arich Berghammer as president of his companies and has put him in charge of expanding the Viper Room and Pink Taco chains into new markets, opening 250-500 capacity clubs to hosting a number of touring acts cultivated at the Sunset Strip location.

In charge of producing those concerts is long-time Viper Room Events Coordinator Ed Levy, who will take a special role developing Viper Room events at new facilities, as well as new showcases at independent clubs. Venues Today caught up with Levy at this year's South by Southwest where he was producing the club's third and largest Austin showcase.

Venues Today: Following the recent acquisition, what did you feel you needed to do this year to be a success at South by Southwest?

Ed Levy: We cultivate bands at our L.A. club and we try to make the South by Southwest experience as similar as possible to the Viper Room experience. We bring in musical equipment and our backline is exactly what we use at the club. We use an elevated stage that we brought in that matches the one inside the L.A. Club

VT: Are we going to see the launch of the 'Viper Room Tour'?

Levy: It's possible. It's still a ways off, but it is definitely the intention to bring out bands that are bubbling up. It's difficult because each region where we set up a club is going to have different tastes. Right now we're only doing two festivals per year - CMJ [Music Marathon & Film Festival, New York] and South by Southwest.

VT: Are we going to see more clubs brand themselves nationally, even if they only have one or two locations?

Levy: It's funny because a few of the clubs are starting to do that in L.A. The Roxy did a showcase this year, the Hotel Café has done it for two years now and Spaceland has been doing it for the last three or four years. Clubs do it because they have something to share with a lot of people and there's a sense that their regular line-ups are part of their brand. Hotel Café for example got a lot of press for bringing out their artist Meiko, who is part of the venue's record label and is part of tour they're running through some of the House of Blues clubs.

VT: What about the Viper Room?

Levy: We want to develop our road act. We know that we have a big brand outside of the city and before the acquisition; there was talk of either opening other Viper Room clubs or supporting some type of tour. The SXSW showcase is the next step

for us, testing out the waters to see what works.

VT: This year South by Southwest was cracking down on non-sanctioned parties. Did you do an official South by Southwest showcase?

Levy: No we didn't. We knew we wanted to do four nights and not day-time. They offered us one night and a day-time showcase, which we turned down. We have a good relationship with them, but we had a lot of talent we wanted to showcase and felt it was best to host our own event. We have a good relationship with Club Orchid where the showcase was held and they let us come early to set up our equipment and make some space changes. — Dave Brooks

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