

## Riley Camarillo

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# VT PULSE

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

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## Quote of the Week

*"I am sure we will hit some bumps and learn some things. But, many times, those bumps are smoothed out because it is a new building."*

– Lynn Singleton,  
 President of  
 Professional Facilities  
 Management on the  
 opening of the Durham  
 (N.C.) Performing Arts  
 Center.

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[Elusive As](#)  
[Secondaries Block](#)

## Greetings Riley,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." Our Year-End issue is complete and will be in mailboxes next week. It's a keeper!

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## VT NEWS

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## SHORT TAKES

[>> STATE FAIR STUDY IN](#) — Rod

## TICKETS

### INAUGURATION TICKETS ELUSIVE AS SECONDARIES BLOCK RESALE

*President-elect Barack Obama*



The hottest ticket this January isn't for a college bowl game, or a reunion concert by a mega rock group. On Jan. 20, the stage will be the National Mall and the star is President-elect Barack Obama, whose inauguration into the U.S. Presidency has become the must-attend event of 2009.

D.C. tourism officials are predicting that between 2 and 5 million people will descend on the city for the swearing-in ceremony on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. The high demand event has Obama supporters looking to secondary ticket sites, only to find most are refusing to resell inauguration tickets. One California Senator has even called for legislation making it a federal crime to sell inauguration tickets.

By most estimates, about 250,000 tickets will be made available, distributed through members of Congress to their constituents. Senators will be allotted 375-400 tickets, while their counterparts in the House of Representatives will be given 175-200 tickets. Those numbers far outstrip demand — with Congressional offices reporting 4,000 to 5,000 ticket requests and opting to give their tickets away through a lottery. Most Congressional leaders are requiring lottery winners to pick up the tickets in person with ID to avoid scalping, but several large secondary firms said they are also

Markin, consultant, completed a study of the Tennessee State Fair, Nashville, indicating it would cost \$64 million to re-locate and revitalize the fair. An option would be investing \$5.5 million-\$7.5 million in the current grounds and operating as a regional event.

*Contact: Bill Whitson, (615) 516-5033*

**>> BONNAROO DATES SET** – The date has been set for the eighth annual Bonnaroo Festival. The four day festival is set to take place on June 11-14 in Manchester, Tenn. Ticket pre-sale goes from Dec. 14-31.

*Contact: Ken Weinstein, (212) 619-1360*



refusing to resell the tickets.

“We had tickets posted for four or five days, but then we met with the (Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies) and decided to take them down,” said StubHub Spokesperson Sean Pate.

That decision extends to StubHub’s parent company eBay, which is also blocking the resale of tickets for the swearing-in ceremony, the parade and the gala. Pate said the decision was part political, part policy.

“There’s a sense that we don’t want to hurt any relationships that we hope to keep in good standing,” said Pate. “And it’s not an entertainment event, and that’s normally what we focus on.”

Besides, Pate said the company faced some difficult deliverability issues because most tickets weren’t being handed out until the last minute. He did, however, note that StubHub did list and resell tickets for the 2005 re-inauguration of George W. Bush, but said Obama’s inauguration “seemed much different.”

“It could likely be remembered as one of the most famous events in history,” he said.

Ticketmaster-owned TicketsNow and Don Vaccaro’s TicketNetwork have also passed on posting inauguration tickets, although other sites seemed to be less cautious. On Dec. 3, RazorGator had four tickets listed for the Inauguration Ball at the Washington Convention Center selling at \$2,796 apiece. And broker Carl Rose from Maryland has even launched a website dedicated to the resale of inauguration tickets.

“We are in a holding pattern because of pending legislation,” said Rose of inaugurationtickets.com. He noted that California Senator Diane Feinstein has introduced legislation seeking to ban the resale of inauguration tickets.

“I understand why they do it, but I think it’s probably a bad idea. It’s like the prohibition of alcohol,” he said. “They’re just going to push legitimate business people out of the market and encourage less scrupulous people to capitalize on demand.”

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Obama's swearing in could be the fifth inauguration Rose has sold tickets for. He typically buys tickets from other people and said he has no ties to Congressional lotteries.

"The demand is through the roof for this inauguration and we anticipate the supply to be much lower."

For those who won't be lucky enough to secure inauguration tickets, the Obama team has said it will add large video displays ("JumboTrons" according to Obama headquarters, though those are no longer manufactured) along the National Mall leading up to the Capitol building and expand the parade route so more people can participate. — Dave Brooks.

*Interviewed for this article: Sean Pate, (415) 222-8442; Carl Rose, (301) 953-1163*



## PERFORMING ARTS DURHAM OPENS BIGGEST PAC IN CAROLINAS

*The Durham (N.C.) Performing Arts Center*



Bob Klaus, general manager to the newly opened



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Durham (N.C.) Performing Arts Center (DPAC), doesn't want to discount the challenges that lay ahead of his facility due to the economic crisis.

"But, our ticket sales are very strong right now," Klaus said.

Yesterday, Rachel Gragg, assistant director of marketing and public relations, said 5,500 season tickets have already been sold to the SunTrust Broadway Series, which will include four Broadway musicals a year.

"We hope to have 6,000 sold by the first of January," Gragg said.

Klaus said season ticket prices are ranging from \$80 to \$300. Most of the tickets for shows already booked into the almost 2,800-seat center are ranging from about \$25 to \$75.

The city-owned building is being managed by a partnership between Nederlander Concerts and Professional Facilities Management (PFM). All employees at the building are hired through that collaboration.

The building is already enjoying some successes. Opening night, Nov. 30, featured a concert by B.B. King.

"We just thought that would be a very nice opening performance for us," Klaus said. "We never expected to completely sell out, but we did. We sold every single ticket. We have Robin Williams scheduled here in March. That performance is already sold out."

Construction on the DPAC began in 2006, although city officials had been planning it since 2004. The \$44 million venture was funded by the city with \$33.7 million in certificates 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. The deal has no risk for the city. 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

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capital improvements.

“Most of the events will be promoted by the venue, but we are open to collaborating with touring shows and promoters,” Klaus said. “We are already co-promoting a show with Live Nation and another co-promotion with Outback Concerts.”

There are three large and spacious lobbies, totaling 15,000-square-feet of space, for people to gather. There are restrooms, and food and beverage bars on each of the three levels of the building. Food and beverage operations are being run by Centerplate.

“Centerplate also has other contracts in this area, the Durham Bulls and the Greensboro Coliseum,” Klaus said. “I worked with John Shelton, the regional vice president of Centerplate in Nashville, and with Jamie Jenkins, who is the local Centerplate general manager, 15 years ago when we opened Walnut Creek Amphitheater, Raleigh (N.C), together. They do a great job and I am proud to be working with them again.”

Klaus said the goal of the management of the new DPAC, which is now the largest performing arts center in North and South Carolina, is to have something for everyone.

The building hopes to have 100 events annually. Out of that 100, about half will be Broadway musicals including such hits as “The Color Purple” and “Wicked,” the latter already confirmed for the 2009-2010 series.

He expects to have about 30 concerts, 10 nights of comedy and 10 event nights of a variety of family shows. He already has scheduled some corporate Christmas parties and a variety of other rental events, which can be held on the stage or in the lobby areas.

Lynn Singleton, PFM president, said the success at the new building will be all about the right blend of events for the market.

“I am sure we will hit some bumps and learn some things,” Singleton said. “But, many times, those bumps are smoothed out because it is a new building.”

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**Sydney (Australia)**  
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**Hamilton (New**  
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**Leshar Ctr for the**  
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**University of West**  
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Carrollton -  
Coliseum Director

**VIEW THE FULL  
LISTINGS**

Singleton feels events that skew young will do well in the Durham market.

“My perception is that there are a lot of young families in this area, so family events geared toward that market should do well,” he said. “Broadway shows like ‘Rent’ (coming up in January) will do well in that market. James Taylor will always do well.

The other thing I feel will do well in this market is comedy. The room has great sightlines and a world-class sound system, which is great for comedy.”

The collaboration between Nederlander Concerts and PFM has so far been seamless, Singleton said.

“They are pretty much taking the lead on the Broadway productions and we are taking the lead on the family shows and one-nighters,” he said. — Pam Sherborne

*Interviewed for this story: Bob Klaus, (919) 688-3722; Rachel Gragg, (919) 688-3722; Lynn Singleton, (401) 421-6008*

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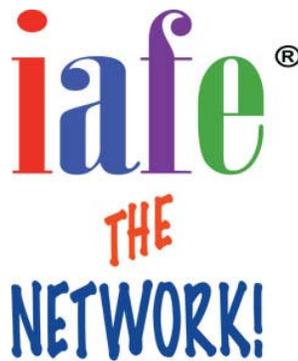
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PRE-CONVENTION  
**IAFE PROGRAM FEATURES PRACTICAL,  
EXCHANGEABLE, CURRENT IDEAS**



A daylong symposium on what it means to go green, a task force workshop that addresses how animals fit into emergency planning, and a keynote address by a professional speaker who actually attended a fair in preparation for his speech are among highlights of the International Association of Fairs & Expositions upcoming

convention.

The 118th annual IAFE convention, which generally draws 5,000 to Las Vegas including related gatherings of the International Entertainment Buyers Association, the Outdoor Amusement Business Association, and the Showmen's League of America, runs Dec. 15-18 and is headquartered at the Paris Hotel.

Doug Lipp, a customer service expert and former head

of Corporate Training at Walt Disney University; Willie Jolley, speaker, singer and author, and Dr. Lowell Catlett, a Regent's Professor at New Mexico State University and dean of the College of Agriculture and Home Economics, are the keynote speakers. Lipp is jointly presented by the OABA and IAFE and prepared for this address by attending Cal Expo, Sacramento, Calif., and its carnival, Ray Cammack Shows, said Jim Tucker, president of IAFE.

The meetings kick off with a daylong pre-convention symposium on "Going Green – Changing Our Fair Environment," Dec. 14. More than 100 are pre-registered. All support materials will be on a flash drive, courtesy of Comcast-Spectacor, Tucker noted. "You can't say you're green and not live up to it. It doesn't work if you just change your story and not what you're doing."

Tucker said the symposium will feature "easily exchangeable ideas," and listed a few stellar examples. The Marin (Calif.) Fair advertised itself as the greenest county fair on earth last year with great success. "That grounds was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright," he added of a fact he picked up when visiting.

Tucker has also been impressed by the Royal Agricultural Show in Adelaide, Australia, which received a \$36 million grant from the federal government to build a 1.3-million-gallon water storage facility, followed by additional money from the state to put photovoltaic panels on its buildings resulting in a huge natural resource for the town. The area is into its 17th year of drought, Tucker said. The showgrounds projects have generated so much publicity that the fair has now installed a digital sign out front which broadcasts how much water and electricity the project has generated, like so many millions of hamburgers sold at McDonald's, Tucker said.

Once again, the big IAFE fundraiser will be a wine and dine event. Attendees pay \$100 and are treated to a program of wine tasting. The wines are the purple and blue ribbon winners from fairs all over the world. Fairs are in a unique position to provide product for this fundraiser, Tucker noted of the wine contests held at fairs, most of which involve sending a case per wine

type for judging purposes.

The funds raised provide scholarships to the Institute of Fair Management, Tucker said. The event also includes an auction and, of course, wine judging, which is based more on presentation than taste since fair managers are not experts, Tucker said. The fundraiser generally nets \$20,000-\$30,000.

The trade show is nearly sold out at 400 booths, Tucker said. He has checked with other association executives in the industry and word on the street is that while attendance is down in some cases because of the economy, exhibitors are fairly well pleased with the quality of the attendees. "They are the buyers," Tucker said. He also noted that fairs had a good year, partly the 'staycation' mentality, and therefore he's expecting a good turnout.

There are some basics it behooves a fair manager to hear, he noted. There are new Internal Revenue Services 990 rules which impact not-for-profits and there will be a workshop on that.

Fairs are also being impacted by the entertainment district trend, he added, something Venues Today covers with projects like L.A. Live and Victory Park in Dallas, among many that involve major arenas. Tucker said there will be a representative from Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, at this year's conference to talk about the 15-year program that will change that 55-acre, downtown fairgrounds into a district with commercial, retail and residential development. "They are doing some environmentally bright things like walking trails," he said. The fairgrounds sits in the middle of a population base of 1.7 million, not unlike fairs in North America that are being pressured to relocate because of best-use issues if they are downtown. The option is to assimilate into year-round use that happens to include a fair.

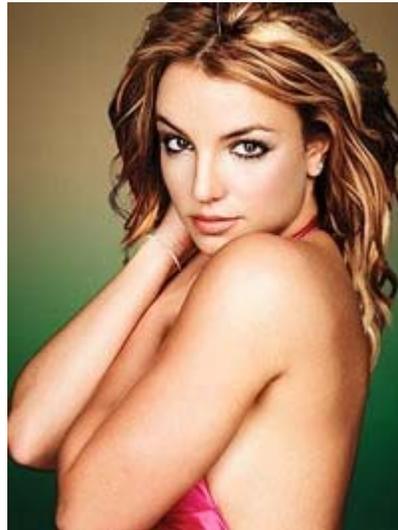
On the concessions side, the convention will feature a program by the Center for Food Integrity, Kansas City, Mo., which monitors public perception of food production and processing. "That's our story," Tucker said. Center representatives will reveal the results of a survey conducted recently, helping fair managers tailor

their message in the future. - Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Jim Tucker, (417) 862-5771*

## BOOKINGS

### **BRITNEY IS THIRD MILLION-DOLLAR SHOW IN 1ST QUARTER FOR NEW ORLEANS**



*Britney Spears*

With the addition of Britney Spears' opening date March 3, plus two rehearsal dates, the New Orleans Arena has three million-dollar-plus concerts on sale all at one time for the first time since the building opened. That's as much proof the market is strong as Alan Freeman, general manager there for SMG, could want given the current economy, New Orleans' ongoing recovery from Hurricane Katrina and any other bad news the New Year might bring.

The first day of pre-sale for Britney's show, Dec. 2, moved 7,000 tickets, more than might have been anticipated. Britney has not toured for awhile and has had well-publicized personal problems. No one knew who the fan base is for certain.

Freeman is comfortable the show will do north of \$1 million. Tickets go on sale to the general public Dec. 6 and are priced \$37.50-\$125. The general admission floor is \$125 per person with a 1,500-1,800 person cap, based on seven square feet per person, for the in-the-round stage set up. Freeman said the arena has hosted several in-the-round concerts of late, calling it "a little bit of a trend," as is a return to general admission tickets. Nickelback was all general admission, as was Rascal Flatts, he noted. It does allow the artist to maximize ticket sales.

He had seen limited production specs on the show, but said the stage is shaped like a three-ring circus, with

three distinct performance spaces, in honor of the tour title, “The Circus Starring Britney Spears.” It will be at least a 20-truck show, he said. He will know more as rehearsals get underway, but it appears capacity will be 17,000. The show is promoted by AEG Live.

The New Orleans Arena’s million-dollar-babies also include the Eagles, \$1.7 million with under 200 tickets left, mostly singles, for the Jan. 23 show, and Celine Dion, also \$1.7 million, with just about 1,000 tickets left to sell, most of which will probably go to Harrah’s Casino, co-promoter. Celine is set for Jan. 10.

Dion tickets are priced \$49.50-\$250. The Eagles are \$60-\$195 and those are among the “all-in” tickets being offered by Ticketmaster sans service fees or facility fees. New Orleans Arena normally has a \$2 facility fee, though there is no additional fee if tickets are purchased at the box office.

Freeman is looking forward to a very happy New Year in New Orleans. — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Alan Freeman, (504) 587-3892*

## **HOT**Tickets

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 Nov. 4, 2008.

### **X-MAS SPECTACULAR SCORES COOL \$10 MIL AT RADIO CITY**

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<b>1) AC/DC</b> Gross Sales: \$2,465,450; Venue: <b>Madison</b> <b>Square Garden</b> Attendance: 28,136; Ticket	<b>1) Madonna</b> Gross Sales: \$3,267,126; Venue: <b>Atlantic</b> <b>City (N.J.)</b> <b>Boardwalk Hall;</b> Attendance: 13,208; Ticket	<b>1) Radio City</b> <b>Christmas</b> <b>Spectacular</b> Gross Sales: \$10,229,549; Venue: <b>Radio City</b> <b>Music Hall, New</b> <b>York;</b> Attendance:	<b>1) High School</b> <b>Musical 2</b> Gross Sales: \$836,675; Venue: <b>Fox</b> <b>Theatre,</b> <b>Atlanta;</b> Attendance:

Range: \$89.50-  
\$69.50; Promoter:  
Live Nation;  
Dates: Nov. 12-13;  
No. of Shows: 2

## 2) AC/DC

Gross Sales:  
\$1,380,000;  
Venue: **Xcel  
Energy Center,  
St. Paul, Minn.;**  
Attendance:  
15,419; Ticket  
Range: \$89.50;  
Promoter: Jam  
Productions;  
Dates: Nov. 23;  
No. of Shows: 1

## 3) Coldplay

Gross Sales:  
\$1,258,099;  
Venue:  
**BankAtlantic  
Center, Sunrise,  
Fla.;** Attendance:  
15,096; Ticket  
Range: \$97.50-  
\$49.50; Promoter:  
Live Nation, In-  
House; Dates:  
Nov. 9; No. of  
Shows: 1

## 4) AC/DC

Gross Sales:  
\$1,255,040;  
Venue: **TD  
Banknorth  
Garden, Boston;**  
Attendance:  
13,718; Ticket  
Range: \$92.50;  
Promoter: Live  
Nation; Dates:  
Nov. 9; No. of

Range: \$350-\$50;  
Promoter: Caesars  
Atlantic City &  
Main Events, Live  
Nation; Dates:  
Nov. 22; No. of  
Shows: 1

## 2) John Mellencamp

Gross Sales:  
\$729,714;  
Venue: **Brisbane  
(Australia)  
Entertainment  
Centre;**  
Attendance:  
9,076; Ticket  
Range: \$95.34-  
\$48.88; Promoter:  
The Frontier  
Touring Company;  
Dates: Nov. 25;  
No. of Shows: 1

## 3) New Kids On The Block

Gross Sales:  
\$475,029; Venue:  
**Dunkin Donuts  
Center,  
Providence, R.I.;**  
Attendance:  
7,575; Ticket  
Range: \$77-\$37;  
Promoter: Live  
Nation, In-House;  
Dates: Nov. 6; No.  
of Shows: 1

## 4) Trans Siberian Orchestra

Gross Sales:  
\$472,860; Venue:  
**Atlantic City  
(N.J.) Boardwalk  
Hall;** Attendance:

185,625; Ticket  
Range: \$90-\$42;  
Promoter: MSG  
Entertainment;  
Dates: Nov. 10-16,  
Nov. 18-23; No. of  
Shows: 43

## 2) Cirque du Soleil "Wintuk"

Gross Sales:  
\$3,455,730;  
Venue: **The WaMu  
Theater at  
Madison Square  
Garden, New  
York;** Attendance:  
65,997; Ticket  
Range: \$220-\$30;  
Promoter: BASE  
Entertainment,  
Cirque du Soleil,  
MSG  
Entertainment;  
Dates: Nov. 12-23;  
No. of Shows: 24

## 3) Vicente Fernandez

Gross Sales:  
\$1,928,870;  
Venue: **Gibson  
Amphitheatre at  
Universal  
CityWalk, Calif.;**  
Attendance:  
17,848; Ticket  
Range: \$165.50-  
\$67.50; Promoter:  
Live Nation;  
Dates: Nov. 7-9;  
No. of Shows: 3

## 4) Sarah Brightman

Gross Sales:  
\$534,005; Venue:

15,352; Ticket  
Range: \$68-\$25;  
Promoter:  
Theater of the  
Stars; Dates:  
Nov. 6-16; No. of  
Shows: 14

## 2) Fidelio

Gross Sales:  
\$551,827;  
Venue: **Keller  
Auditorium,  
Portland, Ore.;**  
Attendance:  
8,106; Ticket  
Range: \$162-\$9;  
Promoter:  
Portland Opera;  
Dates: Nov.  
7,9,13,15; No.  
of Shows: 4

## 3) Ain't Misbehavin

Gross Sales:  
\$451,092;  
Venue: **Fox  
Theatre,  
Atlanta;**  
Attendance:  
15,141; Ticket  
Range: \$43-\$14;  
Promoter:  
Broadway Across  
America; Dates:  
Nov. 18-23; No.  
of Shows: 8

## 4) Maxwell

Gross Sales:  
\$445,759;  
Venue: **Verizon  
Wireless  
Theater,  
Houston;**  
Attendance:

Shows: 1

**5) Radio City Christmas Spectacular**  
Gross Sales: \$1,123,215;  
Venue: **Target Center, Minneapolis;**  
Attendance: 21,191; Ticket Range: \$72-\$12.50; Promoter: MSG Entertainment, Radio City Entertainment;  
Dates: Nov. 7-9;  
No. of Shows: 6

11,450; Ticket Range: \$50-\$20;  
Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Nov. 28; No. of Shows: 1

**5) Alan Jackson, Trace Adkins**  
Gross Sales: \$462,885; Venue: **Citizens Business Bank Arena, Ontario, Calif.;**  
Attendance: 6,889; Ticket Range: \$75-\$60;  
Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice;  
Dates: Nov. 23;  
No. of Shows: 1

**New UCF Arena, Orlando, Fla.;**  
Attendance: 4,620; Ticket Range: \$250-\$60;  
Promoter: In-House; Dates: Nov. 14; No. of Shows: 1

**5) Bloc Party**  
Gross Sales: \$505,557; Venue: **Hordern Pavillion, Sydney, Australia;**  
Attendance: 10,576; Ticket Range: \$51.71;  
Promoter: Secret Sounds; Dates: Nov. 25-26; No. of Shows: 2

5,749; Ticket Range: \$150-\$59.50;  
Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Nov. 6-7; No. of Shows: 2

**5) The Smashing Pumpkins**  
Gross Sales: \$383,555; Venue: **United Palace Theatre, New York;**  
Attendance: 6,586; Ticket Range: \$85-\$45;  
Promoter: Live nation, In-House; Dates: Nov. 6-7; No. of Shows: 2

Compiled by Rob Ocampo and Nicole Sorenson. To submit reports, e-mail [HotTickets@venuestoday.com](mailto:HotTickets@venuestoday.com) or fax to (714) 378-0040.

## THE BEAT

### DEALS

#### LIVE NATION REACHES 'BLOCKBUSTER' AGREEMENT WITH RETAILER

*Blockbuster plans to start selling tickets to Live Nation concerts*



Concert promoter Live Nation has entered into a partnership with **Blockbuster Entertainment** to provide ticketing outlets for Live Nation's new ticketing venture.

The deal fills important voids for each company.

Live Nation gets 500 brick and mortar locations to sell its tickets and finds a replacement for the network of ticket outlets it previously used through its partnership with Ticketmaster. Blockbuster gets increased foot traffic at a time that it's facing increased competition from online video rental services like Netflix – and the possibility to expand its retail offerings into music and merchandise.

The three-year deal will likely account for about one million ticket sales a year – about one-tenth of all Live Nation tickets sold in the U.S., the bulk of which now get sold via the internet. Live Nation plans to launch its own ticketing service at the beginning of 2009 using a platform powered by German ticketing company CTS Eventim.

Although Live Nation officials would not comment for this article, the company released a statement saying certain blocks of tickets for upcoming events would be exclusively reserved for sale.

“Our research definitively shows that the vast majority of music fans who prefer to buy their concert tickets at a retail location find Blockbuster to be the most convenient choice,” the company's Nathan Hubbard said in a statement.

Live Nation's move into the ticketing space has launched an unexpected rivalry between Ticketmaster and the promotions company. Tensions heated up in August when Live Nation announced that it had signed an agreement to provide ticketing services for SMG's facilities after the company's Ticketmaster contract expired – a move Ticketmaster CEO Sean Moriarty angrily dubbed “theatrics” in a written response. Since then, Ticketmaster purchased a majority share in mega-management firm Frontline Management (which represents over 200 major artists) and placed music icon Irving Azoff at the helm.

The announcement did little to move either company's beleaguered stocks. Live Nation's stock jumped about 61 cents on the news, only to erase most of its gains and close at \$3.81. Blockbuster's stock also saw a brief gain, while Ticketmaster's stock has held steady around the \$4 price – a dramatic plunge from August when the stock had its IPO at \$25 per share.

“I don't find the announcement hugely relevant,” said analyst Scott Devitt of Stifel Nicolaus. “I'm not convinced that Blockbuster is the best-positioned company in the world and there's some risk if they have to start closing locations.”

Devitt said the deal does little to address the problems that are keeping both companies' stocks in the hole. For Ticketmaster, it's massive debt and dwindling market share; for Live Nation, it's investor trepidation about consumer spending.

“All these companies are challenged right now. Retail in general is challenged,

but companies like Ticketmaster are more challenged,” Devitt said. “This announcement further publicizes the problems Ticketmaster is facing.”

Alan Gould of firm Natexis Bleichroeder said he was impressed by the Live Nation/Blockbuster deal, which he said was reminiscent of the old Ticketmaster outlets at record stores.

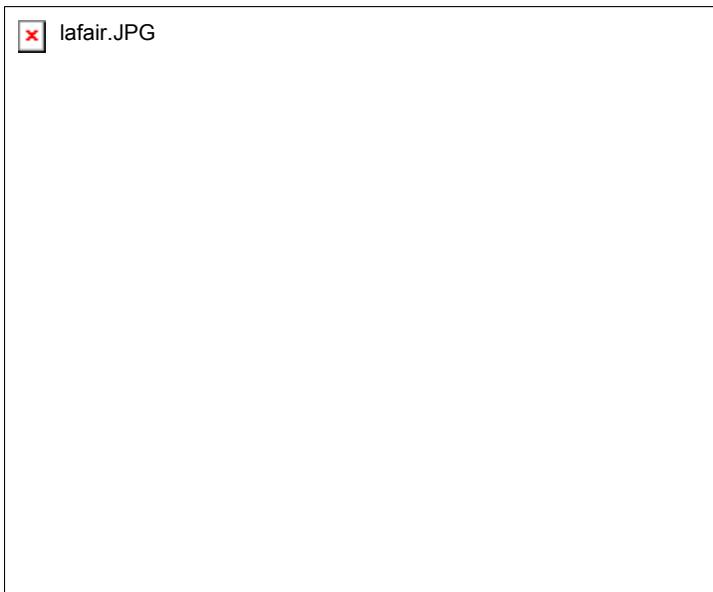
“Live Nation seems to be doing well, but what’s driving down the stock is fear about the overall economy,” he said. “Wall Street anticipates the future and discounts that.” – Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this article: Scott Devitt, (703) 392-4844; Alan Gould, (212) 698-3000*

## FAIRS & FESTIVALS

### GAS PRICE DROP BRINGS ATTENDANCE BOOST TO BAYOU FAIR

*The midway at the Louisiana State Fair, Shreveport*



Dropping fuel prices after a summer of paying some of the highest prices ever for gas, coupled with good weather, led to a six percent increase in attendance at the State Fair of Louisiana, Shreveport, with a final figure of 430,093.

That’s up more than 24,000 over last year’s 405,748, said GM Chris Giordano of the Oct. 23-Nov. 9 event.

“I think that actually helped us a little bit,” Giordano said. “Right when the fair was starting, we saw fuel prices starting to drop and summer was kind of tough on everybody as far as travel plans. I’m thinking some people didn’t go on their normal vacations and come fair time, they were ready to take the family to do something. The bad economy didn’t affect the fair any.”

And the people who came seemed to want to spend some money. Vendors operate on a flat fee so Giordano did not have any figures on food, but he noted that most concessionaires were up.

“Our rodeo attendance was up a little bit too,” he said. “The weather has got to be a huge factor. The weather was beautiful the entire run of the fair, which is

a hard thing to do in Louisiana for three weeks.”

The fair was open for three weekends and closed Mondays and Tuesdays, which has been the configuration for four or five years, Giordano said. The set-up works well. “It used to be a 10-day fair and several years ago, it went to 17 days.”

Then officials decided to open on a Thursday instead of Friday and close on a Sunday, making for 18 days, but closed Monday and Tuesday, for 14 days altogether.

“We wouldn’t get any people on Monday or Tuesday anyway, and it gives everybody a break. Everybody seems to go along with it and like it - the carnival and the independent food operators. I know my staff likes it.”

The break also gives the staff an opportunity to do a deep cleaning on the midway as well as catch their breath a little bit.

The Lowery Carnival Co., based in Gulf Shores, Ala., provided 60 to 65 rides on the midway with help from Crabtree Amusements and grossed more than \$1.2 million, up nearly seven percent over 2007, Giordano said. Owned by Bill and Carol Lowery and operated with help of their children, Tony, Willie and Jackie, the show is in its fourth year of providing the midway.

“He’s got a pretty substantial show,” Giordano said. “Between the two of them, they can pull off just about any fair. They take care of their employees, and they’re all nice looking in khaki pants and golf shirts. We’ve just got an excellent working relationship.”

That relationship led to the carnival co-sponsoring the fair’s leading musical act, Percy Sledge, who drew about 2,500 to an outdoor stage that can accommodate 3,000.

“We were at our state fair meeting in February and Tony said, ‘Chris, you need to book Percy Sledge ... I’ll pay for half.’ So that’s how it went. He brought out a crowd.”

Concerts, which are free with admission, also included Cupid, Kraig Parker as Elvis, Wayne Toups and Kevin Fowler.

“We’re not spending huge money on entertainment,” Giordano said. “We used to for several years, but it wasn’t paying off for us, so we scaled back quite a bit. We’ve been increasing a little bit in the last couple of years.”

Still, the fair paid less for the musical acts - about \$100,000 - than for the walk-around acts, which cost about \$150,000. Those attractions included a zoo, the Hollywood Racing Pigs, Ms. Stevana’s Friesian Horse Show, an Extreme Canine

Stunt Show and more.

Pay-one-price wristbands cost \$25 for all day, but on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, when patrons can get in from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and park both for free, they also can take advantage of a \$10 wristband. Parking usually costs \$5.

“Those cut off at 3 p.m.,” Giordano said.

The promotion has helped drive attendance during a time that otherwise would not be very busy, Giordano said.

Wristbands can be purchased at two supermarkets, Brookshires and Super 1 Foods, for \$24. Sales have been good, bringing in \$600,000 to \$800,000, about half of the total advance \$1.5 million gate and wristband sales the fair does.

“That’s not counting the individual tickets and armbands sold inside and at the gate,” Giordano said.

Gate admission costs \$8 across the board for everybody except for patrons 2 years old and under, who can get in for free.

The fair, which has a total budget of about \$1.5 million, sold tickets online for the first time this year, although did not do the print-at-home tickets. The procedure went well, Giordano said.

“We had a tremendous response,” Giordano said. “I don’t have the numbers broken out, but we had pretty tremendous online sales.”

Eventually, the fair will move to the print-at-home tickets after the fair can buy the required equipment.

“I wasn’t ready to make the investment,” Giordano said.

Next year’s dates will be Oct. 22-Nov. 8. - Mary Wade Burnside

*Interviewed for this story: Chris Giordano, (318) 365-1361*

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