



(Clockwise from top left) Electric Daisy Carnival takes over MetLife Stadium, E. Rutherford, N.J. (Photo by MetLife Stadium); Katy Perry brings her Prismatic World Tour to Prudential Center, Newark, N.J. (Photo by Christie Goodwin); A rendering of Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, N.Y., post renovation; Usher performs at Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore. (Photo by Owen Sweeney)

THE MID-ATLANTIC MACHINE

Total grosses are up for the region overall

by REBECCA NAKASHIMA

Despite a frigid winter of brutal snowstorms in parts of the Mid-Atlantic, this year's 25 Top Stops reported a 3.8 percent increase over last year's 33 venues' total gross with \$516.7 million. This speaks to the successful seasons many venues enjoyed in the past year and hope to build on in the coming months. It also speaks to the responsive, entertainment-seeking markets that make up the Mid-Atlantic, with fans buying tickets for everything from family shows and concerts to sports games and conferences. >

METLIFE STADIUM, E. Rutherford, N.J., is the only stadium to make it on the Mid-Atlantic Top Stops list, with its best year yet since opening in 2010. MetLife Stadium benefited from 8 more events than last year that earned \$68.3 million, a 48-percent increase.

“Our past year was our best year,” said Ron VanDeVeen, senior vice president of events and guest experiences. “At MetLife Stadium, we did about 21 major events plus high school bands and football championships and other minor events like that, too.”

Those 21 events, five sporting, 16 non-sporting, are in addition to the 20 NFL games played at MetLife Stadium every season. A September college football game between Notre Dame and Syracuse sold out the stadium at 76,000 people, grossing over \$6.3 million and will return to MetLife Stadium in 2016.

In April 2014, Feld Motor Sports brought AMA Monster Energy Supercross to MetLife Stadium, making it the first Supercross event in the area in the last 20 years. It was a complete

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TOPSTOPS

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Based on concert and event grosses from March 1, 2014 – Feb. 28, 2015, as reported to *Venues Today*.

VENUE, LOCATION	NO. OF SEATS	TOTAL GROSS	ATTENDANCE	SHOWS
> 15,001 OR MORE SEATS				
1. Madison Square Garden, New York	20,000	\$85,737,528	851,445	59
2. MetLife Stadium, E. Rutherford, N.J.	82,000	\$68,336,447	819,552	21
3. Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.	18,000	\$48,611,879	808,395	120
4. Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia	21,600	\$33,756,628	657,254	63
5. Verizon Center, Washington	20,500	\$30,510,594	396,058	55
6. Prudential Center, Newark, N.J.	19,500	\$19,599,699	277,982	48
7. Izod Center, East Rutherford, N.J.	20,000	\$16,910,609	457,784	55
8. Consol Energy Center, Pittsburgh	18,087	\$15,175,267	313,833	46
9. Times Union Center, Albany, N.Y.	17,000	\$10,952,950	241,583	61
10. Nassau Vets. Mem. Coliseum, Uniondale, N.Y.	18,000	\$7,109,612	96,007	13
> 10,001-15,000 SEATS				
1. Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore	14,829	\$16,963,286	432,706	81
2. Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall	14,770	\$15,407,643	242,106	46
3. Petersen Events Center, Pittsburgh	12,508	\$990,128	15,045	6
4. Blue Cross Arena, Rochester, N.Y.	12,875	\$742,459	10,017	5
5. Giant Center, Hershey, Pa.	12,500	\$718,535	11,645	7
> 5,001-10,000 SEATS				
1. Radio City Music Hall, New York	6,013	\$90,285,177	1,188,178	91
2. The Theater at Madison Square Garden, N.Y.	5,605	\$17,601,607	315,135	96
3. The Liacouras Center, Philadelphia	10,000	\$3,949,959	88,880	29
4. Mohegan Sun Arena, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.	10,000	\$3,858,663	115,342	49
5. Santander Arena, Reading, Pa.	9,641	\$1,658,236	46,819	15
> 5,000 OR FEWER SEATS				
1. Beacon Theatre, New York	2,894	\$23,292,606	326,620	128
2. State Theatre, New Brunswick, N.J.	1,893	\$5,780,359	136,423	112
3. Santander Perf. Arts Center, Reading, Pa.	1,821	\$1,825,368	41,099	43
4. Palace Theatre, Albany, N.Y.	2,782	\$1,489,283	28,288	20
5. Best Buy Theater, New York	2,100	\$439,210	4,889	4

Compiled by Daniel Gray, HotTickets@venuestoday.com

CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS

An Aug. 4 performance by Long Island-native Billy Joel will be that last time Nassau Veteran's Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, N.Y., is filled with screaming crowds and live music for awhile. Immediately following the concert, Nassau Coliseum will undergo an estimated \$260-million renovation, opening again in December 2016.

The show is presented by Bruce Ratner and Nassau Events Center (NEC), the same management team behind Barclays Center in Brooklyn. The reimagined Nassau Coliseum will be developed, operated, and programmed by NEC. Ratner's redevelopment extends beyond the arena to the construction of a movie theater and other restaurants and stores.

"Who else but Billy Joel could play the final show at Nassau Coliseum?" said Brett Yormark, CEO of Barclays Center, who will oversee Nassau Events Center's reimagined venue. We appreciate having him close the building in such a fitting way as we prepare to give Long Islanders a spectacular venue with world-class programming and a retail and entertainment destination they will be proud of."

The NHL's New York Islanders, major tenant of Nassau Coliseum since its opening in 1972, will move to Barclays Center.

"We're turning what could have been a wasteland into a thriving sports and entertainment destination," Ratner said at a news conference. "It's a very important step. We're excited to build. We'll start the coliseum in August as we said, retail to follow."

Ratner said they will bring over 300 events to Nassau Coliseum after the renovations, and that already 200 events have committed, including college basketball, boxing and concerts.

Tickets for the Billy Joel show went on sale on May 1 and sold out in five minutes, making it one of the fastest selling concerts ever at Nassau Coliseum. — Rebecca Nakashima

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success, attracting over 62,000 attendees and grossing over \$2.7 million. And it paved the way for the event to return to the stadium on April 25, 2015 and become the first time the event was nationally televised on Fox. Already, Supercross has announced a 2016 stop next April.

A strong lineup of 2014 stadium concert tours played a big role in the successful season as well, something VanDeVeen hopes will continue in 2015 with dates from Taylor Swift, One Direction, Kenny Chesney and others.

"Last year was an incredible year with ticket sales," said VanDeVeen. "Jay Z and Beyonce for two shows sold out, One Direction with two sold-out shows, Eminem and Rihanna with two sold-out shows. Pretty much everything comes close to selling out, if not selling out."

Another monster event for MetLife Stadium was the "Keep Seeking First God's Kingdom!" Jehovah's Witnesses convention held over two weekends in June. The gathering represented the largest convention for Jehovah's Witnesses in the New York metropolitan area in decades. Each day attracted over 50,000 attendees for a total of more than 360,000 over those six days.

SMG-managed **MOHEGAN SUN ARENA AT CASEY PLAZA**, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., enjoyed a strong season of country hits and family show success. The arena sold out for a Luke Bryan show last Valentine's Day and enjoyed good runs from Disney on Ice, The Harlem Globetrotters, WWE and a six-show run of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

Community involvement played a key role in a few of the family shows that came to the arena. Reaching out to fans through special events surrounding a show remains an engaging aspect of their fan engagement efforts.

"We enjoyed being out and about in our community this season with the Harlem Globetrotters who had their player Buckets Blakes spread an antibullying message to students," said GM Brian Sipe. "We also had Elmo and Grover visit and read at Osterhout Library in Wilkes-Barre."

This summer, they will be breaking ground for a \$4-million renovation.

"We hope to have all of those plans finalized by mid-May of what exactly all of our construction plans will be," said Sipe.

For **ROYAL FARMS ARENA** in Baltimore, General Manager Frank Remesch describes their past concert season in terms of baseball: "The concerts this year were all good

concerts, but no real standouts. It was just steady, just singles and doubles, no homeruns. But that's OK, obviously it works, so I'll take it."

The season also brought some disappointments. Royal Farms Arena had to deal with handling 11 canceled and postponed shows, resulting in a significant loss in attendance. Among those was a Katt Williams show that was canceled because the comedian was bitten by a Brown Recluse spider. A seven-show run of Marvel Universe Live was also scheduled to play the arena, but had to be pushed to 2016 because they couldn't get the rigging analysis done in time. A blizzard struck during one soccer match and only 300 people showed up to a game that would have normally attracted more than 4,000.

"It's amazing when you look at where we are now with our numbers compared to where we should be with 11 canceled shows," said Remesch.

The surprise success came from the 12-show run of Disney on Ice: Frozen in October and November. Originally just nine shows, three were added because of the response from Baltimore audiences, with almost 87,000 people coming out for the 12 shows, a run that grossed over \$2.6 million.

"We do a phenomenal number of family shows here every year," said Remesch. "We do two runs of Disney on Ice, 9-11 shows each, we do Arenacross, Monster Truck, 21 performances of the circus and bull riding. Once we start the season in September, you almost have a family show every month and a half. Our bread and butter is the family shows and concerts. That's what works in Baltimore."

In addition to the event lineup, a lot was done behind the scenes in the past year, to the building and system updates, in order to improve the fan experience at the building that SMG started managing in 1999. A new POS system was installed that makes it easier for patrons to pay with credit cards. Before the new system, Remesch said they were averaging 17 percent of transactions made with credit cards. Now, five months after the new system was installed, they're averaging 35 percent, and it's still rising. Not only is it driving up credit card use, but sales as well.

"I have an older building, so anytime I can do something that puts us up to the current millennia, it seems like the right thing to do," said Remesch. "The other system was starting to cause us some grief and breaking down, so it was a good excuse. My justification behind it

was it's going to pay for itself in 2-3 years. Well, it's going to do it in about a year, because it's better than what I expected. It was driven by customer service initially, and a great side effect was that I actually made more money by it."

Three suites were added, using some dead space on the concourse. Two will hold 12 people and the third is a skybox higher up and will hold 25 people, and they each have a private restroom. The smaller ones run around \$600 during events like family shows and up to \$3,500 for bigger events. Remesch said he chose not to advertise them when they first opened, so they could work out any kinks, but they're already selling themselves.

"It adds to the fan experience and the promoter experience," said Remesch. "When you get the promoters happy they bring more events. When the fans are happy they buy more tickets. It's a great cycle."

VERIZON CENTER'S total gross was down 31 percent from last year's reported number, but the Washington, D.C., arena still hosted a total of 18 concerts, including two back-to-back sellouts from Katy Perry as well as sellout shows from Fleetwood Mac, the Eagles, Lady Gaga and Stevie Wonder.

"We also hosted the Microsoft Worldwide

Partner Conference along with the convention center as a citywide event in July 2014, for the second time," said GM Dave Touhey. The five-day conference attracted more than 16,000 Microsoft partners and employees from 150 countries.

PRUDENTIAL CENTER, Newark, N.J., reported its most successful year in its seven-year history. The arena hosted 32 sold-out shows, a record for them, including performances by Katy Perry, the Eagles, Pitbull and Enrique Iglesias and Fleetwood Mac. An attendance record for a single performance of 16,444 with George Strait last March and record gross revenue for multiple annual events, including Disney on Ice and The Harlem Globetrotters, were highlights of the year.

In order to keep that momentum going, Sean Saadeh was recently hired as executive vice president of entertainment programming to lead an expansion of the booking division for the arena. Saadeh had been at Barclays Center, Brooklyn.

"We're coming off our best year, and that's a testament to our leadership and wanting to expand there," said Saadeh. "We have a great team, so my goal is to take that momentum and run with it. We have a great opportunity here with our new culture that I think will

expand beyond our walls. Our programming partners are recognizing our success and are wanting to support us more. After seven years, the Prudential Center continues to show that it sells tickets and does well on these events."

Saadeh and his team are looking to continue to expand the concert business, since it resonates well in that market. He wants to get more creative with the types of events they host and will focus on trying to do interesting annual events that will appeal to the market. Part of that process will involve having great analytics about the audiences in order to understand what works and what doesn't.

"The volume and variety is something we always try to do," said Saadeh. "We want to have quality events too, so it's trying to find those two things. Having diverse events really speaks to our marketplace. Northern New Jersey is so diverse, and we feel like we're Northern New Jersey's venue. That's our culture here. That's definitely one of our strategies moving forward."

Interviewed for this story: **Frank Remesch**, (410) 347-2020; **Sean Saadeh**, (973) 757-6511; **Brian Sipe**, (570) 970-3501; **Dave Touhey**, (202) 628-6042; **Ron VanDeVeen**, (201) 559-1515

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