





ARENA MARKETING RULES

by LINDA DECKARD

Four years and 24 live shows into Star Wars In Concert, promoter Gregg Perloff, Another Planet Entertainment, is “astounded and wonderfully surprised at the overall reaction to the show.”

Marc Geiger, William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, who books the show, which opened in the U.S. at the Honda Center, Anaheim, Calif., Oct. 1, “knew the arena marketing mentality, skill and databases were the right ones for this audience.”

And Brad Parsons, ArenaNetwork, representing the major venue coalitions including SMG, AEG Facilities, and Venue Coalition as one of the first to step up to co-promote, finds tweaking the marketing message a fine art that is exactly an arena marketer’s cup of tea. “For three or four years, I have personally believed we as venue operators and promoters have to change the kinds of shows we have to do. I’ve been searching for shows of this nature,” Parsons said.

All three referenced this new event as life after rock and roll. Because Star Wars In Concert is the newest and most unusual arena booking of 2009 and because it shares risk between the promoter and the arena, the Perloff/Geiger/Parsons trio has been voted the Venues Today 2009 Hall of Headlines winning team for Bookings.

Perloff started working on the idea with Lucas Films four years ago. He drew in Geiger, whom, he points out, has been involved with several out-of-the-ordinary arena offerings, including Walking with Dinosaurs (a Venues Today 2007 Hall of Headlines winner), Video Games Live and Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Geiger gave Perloff, an independent promoter, the original idea to get involved in an international show where he wasn’t competing with other promoters.

Momentum is still building as the message finally penetrates, but it is building. “People love the show for so many different reasons, because the symphony is so outstanding or because they’ve never seen a screen this big because there’s never been a touring



screen this large,” Perloff said. The screen is 30 X 60 in high definition and 100 feet across “so it’s spectacular, giant. We have an 86-piece orchestra, a 60-piece choir. We’re touring with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra. People are like, ‘so this isn’t a pick-up orchestra?’ Well no, this is one of the greatest orchestras in the world.”

Star Wars In Concert was developed as a compilation of all six Star Wars movies, edited thematically, with music rewritten by John Williams to the scenes on screen.

Geiger had his share of selling to do to arena managers. He knows this type of risk sharing isn’t unique by any stretch, but Star Wars is this year’s story. “The trend is developing content for arenas with a sharing of risk. Arenas do not necessarily become a buyer per se, with guarantees and risk capital, but partner and share or throw some other monies in the pot and become real marketers. I think it’s not that different from a lot of sports stuff they do. That’s a good thing and there should be a lot more of it. I don’t think it’s radical rethink; it’s little tweaks in the deal structure.”

Perloff said the average gross per show, early on, is in the \$500,000 range, with two shows the norm. Geiger added there are a few \$350,000 grosses mixed in. The goal is to get rid of the \$350,000 and ratchet up the half a million. Sample grosses include \$1,068,841 at the Honda Center Oct. 1-2; \$206,830 at the Jacksonville (Fla.) Veterans Memorial, one show, Oct. 29; \$1,120,558 at the HP Pavilion at San Jose (Calif.), two shows, Oct. 11; and \$394,712, one show, at the St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa, Fla., Nov. 1.

“We used to call this [type of event] life after rock and roll. I think it shows that there are people who are hungry for different forms of entertainment,” Perloff said.

This has a broad appeal in terms of likeability. That’s important to venues,” Parsons added. “It is their civic duty to present events that are appealing to their populations. That was the original definition of an arena manager.”

BOOKINGS

Above: Yoda prepares from combat during a scene from Star Wars In Concert.