

Rick Saas

Subject: FW: Sept. 28, 2005 Newsletter



VENUES**today**

"The news behind the headlines"

Dear Rick,

September 28, 2005 VOL. IV, Number XXVIX ISSN 1547-4143

Welcome to your **Venues Today** weekly e-newsletter, full of the latest live entertainment industry news. VT staff Linda Deckard, Pauline Davis, Sue Nichols and April Stroud just returned from IAAM's Arena Management Conference in Dallas. Look for coverage here and in the November issue. Look for the latest trend features in our October magazine, which will hit your desk in the next few days. For a full calendar listing, to view archives or subscribe to *Venues Today*, visit our Web site at www.venuestoday.com.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Maybe facility managers should run FEMA." — Jerry Guido, Feld Entertainment, of the industry's effective handling of hurricane evacuees

IN THIS ISSUE...

- **Venezuela City Hopes To Attract Expos & Shows With New Complex**
 - **Shelter Experiences Shared at Arena Meeting In Dallas**
 - **Oklahoma City Looks Forward To Hornets Benefits**
 - **Hot Tickets: Paul, Elton, Dave Take Top 3 Spots**
 - **Packaging & Partnerships Please Promoters These Days**
 - **Virginia Beach Highlights Architecture of New Convention Center**
 - **Big Screen Text Messaging During Events Enhances the Experience**
 - **Local Caterer Takes Contract Deal With Fresno Convention Center**
 - **Short Takes**
-

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VENUE NEWS

Artificial beach planned for Venezuela expo complex



VENEZUELA CITY HOPES TO ATTRACT EXPOS & SHOWS WITH NEW COMPLEX

The city of Barquisimeto, 161 miles from Caracas, Venezuela's capital city, is expected to become a event hub for the region with the opening of a new expo hall and recreation venue.

The project, a public-private partnership, is being directed by architect David Gabay and coordinated by engineer Leonardo

Gaschteff. It will include a 150-store commercial center, food court, bingo and movie theater, an 8,000-seat pavilion for expos and shows with space for 190 exhibits, a 4,000-seat amphitheater, and a water park with an artificial beach, slides and a river.

Construction is scheduled within a month, with the goal of finishing the first part of the project in two-and-a-half years.

Arena Parque Ferial C.A. is the ad-hoc company created for the project. The city of Barquisimeto owns 8 percent of the shares and Ingenieria Damper the remaining 92 percent.

"The city put up the land and Ingenieria Damper brings the work and its future management and operation. The city will receive 8 percent of the company's total income," said Gaschteff. "The interesting thing is that the investor has the legal safety it needs to make the investment and the city knows that its profit will not be affected by the management or the company's profits, since it will depend on the gross revenue."

This system, he said, opens the door "to other companies that could partner with city governments to put together projects to their benefit, the city's benefit and the people's benefit."

The project is part of a strategic developmental plan for the city of Barquisimeto, with a population of 1.2 million. The new venues will be located on the 64 acres where the existing 40-year-old fair complex stands, said Alcibiades Vasquez, president of the Municipal Institute of Housing (IMVI), the organization that owned the land. It is located in a part of the city that has great potential but was only used 10 days each year, for the city's anniversary fair, he said.

Total investment for the project is estimated at \$85 million, with the first stage consuming over \$20 million, said Vasquez. A second development stage will include the construction of a 140-room hotel for \$12 million, and another \$8 million has been assigned to expand the expos and exhibits areas later on.

The expo halls, to be built on what it is now an off-track-betting facility, will be adaptable for music and sports. It will have a roof and air-conditioning, said Vasquez.

Initially, eight expos are expected each year, with that number growing to 12 as the venue grows, said Gaschteff. Themes as different as tourism, construction, sports, art and home improvement are already planned. Its 8,000 numbered seats will be ready for any kind of international show, as well, with an adjacent food court ready to serve the crowds. It will have space for open shows for up to 40,000 people. "On expos days we expect to attract between 30,000 and 50,000 people a day," said Gaschteff.

The Oscar Martinez amphitheater is currently one of the better acoustics venues in Venezuela, so it is going to be preserved. But improvements are planned, including more seats, for a capacity of 4,000.

The new complex is expected to attract 29 million visitors, both local and from other parts of the country, in its first year of operation, said Gaschteff. "But we also expect to attract some of the Central and South American market."

"Maybe international artists that used to skip Barquisimeto and go from Caracas straight to Maracaibo due to a lack of infrastructure here will now come to our city," Vasquez said.

Gaschteff is even more optimistic. "I am convinced that Barquisimeto can become a very important tourist destination. Ever since the construction of this complex was announced, there has been big interest in developing spaces like inns and hotels," he said. — María Agustina Guerrero

Interviewed for this story: Leonardo Gaschteff, 58-414-3518261; Alcibiades Vasquez, 58-416-6567727

Kent Meredith, United Spirit Arena, Lubbock, Texas; Michael Enoch, Jerry Guido and Frank Poe (VT Photo)



SHELTER EXPERIENCES SHARED AT ARENA MEETING IN DALLAS

DALLAS — The ubiquitous session topic, alternative bookings for

arenas, took a turn this year at the Arena Management Conference (AMC) here Sept. 24–27. Instead of new concerts, sports leagues and family shows, discussion centered on preparing to serve as an emergency shelter.

Hurricane Rita was pushing toward Texas, path unknown, as AMC was preparing to convene, a circumstance that resulted in more than 40 known cancellations. The ArenaNetwork meeting scheduled in conjunction with AMC was cancelled. In all, about 250 people, including International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM) members, allied members, spouses and guests ultimately attended, according to IAAM's Brenda Pennington.

One of the kickoff panels was supposed to include a member of the management team that helmed the Louisiana Superdome and New Orleans Arena through its Hurricane Katrina shelter days, but no one was able to make it as Hurricane Rita diverted their attention and that of several arena managers from Gulf Coast Texas towns.

Frank Poe, Dallas Convention Center, stopped by to share his experiences managing a Katrina shelter, which, as he spoke, was operating as shelter again for Hurricane Rita victims. They had placed all but 900 of the Hurricane Katrina evacuees, but he was expecting another 1,700 from Hurricane Rita. "We are an industry that has been called into action," Poe said. And many venue managers have struggled with minimal resources and a severe lack of time, he added.

"I'm not sure the 'Best Practices' of IAAM can prepare you for a massive evacuation and shelter program like we're dealing with," Poe said of the IAAM paper dealing with emergency preparedness. Shelters, in the arena industry, are supposed to be temporary, short-term programs. "With Katrina, that changed." He'd heard that the number of hurricane homeless is the highest since the U.S. Civil War.

One issue that's critical in the wake of this experience is to determine who is ultimately responsible for a shelter operation — FEMA, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, law enforcement? "We came to it with an event orientation," Poe said. But determining whom the "client" was proved to be "almost like herding butterflies." A new template for shelter operations will strive to have those relationships defined, he said.

Poe's personal experience involved housing 27,000-28,000 people at the convention center and Reunion Arena here. "I reserve the right to adjust my opinions as days go forward," he said. The magnitude of the shelter program is an ongoing issue, with 30,000 evacuees still in the Dallas area, most now relocated to more livable housing of some sort. Poe said it now looks like the venue's role in this operation will stretch overall through the end of the year. FEMA is occupying 60,000 square feet of space to administer the recovery, he said. To quote Glenn Menard, manager of the Superdome for SMG, "We can take care of people real well for four hours," Poe said. "Beyond that, it's a struggle." For Dallas, "We're in our fourth week now."

When the Gulf Coast evacuees were pouring into the convention center, medical needs became a critical care factor. The social services program clashed with the charitable donations effort; federal offices on all different levels needed space. "As much as we think we are prepared as a country for these tragedies, we are not as prepared we need to be," Poe said. IAAM needs to pull back as an organization to figure out how public service fits into the long-term as well as short-term operation of a building, Poe said. Personally, he was very moved by the losses and tragedies suffered by the evacuees, stories forever etched in his mind, and therefore very aware "we have to deal with the emotional trauma our staff faces" in events like this.

Micheal Enoch, Enoch Light Productions, Henderson, Nev., who volunteered to help at the Reliant Astrodome in Houston, a major shelter from Hurricane Katrina, cannot get the giant field goal net, at least 30-by-60 feet, filled with names and photos of missing family members out of his mind. That photo is always with him, on his cell phone camera. "Watching that was amazing," he said.

His jobs as a volunteer varied and the situation was always volatile, he said. On day one, Enoch helped construct showers in the convention center restrooms. Day two, he was assigned to traffic control, taking food and drink to police officers, and that night, he answered phones in the FEMA command center. His final job was event documentation, photographing every room that was used.

Jerry Guido, Feld Entertainment, shared that "13 months ago, we'd never cancelled a performance because of a hurricane," which is a huge statement considering Feld has a dozen family shows on the road. Last year's hurricane season in Florida, which featured Charlie, Ivan, Jeanne and Francis, resulted in the organization's first cancelled shows, as well as several rescheduled events. "We found a lot of cooperation from facility managers," he said of that experience.

The same was true this year when Katrina came through and they had to cancel the last two shows in Baton Rouge, La., and get out of town. Several of the pack-up crew and concessions people didn't show. Performers were pushing road trunks to get the show packed and on the road, he said.

Guido experienced a public relations issue he hadn't considered when Feld moved into Jackson, Miss., post-Katrina with one of its Disney on Ice units. The arena had housed 3,000 evacuees and was down to 400 and shrinking when it was time for the show to arrive. "We were concerned the perception would be that evacuees were being moved so the ice show could play," he said. People still did not understand the arena was never a long-term housing solution.

The ice show was further hampered by the fact advance ticket sales had been impossible three weeks out because electricity was down. But in the long run, "our feeling was if the building is available, we'll do the show; if not, we won't," Guido said. "We're doing the date; we're not sure how it will work out for us," he said. The goal was to keep the customer first. The overall result of the experience was "a new appreciation for facility managers. Maybe facility managers should run FEMA," Guido said.

There are costs other than the very human ones in the forefront, and who pays is still an issue in most cases. Poe said that when Katrina hit New Orleans, the Dallas Convention Center had a Wal-Mart annual meeting scheduled. "They decided the Wednesday before Labor Day they would cancel the meeting and they did not want the rental back," Poe said. "They let us use it to help evacuees."

"In that sense, the facility was able to keep the venue whole," Poe said. As to reimbursables, Poe said it is his understanding the federal government will eventually reimburse direct expenses, but not lost income, "any of your 'profit' if there is such a word in the convention center industry." He estimated the convention center and Reunion Arena have incurred \$500,000 in out-of-pocket expenses, all eligible for reimbursement at some point.

The ghost of the horrors documented at the Louisiana Superdome as desperate people awaited evacuation was never far from anyone's mind, evacuees or shelter hosts, Enoch said. "People were traumatized," he added. "In Houston, there was a large security presence."

“The imagery the media captured in New Orleans, the death and looting, the tragedy to everyone who was an evacuee from New Orleans” was top of mind for the Dallas police force as well, Poe said. They used an extensive database to sort through the registered evacuees and several, such as known sex offenders for instance, were moved to a specialized facility. On the other side of the social issues picture, cities also stepped up to get kids in school, sick to hospitals and everyone in a proper housing situation.

The magnitude of the disaster was nearly matched by the outpouring of help, and several audience members had stories of generosity to share. Melanie Jordin, Ft. Smith (Ark.) Convention Center, was supposed to be a shelter for 9,000 evacuees on their way to Ft. Chaffee. Both Feld Entertainment and VEE Corporation, which produces Sesame Street Live, responded when she let them know 1,500 kids would be housed at the arena. Both sent toys and books. And then suddenly the 9,000 evacuees were gone. “We didn’t know they were going. I had to put the brakes on everything.”

Steve Peters, Compass Facility Management, counts the Vicksburg (Miss.) Convention Center among its clients and that venue became a shelter (see Sept. 14 VT e-newsletter). One big issue was security when FEMA and the Red Cross announced cash and debit card were being made available to evacuees. There were hard feelings among the existing homeless who, at one point, lined up to protest.

Asked what design enhancements might result from the arena-as-shelter scenario, Poe suggested the principle use of a venue is as a public assembly space for entertainment, conventions and trade shows. You don’t build a church for Easter Sunday, he noted. The shelter need for showers, medical triage and food service on this magnitude is not a practical design for venues of the future, but hardening the structure to withstand worst-case weather scenarios is another issue. “We will have to give this some thought,” Poe concluded.

AMC meets in Memphis in 2006. — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Frank Poe, (214) 939-2755; Michael Enoch, (702) 595-7616; Jerry Guido, (703) 448-4167

Ford Center, Oklahoma City



OKLAHOMA CITY LOOKS FORWARD TO HORNETS BENEFITS

OKLAHOMA CITY — With their New Orleans arena out of commission courtesy of Hurricane Katrina, the National Basketball Association (NBA) Hornets needed an emergency home and Oklahoma City’s Ford Center fit the bill thanks, in part, to a lack of events that would conflict with the team’s schedule.

The three-year old, basketball-ready venue, managed by SMG, seats nearly 20,000,

and the only conflicting events were eight home games for the Central Hockey League's Blazers. The Blazers agreed to play those games across the street at the Cox Business Services Convention Center.

After Hurricane Katrina wiped out most of the New Orleans infrastructure, the NBA needed to quickly find a base of operations to keep the Hornets a viable franchise, said Frank Hill, an attorney representing the team locally, at a press conference announcing the deal. Oklahoma City's resources proved a good fit.

"We had the dates available; we had an arena; we had a tremendously supportive government. I'm not sure there's another city in America that could have done this — 23 days from Katrina, with the city, the NBA, the state and the business community all coming together," he said. "We're trying to help them preserve their franchise; it's just the right thing to do."

But what's really got the city abuzz is an estimated \$57 million in new money expected to flow through the local economy. That influx includes everything from season tickets to the food eaten after the game, hotel rooms rented for overnight stays, and the automobile fuel for getting around the city.

"That includes \$1.1 million in local sales tax and \$2.9 million in state sales tax," said Tom Anderson, executive manager for Oklahoma City's management office. "Then you look at the payroll impact related to bringing the team into the city — player and front-office payrolls are estimated at about \$60 million. From that alone, the state generates about \$3.6 million in income tax."

And the city is willing to front some money to make it happen. The deal to bring the Hornets to Oklahoma includes a housing allowance for as many as 100 workers, 25,000 feet of office space near the Ford Center, minor improvements to the center and a guarantee of \$30 million to \$40 million in revenue.

If the team makes less than that, the city, state and private investors will make up the shortfall. If revenues for Hornets games surpass \$40 million, the excess will go to reimbursing the city, and should the gross get past \$40.2 million, the team will share half of its profit with the city from that point forward.

"They're getting the ticket revenues, the merchandise revenues and the concessions revenues until we reach the benchmark and we start recovering our investment," Anderson said.

The arena normally operates its own concessions for Ford Center events, said Ford Center Marketing Director Jeff Jacobson. Parking fees are collected by the Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority.

State legislation is being developed for a proposal at the next session that would exempt sales taxes on tickets for major league sports, an incentive to attract the Hornets, Anderson said. But until then the city and state collects the standard sales tax rate as part of the ticket price.

With an average attendance of at least 12,000 expected for each of the 41 home games, at about \$50 per ticket, Anderson said the guarantee will be relatively easy to meet.

"Conservatively, total team revenues are estimated at around \$42 million," he said. — Ted Strueli

Interviewed for this story: Frank Hill, (405) 235-9621; Tom Anderson, (405) 297-2345;
Jeff Jacobson, (405) 602-8700

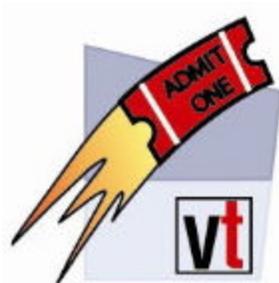
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Glendale (Ariz.) Arena is looking for an Arena Marketing Manager and an Arena Publicity Manager. The arena opened in Dec. 2003 and is home to the NHL Phoenix Coyotes and NLL Ariz. Sting. Both positions require a minimum of 3 years experience in the event entertainment industry (arena and/or promoter experience is preferred). Both positions report to the Executive Director of Arena Marketing and will help to promote the arena and events such as concerts and family shows. The Publicity Manager's responsibilities will include writing and submitting press releases, scheduling interviews, pitching stories, creating the daily clips, coordinating the house photographer, and writing internal newsletters. The Marketing Manager's responsibilities will include negotiating media buys and promotions for events, creating event settlement packets, coordinating group sales efforts, and overseeing collateral creation. Both positions will require the staff to be onsite for all arena events (non-team related). Resumes can be submitted to suzanne.kimball@glendalearenaaz.com.

[For More Information on Glendale Arena, click here to visit our website](#)

BOOKINGS



HOTtickets

PAUL, ELTON, DAVE TAKE TOP 3 SPOTS

HOT TICKETS is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to **Venues Today** e-newsletter. Following are the top 10 such concerts and events which took place since Sept. 7, 2005. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

The **Hot Tickets** this week as reported to **Venues Today** are:

1) Gross Sales: \$4,665,795
Event: Paul McCartney
Venue: **Wachovia Complex, Philadelphia**
Attendance: 32,930
Ticket Range: \$252-\$52
Promoter: Electric Factory Concerts (CCE)
Date: Sept. 22-23
No. of Shows: 2

2) Gross Sales: \$1,651,748
Event: Dave Matthews Band
Venue: **Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Denver**
Attendance: 28,389
Ticket Range: \$58.50
Promoter: Chuck Morris Presents (CCE), Kroenke Sport Enterprises

Date: Sept. 9–11
No. of Shows: 3

3) Gross Sales: \$1,610,074
Event: Elton John
Venue: **Air Canada Centre, Toronto**
Attendance: 17,595
Ticket Range: \$111-\$59
Promoter: House of Blues Canada
Date: Sept. 7
No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$1,494,396
Event: Phantom of the Opera
Venue: **Fox Theatre, Atlanta**
Attendance: 31,289
Ticket Range: \$62-\$17
Promoter: Broadway in Atlanta
Date: Sept. 20–25
No. of Shows: 8

5) Gross Sales: \$1,429,790
Event: Elton John
Venue: **MCI Center, Washington, D.C.**
Attendance: 16,248
Ticket Range: \$125-\$45
Promoter: The Cellar Door Companies (CCE)
Date: Sept. 10
No. of Shows: 1

6) Gross Sales: \$1,275,600
Event: Klitschiko vs. Peter
Venue: **Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall**
Attendance: 9,387
Ticket Range: \$400-\$50
Promoter: Caesars Entertainment, Duva Boxing, K2, Top Rank
Date: Sept. 24
No. of Shows: 1

7) Gross Sales: \$1,271,971
Event: Marc Anthony
Venue: **Madison Square Garden Arena, New York**
Attendance: 15,534
Ticket Range: \$129.50-\$49.50
Promoter: Ron Delsener Presents (CCE)
Date: Sept. 9
No. of Shows: 1

8) Gross Sales: \$939,835
Event: Marc Anthony
Venue: **T.D. Waterhouse Centre, Orlando, Fla.**
Attendance: 12,195
Ticket Range: \$95-\$45
Promoter: Electric Factory Concerts (CCE)
Date: Sept. 14
No. of Shows: 1

9) Gross Sales: \$711,133
Event: Coldplay
Venue: **Sound Advice Amphitheatre, West Palm Beach, Fla.**
Attendance: 18,265
Ticket Range: \$66-\$18
Promoter: Cellar Door Concerts (CCE)
Date: Sept. 13
No. of Shows: 1

10) Gross Sales: \$704,196
Event: Destiny's Child
Venue: **General Motors Place, Vancouver, B.C.**
Attendance: 11,458
Ticket Range: \$113-\$24
Promoter: CCE
Date: Sept. 10
No. of Shows: 1

Compiled by Rick Saas, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

Randy Brown, Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, Ft. Wayne, Ind.; Larry Fontana; Michael Marion; Bob Roux, Jack Orbin, and Gary Smith (VT Photo)



**PACKAGING & PARTNERSHIPS
PLEASE PROMOTERS THESE
DAYS**

DALLAS — AEG'S Danny Eaton has been staying close to home, booking 95 shows into Nokia Theatre at Grand Prairie, up from 74 last year, said Larry Fontana, manager there for AEG. It's a safe haven and indicative of the caution promoters are showing this year, he said during the 2005 promoter panel at the Arena

Management Conference here Sept. 24-28.

Clear Channel Entertainment's Bob Roux, Pace Concerts, was also cautiously optimistic. It's a strong year with megastars like the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and U2 touring. "Major market arenas are having a good year and I hope it will continue in 2006," Roux said.

The Latin music business is also "better than it has ever been. The bands are becoming affiliated with mainline agencies and major managers," Roux continued. The music is drawing good crowds in non-traditional markets, partially a result of successful packaging. The Mark Anthony-Alejandro Fernandez-Chayanne package is a prime example. "We were overwhelmed with the success of that tour," he said.

Jack Orbin, Stone City Productions/Jack Utsick Presents, said that Stone City is having that same success packaging jazz acts. Long known as a rock and roll promoter, "we've diversified tremendously," Orbin added.

Roux felt ticket prices are coming down for all but the mega-tours, with bands like Nine

Inch Nails and Stone Age topping out at \$45, Foo Fighters and Weezer at \$45-\$35, System of a Down in the high \$30s.

But while the ticket prices might be lower, the guarantees remain high, noted Michael Marion, Alltel Arena, North Little Rock, Ark. Acts play secondary markets with a \$45 ticket and still want a \$300,000 guarantee. "We have to pass because they want the same thing they get in Chicago," Marion said.

"Unfortunately, it's a supply and demand business," Roux responded. And the world is getting smaller for the concert industry. China and Asia are opening up and Europe is strong. "You have a lot of acts, Green Day being one of them, that want to play the entire world," Roux said. "They are hearing the ticket price message, but not the promoter deal. There is short supply and a lot of demand." Roux said promoters are pushing acts to make a second lap around the track, but it's not always easy.

The other "central theme" Roux noted was an increase in marketing money, saying \$60,000-\$70,000 is typical now, where it was \$40,000-\$50,000 or even \$35,000-\$40,000 in secondary markets. Promoters are more prone to use the media buying power of the venues and sports teams, he added. "That's a big priority," he said.

While it is a relationship business, and successful venue managers are those who visit and call agents and promoters, the conversation has shifted more to marketing and branding, Roux said. "How do we create that magic in the market again? We have to come together as partners to find new ways to market those shows."

For CCE, working with National Basketball Association and National Hockey League teams has been a very viable way to promote a show, Roux said. And it's not just about marketing to season-ticket holders. Team sponsors are being tapped as local concert sponsors, with care taken not to trample any tour sponsors. "There's an opportunity on the sponsorship side to mitigate the risk on the local level," Roux said. "It's something we should focus on."

Orbin agreed that "the relationship with building managers is more important than at any time in my 34 years of promoting." He seeks alliances and flexibility. "We can direct acts to certain buildings," he reminded those in attendance.

Orbin thinks the next six to nine months are going to be great. With CCE spinning off its concert division, now known as Spinco, the promoter landscape will change, Orbin said. "The risk/reward has been topsy turvy."

Fontana also believes January and March will be strong. He sees a lot more action than normal in the first quarter.

Timing was a month or more shy of being able to say specifically who's coming out in 2006. "In 35 to 60 days, we will hear more," Roux said. He does think the concert market is sensitive to the economy and its biggest years coincide with a strong stock market.

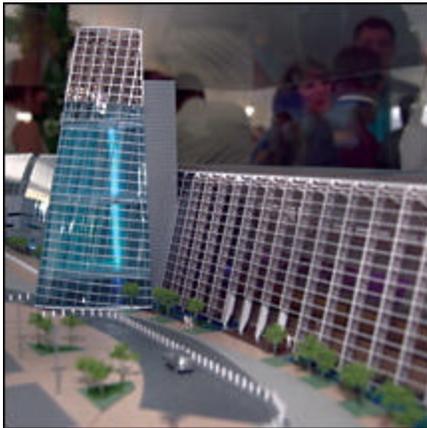
He mentioned ongoing tours extending into 2006 for AEG with Bon Jovi and Kanye West and Jeff Sharpe. "CCE has holds for country; they're always first out of the gate," Roux said. Coldplay has put some of its tour on hold.

For secondary markets, Orbin sees Def Leppard and Disturbed as strong bets in the first part of the year. "Sometime in October, we get the February to April calls," he said, agreeing with Roux that it's too early to say how crowded the road will be in 2006.

Asked by panel moderator Gary Smith of *Pollstar* what makes him so successful finding concerts for a secondary market, Marion said the system has not changed. "At the end of the day, what gets everyone's attention is money, being willing to take some risks. We got a Rolling Stones date. I'm happy about that. You have to make it work financially." — Linda Deckard

Interviewed for this story: Bob Roux, (713) 693-2940; Jack Orbin, (210) 493-3900; Larry Fontana, (972) 854-5087; Gary Smith, (559) 271-7900; Michael Marion, (501) 340-5668

MARKETING



Rendering of Virginia Beach Convention Center, left, and ballroom photo

VIRGINIA BEACH HIGHLIGHTS ARCHITECTURE OF NEW CONVENTION CENTER

The Virginia Beach (Va.) Convention Center will have a ballroom dedication to celebrate the first phase's grand opening tomorrow, Sept. 29. The theme, keeping in line with its marketing campaign, is titled, "You used to have to visit Paris, Pisa or Egypt to tour an architectural wonder."

According to Pamela M. Lingle, communications manager for the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, "We will have Egyptian décor when people drive up to the porch drop off area. The event also will feature Paris-inspired décor in the pre-function space, complete with an ice sculpture of the Eiffel Tower and Paris storefronts."

About 575 attendees are expected at the event, including members of the city council, city officials, state officials, meeting planners, media, current convention center clients, the Convention Center Steering Committee members, the Board of Directors from the Virginia Beach Hotel Motel/Association, the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association, the Resort Retailers Association, and other community and industry members.

Attendees will be served dinner in the 31,000-square-foot ballroom, which will be decorated with ice sculptures of the convention center's 150-foot iconic tower. The tower houses an Internet café with a coffee bar on the first level, a boardroom on the

second level and a VIP lounge on the third level. The fourth level is an observation deck.

Live entertainment at the reception will be provided by Now and Then, a jazz group from the Hampton Institute. The Governor's School of the Arts will present an orchestra and a singing and dancing Broadway music show. At the end of the evening, the pre-function space will be set up like a lounge, with the theme "Ella: The Life and Music of Ella Fitzgerald."

Distinctive Gourmet, the food provider for the convention center, will donate food and drink for the dedication. Other sponsors include Bold Valet, Concrete Creations, Dr. Bob's Theatricity, Exhibits Inc., Freeman, Fresh Market, Onyx Engineering, Pizazz Jewelry and Tropicare.

Phase one of the \$202.5-million convention center features a 31,029-square-foot ballroom, a 56,516-square-foot exhibition hall and 19,249-square-feet of meeting space. When it's completed in early 2007, the venue will offer 516,522 gross square feet of space, including a 150,000-square-foot column-free exhibit hall, 28,929-square-feet of meeting space and 2,230 free parking spaces.

Designed to give groups increased flexibility in accommodating conventions, trade shows, meetings, weddings, banquets and receptions of many sizes, the convention center was created after 15 years of discussion and planning. "We wanted to transition our venue from more of a state facility to become a national venue," said Al Hutchinson, director of convention sales and marketing for the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau. Virginia Beach's old Pavilion Convention Center has been torn down, and the second half of the new building will be built on its site.

For the last 18 months, the CVB has marketed the new venue aggressively in *Convene Magazine*, *Successful Meetings*, *M&C Magazine*, *Meetings South*, *Black Travel and Tourism*, *Association Management*, and *Religious Conference Manager*. "We do a sales blitz to [meeting planners with national associations in] Washington, D.C., Virginia and Maryland, twice a year, and are involved in meeting planner associations to get the word out. We focus on associations that have a history of meeting in second-tier cities with our size convention facility," said Hutchinson. "We also have implemented familiarization tours twice a year, where meeting planners can come visit our new facility." He estimates the annual marketing budget for the convention center is in the mid \$100,000 range.

Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the building aims to capture the essence of the coastal destination in its design and theme. Water, wood and natural light are integrated throughout the facility, with nautical glass curtain walls that appear to float in pools of water.

Divisible by four, the exhibit hall has 40-foot ceilings, along with 10-by-10-foot grids permanently etched into the floor. "This saves time for booth setups, since no tape is needed to mark off the space," said Hutchinson. The halls are accessible through 21 loading docks and four street-level ramps.

Located in the pre-function area, four video walls provide both art and information during conventions. "The video wall was designed by our architects, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. This is a custom application that will project four 9-foot-high-by-90-foot-wide images using 32 video projectors. The system will not be complete until December of this year," said W. Courtney Dyer, general manager of the convention center.

The wood-paneled ballroom, which can be divided into three sections, seats up to 1,800

for banquet events.

Functions slated for the venue include the U.S. Naval Warfare Symposium on Oct. 2-6, which will have 1,800 delegates, and the International Church of Our Lord Jesus on Oct. 9-17, which will host 2,000 attendees. — Lisa White

Interviewed for this story: W. Courtney Dyer, (757) 219-2161; Al Hutchinson, (757) 437-6470; Pamela M. Lingle, (757) 437-4772



Public text messaging at Starlight Theater

BIG SCREEN TEXT MESSAGING DURING EVENTS ENHANCES THE EXPERIENCE

Today, mobile phones offer all kinds of services, including Internet access, photo ops and text messaging. It is the latter two that most interest entertainment venues across the country, as they offer opportunities for audience members to text message and send photos to appear on large screens during concerts or sporting events.

One of the venues that recently tested this audience interaction was the Starlight Theatre in Kansas City, Mo. Two recent shows, Rock the Light Christian music concert and Avril Lavigne, were set up to display text messaging on screen at the front of the venue.

"Actually Sprint approached us with the opportunity," said Bill Hartnett, vice president of events and entertainment at Starlight. "They have been doing it at venues around the country and they are sponsors of our concert series here, so it seemed like a natural fit."

Kids are picking up on the trend quickly. "It does go across the board, although the younger demographic is more aware of text messaging and may be more apt to do something like this," said Angie Read, manager of entertainment marketing at Sprint. "By doing this, we are hoping to build awareness and how interactive it can be. Our goal is to showcase our product and what it can do and how it can serve entertainment and allow you to be more interactive.

Read said sending text messages and photos to big screens offers venues a unique opportunity to give their audiences a chance to be actively involved and feel more connected to the band or sports team.

"It might encourage the fans to view the venue as more progressive, one that that

reaches outside the box to appeal to its audiences," Read continued. "I think this is going to become the norm and people will start expecting it."

Read said they have provided the opportunity to text message at several events, including the Kansas City Royals games and the Samsung SuperCross Event Series at the Meadowlands Complex in E. Rutherford, N.J. "It's been very successful everywhere we have done it. We keep learning from each one how to do it bigger and better next time."

Alex Campbell, CEO of Vibes Media in Chicago, which sets up these systems, said there might be more lucrative reasons to use text messaging at events. "It's an easy thing to do so I would ask a venue manager what are your objectives? Is it something where you are trying to get people in the audience to interact, or do you want to sell it as more profitable ad space for sponsors? The cool thing with text to screen, when you do it everyone stares at the screen during the entire show, so you increase the value of the spot by doing this because you know a lot of people are paying attention to your screen."

Hartnett said there is not a direct revenue stream coming from text messaging available to the audience. "It's an expense but it's an experience, an enhancement, for our guests," she said.

"What we are able to do is give our sponsors more valuable recognition through use of the screen. By having the screen it enables us to give our sponsors more in-venue recognition through live video or pre-produced spots that are eye catching and more memorable than you would get from a static sign."

The venue rented a, LED screen for Rock the Light and used Lavigne's screen during her concert. Hartnett said the LED screen was much brighter and much easier to see for an outdoor venue.

"We rent the screen, then Sprint comes in with its technology to interface the screen through their system," Hartnett explained. "The text messages and photos went through their system and through a series of filters to make sure there was no inappropriate content before it reached the screen. Every event is different, so what might have been appropriate for Avril Lavigne might not have been appropriate for Rock the Light."

Hartnett estimates that a venue could rent a screen for as little as \$2,500 to \$3,000 for text messaging only, but the cost would rise to \$5,000 to \$10,000 if it plans to allow photos.

Campbell said there are several ways to set up for text messaging at an event. "You can have a static screen where you can send messages that take up the whole screen, or you can do a scroll across the bottom, CNN style. This works if you have live feed of what is going out on stage."

Campbell said from the time someone text messages to the time the message goes on the screen is about five seconds, and during that time period the message would have gone through three different filters to check it for content.

Vibe plugs its system into an existing video system at the venue. "It's pretty simple; if you're a venue and you have video screens we can pretty much work with it," Campbell said. "We've worked with proprietary technologies to straight up videos systems. Some companies have LCD boards that only accept certain formats, and then we need to be able to go into their system and learn how to work with their technology. We did a

program with the Anaheim Angels where we put messages on their scoreboard, which was not equipped to do that. We worked with their software providers and made it happen.”

Campbell said if a venue has not had text messaging before, Vibe will meet with them, and then they might go into the venue a couple days ahead of time to set everything up. “I don’t think we’ve ever run into a problem where we couldn’t do it.”

Hartnett said the season is wrapping at Starlight for the year, but they are definitely looking at doing more text messaging next year. They are even looking at their Broadway series as a possibility.

“We know this is of greater interest to the younger demographics, but if we did a family show like ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ there might be opportunity there.” — Vernell Hackett

Interviewed for this story: Bill Hartnett, (816) 997-1114; Angie Read, (913) 794-2963; Alex Campbell, (312) 753-6330

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CONCESSIONS

Pardini's setup at Fresno Convention Center



**LOCAL CATERER TAKES CONTRACT
DEAL WITH FRESNO CONVENTION**

CENTER

The SMG-managed Fresno (Calif.) Convention and Entertainment Center (FCEC) made it official last month when it signed a three-year deal making Pardini's its exclusive caterer. The local firm had already been providing 70-80 percent of the catering services to the Center, but Claudia Arguelles, FCEC's director of Sales and Marketing, said this next step is aimed at increasing consistency and reliability.

"We were looking for someone who had the same high standards as we do, but also a caterer that could handle the volume of business we do," Arguelles said of FCEC's four venues, which host more than 500 events a year. "Not everyone can cater to 2,000 people. And whether it's having the staff or inventory, Pardini's is one of the few who had all that."

Pardini's, which has been working with the Center for 35 years, was chosen through a standard request for proposal process and Arguelles said the company's involvement in the local community was also a factor. "They're well known and they have a good reputation," she said. Before Pardini's was chosen, catering gigs at the venue were open to anyone who had the appropriate insurance and permits, though Pardini's was already doing the bulk of the work, which included conventions, awards ceremonies, weddings, banquets and backstage catering for the acts that perform at the theater and arena.

Pardini's owner, Jim Pardini, said his 30-year relationship with the venue helped secure the contract, but most crucial was his firm's reliability. "I think they were looking for a bit more consistency," said Pardini. "Even though we were doing about 80 percent of the things there, they still had some little parties that were left untied and they wanted the ability to go to one person who would handle all the food and beverage so they wouldn't have to worry about referring it out."

Flexibility was also key. The venue handles a number of East Indian weddings every year and Pardini's has been able to furnish chefs who understand the intricacies of Indian cuisine. "They have a variety of custom menus, they do all the serving, they provide the bars, linens and they're not known for a particular kind of food, so they can work with whatever the clients want and customize menus," Arguelles said.

With the deal, SMG gets a higher percentage of Pardini's gross. SMG'S take will rise from 14 percent on food and 30 percent on beverage, to 18 percent on food this year and 22 next, and 35 percent on beverage.

The deal is a part of a continuing trend in the industry of locking in dedicated caterers, according to Arguelles. "We did investigate it a bit and found that most convention centers have exclusive catering deals," she said. "It's just better for everyone in the long run. It's almost the exception to not have an exclusive deal." In addition to maintaining consistency and quality, Arguelles said there are a host of other advantages: a sense of ownership for both the venue and caterer and the ability to keep inventory handy and on site. Arguelles pointed to similar deals at other SMG-managed facilities in San Francisco (Moscone Center); Miami (Miami Beach Convention Center); Savannah, Ga. (Savannah International Trade and Convention Center); and Knoxville, Tenn. (Knoxville Convention Center).

"This way, we can police the event and know who the 'go-to' person is and they can be familiar with us," Pardini said. Another advantage is one you won't necessarily see: maintaining the facility and doing a proper cleanup after the event so the room can be turned over in fresh condition for the next booking.

As they have in the past, Pardini's will continue to be heavily involved in booking events at FCEC. Tapping into a client list that spans several decades, Jim Pardini said he was already booking almost 60 percent of the events his firm worked at FCEC. "I've done these clients' events year after year and it's an automatic for us," said Pardini. "It's our clientele and they want our food and our service." Pardini expects to work more than 200 of the annual events the facility hosts under the deal, from meetings and charitable fundraisers to weddings and corporate events. — Gil Kaufman

Interviewed for this story: Claudia Arguelles, (559) 445-8153; Jim Pardini, (559) 224-3188

SHORT TAKES

ROY DISNEY'S COMPANY BUYS MAJORITY STAKE IN GLOBETROTTERS

Burbank, Calif. -based Shamrock Holdings, headed up by Roy Disney, has purchased an 80 percent stake in the Harlem Globetrotters, with the intention of increasing international visibility for the team, and expanding merchandising, licensing and sponsorships worldwide, according to the company. Mannie Jackson, who has owned the team since 1993, retains 20 percent ownership and the Chairman and CEO position with the team.

Contact: Globetrotters, (602) 258-0000; Shamrock Holdings, (818) 845-4444

THE MARK TO BE RENAMED

iWireless has acquired the rights to name the 12-year-old Mark of the Quad Cities, Moline, Ill. Scott Mullen, manager there, confirmed that iWireless signed a 10-year, \$4.5 million naming rights deal which has them paying \$425,000 a year to the arena. The agreement was reached in August, but the official name has not been chosen. The RFP's went out last December. Mullen, also confirmed the Mark is the newest member of the ArenaNetwork.

Contact: Scott Mullen, (309) 764-2001

CAPA ENDS YEAR IN THE BLACK

The Columbus (Ohio) Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) reported year-end results for fiscal year 2004-2005 up \$70,000, with 90 percent earned through ticket sales and rentals. The operating budget was \$14.6 million. In the past year, CAPA completed a new long-range plan, launched a new Web site, and presented more than 150 events that brought approximately 200,000 patrons to its downtown theatres, which are Ohio Theatre, Palace Theatre, Southern Theatre, and Riffe Center Theatre Complex.

Contact: Kelly Boggs or Elizabeth Trup, CAPA Public Relations, (614) 469-1045

SOCCER MATCH GROSSES OVER \$2 MILLION IN L.A.

The Noche de Superclasicos soccer game, which featured Guadalajara vs. Club America and Chivas USA vs. Los Angeles Galaxy, drew 88,816 attendance to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Aug. 10. The gross was \$2.4 million on tickets priced at \$25 for general admission, \$40 reserved seating and \$60 VIP. The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Commission promoted the event.

Contact: Jon Lee, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, (213) 765-6357

MONSTER JAM SELLS OUT SWITZERLAND & HOLLAND

Clear Channel Entertainment's Motor Sports Monster Jam sold out all four performances at Zurich, Switzerland's AG Hallenstadion, with an audience of 30,151. Tickets were priced \$65.60 (U.S.), \$57.90, \$50.16 and \$34.73. Magnus Danielsson handled the show for Clear Channel. Good News Productions was the co-promoter. Sponsors included Franz Carl Weber, 20 Minuten touring, Star TV, VBZ and Glatt. Prior to the Zurich stop, Monster Jam sold out both performances, for attendance of over 40,000, at Holland's Gelredome in its first-ever appearance there. *Contact: Denny Hartwig, CCE Motor Sports, (630) 566-6305*

MYSFACE.COM SPONSORS NINE INCH NAILS OUTING

MySpace.com is the title sponsor of the Nine Inch Nails/Queens of the Stone Age 40-city U.S. concert tour, which kicked off on Sept. 16. MySpace offers footage of the show online at www.myspace.com/nin. MySpace also hosted the exclusive world premiere of Nine Inch Nails latest album before retail distribution and generated more than 500,000 MySpace user streams in one week (April 26–May 3). Users are invited to upload personalized mixes of the track "Only" and vote for their favorite version at www.myspace.com/ninremixes. More than 1,200 user versions of the song have been created to date.

Contact: Dani Dudeck, MySpace.com, (323) 202-1890

NFL FALCONS SIGN ON WITH STUBHUB TO RESELL TICKETS

StubHub signed a multi-year sponsorship deal with the National Football League Atlanta Falcons to become the team's exclusive secondary ticketing partner. Season-ticket holders and other ticket holders can resell their tickets online for free using StubHub. StubHub will establish an official outlet at Falcons Landing where fans can pick-up last-minute ticket purchases. StubHub partnerships also include the NFL's Indianapolis Colts, Green Bay Packers, Detroit Lions, San Diego Chargers, Houston Texans and Chicago Bears.

Contact: Lindsey Tishgart, StubHub, (512) 527-7022

TICKETMASTER SIGNS DEAL TO DISTRIBUTE U.S. TICKETS IN JAPAN

Ticketmaster has formed a partnership with Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) to provide consumers throughout Japan with access to event tickets and information for select events held in the United States. Under terms of the agreement, JTB will provide affiliate sales to Ticketmaster by translating Ticketmaster Web pages from English to Japanese. Together Ticketmaster and JTB will facilitate sales for a wide range of events in North America including sports, concerts, Broadway musicals and Las Vegas entertainment performances to consumers in Japan. Ticketmaster and JTB are expected to launch online ticketing in December 2005 and telephone call centers and retail Ticket Center locations after that.

Contact: Bonnie Poindexter, Ticketmaster, (310) 360-2321; JTB, 03-5796-5833

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