

VT SPOTLIGHT

BRIDGESTONE ARENA, located in the downtown hub, has a seating capacity of 20,000 and, according to VT's Top Stops information, hosted 95 shows last year with an attendance of more than 800,000. If attendance to the NHL Predators, who call Bridgestone home, were included, the number of total visitors would break the one million mark.

The variety sentiment was echoed by Carl Hall, director of arena management, **RUPP ARENA**, Lexington, Ky.

"We will be like most buildings," Hall said. "It seems that the country music market has backed off right now for us. That could be due to the cycle of tours or the fact we are surrounded by amphitheaters that do a large amount of country during the summers."

"But, we have been doing a broader diversity and that looks to be trending into 2016," he said.

Rupp Arena's seating capacity is 23,000. The building is owned and operated by the Lexington Center Corp., and is home to the University of Kentucky men and women basketball programs. Hall did say that the larger country music acts are still out there touring buildings like Rupp Arena and they are selling tickets.

In fact, Bridgestone Arena's largest ticket

selling act in 2015 was Eric Church, who broke an all-time concert attendance at 18,411 tickets.

Bridgestone Arena sold out a concert for rock band Tool nearly instantly when tickets went on sale in November for the Jan. 23 show.

Kells has seen an increase in comedy acts coming to Bridgestone. The building did well with Ken Hart's What Now Tour, Black and Brown Comedy Get Down, and Amy Schumer in 2016 and already have Martin Lawrence booked for April.

Other acts seen at Bridgestone Arena in 2015 include Stevie Wonder, Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band, Zac Brown, New Kids on the Block, Alan Jackson, Kenny Chesney, Fall Out Boy, Shania Twain, Tim McGraw, Charlie Daniels, Def Leppard, Kelly Clarkson, Lady Antebellum, Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande, and Foo Fighters.

UPDATES AND EXPANSION

Next year is Bridgestone's 20th birthday, which is one reason a continual amount of money has been going into upgrades and improvements including the \$10 million spent this past summer installing a new LED lighting system, purchasing new seats and renovating concession stands.

"You have to keep up what you own,"

Kells said.

Nashville's explosive popularity has business increasing in just about all aspects. **RYMAN AUDITORIUM**, located just a block away from Bridgestone has increased its business 107 percent over the past five years. The 2,362-seat capacity building reported 124 shows to VT last year with an attendance of 250,258.

Ryman Auditorium has capitalized on the increase in tourism not only in ticket sales but also through a new \$14-million expansion project allowing the opening of "Soul of Nashville," a new immersive daytime tour experience. The lobbies were expanded as were the box office and the food and beverage service, including adding a cafe.

POLK THEATER, also in Nashville, had new floor and rail lighting installed along with new carpeting.

The current \$15-million technology upgrade project to Rupp Arena is set for completion later this year just as the facility celebrates its 40th anniversary. Hall said the technology improvements will keep the 40-year-old building relevant and up to date.

"We want to show the market how vibrant we are," Hall said. "We could always use more, of course, but we are remaining stable and constant."

Some improvements are driven by security needs. Aside from the installation of metal detectors at **KFC YUM! CENTER**, Louisville, Ky., there were no major improvements to the building last year.

"With everything that is going on right now, we just needed to install the metal detectors," said Dennis Petruccio, general manager. And, so far, sending patrons through the detectors has gone pretty well. Petruccio said since the detectors were installed in January, they had found some knives, box cutters, items like that but no guns.

ADJUSTING TO POPULARITY

Nashville's surge of notoriety and recognition has left some venue officials still sort of figuring it out, but moving forward nonetheless.

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TOPSTOPS KENTUCKY & TENNESSEE 2016				
Based on concert and event grosses from Dec. 1, 2014 - Nov. 30, 2015, and as reported to <i>Venues Today</i> .				
VENUE, LOCATION	NO. OF SEATS	TOTAL GROSS	ATTENDANCE	SHOWS
1. Bridgestone Arena, Nashville, Tenn.	20,000	\$47,192,261	883,531	95
2. KFC Yum! Center, Louisville, Ky.	22,000	\$16,357,796	340,414	43
3. Ryman Auditorium, Nashville, Tenn.	2,362	\$11,883,721	250,258	124
4. Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville	2,472	\$7,180,656	149,782	106
5. Rupp Arena, Lexington, Ky.	23,000	\$990,704	20,776	3
6. War Memorial Auditorium, Nashville, Tenn.	1,789	\$723,953	21,999	18
7. Palace Theatre, Louisville, Ky.	2,700	\$690,796	10,204	5
8. Freedom Hall, Louisville, Ky.	19,200	\$605,865	14,655	5
9. Orpheum Theatre, Memphis, Tenn.	2,333	\$350,338	4,490	2
10. Grand Ole Opry House, Nashville, Tenn.	4,400	\$230,143	4,093	1

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