

April Armbrust

From: venuestoday [venuestoday@mail.vresp.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2009 7:00 PM
To: april@venuestoday.com
Subject: VT Pulse, Feb 18, 2009



VT PULSE

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

February 18, 2009 • VOL. VIII, Number 6 • ISSN 1547-4143

Quote of the Week

"I'm too tired to read your paragraphs."

— Chinart Kajitte, student, on marketing concerts and events to echo boomers, suggesting more video and sound clips on the Internet

In this Issue

THE NEWS

[Trotters CEO Details Record-Breaking Strategy](#)

[Arizona Stadium Rolls Out Team Building Packages For Corporate Bookings](#)

[Today's Patrons Demand Change From Performing Arts](#)

HOT TICKETS

[Dane Cook's Million-Dollar Gross Not An Isolated Incident](#)

THE BEAT

[The Show Brings High-End Artist Experience To Palm Desert](#)

[Emphasis On Interim Events Occupies Fair Managers](#)

DEPARTMENTS

Short Takes

HELP WANTED

CONTACT VT PULSE

Greetings April,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." Bucking the economy has been all the talk on the convention trail. Read on to see what your peers are doing.

Refine Raw Prospects Into Sweet Leads



Lead Scoring
 Lead Scripting
 Auto-Appends
 Smart-Matching
 Graphic Reporting

Fully Integrated
 With Ticketing & CRM

Call Haynes Hendrickson
 856-685-1450
 www.TurnkeySE.com



VT NEWS

Q&A

TROTTERS CEO DETAILS RECORD-BREAKING STRATEGY

Kurt Schneider, CEO of the Harlem Globetrotters



The Harlem Globetrotters are having a record year. Less than two months into their current tour, the team has set 29 box office records and broken previous ticket sales numbers by 13 percent overall.

CEO Kurt Schneider said he fully expects to maintain double-

SHORT TAKES

>> NEW CENTERPLATE CEO
Desmond Hague, most recently the president of IHOP Restaurants, has been named president and CEO of Centerplate, replacing Janet Stainmayer.
Contact: Gael Doar, (203) 975-5941

>> TICKETMASTER ADDS JAZZ CAFÉ
Ticketmaster has announced a new ticketing deal with London's Jazz Cafe, which welcomed over 100,000 people through its doors in 2008.
Contact: Al Lopez, (310) 360-2602



VT RESOURCE GUIDES
CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO

CONTACT US

To submit news or information, contact:

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

Dave Brooks

digit growth through the 240-game tour. Stretching from Dec. 26 to April 20, the tour will have two Globetrotter teams spread out over 203 markets.

Since acquiring the team in 2005, Shamrock Capital Investments has developed the fan club into a robust Web 2.0 moneymaker, striking broadcast deals that have reached millions and signed sponsorship agreements with IHOP, Campbell's Soup and America's Best Vision.

Next on his list? Schneider said he is looking to open a Harlem Globetrotters office in Harlem. *Venues Today* caught up with the Phoenix-based CEO to discuss the future of America's funniest basketball team.

Venues Today: How is the tour going so far?

Kurt Schneider: We're setting box office records and we have an 83-year history, which is not easy to do. We're beating last year, and last year was our best year ever.

VT: You seem to have really strong California shows with sellouts in Salinas, Redding and Santa Rosa. Which markets are your best?

KS: We did a great business when we started in Pittsburgh and Cleveland. We just did an amazing business in New Orleans and Dallas. Thankfully, we're not geographically restricted. I think one of the reasons we're having such a good year is that families are looking for affordable entertainment. Our average ticket price is \$25 and we only come once a year. If you have to cut back on other stuff, we assume this is one you won't cut back on.

VT: What revenue streams are growing?

KS: Box office revenues are up 13 percent. Merchandise sales are also very strong.

VT: Since Shamrock has acquired the team, what changes have been made?

KS: We looked into our DNA and asked "What are we?" We're family entertainment and we're sports entertainment. We turned over 40 percent of the roster and put nicknames on the back of the jerseys. We started promoting players as stars themselves that people could emotionally connect with. We wanted people to be able to love Ant and Rocket along with Special K and Blenda. We were on TV for the first time in 16 years on MyNetwork TV. We were on the Today Show six different times, as well as ESPN. Our P.R. last year was much larger and a broader base than in the past. We redid our entire website so that it wasn't just about selling tickets, but selling the Globetrotters and the brand.

VT: Did your understanding of the ticket buyer change?

KS: Yes. We did some research last summer and we found that the ticket buyer is mom, and that's who we're going to go after. When we did our marketing, we bought a lot of primetime television. We wanted to get mom's attention, and we wanted to get her on *Desperate Housewives* and *Grey's Anatomy*.

VT: Has the down economy affected your ability to up-sell premium ticketing packages?

KS: Not really. It's just changed the way we've sold our tickets. We did a deal with TicketsNow, a secondary ticket broker. Our goal is to be agnostic and be wherever our fans want to be. If they want to get an exclusive bench experience, they can buy it on TicketsNow. That comes with sitting on the bench, a jersey, a seatback signed by the players and a special meet and greet. More importantly, they're sitting on the bench. We want customers to know that any way they want to experience the Globetrotters, they can do it.

VT: How much does the bench experience cost?

KS: It's through TicketsNow, so it's an options-based

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line c

Venues Today
P.O. Box 2540
Huntington Beach, California 92647

Read the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

Senior Writer &
Assignment Editor
(714) 378-5400, ext. 24
dave@venuestoday.com

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

**For advertising
information,
contact:**

Sue Nichols
Eastern U.S.
(615) 662-0252
sue@venuestoday.com

Pauline Davis
Texas
(615) 243-7883
pauline@venuestoday.com

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

April Armbrust
Director of Marketing &
Sales
(714) 378-0056
april@venuestoday.com

**To update a Fair or
Festival Listing for
the VT Resource
Guide, contact:**

Nazarene Kahn
Resource Guides
Coordinator
(714) 378-5400 ext. 25
resourceguides@venuestoday.com

Nicole Sorenson
Resource Guide Assistant
(714) 378-5400 ext. 26

**HELP
WANTED**

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

Queensland
(Australia) PAC -
Corporate
Development
Manager

Sydney (Australia)
Olympic Park -
Operations Manager

Tulsa (OK) County
Fairgrounds (Expo
Square)
Chief Executive
Officer

UniverSoul Circus,
corporate office
near Atlanta, GA -
Various Positions

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

environment. They go from \$500 up to \$1,500. It's a relatively great value — I defy you to find a bench experience any place else.

VT: Do you have a consignment relationship with TicketsNow?

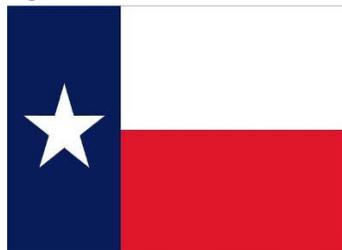
KS: Yes. For us, we want customers to know that however they want to buy tickets, they can buy them. The average ticket price on TicketsNow is almost double our regular ticket price, but it's a convenience for the fan. We just sold out Youngstown, Ohio, and it's a 6,000-capacity venue. Tickets were gone 10 days before the show, but if you look at TicketsNow, you'll find tickets. You'll have to pay a premium, but that's ok.

VT: How are you going to work with the NBA to grow your international market?

KS: The NBA has such a large, solemn infrastructure globally and we don't. They have an office with 150 people working in China. Their goal is to build basketball worldwide and here we come, offering a different basketball product. We're not going to cannibalize their product. We're an additive. We're sports entertainment. It gives them another product that they can sell, and for us, it gives us resources that we normally don't have. We've been touring overseas for 60 years, but now we have a partner. In China, I'm hoping we can get on the Internet and TV, and set up licensing deals with sponsorships. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Kurt Schneider, (602) 258-0000

Big Guns



The Lone Star state flexes its big guns in our annual look at Texas venues. April is also the Spring Special - a look at the Fair & Festival Season. And we'll round

out this issue with our second annual INTIX quarterly.

Advertising Deadline: March 24, 2009

Contact your VT rep to reserve space:

Eastern US * Sue Nichols * Ph: (615) 662-0252 * E:
Sue@venuestoday.com

Texas *Pauline Davis * Ph: (615) 243-7883 *
E: Pauline@venuestoday.com

Midwest & West Coast & Intl *Rich DiGiacomo * Ph: (310)
429-3678 *E: Rich@venuestoday.com

[Click here to visit our website and view advertising rates/sizes](#)

BOOKINGS ARIZONA STADIUM ROLLS OUT TEAM BUILDING PACKAGES FOR CORPORATE BOOKINGS

*Corporate party set up at the University of Phoenix Stadium,
Glendale, Ariz.*



On Thursday, the University of Phoenix Stadium will roll out new corporate teambuilding programs that give corporations unprecedented access to the home of the NFC Championship Arizona Cardinals.

“With a tough economy, keeping everyone together, on the same team, communicating and motivated, is essential,” said Melissa Jurcan, director of sales for Global Spectrum, manager of University of Phoenix Stadium, Glendale, Ariz. “These packages were designed to be affordable and yet deliver results. The activities are definitely fun, but they are also designed to allow those that participate to leave here with a message from their company at that same time.”

The program was built from client demand, said Storey Pryor, sales coordinator. “After the last playoff game, the phones were ringing off the hook for events here,” she said. “This is another way to enhance a tailgate, banquet or corporate sales meeting.”

Plus, it has attracted the interest of some of the top corporations in the area, who are seeking bookings as early as this summer, Jurcan said. Their goal is to book at least 25 of these programs annually. Last year, the stadium did about \$500,000 in corporate and social function bookings without the packages.

“These are companies that we have desired to work with in the past, but they were not interested in our facility for whatever reason until we debuted these options. They see the value,” she said.

There are four courses: a scavenger hunt, a cooking class, a mixology lesson, or a tailgating session. Each is geared to teaching communication, sales and marketing, teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking skills.

The program is run as a partnership with Teambuilding 360 and Centerplate, the in-house caterer and concessionaire.

“We have included a facility use fee on top of what Teambuilding 360 is charging per head to cover our own costs and generate revenue for the facility,” Jurcan said. “With Centerplate, we have a standard catering/concessionaire agreement and we will share the profits.”

“The scavenger hunt attendees go from the main concourse to the upper terrace to the field level,” Pryor said. The opportunity to see areas not readily available to the general public takes an ordinary teambuilding scavenger hunt to a new level, she said. Prices run from \$35 to \$60 per person.

The Gridiron Grill features award-winning Chef Sean Kavanaugh of Centerplate, who helps teams prepare an elaborate meal of their choice, from a tailgate spread to a five-course dinner, and enjoy it in one of the stadium’s event spaces. Prices range from \$65 to \$85 per person.

“Any venue with a kitchen can implement this program, but the reason ours stands out is simply because of our chef,” Jurcan said. “Our experience is totally unique in that rarely does anyone have the opportunity to go into an NFL football stadium’s kitchen.”

Mixology divides groups into teams and provides them with four different kinds of alcohol, mixers, fruit and garnishes. Each team creates original drinks that are judged by Centerplate staff. Prices start at \$45 per person.

The Ultimate Tailgate offers a custom tailgate meal, from a cookout on the sidelines to an elite meal served on the Upper Terrace with the roof open. Prices depend on the number of attendees, Pryor said.

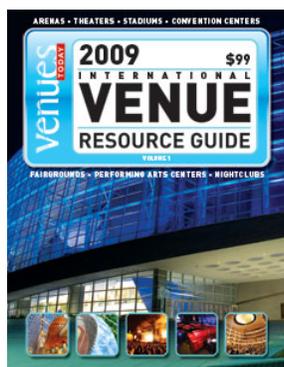
“Because the economy is making the bottom line tighter, we have aggressively priced our packages to appeal to all companies,” said Scott Norton, director of marketing and public relations for the venue.

On Thursday, destination managers, corporate event planners and representatives from local companies like PetSmart and American Express were invited to the stadium, to try out the programs, Pryor said. And it is likely to appear in other Global Spectrum venues.

“Some of our other facilities are in the process of putting together packages of their own, with local ties that make sense for their building and community,” Jurcan said. “I think that is really the key to success with creating these types of programs - it has to be unique to that venue and the region.” – Liz Boardman

Interviewed: Melissa Jurcan, Scott Norton, and Storey Pryor, (623) 433-7108

ONLY 10 DAYS LEFT



to reserve space in the 2009 *Venues Today* International Venue Resource Guide and the 2009 Fairs & Festivals Resource Guide!

What makes us different?

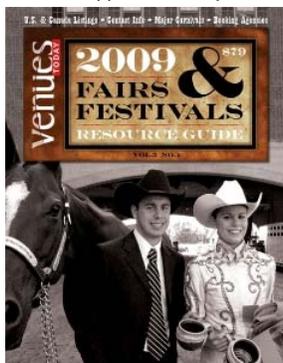
-We are not an association publication so our listings don't depend on whether or not you are a member.

- Our ever expanding database contains valuable information that is not only gathered and updated by our resource guide team but is supplemented by the facts gathered from year-round editorial coverage.

**ADVERTISING
DEADLINE: FEBRUARY
28, 2009**

Contact your VP rep today to reserve space:

Eastern US * Sue
Nichols * Ph: (615)
662-0252 * E:



Sue@venuestoday.com

Texas *Pauline Davis * Ph: (615) 243-7883 *
E: Pauline@venuestoday.com

Midwest & West Coast & Intl *Rich DiGiacomo * Ph: (310)
429-3678 *E: Rich@venuestoday.com

NOTES FROM PAMC

TODAY'S PATRONS DEMAND CHANGE FROM PERFORMING ARTS

Deandre Clark, a student at Georgia State University, updates John Mazzola, Albany (Ga.) James H. Gray Sr. Civic Center, on what entertains echo boomers. (VT Photo)



ATLANTA – “Our current crisis is too valuable a thing to waste,” said Joe Bankoff, president and CEO, Woodruff Arts Center, Atlanta, referring to the economy in his keynote speech at IAAM’s Performing Arts Managers Conference here Feb. 7-10. Bankoff sees the arts as a catalyst for the community and education, not a sacrifice to the economy.

“The business of America has moved to a creative economy. Our advantage is the ability to create,” Bankoff said, setting the tone for a gathering that was very much about overcoming the negative and attracting new audiences while taking care of the longtime patrons.

His perspective is that of a lawyer hired to glue an arts organization comprised of several different resident companies together into one business. Each organization maintains its own artistic autonomy, but the Woodruff Center oversees the overall budget and strategic planning to the benefit of all “divisions” of the company.

Bankoff stressed the need for partnerships, innovative thinking and longterm planning. Arts organizations tend to live 90 percent hand to mouth and 10 percent longterm, Bankoff said. That needs to change.

Among changes he brought to the Woodruff Center, besides the reorganization, are the new Woodruff Sampler, a stored-value card which can be used anywhere at the center for anything from food and beverage to parking, tickets to merchandise. It was a simple solution to looking at what needs to be done from the customer’s point of view, Bankoff said.

That purchasing patterns have changed was a common theme of PAMC. During a ticketing panel, Anil Malhotra, Analytix, suggested that “we live in an auction-oriented world. People can find out what something is worth. The market will find a way to get to the market price.”

Malhotra said that a lot of the secondary market is not

populated by speculators but by people who buy a ticket and can't attend the show. There must be a strategy to meet that need on the primary market, he said, because it will be met.

Sunshine Tucker, Fox Theatre, Atlanta, noted a lot of sales are taking place on Facebook, another avenue venues must take. Karen Swope, Ticketmaster, told of one club client that sold out a show of 350 seats just through Facebook.

That concept was very much embraced by a panel of "echo boomers," students at Georgia State University, who shared what they would like to see in performing arts venues. Hot buttons included:

- Provide a lounge or gathering area, like the chic design at the W Hotel, where friends can meet before the show. Young people are very much about the social side of going to events and that needs to be facilitated.
- Pre- and post-show opportunities are greatly appreciated by today's youth. It's something the National Football League has figured out; so should performing arts. Something in addition to the main performance means another opportunity to be with friends.
- Provide clips about a show, sound and video. "I'm too tired to read your paragraphs," one student said. If she could download a clip to show a friend, that would be appreciated. Links to see previews are also popular. Reviews are not good enough.
- Find the right price point through student discounts. Several said they bought lawn seats to be with friends as much as for the discount. General admission was overwhelmingly preferred to reserved seating, again to be with friends.
- A chance to win anything free is great for a college student.
- Today's youth have a festival mentality, multiple performances, multiple things to do, and "we're casual," one noted. The opera and orchestra are perceived as uptight and sophisticated. "We wear jeans. We don't belong there."
- Text messaging is a great marketing tool. "We text more than we talk," one student said. "If the phone went off and you won prizes, I'll give you my number."

The general consensus was that the days of "Elvis has left the building" to end a concert are over. Today's audience wants to party on.

Not to forget yesterday's audience, though, another panel advised that with all the emphasis on youth, it's not good to forget the seniors, in front and back of stage. A panel on baby boomers, as opposed to echo boomers, noted aging audiences must also be served.

Jeff Hartzog, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Fla., said it can be as easy as senior programming that includes box lunches. He's done some Adults At Leisure Series shows on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons with a \$1 bag of popcorn which has done very well with seniors.

Kristi Thomas, Accessology, advised performing arts managers to make all new additions accessible. ADA is about equal, not special, treatment, she said, but more and more of the people in today's audiences need that equal treatment. It has been 19 years since the ADA went into effect and it is being updated.

Handicap parking continues to be a major issue. Hartzog said he counted 98 hangtags at one show at his PAC. "We're in compliance, but how do you accommodate 98 tags," he said. Ruth Eckerd Hall has begun designating

an extra row for handicapped parking through a plea to patrons, not a legal sign. "If you use the symbol, it puts you in jeopardy," Thomas added, but asking never hurts.

There are also more aging performers, so accessibility and ADA code are just as important backstage, where the artist is likely to arrive in a wheelchair. The new ADA guidelines will require changes for performance areas, Thomas noted. "If the audience can get from the theater onto the stage, that has to be accessible to the disabled too. That's a big change," she said. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Joe Bankoff, (404) 733-5195; Kristi Thomas, (972) 434-0068; Jeff Hartzog, (727) 712-2710; Anil Malhotra, (404) 219-6847



HOTickets

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 Jan. 27, 2009.

DANE COOK'S MILLION DOLLAR GROSS NOT AN ISOLATED INCIDENT

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) AC/DC Gross Sales: \$1,263,441; Venue: Sommet Center, Nashville, Tenn.; Attendance: 14,476; Ticket Range: \$92-\$67.50; Promoter: In-house, Live Nation; Dates: Jan. 31; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) Leonard Cohen Gross Sales: \$946,285; Venue: Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 8,284; Ticket Range: \$130.62-\$92.89; Promoter: The Frontier Touring Company; Dates: Feb. 3; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) Dancing With The Stars Gross Sales: \$548,610; Venue: Mohegan Sun Arena, Uncasville, Conn.; Attendance: 9,574; Ticket Range: \$195-\$65; Promoter: In-house, Live Nation; Dates: Jan. 30-31; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>1) Mamma Mia! Gross Sales: \$1,864,032; Venue: Broward Center For The Performing Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Attendance: 33,881; Ticket Range: \$67-\$23; Promoter: In-House; Dates: Jan. 20-Feb. 1; No. of Shows: 16</p>
<p>2) Dane Cook Gross Sales: \$1,215,153; Venue: St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla.; Attendance: 19,092; Ticket Range: \$102.75-\$32.75; Promoter: American Concerts Inc., Frank J. Russo; Dates: Jan. 31; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>2) Brad Paisley Gross Sales: \$426,206; Venue: John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario; Attendance: 7,942; Ticket Range: \$58.98-\$39.18; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Feb. 12; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>2) John Legend Gross Sales: \$312,866; Venue: Radio City Music Hall, New York; Attendance: 5,953; Ticket Range: \$70.50-\$40.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Feb. 5; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>2) Dracula Gross Sales: \$461,526; Venue: Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, Atlanta; Attendance: 8,924; Ticket Range: \$125-\$15; Promoter: Atlanta Ballet; Dates: Feb. 5-8, 12-15; No. of Shows: 8</p>
<p>3) AC/DC Gross Sales: \$1,155,086; Venue: FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tenn.; Attendance: 13,673; Ticket Range: \$89.50-\$64.50; Promoter: Beaver Productions; Dates: Jan. 30;</p>	<p>3) The Veronicas Gross Sales: \$199,168; Venue: Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 5,210; Ticket Range: \$75.36-\$39.99; Promoter: The Frontier Touring Company; Dates: Feb. 14;</p>	<p>3) Motley Crue Gross Sales: \$269,207; Venue: Reno (Nev.) Events Center; Attendance: 5,216; Ticket Range: \$95-\$29.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Feb. 4; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Motley Crue Gross Sales: \$458,087; Venue: The Joint, Las Vegas; Attendance: 4,051; Ticket Range: \$400-\$100; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates:</p>
	<p>4) Labelle</p>		

No. of Shows: 1	No. of Shows: 1	Gross Sales: \$172,340; Venue: Nokia Theatre L.A. Live;	Feb. 6-7; No. of Shows: 2
4) Lil' Wayne Gross Sales: \$620,418; Venue: U.S. Airways Center, Phoenix; Attendance: 10,048; Ticket Range: \$121.50-\$35.50; Promoter: Al Haymon, In-House, Live Nation; Dates: Jan. 28; No. of Shows: 1	4) WWE Monday Night RAW Gross Sales: \$193,645; Venue: Spokane (Wash.) Arena; Attendance: 6,298; Ticket Range: \$42-\$16; Promoter: World Wrestling Entertainment; Dates: Feb. 16; No. of Shows: 1	Attendance: 3,340; Ticket Range: \$95-\$17.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: Jan. 29; No. of Shows: 1	4) NE-YO Gross Sales: \$258,656; Venue: Club Nokia, Los Angeles; Attendance: 4,712; Ticket Range: \$79.50-\$49.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Atlanta World Wide Touring Company, Goldenvoice; Dates: Feb. 7-8; No. of Shows: 2
5) WWE Monday Night RAW Gross Sales: \$374,115; Venue: Oracle Arena, Oakland, Calif.; Attendance: 12,375; Ticket Range: \$60-\$20; Promoter: World Wrestling Entertainment; Dates: Feb. 9; No. of Shows: 1	5) Jose Carreras with The Queensland Orchestra Gross Sales: \$179,813; Venue: Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 1,909; Ticket Range: \$448.12-\$12.39; Promoter: The Queensland Orchestra; Dates: Feb. 6; No. of Shows: 1	5) The Veronicas Gross Sales: \$144,267; Venue: Newcastle (Australia) Entertainment Centre; Attendance: 4,281; Ticket Range: \$76.45-\$36.47; Promoter: The Frontier Touring Company; Dates: Feb. 13; No. of Shows: 1	5) David Copperfield Gross Sales: \$244,724; Venue: Bob Carr Performing Arts Center, Orlando, Fla. ; Attendance: 2,469; Ticket Range: \$59.75-\$39.75; Promoter: Broadway Across America; Dates: Jan. 29; No. of Shows: 2

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

THE BEAT

GRAND OPENINGS THE SHOW BRINGS HIGH-END ARTIST EXPERIENCE TO PALM DESERT

Outside The Show; Steve Macfadyen, director of entertainment at The Show with Billy Joel and David Fendrick, COO for the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.



Steve Macfadyen is at it again, opening a 2,001-seat theater at the Agua Caliente Casino, Resort and Spa in Rancho Mirage, Calif.

Titled *The Show*, the ornate new theatre opened Thursday with a sellout performance by Billy Joel, followed by a Friday show with Matchbox Twenty and a Valentine's Day concert with Martina McBride. The \$76 million facility is a testament to the bleak beauty of California's Palm Desert with seats colored in a palate of mocha, ash and dijon and a lobby floor composed of grey blend pebble rock. From the black Marinace bar surfaces to the stacked wood column walls in the main lobby, each finish is set to mimic the color palate of a desert in bloom.

Macfadyen said he's still making a weekly commute from his home in Hollywood to the Palm Desert, although he hopes to soon permanently settle in the area. It's been a long journey for Macfadyen, who was laid off from the House of Blues six months after the company was acquired by Live Nation Entertainment in 2006. The former Bill Graham Presents veteran said he got a call one day from a casino executive asking if he was interested in moving to the desert. He officially started in November 2008.

The Show now joins an increasingly competitive cadre of casino venues in the area. The nearby Morongo's bookings include B.B. King and UB40, while the adjacent San Manuel Casino is hosting Brooks and Dunn, Mixed Martial Arts and Jewel. Then there's Fantasy Springs and Spotlight 29, which are within a 25-mile radius of Agua Caliente.

Macfadyen said he plans to compete on design, acoustics and event experience. Architects were firm Delawie Wilkes Rodrigues Barker and the contractor was the PENTA Building Group. His theater is borrowing from popular design concepts at other casinos like The Pearl at the Palms Hotel in Las Vegas, which links luxury suites to a common area where patrons share a bar, a bathroom and a wait staff offering bottle service. The Show has two common areas linking its 12 luxury suites.

For Macfadyen, operating a casino venue meant learning how to think like a gaming operator. While his staff has offices inside the venue, he is housed in one of the hotel's office towers, working with the rest of the casino executives to operate The Show as an extension of the hotel.

"I've worked in casinos when I've toured," he said. "But I arrived, I did the show and I left. I didn't have to think about how all the different elements tie together with player development and rewards cards and different levels of play."

Casino booking is not just about the act — it's about the audience. Most shows only go until 10 p.m. and few go later than 11 — the casino wants the patrons gambling after the encore.

"I also have to be careful about age demographics. I can't skew a show too young — anyone under 21 can't gamble. That's the law," he said. "I have to be quite cautious about what types of acts we look for here. I'm not booking with just whatever I think would work. There's a lot that goes into it."

The lead promoter on The Show is Billy Brill of Billy Alan Productions, a Los Angeles-based company specializing in casino bookings. Brill said the sweet spot for booking casinos is determining "The Drop" — how much money concert-goers will later spend on the casino floor, in restaurants and in their hotel rooms.

"All the casinos have a confidentiality clause about their drop, but if you see people on the floor, then you're happy," Brill said.

And while some properties can afford to subsidize artist guarantees, it's a misconception that casinos will treat concerts like a loss leader, he added.

"They still expect to make money and it's in the business plan to make money on all the shows," Brill said. "Casinos are not a bank. They need to turn a profit and compete like everyone else."

Macfadyen said the new facility was built with the artist amenities in mind. The facility has high-end back of house dressing rooms and green rooms for meet and greets, along with loading docks that directly access the stage and flat screen televisions that broadcast the stage area.

"Billy Joel was blown away by the space. He couldn't believe it," said Brill. "When you get people of that caliber talking about your venue, you know they're going to tell other artists and spread the word around." — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Steve Macfadyen, (760) 202-6039; Billy Brill, (661) 263-8061

FAIRS & FESTIVALS EMPHASIS ON INTERIM EVENTS OCCUPIES FAIR MANAGERS

Kelly Watkins, Yuma (Ariz.) County Fair; and Jon Baker, Jim Stalaker and Peggy Bauernfiend, Pima County Fair, Tucson, Ariz. (VT Photo).



RENO, Nev. — The room was packed for a workshop on interim events led by Jon Baker, Pima County Fair, Tucson, Ariz., who is also the incoming president of the Western Fairs Association, during the group's meeting here Jan. 25-28. Baker's fair has operating revenues of \$4.5 million, \$2 million of which is raised during the off-season.

He advised fair managers to "charge for the extras; be in the game for the long-term." The Pima County Fair has committed considerable resources to non-fair use. Part of the process was to find a niche, which he said for his fair includes horse shows, music festivals, themed events like gun, home and livestock shows, and RV Park rentals.

The fairgrounds consists of 640 acres. The concert park is 20 acres, no seating. The grounds boasts 15 horse arenas, 1,000 horse stalls, and 400 RV sites. Pima also has a school on site, complete with free WiFi, and a liquor license, which makes it possible to operate a lounge club for campers and a beer truck concession for concerts.

Baker said Pima County hosts 125 horse shows a year. Two of those shows occupy nine weeks total over a continuous run. Horse show clientele are some of the best for the bar on the grounds, an option that keeps the campers on the grounds and out of cars. "We make it a party with karaoke," Baker said. "We buy the pizza, they buy the booze."

The fair has 22 full time employees and hires temps as needed. There are usually eight additional staff during horse shows; hundreds more during concerts.

The fairgrounds hosts two or three music festivals during the year, Baker said. "We sell the beer and take the parking." The biggest festival there drew 25,000 for a one-day event featuring Metallica. The fair parked 9,500 cars and sold 425 kegs of beer.

The fair markets itself to promoters through conferences and trade paper advertising. It's important to be able to negotiate the fees for every event, Baker said. The more usual music festival is in the 10,000-15,000 attendance range, he said. Because the grounds is so huge, it lends itself to auxiliary events, like a bungee jump, tattoo artists and kettle corn.

The county is currently working on a master plan for the area that includes the fairgrounds. Besides the fair, there are five other sectors including shooting ranges, a motorcycle park and two racetracks. The agreement is that they will all use the fair's RV park and the fair will invest in expanding that park. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Jon Baker, (520) 762-9100