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# VT PULSE

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

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## Quote of the Week

*"Dallas fans like hockey, but they love football. Sometimes when you like something, then price and value become a strong part of whether people will buy tickets or not."*

— Geoff Moore of the Dallas Stars on selling tickets in the Lone Star State. The team recently signed a deal for a new dynamic ticketing system powered by Qcue.

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## Greetings,

Welcome to VT Pulse, your weekly guide to the "News Behind the Headlines." This week we launched a call for nominations for our annual Hall of Headlines awards. To nominate an industry executive, email [linda@venuestoday.com](mailto:linda@venuestoday.com) with a description of the person, company and accomplishment. You can also fax in your nomination to (714) 378-0040, or call (714) 378-5400 and ask for Dave or Linda.



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For more information, contact Harold Hansen, IAAM's Director of Life Safety & Security, at 773.973.2049; or e-mail: [harold.hansen@iaam.org](mailto:harold.hansen@iaam.org).

[Qcye Introduces Dynamic Ticketing To Dallas Stars](#)

**DEPARTMENTS**  
Short Takes

HELP WANTED

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### SHORT TAKES

>> **JAY-Z TAKES IT BACK TO SCHOOL** – Rapper Jay-Z has just announced the dates for this fall's tour with Live Nation, which has him stopping at a number of university venues, starting at Penn State in State College and ending at the University of Texas, Austin. Tickets go on sale Sept. 11, the same day as the release of his new album "The Blueprint III" and a special charity concert at Madison Square Garden in New York.  
*Contact: Liz Morentin, (310) 975-6860*

>> **IAAM AWARDED \$250,000 GRANT FROM DHS** – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has awarded a \$250,000 grant to the International Association of Assembly Managers Foundation to increase emergency preparedness in venues. Through the grant, IAAM will deliver training in safety and security protocols for emergency preparedness, crises communication, and introduction to a free risk self assessment and benchmarking tool.  
*Contact: Jill Dotts, (407) 595-1677*

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### VT NEWS

#### **BEHIND THE HEADLINES**

#### **SYDNEY ARENA GETS NEW MANAGEMENT FOLLOWING COLLAPSE OF ARENA MANAGEMENT**

*Newly appointed Sydney Entertainment Center GM Steve Romer presents an award to rocker Alice Cooper after his Aug. 24 concert.*



The Sydney Entertainment Centre (SEC) is under new management and has a new leader in veteran Aussie entertainment executive Steve Romer.

Romer took the post on Aug. 7 after his employer Darling Harbor Convention and Exhibition (DHCE) assumed the contract to operate the 12,500-capacity venue. The DHCE currently manages the adjacent Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, where Romer had worked for the past six years as director of operations.

The DHCE was assigned the contract by owners Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) after the previous manager Kevin Jacobsen's Arena Management went into voluntary administration – a process similar to receivership and a possible precursor to U.S. Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Jacobsen's group, which operated the facility since 1983 – was reported to have an estimated \$8.4 million in debt when it was evicted from the facility on Aug. 6.

Jacobsen said he placed the company into administration after several attempts to sell the company to AEG or Live Nation failed. "The due diligence found that the contract with the SHFA was simply unprofitable," he said. In September of 2008, the SHFA signed a 10-year

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lease with Arena Management that included \$2.1 million in base rent and approximately \$1 million more in revenue sharing.

“After several months, I realized the deal was untenable and tried to get them to change the terms of the contract, but state law required them to put the contract back out to bid,” said Jacobsen.

One of Jacobsen’s other companies, Campbell Street Theatre, loaned Arena Management \$1.7 million, allowing Jacobsen to trigger the administration hearings, although a recent creditors report by administrator Joubert Insolvency has attempted to block Campbell from collecting its debt. The Joubert report said that under the leadership of Jacobsen’s 30-year-old son Michael, Arena Management paid “unsubstantiated” bonuses to some directors, used company coffers to pay for personal travel and continued to do business while being knowingly insolvent. Jacobsen denies all the charges. Jacobsen said he had hoped to restructure the company’s debts and had recently offered to repay unsecured creditors 35 cents on the dollar. Instead, the creditors voted to begin liquidation of the company.

Owner Harbour Foreshore Authority claims it’s owed \$1 million in back rent, according to the report. Ticketmaster 7 says it is owed \$3.4 million. Promoter Michael Coppel said he was never paid \$900,000 for 10 Pink shows.

“That was essentially a kickback we gave to him so that he would bring the show to us instead of the Acer Arena” in nearby Homebush, said Jacobsen. Competition with the facility was so stiff that he regularly gave away rent to promoters just so he could fill seats.

Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority CEO Robert Domm said that the arena wasn’t at a disadvantage and added that his decision to evict Arena Management was largely financial.

“Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority’s decision to terminate Arena’s lease was based on Arena’s breach of essential terms of its lease and due to the company being placed under voluntary administration and receivership,” he wrote in an email. “Sydneysiders and visitors clearly want an entertainment centre in the heart of the city and the Foreshore Authority will ensure that the SEC keeps its doors open.”

With Arena Management now evicted, the DHCE will assume the previous contract, which lasts until December 2011, with a five-year option to renew. The DCHE is seven years into a 15-year lease for the adjacent convention center.

“We’ve had a fabulous relationship with SHFA and the New South Wales government and they put us on standby and asked us if our company would be interested in assisting if the previous operator went into administration,” Romer said. “That operator did go into administration and ended up dismissing all of the Sydney staff on Aug. 7. We were given a phone call on that same day and asked to be in place the following morning.”

About 19 staff members from the arena have been hired back under DHCE. Romer didn’t release the new details for operating the venue, although he said there were considerations to use the convention center’s resources to operate the facility. The convention center operates all of its services in-house, from concessions to security and janitorial, and Romer said the entertainment center could likely achieve

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**HELP WANTED**

**VIEW THE FULL LISTINGS**

**Burswood Entertainment Complex, Perth, Aus.** -Dome Technical Coordinator

**Burswood Entertainment Complex, Perth, Aus.** -Dome Catering Assistant

**Venues West, Mt. Claremont, Aus.** - Director of Venue Operations

**Royal Agricultural Society, NSW, Sydney** -Coordinator Food & Beverage

**Hampton (Va) Coliseum** -Assistant Box Office Manager

**Mahalia Jackson Theater & Saenger Theater, New Orleans** - Ticket Office Manager

**Booth and Case, St. Charles, Mo.** - Director of Sales

**VIEW THE FULL LISTINGS**

some efficiency by combining services, although they will maintain the arena's previous operator's contracts in the short term.

As for the terms of the deal, Romer could only say, "The previous operator was under a straight-forward rental lease," while under the new agreement, Romer said his group was "under a management deed and we're operating the venue for a commercial management fee."

Romer's group will book the arena and has rewritten several contracts with acts previously signed by Arena Management. The arena's first event under DHCE was an Alice Cooper concert on Aug. 24.

The assignment is the latest career move for Romer, who is current president of the Venue Management Association, where he has served as a councilor since 2002. He has also served as an entertainment manager for several Gold Coast theme parks.

As for Jacobsen, he said he's likely done with the music business in Sydney, but plans to continue touring an international Broadway adaptation for Dirty Dancing. — Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this article: Steve Romer, +61 (0) 2 9320 4233; Kevin Jacobsen, +61 (0) 2 9211 6899; Robert Domm, +61 (0) 2 9240 8520*



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#### BOOKINGS

### CYPRESS HILL LIGHTS UP SO CAL POT FEST WITH LONG-AWAITED SUBLIME REUNION



Any hip-hop show that features the reunion of two of the most beloved rap acts of the 1990s, the Geto Boys and Goodie Mob, is already an easy sell for fans of the genre. But for their revived “Cypress Hill Smokeout” festival in October, the noted marijuana-loving rap trio whose name tops the bill pulled off a reunion that some thought might never happen.

Among the dozen-plus acts on the bill is Sublime, the mellow down, Long Beach reggae-rap trio whose career was cut short just as they became household names by the death of Bradley Nowell in 1996. With a new singer, Rome, on board, the band will play their first official show at the “Smokeout,” a gig that should attract a raft of fans to the re-launched festival.

“Getting Sublime was a super big deal,” said Chang Weisberg, president of the show’s co-presenter, Guerilla Union, on the last minute addition of the still popular trio. “It means everything in the world to those guys and to be able to work with [surviving members] Bud [Gaugh] and Eric [Wilson] and their management and knowing how familiar they are with the Smokeout makes it special.” The Sublime offshoot, Long Beach Dub All-Stars, had played four of the previous six Smokeouts, and the members of Cypress Hill are huge fans of the group, which have sold over 17 million albums.

The concert/cannabis expo will take place Oct. 23-24 at the San Manuel Amphitheater in San Bernardino, Calif. It is being co-promoted by Cypress Hill and Guerilla Union in association with Live Nation, which operates the venue. Because the band is co-promoting the show,

Weisberg said it had an even bigger stake in securing a solid talent line-up; the rap group and Union will split the profits evenly. Weisberg doubts they will sell out the massive 50,000-capacity space both days, but he expects the combination of the star-heavy roster and the adjoining expo to draw healthy crowds.

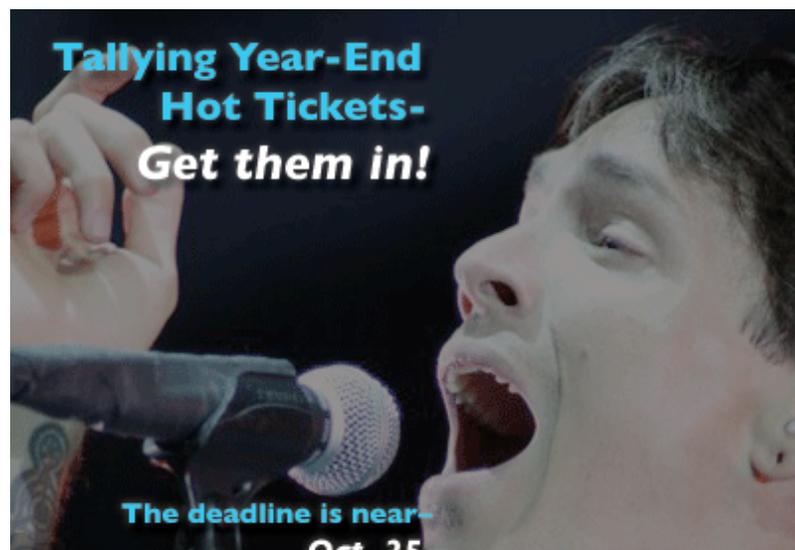
In addition to the above-mentioned acts, the roster is heavy with other groups that could easily draw well on their own. Among the other bands, a mix of rap, hard rock and punk, are: Slipknot, Deftones, Pennywise, Redman & Method Man, Hieroglyphics, Knaan, Mix Master Mike, Kottonmouth Kings, Bad Brains and hosts, comedic pot duo Cheech and Chong. To accommodate the stoner crowd, 3,000 seats in the orchestra pit were removed to make room for a general admission area up front, while spaces were also constructed for pot-friendly movie screenings, a medical marijuana expo and lots of space for public and VIP meet-and-greets with the acts.

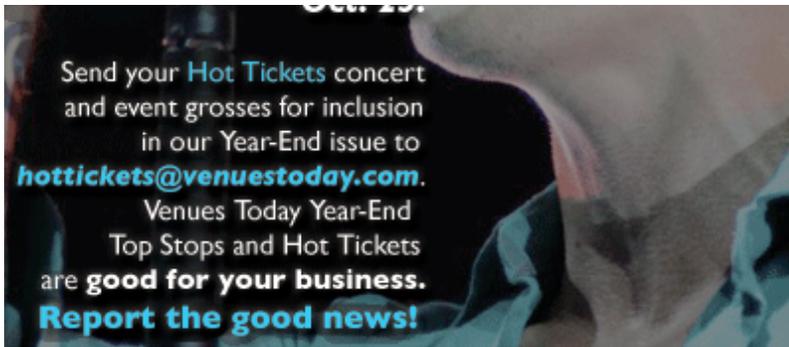
The event, which was launched in 1998 by the band and last took place in 2003, was intended to create awareness around cannabis culture and is expanding this year to a two-day, 30-act bill with three stages. It will also feature guest speakers, marijuana cultivation tips, a vendor's village and "massive munchie gardens" for fans in search of savory snacks.

Guerilla Union is best known for its Rock the Bells series of hip-hop shows, as well as the independent Paid Dues hip-hop festival, along with apparel and other media ventures.

As an added incentive in these hard economic times, Weisberg said two-day tickets - a pre-sale took place on Sept. 4 with general public sales scheduled for Saturday (Sept. 12) - will be available for \$30 to help cash-starved fans. "People will be shocked at how much value they're getting for the ticket price," he said. "We're doing everything we can to accommodate fans because we know they'll be paying parking and other fees." Weisberg worked with the bands and their managers to help keep the costs low, but also made sure that VIP-style packages were available for attendees looking for a more upscale experience. Higher price-point tickets for orchestra pit seats will be available for \$75 for both days. - Gil Kaufman

*Interviewed for this article: Chang Weisberg, (909) 706-3700*





#### FAIRS & FESTIVALS

#### FAMED SUNSET STRIP CLOSED FOR MASSIVE CLUB FEST

*The Sunset Strip, West Hollywood, Calif.*



The 2nd Annual Sunset Strip Music Festival kicks off Thursday Sept. 10 and is expected to be bigger than last year's inaugural event with an anticipated attendance of more than 10,000 people and a projected revenue of \$700,000 to \$800,000.

The three-day festival will open Thursday night at the House of Blues and celebrate the musical legacy of the famed stretch of Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood, Calif., home to a number of legendary rock clubs including the House of Blues, the Key Club, the Roxy Theatre, the Cat Club, the Viper Room, and the Whiskey A Go-Go, all of which are participating in the festival.

Friday night's festivities will feature performances by several musical acts in six clubs along the strip. Saturday, the main day of the event, will feature more than 40 bands—including headliners Korn and Ozzy Osborne—performing in six Sunset Strip clubs and on two outdoor stages. A portion of Sunset Boulevard between San Vicente and Doheny will be closed to traffic on Saturday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. — the first time in history that the strip has been closed to traffic for a live event.

"We wanted to make it a true festival by closing down the strip," Festival Executive Director Todd Steadman said, adding that there was a strong desire between the area businesses, the community, and the city

of West Hollywood to close down the boulevard. Festival organizers hired a site logistics specialist to help plan the details and in April, they presented the plan to the West Hollywood City Council, which voted in favor of the closure 5 to 0.

The festival was born out of a desire by the community and local businesses to honor artists who have made an impact on the legacy of the Sunset Strip. Last year’s inaugural event served as a tribute to the strip’s “founding fathers”— Lou Adler, Mario Maglieri and Elmer Valentine, music industry icons who connect the Sunset Strip to its past, present and future. This year Ozzy Osborne will be honored as the festival icon. During Black Sabbath’s first U.S. tour in 1970, the band played a five-night stand at the Whiskey A Go-Go and went on to become one of the most popular rock groups in the country. Rock icons such as The Doors, Motley Crue and the Red Hot Chili Peppers owe much of their initial success to small, and sometimes impromptu, shows held in these clubs.

“Music is definitely a part of the Strip’s DNA,” Steadman noted.

Managing Festival Director Karmen Beck echoed Steadman and said that having a festival on the Sunset Strip, with all of its musical heritage, makes perfect sense.

“There’s going to be music pouring out of every corner of this festival,” she said.

Jeremy Dawson, keyboardist, writer, and co-founder of the musical group Shiny Toy Guns—which will play on one of the outdoor stages Saturday—said the group is excited to perform the Sunset Strip Music Festival as it is a unique situation in which the venues and businesses of the strip will come together.

“It’s usually all of the bars doing their own thing,” he said. “So this is kind of a united front. I think this will be the beginning of a resurgence down there.”

Dawson said the band signed on to perform the festival several months ago and they are particularly excited to play the same bill as LMFAO and Iggy Pop. He added that he is also looking forward to the possibility of running into former promoters and Sunset Strip club owners that gave Shiny Toy Guns a chance several years ago before they became more popular. — Lindsay Sandham

*Interviewed for this article: Karmen Beck and Todd Steadman, (818) 380-0400; Jeremy Dawson, (646) 725-6245*

## 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 Aug. 11, 2009.

### SIR PAUL AND HIS BAND ON THE RUN CLEAR \$11 MIL IN 3 SHOWS

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
1) Paul McCartney Gross Sales: \$5,054,620; Venue: Dallas Cowboys Stadium, Arlington,	1) Pink Gross Sales: \$2,367,769; Venue: Brisbane (Australia) Entertainment Centre;	1) Cirque du Soleil - Alegria Gross Sales: \$1,654,919; Venue: Agganis Arena, Boston; Attendance:	1) Bette Midler Gross Sales: \$2,392,955; Venue: The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas; Attendance:

**Texas**; Attendance: 35,903; Ticket Range: \$175-\$45; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Live Nation, Marshall Arts, MPL; Dates: Aug. 19; No. of Shows: 1

2) **Paul McCartney**  
Gross Sales: \$3,517,564; Venue: **Piedmont Park, Atlanta**; Attendance: 36,062; Ticket Range: \$400-\$79.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 15; No. of Shows: 1

3) **Pink**  
Gross Sales: \$3,178,791; Venue: **AcerArena, Sydney**; Attendance: 29,648; Ticket Range: \$120.53-\$86.07; Promoter: Michael Coppel Presents; Dates: Aug. 28-29; No. of Shows: 2

4) **Depeche Mode**  
Gross Sales: \$2,771,625; Venue: **Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles**; Attendance: 34,919; Ticket Range: \$175-\$45; Promoter: Andrew Hewitt, Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 16-17; No. of Shows: 2

5) **Paul McCartney**  
Gross Sales: \$2,648,659; Venue: **BOK Center, Tulsa, Okla.**; Attendance: 15,479; Ticket Range: \$198-\$59.50; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West, Live Nation, Marshall Arts, MPL; Dates: Aug. 17; No. of Shows: 1

Attendance: 23,247; Ticket Range: \$111.39-\$86.13; Promoter: Michael Coppel Presents; Dates: Aug. 25-26; No. of Shows: 2

2) **AC/DC**  
Gross Sales: \$965,379; Venue: **San Diego Sports Arena**; Attendance: 10,867; Ticket Range: \$93.50-\$59.50; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Sept. 6; No. of Shows: 1

3) **AC/DC**  
Gross Sales: \$895,896; Venue: **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; Attendance: 10,124; Ticket Range: \$92; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 18; No. of Shows: 1

4) **Blink 182**  
Gross Sales: \$680,332; Venue: **Nikon at Jones Beach Theater, Wantagh, N.Y.**; Attendance: 13,930; Ticket Range: \$66.50-\$6.25; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 25; No. of Shows: 1

5) **American Idols Live 2009**  
Gross Sales: \$587,172; Venue: **Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.**; Attendance: 9,622; Ticket Range: \$69.50-\$40.50; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Sept. 6; No. of Shows: 1

23,432; Ticket Range: \$97-\$47; Promoter: Cirque du Soleil; Dates: Aug. 26-30; No. of Shows: 8

2) **Steely Dan**  
Gross Sales: \$1,295,578; Venue: **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; Attendance: 13,999; Ticket Range: \$275-\$49.75; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 21-22, 24-25; No. of Shows: 4

3) **Marco Antonio Solis**  
Gross Sales: \$854,990; Venue: **Gibson Amphitheatre at Universal CityWalk, Universal City, Calif.**; Attendance: 10,949; Ticket Range: \$250-\$55; Promoter: Alvarez & Garner, Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 14-15; No. of Shows: 2

4) **Depeche Mode**  
Gross Sales: \$678,597; Venue: **Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Denver**; Attendance: 8,679; Ticket Range: \$89-\$55; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 27; No. of Shows: 1

5) **Jeff Dunham**  
Gross Sales: \$468,949; Venue: **Mark G. Etess Arena, Atlantic City, N.J.**; Attendance: 9,581; Ticket Range: \$60.50-\$40.50; Promoter: In-house, Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 15; No. of Shows: 2

20,307; Ticket Range: \$250-\$95; Promoter: AEG Live, Concerts West; Dates: Aug. 25-26, 29-30, Sept. 1-2, 4-6; No. of Shows: 9

2) **Steely Dan**  
Gross Sales: \$1,129,862; Venue: **Chicago Theatre**; Attendance: 12,110; Ticket Range: \$205-\$54.50; Promoter: Jam Productions; Dates: Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 3-4; No. of Shows: 4

3) **Mamma Mia!**  
Gross Sales: \$757,190; Venue: **Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Fla.**; Attendance: 11,106; Ticket Range: \$77-\$47; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Aug. 11-16; No. of Shows: 8

4) **Nine Inch Nails**  
Gross Sales: \$536,030; Venue: **Aragon Ballroom, Chicago**; Attendance: 9,746; Ticket Range: \$55; Promoter: Jam Productions; Dates: Aug. 28-29; No. of Shows: 2

5) **Grease**  
Gross Sales: \$533,215; Venue: **Bob Carr Performing Arts Center, Orlando, Fla.**; Attendance: 10,354; Ticket Range: \$71-\$37; Promoter: PTG Florida; Dates: Aug. 25-30; No. of Shows: 7

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

## FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

### CHANGE IS IN THE AIR FOR LABOR DAY FAIRS



*A scene from the Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul*

It was a more of a mixed bag than usual with U.S. fairs ending on Labor Day, varying from a record-setting Minnesota State Fair based on tradition to several state fairs throwing tradition out the window.

Among the latter are the Nebraska State Fair, Lincoln, which also set records in its last year at the current grounds prior to moving to Grand Island in 2010. The Michigan State Fair, Detroit, on the other hand, is looking at the end of a 150-year tradition right in the face, with eviction set for Sept. 30 and no plans for a 2010 run.

And the California State Fair, Sacramento, rallied to bring in

more money, less people as it faced mammoth fair date changes all around the state from a state capital city facing fiscal crisis, leading to a serious look at moving the fair dates to July in 2010.

In all, *Venues Today* contacted eight fairs ending Sept. 6, of which five reported increased attendance, three static or less numbers.

The 156<sup>th</sup> California State Fair, Aug. 21-Sept. 7, themed Let Yourself Go, broke some important records and milestones in its 18-day run.

Advance ticket sales soared to \$1.2 million dollars in online purchases, the highest ever, which CEO and General Manager Norb Bartosik attributed to discounts and promotions. Subway offered a coupon good at the fair box office or on-line for \$28, good for rides all day and admission to the fair.

Bartosik also noted that Butler Amusements, new to the fair, offered daily \$30 and \$35 pay-one-price promotions that worked very well. In addition, they promoted four rides that had been at Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch, offering 5,000 Gold tickets to ride Michael Jackson's rides for free on Fridays at the fair.

Butler Amusements grossed \$3,380,918 at Cal Expo, down from last year's \$3,520,549, but from fewer people. Total State Fair attendance was approximately 676,000, a decrease of 15 percent from 2008. The last Sunday, the carnival grossed a record \$463,000.

Concerts did well, with David Cook, MC Hammer, Three Dog Night and Blake Shelton drawing 7,500-8,500 to the Golden1 Stage, Bartosik added.

The food and beverage gross was down to about \$5.2 million from \$5.9 million, and the parked car count was 129,000, down from 146,000 last year, Bartosik said.

Despite discounts and promotions, though, like the Poppy Pack of four admissions, 4 monorail tickets, and one parking pass for \$39.95, a 43 percent discount, the fair could not overcome earlier back-to-school dates, which left weekdays dead, competition for the entertainment dollar and, most definitely, state employee furloughs, leading them to seriously explore moving the fair dates in 2010 to mid-July. Bartosik said it would still be a 21-day fair and the final decision rests with the board and is somewhat dependent on race dates. Such a move would end a 150-year tradition, but "nothing is sacred anymore," he said.

Except at the Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul, where the Aug. 27-Sept. 7 fair strives to keep the status quo, resulting in a record "Great Minnesota Get-Together" with an all-time high of 1,790,497 attending, beating 2001 by 27,521, and up 97,000 from 2008.

"People need something to count on and they know they can come here," said Jerry Hammer, general manager. Awareness of the fair has never been better, he said. "Fairs take on a mood; we provide the elements but then what happens and how it goes is something nobody can formulate."

Hammer said spending was up at the Minnesota State Fair. Admission income was \$20.4 million, up \$1.5 million. The independent midway grossed \$6 million, about dead on with last year. Food and drink at the fair, known for its edibles, grossed about \$25 million, without including beer, of which the fair receives 12.5 percent. Sponsorships held up at \$800,000 in cash and more in kind, Hammer said.

The weather was good and that was nice, but Hammer can remember good weather years with bad revenue numbers. "It's something a lot deeper than weather," he said. The 2010 Minnesota State Fair will run Aug. 26 through Labor Day, Sept. 6.

But weather can definitely dampen things, as happened at the Maryland State Fair, Timonium, Aug. 28-Sept. 7, where attendance was off considerably four of the first five days. It rallied with the sunshine however and attendance ended up at 392,958, up from 388,090 last year. Paid attendance was up about 5,000, said Max Mosner, manager.

Mosner said the fair worked with the local Fox TV affiliate this year, after five years with ABC, and the revenue sharing as well as PR piece of the pie was up considerably. Sponsorship in general was up, to \$846,000 in cash and trade, compared to \$784,000 last year, despite the economy.

However, the fair did spend \$175,000 on talent this year, a move that was modestly successful. That was not in the budget last year, so Mosner wasn't anticipating a profitable run. The 2010 fair will be Aug. 27-Sept. 6.

At this point, there will be no 2010 Michigan State Fair, Detroit. Manager Bob Porter said the order to vacate the premises Sept. 30 stands. The Aug. 26-Sept. 7 fair drew a paid gate of approximately 170,000, up 23 percent from last year. Total attendance last year was 220,000. "Revenues will be up," he said. Weekend admission prices were increased to \$10 from \$5.

Porter talked to a lot of people that came to the fair because it was the last year, contrary to opinion he'd received. He had been advised initially that closing the fair would decrease the gate and he spent considerable time travelling the state, from Lansing to Kalamazoo to Flint to Port Huron, personally stumping on behalf of the fair.

The imminent closure of the state fair did hurt sponsorships, including several Foundations that are forbidden to invest in non-sustainable enterprises. They have to know they'll be back year after year, he said.

As of Sept. 9, 21 days before the gate is locked, there was no dismantling plan in place, he said. What happens to equipment, memorabilia and all the history that has been at that 167-acre fairgrounds in downtown Detroit since the 1800s is in the hands of the state department of management and budget.

Dismantling the Nebraska State Fairgrounds, Lincoln, for its move to Grand Island, however, is underway. The Aug. 28-Sept. 7 fair drew a healthy 367,203, up almost 19 percent over last year. A lot of people came to be part of 140 years of history, said Christine Rasmussen, fair marketing director. Belle City Amusements provided the midway for the first time. Nods to history included a 1,000-piece kazoo band, balloons, and World War II veterans on parade. Tony Orlando entertained the senior citizens. A record 71,672 people turned out on Labor Day Sunday.

David Grimm, Champlain Valley Exposition, Essex Junction, Vt., cited perfect weather for a tremendous fair, up five percent from 281,000 last year. He was expecting an increase, thanks to the increased buzz on the internet and strong grandstand lineup. Jeff Dunham, ventriloquist, was the hit of the entertainment package, drawing 7,800. Number two was Kid Rock, with 7,100. Tickets ranged from \$40-\$55, including the gate.

The fair was themed Summer's Last Blast, which is also the basic role of the Alaska State Fair, Palmer, which was flat at about 295,000 attendance for its Aug. 27-Sept. 7 run. Dean Phipps, marketing manager, said their theme was Get Up & Get Happy and people did, though earlier back-to-school dates impacted attendance.

The biggest record set in Palmer was Steve Hubacek's 127-pound Giant Green Cabbage, which will make its way into the Guinness Book of World Records.

In the Northwest, the Evergreen State Fair, Monroe, Wash., reported attendance was down 8-10 percent to an estimated 720,000 Aug. 26-Sept. 6, compared to 761,000 last year.

Mark Campbell, fair manager said also cited weather, the negative kind, having lost Labor Day weekend to rain, cold and thunderstorms. Butler Amusements provided the midway, one of three Labor Day fairs the carnival booked this year, also including the Western Idaho State Fair in Boise, Campbell said. "I think Butch Butler is putting together a promotional video for the company." It was quite a week for that show. - Linda Deckard

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## TICKETS

### QCUCE INTRODUCES DYNAMIC TICKETING TO DALLAS STARS



*Qcue CEO Barry Kahn (right) is seen here with Russ Stanley from the San Francisco Giants and Sonia Sanchez from Tickets.com at INTIX (VT Photo).*

Ticketing upstart Qcue has signed another deal to bring dynamic ticketing to a professional sports franchise. The Dallas Stars of the National Hockey League have signed an agreement to sell most of the American Airlines Center upper bowl using a yield-management model similar to the airline industry. Working with Tickets.com, the system allows the team to make real-time price changes based on demand, opponent and historical sales data.

The system is already in its second season with the San Francisco Giants, another franchise powered by Tickets.com. Qcue CEO Barry

Kahn said his Austin, Texas-based company helped the Stars set the prices for their first 14 home games, which go on sale Saturday.

"That's when the big change in price occurs," said Stars Exec. VP of Sales and Marketing Geoff Moore, adding that tickets are released in batches of 14 every two months. Last season, nearly all tickets in the premium terrace were priced at \$60. Now, less than 25 percent of tickets are priced that high. Tickets drop to \$50 for an Oct. 30 game against Florida and go as low as \$36 per ticket for games against Los Angeles or Calgary. A second game against Nashville on Oct. 14 was selling for \$24 less than the opener against the same team.

"They definitely kept the fans in mind and came out of the gate with low prices that they expect to rise," Kahn said, later adding that tickets "were underpriced across the board to reward those who purchased early."

The strategy is to price the tickets low for the initial on sale and then slowly increase in price as more tickets sell. While he said the Qcue web-based application gave him the ability to make daily price changes, the team would more likely adjust their prices on a weekly basis.

"The technology actually told us to raise the price on a couple games, but we didn't feel comfortable doing that," Moore said. The goal is to sell more tickets and not necessarily to extract more revenue out of the same ticket. In Texas, the live experience of a packed hockey game is almost as important as the product on the ice, Moore said.

"And that's a critical piece when you're competing for entertainment dollars with football and other sports," Moore said. "In a fragmented media landscape, it's become very difficult to communicate offers to people through traditional media. We're trying to make it as easy and simple as possible to understand our pricing. When we advertise, we can just push everyone back to dallasstars.com and they can check the price of the

game for that date.”

Prices for the seats won't drop below the season ticket value and Moore said the team expected to have a multi-year relationship with Qcue. Kahn said that Qcue's earnings would be based on sales volume revenue benchmarks tied to increased sales.

“We have a strong sports market here in Dallas, and we have a growing hockey market. Our challenge always is to market our team and find the right value proposition for the sports fan,” Moore said. “Dallas fans like hockey, but they love football. Sometimes when you like something, then price and value become a strong part of whether people will buy tickets or not.” – Dave Brooks

*Interviewed for this article: Geoff Moore, (214) 387-5505; Barry Kahn, (512) 626-5503*

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