

CLASSIC VENUES GET UPGRADES

Competition for events is fierce for Kentucky and Tennessee venues

by BRAD WEISSBERG

Kentucky and Tennessee venues had a down year overall, but there were several bright spots. The general consensus was that competition from new venues was making attracting talent and events difficult, especially for the older venues. Reported concert and event grosses from the top 10 Top Stops on *Venues Today's* yearly chart for the two states are down slightly over 10 percent; going from \$86 million down to \$78 million year over year.

Jason Rittenberry, president & CEO, Kentucky State Fair Board, which oversees several Kentucky venues including Freedom Hall, Louisville, Ky., said he bucked the trend and the venue was up almost 30 percent.

“Primarily the bump was from strong in-house shows such as Feld shows like Monster Jam and Arenacross and USA BMX,” said Rittenberry.

Tickets ranged from \$25-\$55. There were no VIP programs associated with the events, but Rittenberry, who just completed his first 100 days in his post, said one of his goals is to implement new premium options.

“We have the area and the space and we need to get some capital and make the investment to develop a lounge,” he said.

Freedom Hall is in the process of evaluating the facility and looking to make large cap-

ital improvements, including replacing the stadium seats, making Green Room renovations and adding a new center-hung scoreboard.

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(Clockwise from top left) The crowd rocking to Coldplay at KFC Yum! Center, Louisville, Ky.; Jason Aldean, Freedom Hall, Louisville, Ky.; KMC Yum! Center, Louisville Ky., at night; NEEDTOBREATHE, Rupp Arena, Lexington, Ky.; The introduction of De'Aaron Fox at the University of Kentucky vs. University of California, Los Angeles basketball game, Rupp Arena, Lexington, Ky., Dec. 3, 2016. (Rupp Arena photos courtesy: Photo © Paul Hooper / Rupp Arena)

TOPSTOPS		KENTUCKY & TENNESSEE 2017			
Based on concert and event grosses from Dec. 1, 2015 – Nov. 30, 2016, as reported to <i>Venues Today</i> .					
VENUE, LOCATION	NO. OF SEATS	TOTAL GROSS	ATTENDANCE	SHOWS	
1. Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tenn.	20,000	\$32,025,452	587,006	59	
2. KFC Yum! Center, Louisville, Ky.	22,000	\$23,491,212	331,407	36	
3. Tennessee Perf. Arts Center, Nashville	2,472	\$9,834,157	205,785	137	
4. Ryman Auditorium, Nashville, Tenn.	2,362	\$5,342,023	92,358	45	
5. Papa John's Cardinal Stadium, Louisville, Ky.	55,000	\$2,475,354	42,448	1	
6. FedExForum, Memphis, Tenn.	18,500	\$1,086,666	16,203	6	
7. Freedom Hall, Louisville, Ky.	19,200	\$959,024	25,253	4	
8. UTC McKenzie Arena, Chattanooga, Tenn.	11,871	\$857,391	12,073	7	
9. Louisville (Ky.) Palace Theatre	2,715	\$820,126	12,692	7	
10. War Memorial Auditorium, Nashville, Tenn.	1,789	\$664,666	21,941	19	

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