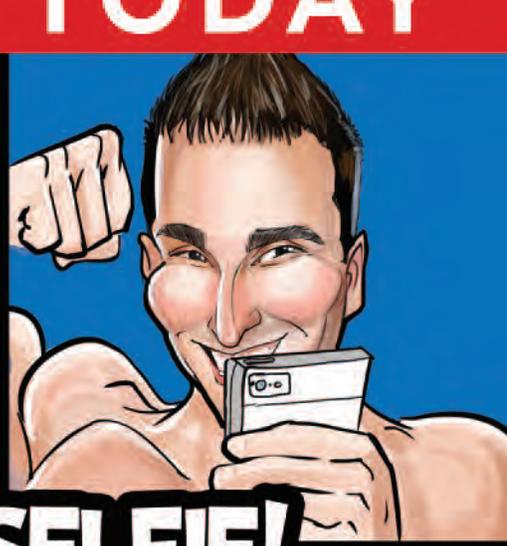
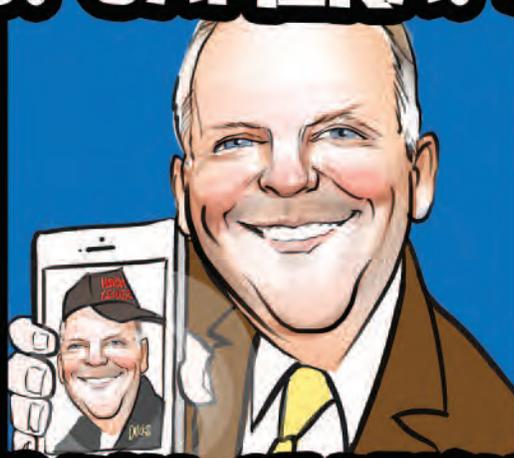


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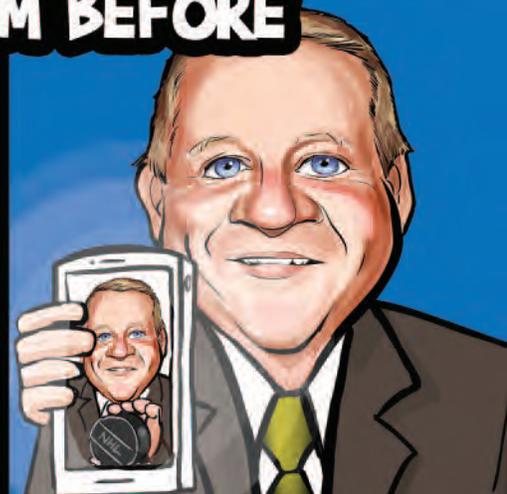
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NEW KINGS OF BROOKLYN

by DAVE BROOKS

If you've visited New York this past year, you might have noticed things seem a little different these days.

Especially for touring artists — the opening of Barclays Center in Brooklyn has ended Manhattan's monopoly on arena entertainment, bringing basketball, boxing, concerts and family entertainment to the Tri-State Area.

"The city is under new management," proclaimed rapper Jay Z on Twitter after the newly rechristened Brooklyn Nets beat the New York Knicks in their first matchup since Barclays Center opened in September of last year. In less than one year, Barclays Center has become the top-grossing arena in North America, brought professional basketball and NHL hockey (2015) to Brooklyn and won the right to replicate its success with a massive project on Long Island with a dramatic makeover of Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale.

It's for these accomplishments that *Venues Today* recognizes Barclays Center Majority Owner and Brooklyn Nets Minority Owner Bruce Ratner and CEO Brett Yormark with its Hall of Headlines Award for News. Together with their staff, the pair has breathed a new sense of competition into the city and helped to change the way Brooklyn residents think about their borough of 2.6 million residents.

"When my company first started doing real estate in Brooklyn years ago, there no major corporations here, so to get people to consider coming to Brooklyn, we had to be very nice," Ratner said. "Both Brett and I love to host, we have all our lives. We look at the arena as a place where we host people."

It's also a place that many call home. The 18,000-capacity venue hosted over 250 events since opening, including 75 concerts, the Atlantic 10 Conference college basketball championships, family shows, a relocated MTV Video Music Awards and the 2013 NBA Draft.

"One of the things we always wanted to do was position Barclays Center as an aspirational venue," explained Yormark. "We wanted to create a place where kids in our community would visit and aspire to one day perform on our stage, or play on our court, or box in our ring."



That's meant creating community-driven events combining both amateur and professional sports. This year, Barclays Center helped secure the 86-year-old Golden Gloves, the nation's largest amateur boxing tournament. Yormark's ambitions for boxing are nothing short of extraordinary — "I will not rest until we get a Floyd Mayweather fight," he said of the undefeated, five-time world champion. "That would be a crown jewel for us. When we get that, we will have made it."

Landing the undisputed champion would be a coup for the Barclays Center team, but Yormark and Ratner have plenty of great partners to help them run the building and secure content. Oscar de la Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions has a deal to bring championship fights to the facility, while AEG has a management contract to help run the facility.

"AEG has a hybrid operation agreement with us," said Yormark. "They provide us their expertise in facility management, but all booking is done in-house, along with sales and marketing."

As for Nassau Coliseum, the plan is to convert the aging Long Island arena into a thriving entertainment district, with restaurants, shopping and a revitalized arena. Earlier this year, Ratner and Yormark won the rights to redevelop the arena in a closely fought battle with Madison Square Garden that was ultimately decided by Nassau County officials.

Ratner said a big part of his group's winning proposal was an offer to return six New York Islander home games to the facility once it reopens. Earlier this year, the Islanders announced they would be leaving Nassau Coliseum for Barclays Center, beginning in 2015. The deal with Barclays Center allows Long Island to maintain a connection with the team, and Ratner said his group was also boosted by a commitment from Jay-Z and his artist group Live Nation to provide content for the building.

"We both fought hard for it," said Ratner, acknowledging that Barclays Center and Madison Square Garden tried to downplay the competitiveness of the market when the Brooklyn arena first opened, but the fight for control of Long Island "was a real horse race and they (MSG) were world-class competitors."

Above: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.