

## April Armbrust

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# VT PULSE

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

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## Quote of the Week

*"I think you can safely say that the days of 30-40 percent margins on resale are over. We're going to be focused on getting the right ticket at the right price for the right fan."*

— Greg Bettinelli, VP of Business Development, talking to brokers on Live Nation Ticketing plans

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## Greetings April,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." Happy New Year; it's back to work. Many have already hit the road, including VT's Dave Brooks who is reporting from the Ticket Summit in New York. Coming up, some of us will see some of you at INTIX in Salt Lake City, WFA in Reno and SMA in Palm Springs, Calif.

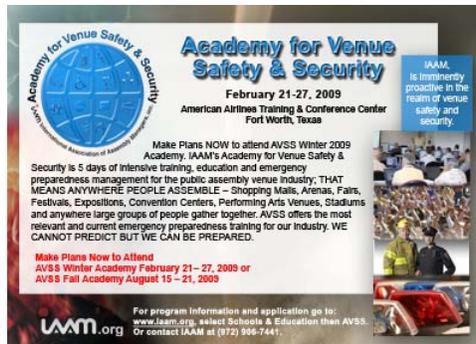
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## VT NEWS

### TICKETING DEAD TOUR BREATHES LIFE INTO BROKER MEETING

Jeffrey Banet of [ineed2tickets.com](http://ineed2tickets.com) is pictured with San Antonio ticket broker David Burgess; (center) the logo for the Grateful Dead, whose surviving members are reuniting for a spring tour; broker Tom Patania of Select-A-Ticket.



NEW YORK – If brokers at this year's Ticket Summit needed a little good news for 2009, they got it this week when the surviving members of the Grateful Dead announced a 19-date tour for the beginning of November.

"Yes, we're happy about it, The Dead always does well for us," said broker David Burgess of San Antonio. "A lot of people are anticipating a rough patch for 2009, so it's nice to see that a legacy group like The Dead are taking a risk and hitting the road. I hope they are successful and other artists follow their lead."

HELP WANTED

CONTACT VT PULSE

## SHORT TAKES

>> **HOK GROUP SALE COMPLETE** — HOK Group has transferred legal ownership of HOK Sport Venue Event to leaders of that practice, effective Dec. 31. HOK Sport Venue Event is now an independent firm and will launch a new corporate name and brand in 2009. The new company will continue to be managed by an Executive Group of 13 existing Senior Principals and will operate from all its key offices worldwide, including London, Kansas City and Brisbane. *Contact: Gina Leo, (816) 221-1500*



## CONTACT US

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Dave Brooks  
 Senior Writer & Assignment Editor

With their top-tiered ticket moving for \$95, the tour is a piece of positive news following a wave of negative forecasts during the conference at the elegant Waldorf Astoria in midtown Manhattan. After three years in Las Vegas, the conference sponsored by Don Vaccaro's TicketNetwork has launched its East Coast event and drew 500 registrants in its first year.

And while the attendees seem optimistic, the news out of the conference hasn't been positive. Tickets for New York teams have skyrocketed with the construction of new venues. The Yankees are planning to charge as much as \$2,500 per seat for dugout sections, while the Giants and the Jets have announced a series of expensive Personal Seat Licenses.

Even Live Nation's new ticketing platform was announced as a bittersweet alternative to Ticketmaster, with VP of Business Development Greg Bettinelli telling a room full of ticket brokers that the promoter giant plans to tighten the noose on the group.

"I think you can safely say that the days of 30-40 percent margins on resale are over," he said. "We're going to be focused on getting the right ticket at the right price for the right fan."

And then there's the economy, which Bettinelli estimated brought on a 15 percent industry-wide drop in ticket sales for December. With all that on the brain, the announcement of The Dead tour has many feeling optimistic.

"I think it's going to do great; \$99 is a fair price in this market," said New York broker Tom Patania. "If they went to \$150, that would have been way too high."

The Grateful Dead kicks off its arena tour on April 12 at the Greensboro (N.C.) Coliseum and finishes May 10 at the Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, Calif. Featuring Phil Lesh, Bob Weir, Mickey Hart and Bill Kruetzman, the whole group hasn't toured since 2004. Tickets go on sale Jan. 13 and the tour is being promoted by Live Nation.

"Right now they're the biggest legacy act on the road. It's not like the old days when there were 20 bands on the road at any one time that could fill an arena," Patania said. "Now, it's who's on the road? That's the big question."

Broker Jeffrey Banet of ineed2tickets.com said the upcoming tour has everything that he likes about a reunion tour.

"They have proven success with their solo projects. Since it's a limited run and they haven't toured in a while, there's going to be audience who is willing to buy," he said. "And they play different music at every show, so there's always a different experience and people want to be part of that."

But even the optimism about the upcoming tour rubbed a few attendees the wrong way.

"I thought it was pretty interesting our tickets haven't gone on sale or even been announced yet, but brokers are still listing them on StubHub," said Dave Touhey of the Verizon Center in Washington, D.C. Over 20 tickets, ranging from \$115-\$400 were listed on the site. "I don't even have a seating chart yet," he said. — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this story: David Burgess, (210) 348-5584; Greg Bettinelli, (310) 867-7000; Tom Patania, (973) 839-6100; Jeffrey Banet, (888) 575-5338; Dave Touhey, (202) 628-3200*

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## **HELP WANTED**

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**Greater Richmond  
 (Va.) Convention  
 Center - Director of  
 Event Services**

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This February, *Venues Today* magazine will be honoring three ticketing professionals with our first **VT Box Office Stars** awards. We are looking for your nominations.

We are asking for ticketing professionals for newsworthy achievement or outstanding service in their own ticket office or in the ticketing industry at large. We will present the awards during the Feb. 3 luncheon at the **INTIX convention** in Salt Lake City.

Does someone come to mind? Please nominate them! Be sure to include the person's name, title and company and a good description of the accomplishment in 2008 that makes this person a Box Office Star. We can all learn from these ideas.

**The deadline for nominations is Jan. 9. Send nominations to [linda@venuestoday.com](mailto:linda@venuestoday.com) or fax them to (714) 378-0040.**

We greatly appreciate your thoughts and suggestions. Three winners will be honored in our February edition, which will be available at the annual INTIX conference in Salt Lake City.

## **ARENAS WFCU CENTRE OPENS EARLY AND UNDER BUDGET**

*Windsor Spitfires open the WFCU Centre.*



The WFCU Centre, Windsor, Ontario, opened early, under budget and with a sold out Windsor Spitfires hockey game which drew 6,600 Dec. 11, said Rich Trella, general manager of events there for Global Spectrum.

The new arena also boasts food by Ovations Food Services, ticketing by New Era Tickets, and club and suite sales by Front Row Marketing, all companies of which are under the Comcast-Spectacor umbrella along with Global Spectrum.

Per caps on food and drink for the first Spitfires game were \$11.40, Trella said. The team then played four more games over eight days, drawing about 5,000 Saturday, Dec. 11; 5,200 Dec. 13; 4,900 Dec. 14; and 5,600 Dec. 16. When the Ontario Hockey League team played at the 4,000-seat Windsor Arena, they were averaging more like 3,000, he said. That arena is now being used for community hockey and is not competition to the new arena.

Front Row reported selling 23 of the 31 suites and 513 of the 632 club seats before the holidays, Trella said. Traffic was a bit sticky opening night but, in the past month, fans have learned to use all three entrances and arrive early. The venue has 1,900 free parking spaces. Overflow has to pay to park in a private lot, which charges \$5 a car.

"We encourage people to come early. We're opening the bar at 5 p.m. that is connected from the outside,

and they come early to hang out in there. We're also connected to the Community Centre where there's a pro shop," Trella said. It's hard to do many pre-game events to encourage early arrival while the weather is cold, but that is on the agenda when the snow goes away.

Since opening, Global Spectrum has shifted some staff and security points, most particularly to accommodate the entrance from the Community Centre, which was part of the \$71 million construction campaign and opened with the hockey arena. The original budget was \$73 million and the opening date was to be Dec. 31. The Community Centre has three ice pads, a basketball gym and a senior center.

The major operational hitch, about to be solved, is the second level restaurant. The arena was designed with a second level on the west end only, which accommodates the restaurant and a few hundred seats. People want to go up there for the view, which disrupts restaurant service and overcrowds the area, Trella said. The plan now is to convert the restaurant to bistro style rather than waiter service so it can accommodate the casual visitor. On the other end of the bowl, first level seating goes all the way up to the third level. The third level accommodates suites around three fourths of the arena, excepting the east end.

The Spitfires will play 34 home games in a full year, but this year, the first 12 were played at Windsor Arena, Trella said. He has booked the Great Big Sea in March and Stars on Ice in April. — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Rich Trella, (519) 974-7979 x4601*



#### PERFORMING ARTS CENTERS THE SUN SETS ON MARICOPA COUNTY EVENTS CENTER

The final curtain has dropped on the 7,034-seat Maricopa County Events Center (once known as the Sundome Center for the Performing Arts) in Sun City West, outside Phoenix, Ariz.

After two years of trying to revive an old venue that had been offline a little too long, was located in the wrong place and was competing in an oversaturated market, Nederlander Concerts opted to give up effective Dec. 31 and sever its management agreement with the county. Maricopa County officials agreed it was a dismal outlook and chose to give the venue back to Arizona State University. It's now on the market and most likely will be sold to a developer interested in the property, not a performing arts venue.

Adam Friedman, president, Nederlander Concerts, said the fate of the Maricopa County Events Center is not a sign of the times so much as a local issue. Nederlander agreed to manage the venue and invest in improvements just before Friedman joined Nederlander, but he said the thinking was reasonable and the deal was very favorable to Nederlander.

"It was an opportunity on very favorable terms to go into a market that would expand our routing leverage throughout the western part of the country," he said. "We took a venue that had seemingly the right number of seats - a midsize venue that fits our portfolio - to go in there and try and make it happen. We did bring a lot of talent to the venue, some great headliners and a lot of theatrical product, but because of the cost of location, the cost of needed renovation or the economy,

it just didn't take off. Having lived there a couple of years, we realized it needed a significant amount of renovation work."

In the original agreement, to get the ball rolling, Nederlander and the county talked about \$1.6 million each in renovation, Friedman recalled. In truth, it needed more like \$10 million, he said.

Over the course of the contract, no major renovation capital was spent, he added. With the county's help, Nederlander began assessing the needs "and they were great," Friedman told Venues Today. "The building had a lot of deficiencies from stage capacity to the grade of the seating area being too soft. The concession areas and plazas were outdated and in need of expansion. You're talking about major bucks. That building is old, 30 years old."

It's no different than the fate of many of the 20,000-seat arenas built 20 to 30 years ago, he said. The amenities any venue needs to be a competing force are missing. "We didn't want to operate and have a lower inventory of shows," he said.

In the end, Nederlander and the county agreed it was "no harm, no foul. We had a great relationship with the county on the way in, during and on the way out," Friedman declared.

The economy certainly accelerated the decision not to invest, he admitted. The most difficult aspect of any such demise is the people side, the staff, he said. "They were notified along the way. There were no surprises to anyone." Everyone now laid off was a Phoenix local, not relocated employees, he said.

Bob Dylan and Johnny Mathis sold out the Maricopa County Events Center, he said, "but there were a host of other acts that would have sold more in a different market and a different building...And the building was not a significant draw." It's tough to overcome a negative perception of a venue once it sets in, he said.

Once the 5,000-seat Dodge Theatre opened in Phoenix, the inventory moved, he said. "Our guys were good bookers, solid buyers. Sometimes you have to decide, this market can only handle one of these types of buildings and we're flooding it. I'm a believer that most markets are flooded with seat inventory to begin with. If you are going to do it, you better have something special and different."

That's Nederlander's focus — cachet venues, he concluded. "We're a very successful boutique promotion firm." The failure of one mid-size facility is by no means a sign of the times.

In 2009, "the mid-size space will again be the space of choice, especially with artists concerned about going into buildings that are too big and can't sell through," Friedman said. "We're expecting great inventory and feeling very bullish with our confirmation and offers out there right now. The only question is whether or not people will pay the ticket price."

The former Sundome Center for the Performing Arts was the entertainment centerpiece of Sun City West, a marketing tool to sell homes, when it was built in 1980 by Del Webb. The venue was uniquely designed as the largest single-story performing arts center in the country, with no more than 12 stairs in the building, a function of being in a retirement community. Nederlander's original management agreement was for 10 years (VT Pulse, Jan. 18, 2006). — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Adam Friedman, (323) 468-1704*

## 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 Dec. 9, 2008, and not previously reported in VT Pulse.

### HOLIDAY SHOWS RING IN THE NEW YEAR

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) <b>Kylie Minogue</b> Gross Sales: \$2,976,524; Venue: <b>AcerArena, Sydney, Australia;</b> Attendance: 34,308; Ticket Range: \$104.42-\$69.38; Promoter: Frontier Touring Company; Dates: Dec. 14, 16-17, 2008; No. of Shows: 3</p>	<p>1) <b>Walking With Dinosaurs</b> Gross Sales: \$1,288,585; Venue: <b>San Diego Sports Arena;</b> Attendance: 28,754; Ticket Range: \$79.50-\$29.50; Promoter: British Broadcast Corporation, Creature Production Company; Dates: Jan. 1-4; No. of Shows: 9</p>	<p>1) <b>Radio City Christmas Spectacular</b> Gross Sales: \$49,605,061; Venue: <b>Radio City Music Hall, New York;</b> Attendance: 655,240; Ticket Range: \$250-\$42; Promoter: MSG Entertainment; Dates: Nov. 24-Dec. 21, 29, 30, 2008; No. of Shows: 133</p>	<p>1) <b>Bette Midler</b> Gross Sales: \$2,178,258; Venue: <b>The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas;</b> Attendance: 16,228; Ticket Range: \$250-\$95; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: Dec. 30, 2008-Jan. 4; No. of Shows: 5</p>
<p>2) <b>Tina Turner</b> Gross Sales: \$2,325,184; Venue: <b>Bell Centre, Montreal, Quebec;</b> Attendance: 25,767; Ticket Range: \$124.67-\$49.45; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Marshall Arts; Dates: Dec. 8, 10, 2008; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>2) <b>Neil Diamond</b> Gross Sales: \$685,572; Venue: <b>Gwinnett Arena, Duluth, Ga.;</b> Attendance: 8,816; Ticket Range: \$55-\$23; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: Dec. 10, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>2) <b>Cirque du Soleil "Wintuk"</b> Gross Sales: \$7,391,426; Venue: <b>The WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York;</b> Attendance: 90,158; Ticket Range: \$220-\$30; Promoter: BASE Entertainment, Cirque du Soleil, MSG Entertainment; Dates: Dec. 22, 2008-Jan. 4; No. of Shows: 23</p>	<p>2) <b>Atlanta Ballet's The Nutcracker</b> Gross Sales: \$1,709,849; Venue: <b>Fox Theatre, Atlanta;</b> Attendance: 33,971; Ticket Range: \$85-\$15; Promoter: Atlanta Ballet; Dates: Dec. 5-28, 2008; No. of Shows: 24</p>
<p>3) <b>AC/DC</b> Gross Sales: \$1,524,346; Venue: <b>St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla.;</b> Attendance: 16,420; Ticket Range: \$92.25; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 21, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) <b>Trans-Siberian Orchestra</b> Gross Sales: \$649,173; Venue: <b>i wireless Center, Moline, Ill.;</b> Attendance: 16,320; Ticket Range: \$57.50-\$23.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Dec. 13, 2008; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>3) <b>George Lopez</b> Gross Sales: \$3,368,000; Venue: <b>Nokia Theatre L.A. Live;</b> Attendance: 46,410; Ticket Range: \$89.50-\$55.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: Dec. 19-20, 26-31, 2008; No. of Shows: 7</p>	<p>3) <b>Chinese New Year Spectacular 2009</b> Gross Sales: \$962,000; Venue: <b>Pasadena (Calif.) Civic Auditorium;</b> Attendance: 12,884; Ticket Range: \$188-\$35; Promoter: Devine Performing Arts; Dates: Dec. 30, 2008-Jan. 4; No. of Shows: 8</p>
<p>4) <b>AC/DC</b> Gross Sales: \$1,360,148; Venue: <b>Time Warner Cable Arena, Charlotte, N.C.;</b> Attendance: 15,125; Ticket Range: \$91.50; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Dec. 18, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) <b>Alicia Keys</b> Gross Sales: \$576,562; Venue: <b>Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre;</b> Attendance: 7,403; Ticket Range: \$90.82-\$33.70; Promoter: The Frontier Touring Company; Dates: Dec. 10, 2008; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) <b>Power 106 Cali Christmas Holiday Show</b> Gross Sales: \$421,555; Venue: <b>Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.;</b> Attendance: 5,255; Ticket Range: \$95-\$45; Promoter: Live</p>	<p>4) <b>Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy</b> Gross Sales: \$573,015; Venue: <b>Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, Atlanta;</b> Attendance: 15,218; Ticket Range: \$63-\$15; Promoter: Atlanta Broadway Series; Dates: Dec. 30, 2008-Jan. 4; No. of Shows: 1</p>
<p>5) <b>AC/DC</b> Gross Sales:</p>	<p>5) <b>The Wiggles Live!</b> Gross Sales:</p>		

\$1,352,852; Venue: <b>U.S. Airways Center, Phoenix;</b> Attendance: 14,004; Ticket Range: \$101.18; Promoter: Live Nation, In-House; Dates: Dec. 10, 2008; No. of Shows: 1	\$517,175; Venue: <b>Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre ;</b> Attendance: 26,322; Ticket Range: \$21.36- \$19.15; Promoter: The Wiggles; Dates: Dec. 18-19, 2008; No. of Shows: 5	Nation; Dates: Dec. 9, 2008; No. of Shows: 1 <b>5) Xqlusive Showtek</b> Gross Sales: \$410,793; Venue: <b>Hordern Pavillion, Sydney, Australia;</b> Attendance: 5,111; Ticket Range: \$105.88- \$84.22; Promoter: Q Dance Australia; Dates: Dec. 19, 2008; No. of Shows: 1	Shows: 8 <b>5) Monty Python's Spamalot</b> Gross Sales: \$405,519; Venue: <b>Civic Center of Greater Des Moines (Iowa);</b> Attendance: 9,015; Ticket Range: \$70-\$30; Promoter: In- House; Dates: Dec. 23-28, 2008; No. of Shows: 7
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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



### CHARLOTTE HARBOR EVENT & CONFERENCE CENTER

Punta Gorda, Fla.

**Concessionaire:** Boston Culinary Group

**Terms:** BCG has signed a three-year contract with two one-year options to provide concessions and catering for the new Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, effective immediately. BCG will invest \$150,000 into equipment. They will pay 15-20 percent of catering and concessions. Minimum income to the county the first year is \$75,000.

Punta Gorda was hit hard by Hurricane Charlie in 2004. The new 44,000 square foot event center celebrates its grand reopening Jan. 10. It replaces the Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium destroyed by Charlie and the temporary "tentatorium" that operated outside the old auditorium until ground was broken on the new event center in May 2007. The new venue features a modern and open floor space. It is located on the waterfront, complete with panoramic views.

Jim Finch, recreation program supervisor for the Center, said Hibiscus Hall is 20,000 square feet and can be used for theatrical shows. He anticipates 110 rentals the first year and up to 10 concerts. The venue is much more flexible than the old auditorium, he noted.

Catering and concessions will benefit from a 2,000 sq. ft., full service kitchen. There is one concession stand.

BCG Senior Vice President Sal Ferrulo will oversee the food operation. Kevin Mitchell, who handles HarborView in Ft. Myers for BCG, will be going back and forth to manage the two BCG accounts, according to Steve Cahoon, BCG VP of marketing and business development.

*Interviewed for this story: Steve Cahoon, (617) 499-2700; Jim Finch, (941) 639-5833*

### TRAVEL LOG

## FOR FAIRS AND THE ENVIRONMENT, PERCEPTION IS REALITY

LAS VEGAS — That fairs are becoming more proactive about their environmental footprints was one lesson during the International Association of Fairs & Expositions here Dec. 15-18. Whether it's using solar power to energize their facilities or ensuring animal protection for livestock, there are plenty of green initiatives that fairs can tackle.

Tom Baker of the California Construction Authority held a session on solar panels at fairs, where he explained what fairs could do to harness the power of the sun.

"There's currently \$40 million available in grants to start solar panel projects at your event, but there's a lot of paperwork involved," he explained. "The state and power companies are making this money available with very tight strings attached. Sometimes you have to know what you don't know before they will give you funding."

In the last seven years, Baker said he's helped to secure about \$19.4 million for 12 fairs, including the California State Fair in Sacramento.

"The problem is that there's such a high demand for solar voltaic panels throughout the world that the price has risen dramatically in the last two years," he said. "Although we expect them to eventually come back in line with 2006 prices, it could take some time."

Baker said fair managers should look for solar panels that convert electricity to DC, generate 3.5 watts and operate with a 25-year warranty. That typically means the panel will work at full capacity until year 12, when it will reduce to 90 percent and then reduce again to about 80 at 25 years.

"And there's a cash flow issue, so a lot of fairs are going to be hesitant to agree to a deal until they can work out a monthly payment that is less than their utility payment," he said.

And those looking to improve their image with animal lovers should heed the advice of Cindy Schonholtz, Animal Welfare coordinator for the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association. Her group has an animal welfare committee and works with veterinarians to set safety standards for PRCA events.

"It's very important to have a plan in place in case anything happens," she said. "Whether it's an animal injury, an escaped animal or even an animal that must be euthanized, if you don't have a plan, your organization will suffer a serious public relations black eye."

But she also warns that animal rights activists will never be satisfied with the safeguards her organization puts in place.

"The main thing I tell my sponsors and organizers is to not engage these people," she said. "A lot of event organizers feel like all they have to do is invite these people to tour their facility, view their operation and they will change their minds. This is not a realistic position to take. The more you engage these people, the more you encourage them."

If an incident with an animal does take place, Schonholtz said it's important to be honest and open with the public.

"Perception is reality and people want to know that things are all right," she said. "It's important to be proactive before you find yourself on YouTube." — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this article: Tom Baker, (916) 654-4735; Cindy Schonholtz, (719) 440-7255*

## FACES & PLACES GUINN DEPARTS SMG FOR IMG

Shea Guinn has left SMG and Reliant Park, Houston, to work for IMG. His last day with SMG was Dec. 31.

Mark Miller, general manager of Reliant Park for SMG, continues to run that property. Guinn was president of Reliant Park and senior VP stadiums for SMG. The stadium oversight will apparently go to Hank Abate, who already oversees arena accounts for SMG.

Jim Gallagher, in charge of corporate communications for IMG, confirmed Guinn has joined the company but said details of his job and title would not be released until "the very near future."

*Interviewed for this story: Mark Miller, (832) 667-1780; Jim Gallagher, (212)*

774-4419