



VT PULSE

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

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Quote of the Week

"That's part of his [Gene Simmons'] marketing genius. Venues that in all likelihood won't get a show are out there spreading the word."

— Craig Gates, general manager of the Paul Tsongas Arena in Lowell, Mass. on a campaign launched by rock group KISS to generate fan votes for an upcoming tour. Gates and crew spent an afternoon roaming the streets of Lowell, drumming up support for the band to play their venue.

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THE NEWS

[Swine Flu Fears Not Enough To Slow U.S. Facilities](#)

Greetings,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." It is with sadness this week that we report the passing of former San Jose Sharks executive Frank Jirik. This June we will be doing a tribute to this sports professional, who spent his entire career working in venue management. That's where we need your help. Please send your stories about Frank Jirik to linda@venuestoday.com and help us pay tribute to a legend of the industry.



In June, Venues Today's compass is pointed True North.

For the first time we are focusing on Canadian

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SHORT TAKES

>> **SELL OUT BOY** — Rock band Fall Out Boy has sold out its fifth concert at the Paul Tsongas Arena in Lowell, Mass., since 2005. The band's April 28 outing with promoter Mass Concerts grossed \$240,017 with 7,200 tickets sold. Contact:

venues and the challenges and triumphs of doing business there in 2009. Contact us today to participate in advertising or editorial.

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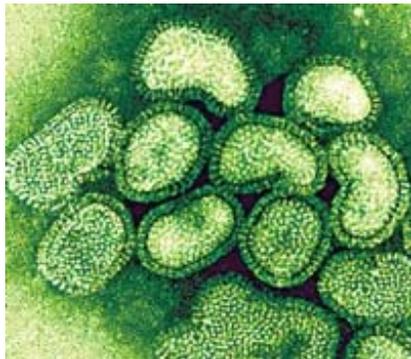
This issue will be distributed at: Event and Arena Marketing Conference, Association of Luxury Suite Directors, and the combined IAAM/NAC Convention.

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VT NEWS

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

SWINE FLU FEARS NOT ENOUGH TO SLOW U.S. FACILITIES



A microscopic view of the Swine Flu virus

The Swine Flu virus has brought on a bevy of event cancellations in Mexico and a few changes in the U.S., but most venue managers are moving forward with business as usual.

Swine Flu, also known as H1N1, has been confirmed by laboratory tests in 1,516 patients in 22 countries, according to the World Health Organization. Mexico has reported the most cases with 942 confirmed including 29 deaths, while the U.S. has 403 cases and

Craig Gates, (978)
848-6901

>> **THIS BUDS FOR YOU** – Live Nation has renewed its sponsorship contract with Anheuser-Busch. The three-year agreement makes Bud Light the exclusive malt beverage sponsor for select U.S. amphitheaters. Contact: John Vlautin, (310) 867-7127

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Each monthly issue of Venues Today will bring you information, news, photos, trends, features and more for the public assembly facility management industry.

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two deaths. Canada has 165 cases, according to the WHO.

The illness has brought Mexico to a near standstill, with hundreds of event cancellations appearing on the Ticketmaster website ([click here to see cancelled events](#)). Cancelled events include four concerts by Los Lobos at the Teatro del Centro Libanes in Mexico City, which was under virtual lock down until about May 6 with most public events and facilities forcibly closed by the government.

"We have lost over 45,000 room nights in the past week," said Ella Messerli, VP of Marketing for the Los Cabos Convention and Visitors Bureau which represents the city of Cabo San Lucas and the surrounding beach communities in Mexico. There have been no confirmed cases of Swine Flu in Los Cabos, but that hasn't stopped corporate travelers from cancelling en masse.

The move comes as the bureau launches www.visitloscabos.travel, an online portal where meeting planners can put out RFPs for meeting availability, which should be quite large considering how empty the region is. Los Cabos has been hit by a triple punch as the economy wanes, concerns about drug violence in Northern Baja take hold and now the Swine Flu outbreak.

"We're in worldwide psychosis," Messerli said, later adding, "but that just means it is the perfect time to come to Cabo because the beaches are practically empty."

In the U.S., it's been business as usual with venue managers and entertainment executives exercising caution but avoiding event cancellations. Pat Courtney, a spokesperson for Major League Baseball, said the season is moving forward without any cancellations while the "league continues to work with medical experts who are monitoring the situation."

The same goes for the National Basketball Association, which is in the throes of its playoff conference semi-finals.

"There has been no suggestion or direction from any government or health officials that public gatherings should be cancelled or avoided," wrote League

happens!

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Sue Nichols

Spokesperson Peter A. Lagiovane in an email. Michael Roth of AEG, which manages the Staples Center where the tenant Los Angeles Lakers are scheduled to play their second playoff game against the Houston Rockets said his facility does not have plans to change course for tonight's game.

For now, most venues are monitoring the situation and requiring employees to use hand sanitizer, said Russ Simons of architecture firm Populous (formerly HOK Sport), who is the chair of the International Association of Assembly Manager's Life Safety Council. The group has posted a web portal with up-to-date information for venue managers ([which can be viewed by clicking here](#)).

"In a situation like this, there's a lot of information that comes out and a lot of folks want to distill that down and find out what that means to them," Simons said. "In the past week, I've been in a number of facilities that are addressing the issue with their internal staff, as well as visitors," Simons said.

The Washington State Convention and Trade Center has placed Purell hand-sanitizer stations throughout the concourse "with lots of reminders to people to wash their hands and cover their mouths when coughing," Simons said.

At the nearby Qwest Field, GM Paul Scheick has invested over \$5,000 in hand sanitizer products including 20 walk-up stations that will be spread out through the concourse on game days. The facility is currently home to the Seattle Sounders of Major League Soccer, along with football's Seahawks who are currently in the off-season.

"We want people to feel safe coming to our facility and traveling because that's what our business is all about," Scheick said, adding that his facility hosted a March of Dimes Walk over the weekend with 15,000 people and had no problems with Swine Flu.

Even border venues have been able to escape largely unscathed and avoid cancellations. Roy Medina of Laredo (Texas) Entertainment Center said his facility hasn't had any cancellations and is planning to move

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

HELP WANTED

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Georgia Dome,
Atlanta -
Engineering Services
Manager

Georgia Dome,
Atlanta - Security
Manager

Greater Richmond
(Va.) Convention
Center – Event
Manager

[VIEW THE FULL
LISTINGS](#)

forward this weekend with the Laredo Community College graduation. James Bricker from the Dodge Arena in Hildago, Texas, said he had a few school cancellations for matinee performances of Disney on Ice, but he was able to refill those seats with other schools which were placed on a waiting list.

“We’re encouraging our ushers to use hand sanitizer and make sure everything gets wiped down properly, but in terms of events, its business as usual,” Bricker said. “We have a George Strait concert this Saturday and we’re still good to go.”

As for Arena Monterrey, one of Mexico’s only concert arenas, it appears to be business as usual with concerts for Metallica and the Jonas Brothers still scheduled to move forward. *Venues Today* was unable to reach Arena Monterrey staff for comment. — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Peter Lagiovane, (212) 407-8537; Ella Messerli, (301) 433-4538; Russ Simons (615) 345-9137; Paul Scheick, (206) 381-7551; Roy Medina, (956) 523-6587; James Bricker, (956) 843-6688

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Send reports to: HotTickets@venuestoday.com or call (714) 378-5400 with questions.

MARKETING

KISS ROUTE TO BE DETERMINED BY FAN DEMAND

Ralph Martin (from left), Sarah Mallard, Craig Gates and Carla Dubiel dressed as KISS in front of the SMG-managed Paul Tsongas Arena as they set out to canvas Lowell, Mass., for votes to bring the legendary rock band to the arena.



It should come as no surprise that a band whose 35-year career has hinged on its mammoth live shows, creative marketing ploys and rabid fan base would come up with yet another novel way to fire up the faithful.

The latest radical notion from KISS' seemingly bottomless bag of tricks is their upcoming fall "Demand It" North American outing. From April 6 to June 30, KISS is encouraging fans to sign on to the event-based social networking site Eventful and vote for their city in a bid to bring the band into town, in what is being billed as the first-ever promotion of its kind for a major rock act. Acts like Wu-Tang Clan have launched similar tours using the social networking site.

"The idea came from all the petitions we've received from KISS fans to come out and play their towns," said Nathan Gregory, a spokesperson for the band's management, McGhee Entertainment.

The promotion is powered by Eventful and ticketing partner Ticketmaster. Under the deal, Eventful tallies

votes from its users who “demand” bands play their hometown venues, while Ticketmaster and its subsidiaries act as the preferred ticketing provider, and use the “demand” data from Eventful to help partner venues book events. Gregory said the idea was to “truly let fans decide where KISS will play this year.”

The novel idea from the hard-touring band has not only caught the fancy of their notoriously loyal fans, but also of venue managers hoping to get in on action they might not normally get. Craig Gates, general manager of the 8,000-capacity Paul Tsongas Arena in Lowell, Mass., which has never hosted KISS before, said he got wind of the promotion from an employee in early March and by that afternoon he started voting to try and get the Tsongas Arena on the board.

“Beginning the following week, we sent out an email blast to everyone on the Tsongas Arena list [about 10,000-12,000 people] with instructions on how to vote and in the early going we were doing pretty well,” said Gates.

In order to keep the competition fair for smaller venues/cities such as Lowell, final site selection will weigh population size versus total votes. At press time, more than 100 U.S. and Canadian radio stations were running promotions encouraging fans to vote in the contest, according to Tommy Nast, co-founder of marketing company Rock Band Entertainment, which is coordinating the radio promotions for McGhee Entertainment. “We have more than 100 stations putting Eventful’s widget on their websites and whenever they play a KISS song they point fans to their site to vote,” said Nast.

Remembering a time in the 1990s when he worked at the Centrum in Worcester and KISS bassist/huckster Gene Simmons asked building management to get dressed up in KISS drag to hype one of the band’s shows, Gates took it a step further and hired a local makeup artist to make up four members of his team. “We walked the streets of Lowell for three hours handing out flyers on how to vote,” he said of the stunt, which got the city as high as 47 on the list before it dropped back down below the 80s.

“That’s part of his [Simmons’] marketing genius,”

Gates said. "Venues that in all likelihood won't get a show are out there spreading the word." Gates estimated he spent \$300-\$400 on the promotion.

The majority of the activity at press time was taking place in Canada, which had a virtual lockdown on the top 20 requests, from Ontario to Alberta, Saskatoon and British Columbia. In Kingston, Ontario, the city's police chief had offered to drive KISS in the city's official 1952 Chevrolet, while nearby Fort Henry had invited the band to be set off one of its 1867-era cannons.

Trevor Zachary, marketing and events manager at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario's Essar Center, said as soon as he got wind of the promotion, he sent out a press release to the local media. "Luckily, a few local news outlets got on board right away and pushed this as hard as they could with continuous articles, some almost every couple hours over 3-4 days," he said of his push, which began on April 20. At press time, the venue, which maxes out at 5,000, was in the top 3, despite a local population of just 75,000. "We're probably the smallest of the cities in the running now in the top 20," he boasted.

Contacted for this story: Craig Gates, (978) 848-6906; Trevor Zachary, (705) 759-5488; Nathan Gregory, (310) 358-9200; Tommy Nast, (818) 735-0600

CONVENTION CENTERS

ATLANTIC CITY FINDS SUCCESS WITH SOLAR

The roof of the Atlantic City Convention Center is now the site of the largest solar panel system in the U.S.



The Atlantic City (N.J.) Convention Center is four months into one of the largest solar roof panel systems in the United States, and VP Gary Musich said the facility plans to expand its renewable energy commitment at the 500,000-square-foot building even further.

Currently the largest single-site roof-mounted solar array in North America, the 13,486-panel, 2.37-megawatt system generates roughly 26 percent of the convention center's electricity needs, according to Musich, VP of Convention Sales for the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority. The ACCVA manages the convention center.

Under its Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Pepco Energy, the company that owns and operates the rooftop solar panel system, the Atlantic City Convention Center is locked into a rate of 10.3 cents per kilowatt-hour for all energy generated from the system, with a minimal annual growth of two percent for the duration of the 20-year contract.

Musich said future green initiatives planned for the convention center include installing a wind turbine on site, which would generate an additional 26 percent of renewable energy for the building. The goal, he said, is for more than 50 percent of the building's electrical use to come from renewable energy sources.

Musich couldn't say exactly how much Pepco spent to fund the installation of the system, but said it was more than \$10 million. The project was completed before Dec. 31, 2008, when federal tax incentives for renewable energy projects were set to expire. The federal tax investment credit has since been renewed.

Utilizing the solar panel system is expected to save the convention center \$4.4 million in energy bills over the next 20 years, Musich said. In addition to the financial savings throughout the course of the 20-year PPA, the solar panel system is expected to prevent 2,349 tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

"Being sensible about energy use has always been our way (at the Atlantic City Convention Center)," said Musich. Atlantic County is also home to the first coastal wind farm in the United States, the 7.5-megawatt Jersey Atlantic Wind Farm.

The Oregon Convention Center is also planning to install solar panels on its roof and is currently going through an RFP process to determine what company, or companies, it will be working with to implement the system. "We're doing as much as we can in terms of energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste management," Sustainability Coordinator Brittin Witzenburg said, adding that proposals are due June 5 and a decision will be made sometime after that. — Lindsay Sandham

Interviewed for this article: Gary Musich, (609) 289-9156; Lindsay Smith, (303) 681-1768; Gwen Wilson, (407) 685-5796; Brittin Witzenburg, (503) 731-7949

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
BIRMINGHAM JEFFERSON CIVIC CENTER AUTHORITY
CONCESSION MANAGEMENT**

A MANDATORY PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE AND SITE VISIT CONCERNING THIS PROJECT WILL BE HELD ON MAY 19, 2009 AT 1:00 P.M. IN THE BJCC EXECUTIVE BOARD ROOM LOCATED AT 2100 RICHARD ARRINGTON JR BLVD, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA 35203

The purpose of this conference is to discuss the project in detail and to consider prospective Proposers' concerns.

All documents pertinent to this advertisement may be examined and obtained at:

BJCC
Operations Department
2100 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd North
Birmingham, Alabama 35203
Attn: Matt Wilson, Director of Operations
Office 205-458-8491
Email: matt.wilson@bjcc.org

Prospective Proposers are requested to direct any questions concerning this proposal to: Matt Wilson (see above info) or Wayne Averitt, Dir. of Finance at 205-458-8479, between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, M-F.

**ALL PROPOSALS FOR BIRMINGHAM JEFFERSON CIVIC CENTER
AUTHORITY CONCESSION MANAGEMENT MUST BE
SUBMITTED TO THE PURCHASING DEPARTMENT FOR THE
BJCCA, LOCATED AT 2100 RICHARD ARRINGTON JR BLVD,
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35203 BY 2:00 P.M., JUNE 2, 2009**

The Authority reserves the right to waive any informalities or to reject any

or all proposals. Each Proposer must deposit with his proposal, security IF REQUIRED BY THE CLAUSES SECTION in the amount, form and subject to the conditions stipulated by the Request for Proposal.

No Proposer may withdraw his proposal for a period of one hundred and twenty (120) calendar days after the actual date of the proposal opening.

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 April 7.

OOPS, BRITNEY DID IT AGAIN WITH BIG CALIFORNIA RUN

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) Britney Spears Gross Sales: \$4,062,953; Venue: Staples Center Arena, Los Angeles; Attendance: 33,142; Ticket Range: \$150-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: April 16-17; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>1) Walking with Dinosaurs Gross Sales: \$1,096,386; Venue: Rabobank Arena, Bakersfield, Calif.; Attendance: 26,493; Ticket Range: \$69.50-\$23.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Goldenvoice; Dates: April 8-11; No. of Shows: 7</p>	<p>1) Dora The Explorer Live! Gross Sales: \$2,460,096; Venue: Radio City Music Hall, New York; Attendance: 60,798; Ticket Range: \$74.50-\$24.50; Promoter: MSG Entertainment; Dates: April 10-12; No. of Shows: 12</p>	<p>1) Elton John, The Red Piano Gross Sales: \$6,390,578; Venue: The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas; Attendance: 43,935; Ticket Range: \$250-\$100; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, In-house; Dates: April 7-8, 10-12, 14-16, 18-19, 21-22; No. of Shows: 12</p>
<p>2) Britney Spears Gross Sales: \$3,081,963; Venue: Honda Center, Anaheim, Calif.; Attendance: 31,582; Ticket Range: \$153-</p>	<p>2) Kenny Chesney Gross Sales: \$622,965; Venue: Journal Pavilion, Albuquerque, N.M.; Attendance: 12,549; Ticket Range: \$75-\$40</p>	<p>2) Yanni Voices Gross Sales: \$737,725; Venue: Radio City Music Hall, New York; Attendance: 9,609; Ticket Range: \$120.50-\$50.50; Promoter: Metropolitan Talent Presents, MSG</p>	<p>2) Jersey Boys Gross Sales: \$6,194,086; Venue: Broward Center For The Performing Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Fla · Attendance:</p>

<p>\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: April 19-20; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>Promoter: AEG Live, Live Nation, The Messina Group; Dates: April 23; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>Entertainment; Dates: May 1-2; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>83,053; Ticket Range: \$150-\$22; Promoter:</p>
<p>3) Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band Gross Sales: \$2,807,010; Venue: Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena; Attendance: 32,066; Ticket Range: \$95-\$65; Promoter: Live Nation, Nederlander; Dates: April 15-16; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>3) Lil' Wayne Gross Sales: \$576,125; Venue: Journal Pavilion, Albuquerque, N.M.; Attendance: 13,881; Ticket Range: \$125-\$19.50; Promoter: Al Haymon, Live Nation; Dates: April 8; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Flight of the Conchords Gross Sales: \$473,607; Venue: Radio City Music Hall, New York; Attendance: 11,694; Ticket Range: \$40.50; Promoter: AEG Live Productions, MSG Entertainment; Dates: April 14-15; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>Broadway Across America, In-house; Dates: April 8-May 3; No. of Shows: 32</p>
<p>4) Kenny Chesney Gross Sales: \$1,840,494; Venue: Pizza Hut Park, Frisco, Texas; Attendance: 25,026; Ticket Range: \$127-\$27.25; Promoter: AEG Live, The Messina Group; Dates: May 2; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) The Killers Gross Sales: \$433,674; Venue: Vector Arena, Auckland, New Zealand; Attendance: 9,236; Ticket Range: \$58.22; Promoter: Frontier Touring Company; Dates: April 8; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) Raphael Gross Sales: \$428,435; Venue: The WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden, New York; Attendance: 5,087; Ticket Range: \$120-\$70; Promoter: NYK Productions; Dates: May 1; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Cher Gross Sales: \$3,294,601; Venue: The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas; Attendance: 22,442; Ticket Range: \$250-\$95; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: April 25-26, 28-29, May 2-3; No. of Shows: 6</p>
<p>5) Britney Spears Gross Sales: \$1,834,352;</p>	<p>5) New Kids On The Block Gross Sales: \$260,438; Venue: Save Mart Center at Fresno (Calif.) State; Attendance: 5,751; Ticket Range: \$77.75-\$18.25; Promoter:</p>	<p>5) Robin Thicke & Jennifer Hudson Gross Sales: \$396,925; Venue: Nokia Theatre L.A. Live; Attendance: 6,880; Ticket Range: \$85-\$35; Promoter: AEG Live, CD Enterprise, Goldenvoice;</p>	<p>4) Thomas and Friends Live Onstage: A Circus Comes to Town Gross Sales: \$979,127; Venue: Beacon Theatre, New York; Attendance: 21,191; Ticket Range: \$70.50-\$20.50; Promoter: MSG Entertainment; Dates: April 17-19; No. of Shows: 9</p> <p>5) Tyler Perry's The Marriage Counselor Gross Sales: \$910,000; Venue:</p>

<p>Venue: HP Pavilion at San Jose (Calif.); Attendance: 17,053; Ticket Range: \$153-\$39.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: April 12; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>Live Nation; Dates: April 16; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>Dates: May 2; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>Beacon Theatre, New York ; Attendance: 18,290; Ticket Range: \$65-\$29.50; Promoter: Peachez, Inc. ; Dates: April 7-12; No. of Shows: 8</p>
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Compiled by Rob Ocampo and Riley Camarillo. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venues today.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

THE BEAT

PASSINGS

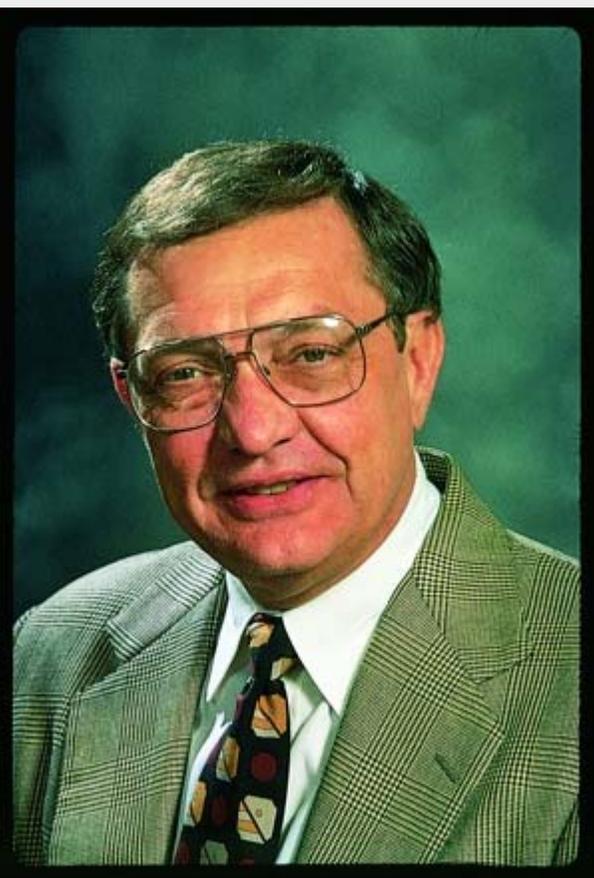
FORMER MET CENTER AND HP PAVILION MANAGER FRANK JIRIK DIES

Frank Jirik

Known for his dry wit and great heart, Frank Jirik spent his entire career in venue management, starting as a member of the grounds crew at the outdoor stadium in Bloomington, Minn., for the Minnesota Twins and ending as senior executive vice president and chief operating officer of the San Jose Sharks and HP Pavilion Management. Jirik died at the age of 69 in Lakeville, Minn., on April 30. The industry turned out for his funeral yesterday.

Silicon Valley Sports & Entertainment President and Chief Executive Officer Greg Jamison lauded Jirik's passion for HP Pavilion and the San Jose Sharks. Jirik is credited with

overseeing the construction, design and management of HP Pavilion at San Jose when the state-of-the-art facility first opened in September of 1993.



Jirik is survived by his wife Sharon, children Becky, Scott, Chelle and their spouses and his seven grandchildren. Donations in Jirik's memory can be made at <http://caringbridge.org/visit/frankjirik>.

In 1967, Jirik helped to open the new Met Center in Bloomington and during the next 24 years was promoted from the operations crew all the way up to vice president of Marketing and Building Operations for the Met Center and the Minnesota North Stars of the National Hockey League. He eventually took over there from Bob Reid. Vince Egan, VEE Corp., chose Jirik's building to rehearse and debut his new show, Sesame Street Live. Don Sandefur, with the Harlem Globetrotters, recalls many a negotiation with Jirik at the Marriott Bar adjacent to the old Met Center, noting his style was to make sure everyone did well.

In 1990, Jirik moved to California to join the expansion San Jose Sharks and became the chief negotiator in all business transactions with the City of San Jose, including the deal that led to the construction of Spectacular San Jose Arena (now called HP Pavilion at San Jose).

Jirik always surrounded himself with a strong management team, from Gigi Pilhoffer, a legend in marketing, who worked for him at the Met Center, to Jim Goddard, his successor at HP Pavilion. "Frank created a work environment that encouraged everyone to reach their full potential," Goddard said.

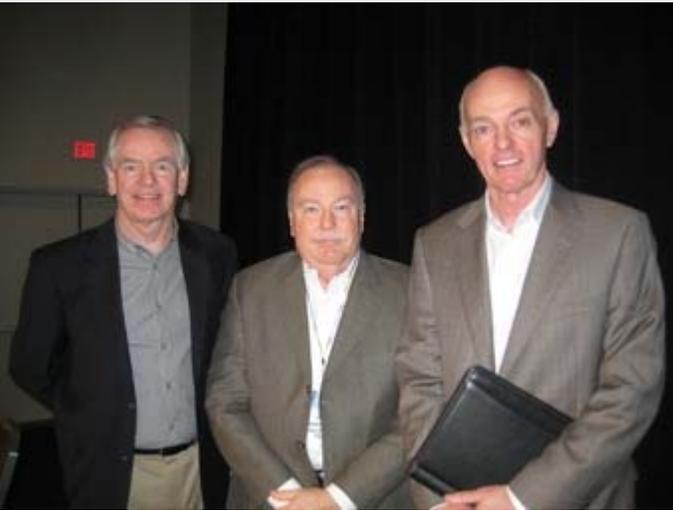
His history in the business mirrors an era in the industry and *Venues Today* will pay tribute to Jirik in a special section in our upcoming June issue. In 16 years, HP Pavilion has played host to more than 2,800 events with more than 25 million people coming through its doors. Jirik was responsible for bringing the top names in the entertainment industry to HP Pavilion and for negotiating long term agreements with all of the major touring family shows, Goddard added.

Jirik was a member of the International Association of Assembly Managers and the Major Arena Managers Association. He served on the board of directors of the San Jose Sports Authority, Public Television KTEH and the San Jose Symphony. He was also on KTEH's Executive Committee and served on the San Jose Sports Hall of Fame Committee. — Linda Deckard

Contacted for this story: Jim Sparaco, (408) 999-5792; Don Sandefur, (352) 259-9016; Dick Geyer, (414) 908-6050; Tom Powell, (615) 361-5265

TRAVELOG

DISTRICT IV BRINGS VANCOUVER SUNSHINE TO CLOUDY ECONOMY



Harvey Jones of General Motors Place in Vancouver, British Columbia, spoke on an economic panel alongside John Christison of the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle and Warren Buckley from the Vancouver Convention Centre.

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA — Is the economy in dire straights, or is the facility industry just facing turbulent times?

That was the question on the minds of attendees of the

International Association of Assembly Managers District IV meeting in Vancouver April 24-27.

"If your neighbor gets laid off, you're in a recession. If you get laid off, you're in a depression," said Warren Buckley, president and CEO for the BC Pavilion Corporation, which manages Vancouver facilities including BC Place and the newly expanded Vancouver Convention Centre.

Buckley said that Canada's tightly regulated banking system helped stave off some of the economic meltdown, but the global nature of the downturn affected all corners of the financial system.

"Right now, the playbook for facility management is maintain revenues, reduce costs and cut, cut, cut," he said. "You need to be selective about what you cut because there are long term implications."

Buckley said he's tried to move forward with training and employee investment, despite trends to pull back. He said he wants to maintain a steady level of customer service and brand consistency to keep consumer loyalty.

"This is cyclical," he said. "It has happened before and it will get better. Customers that stuck with you in difficult times will remember that you continued to deliver."

Buckley told the audience not to treat all customers that same: "Go after the high-yield clients and don't spend as much time with those that offer small returns."

The biggest changes are tied to who is booking space, and for how long, said John Christison from the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle. Christison, who took an informal survey of 27 convention center managers before attending the meeting, said corporate bookings were down, while association bookings seemed to hold steady.

He also noticed that confirmations on bookings were getting later and meeting planners were letting event dates inch up closer before signing deals that were either tightly negotiated or rewritten altogether.

"We've been proud at the Washington Convention Center that we haven't had to cut any staff and that we have been able to infill most of the long-term business with short lead consumer shows," he said, adding that the convention center is not filling vacant positions, has instituted a hiring freeze and cut all travel besides sales staff.

"We are holding on to our pricing and not offering deep discounts or free rent because we know it's very hard to come back from that," he said. "We're also holding the line on amenities. There's been pressure for us to stop providing the free bottled water, the candy dishes and the pencil and paper in an effort to save money. But we believe it's critical to preserve our integrity and maintain customer loyalty."

He said he's also instructed his own convention and visitors bureau to focus only on long-term contracts, while his sales teams signs short-term consumer shows. Christison said the move wasn't popular with the bureau sales staff, who are losing out on the potential commission upside.

Most detrimental has been the delay of a plan to invest \$700 million in the expansion of the convention center; a move that was triggered by political fears in the state capital, despite arguments from Christison that the upgrade would boost the economy during a time when labor and building materials were particularly cheap.

"And let's not forget to ask ourselves what good can come from this situation," said Harvey Jones, GM of the General Motors Place, also in Vancouver.

"You have to be able to see the bright side of any downturn and this recession certainly has its own upsides," he said. "Look at the state of many people's retirement accounts. Many people are rethinking the plausibility of living off their investments and many retirees are considering looking for part time jobs. That's a whole new wave of labor for your facilities that can act as ushers, ticket takers and greeters," he said.

And while consumer spending is dropping, Jones said he's seen an increase in concert ticket sales for acts like Taylor Swift, U2 and Kings of Leon. The drops, he said, are generally in food sales and sponsorships.

"And that has forced us to rethink our own systems and build in new efficiencies that help us do business more effectively," he said. "The solutions are there. You just have to look closely." — Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Warren Buckley, (604) 661-3800; John Christison, (206) 694-5010; Harvey Jones, (604) 899-7400

JEFF KLINE, PRESIDENT OF VERITIX



Jeff Kline is presiding over a digital revolution. The former Ticketmaster executive left the ticketing business in 2001 to work in corporate events, but just couldn't get the ticketing bug out of his system. Last June he moved to Cleveland to work with upstart Veritix, the primary ticketing provider for the Houston Rockets and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Kline said he made the move in part because of the power of digital tickets and the Flash Seats platform to change the way tickets are sold and resold. Venues Today's Dave Brooks caught up with Kline to discuss the digital revolution.

Venues Today: After Ticketmaster, you had a successful career with the corporate events industry. What brought you back to ticketing?

Jeff Kline: I learned about digital ticketing, and I knew that's where the future was going. I think it sets the table for a very different kind of market, a different mentality. Data was certainly a big part of it, and controlling the fees was another big part.

VT: Do you mean that the actual nature of digital tickets lets you control the fee or that having your own ticketing system allows you to control the fee?

JK: It's both. You have your own system that you basically own and control with abilities to set your own business rules. And then you have other abilities because there is no paper ticket. You have the ability to control that transaction. You know who bought the seats, when they got them, how they got them, what they paid for them and the trail for those tickets. It's a lead generation tool. A paper ticket can obviously exchange hands many times and you really don't know or control that trail. With the data, you know who is in each seat and how they got there.

VT: Can Flash Seats work with any primary ticket provider, or just Veritix?

JK: There are some integration steps you have to take, but it was built to work with any primary ticketing system.

VT: What kind of numbers are you doing on the concert side with digital tickets?

JK: We just did Billy Joel and Elton John [at Toyota Center, Houston], which was the largest digital onsale to ever take place with over 12,500 tickets sold over the digital platform. We've recently did 5,000 for Britney Spears the week after that. We just got done doing Nickelback with another 6,000 people on Flash Seats. We're also doing Flash Seats for Real Salt Lake at the Rio Tinto Stadium in Sandy, Utah.

VT: What are the growth areas in terms of secondary market opportunities?

JK: Content owners have been watching the revenue slip out of their pockets for years. The Razorgators and StubHubs have been doing well with their paper exchanges, while the artist sits back and watches all this money go up in smoke. By closing the loop and using a digital platform, artists can now take advantage of the fees. They not only understand how much they're getting, but who, when, where and how.

VT: Have you seen revenue growth on the primary side?

JK: Yes. We found that with the Cleveland Cavaliers, which saw a reduction of no-shows by five to seven percent. That meant per caps, parking and merchandise went up significantly. We attribute that to the increase of digital tickets on the marketplace and the ease of using and transferring them. So sports where there are a lot of events and concerts where there is a vibrant secondary market are both big growth areas for us. We're talking with leagues, we're talking with teams and we're talking with artists.

Interviewed for this article: Jeff Kline, (216) 466-8055

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