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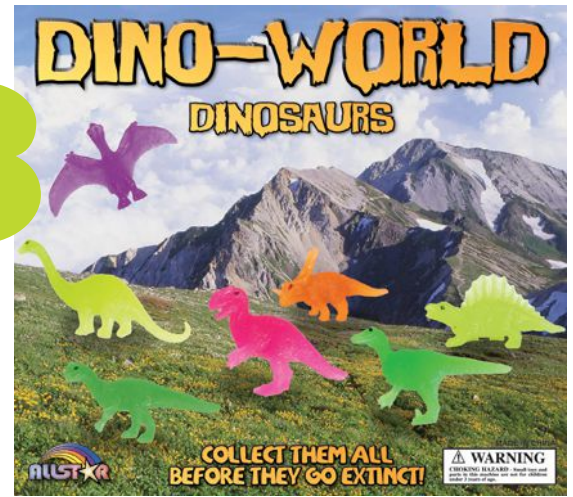
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The Force

Behind the Attractions

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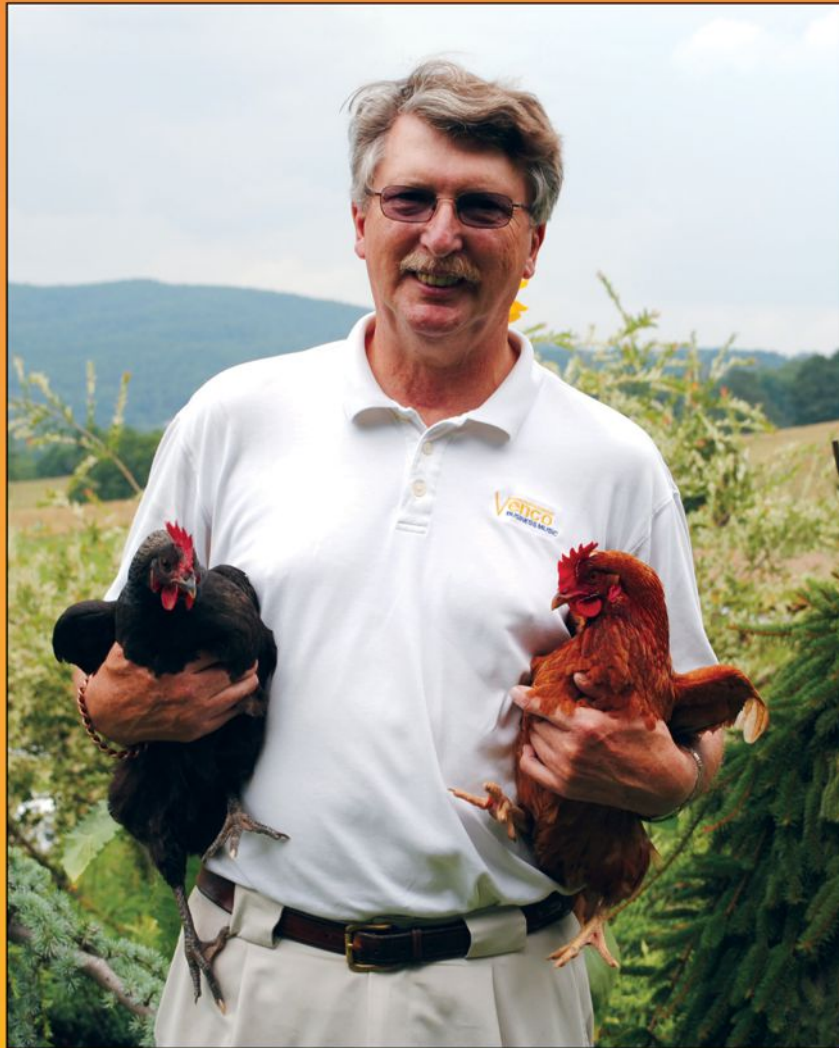


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SAY WHAT?



10

second
interview
with...

Dave Courington is Vice President of Sales and Promotions for Valley-Dynamo. He got his start in the industry at Tornado Foosball. He oversees sales of coin-operated pool, foosball, and air hockey tables and runs tournaments and promotions in the U.S. and around the world. He grew up in Alabama and currently lives in Grand Prairie, Texas.

My first job was:

doodling dust at my Great Uncle Fee's Saw Mill. I was 4 years old.

My favorite type of music is:

Blues.

I wish I had the nerve to:

answer this question.

One thing I can't live without is:

other people.

My favorite cocktail is:

I have two; The one in my hand and the fresh one on the bar.

One word that describes my personality is:

Loyal.

The best advice I ever got was:

From my grandfather: / Always be yourself.

My favorite TV show is:

Andy Griffith.

If I could have dinner with a famous person that person would be:

paying.

My most cherished inanimate possession is:

My Meritorious Service Award ring given to me by the members of the VNEA.

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Skating fun

in Massachusetts



Interskate 91 North, located in Hadley, Mass., is a unique family entertainment center (FEC) featuring skating as the main attraction. Located in the second story of Hampshire Mall, the center attracts all ages and provides a number of ways to have fun indoors.

HISTORY

Owner Bill Hoefler enjoyed skating as a youth and began working in roller skating centers in 1988 before making the decision to pursue family fun and roller skating as his life's work. He started with a job as General Manager of Funland Skate Castle in Decatur, Ala.

An opportunity to purchase his current business arose in 1999 and by March 2000, he was the owner of Interskate 91 North.

Interskate 91 North has a unique relationship with another facility in the area, Interskate 91 South. Though they share a name, the two are separate entities with separate owners that work together to the mutual benefit of each location.

Hoefler explained, "The facility I operate opened in 1980 and was the result of partners coming together, none of which had FEC or roller skating experience. They opened the facility and hired a management company that was in the business of putting managers in FECs in the northeast. A period of time went by and ultimately the manager responsible for this location, Kevin Baker, was made partner of the location."

Years later, the partners opened Interskate 91 South in Wilbraham, Mass. Baker bought out his partners and decided he didn't want to continue operating two locations 46 minutes apart. Hoefler purchased Interskate 91 from him and they still use the same central Web site,



Facility:

Interskate 91 North

Location:

Hadley, Mass.

Attractions:

Roller Skating Rink, Arcade, Laser Tag, Birthday Parties, Group Events

Contact Information:

(413) 586-2737;
www.interskate91.com

plan vacation weeks together, coordinate promotions, and advertise together on local radio and cable stations.

Hoefler said, "It really allows us to market the facilities in a way that neither of us could afford to do as a central entity. We are the primary sources for skating and family fun in the area and we have worked well together for over 11 years."

PARTIES AND PROMOTIONS-THE FACILITY

The largest portion of square footage in the facility is devoted to the roller skating rink. The unique shape of the rink

(shaped like a pair of eyeglasses) helped to place Interskate 91 North in USA Today's list of the top 10 best places to skate in the U.S.

In addition to skating, the FEC features an arcade, a prize redemption center, and a 21,000-square-foot laser tag arena. The facility specializes in birthday parties and group events.

In the arcade, Hoefler said his most popular game is "hands down, Smoking Token." He said that this game is closely followed by Slam-a-Winner, and alley games.

Interskate 91 stocks its own redemption counter with a little help from a company called "Stuff Shop" located in Venice, Fla. Hoefler explained, "Stuff Shop has a complete turnkey merchandising program. Mike Hill, President, does amazing things, whether its putting on a seminar or visiting a facility and building a perfect display. The company has a monthly, simple ordering process for hot items. If something's not moving, we're allowed to send it back."

PARTIES AND PROMOTIONS

On the promotions side, Hoefler said the facility always has something going on. Year round the facility promotes different specials on its Web site where the goal is to appeal to different demographics (ie: families, tweens, novice skaters, birthday parties, etc.)

One popular promotion is the Tuesday super saver package that incorporates laser tag, skating, and game tokens, helping to bring in customers on a traditionally slower night.

This year the facility reworked its pricing for a summer season pass and has had success in attracting customers.

The FEC has three different party

packages that can be booked directly from the Web site, saving time for busy parents. Party offerings include a reserved table in the birthday room, a friendly server to help, a balloon bouquet, printed invitations, four game tokens per guest, a slice of pizza or hot dog snack with soda, paper products, a special DJ announcement, free skating/playing for host parents, and discount passes to visit again.

One interesting party package the facility offers is the "Birthday Blitz." They started offering this special party package in January 2010 anticipating that it would be short lived.

The package is a \$99 party for a smaller number of children where the "cost per head" is not an issue. Hoefler said, "It's not our most popular package but we feel that it has brought some people in who weren't going to have a minimum of 10 people paid for a party. It's perfect for six to eight people."

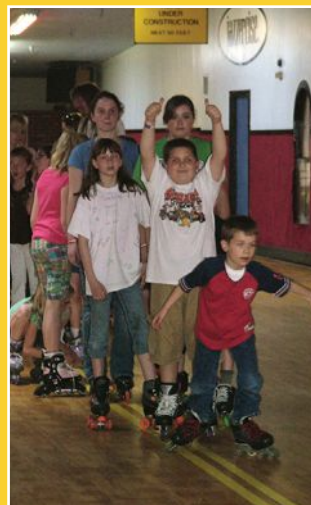
STAYING FRESH

Hoefler had some great advice for dealing with the current economy and keeping a facility fresh.

He said, "I think a lot of us got unintentional educations when the economy flipped, whether we were looking or felt the need to seriously evaluate our businesses or not. It was a bit of a wake up call. We had to be serious about looking at our product offerings. The party package at \$99 is a perfect example. How many parties did we not have? Opportunities missed? Hours I was offering that were different from what people were looking for?"

He added, "To keep the facility fresh, something as simple as changing the lighting, carpeting, or paint scheme can work wonders. We were chasing away the 12-16-year-old crowd because of neon colors. It's OK to theme more for the teenage kids because the younger ones will still come provided the facility does not appear dark or smelly to parents."

For more information, call (413)586-2737; Web (www.interskate91.com). ▲



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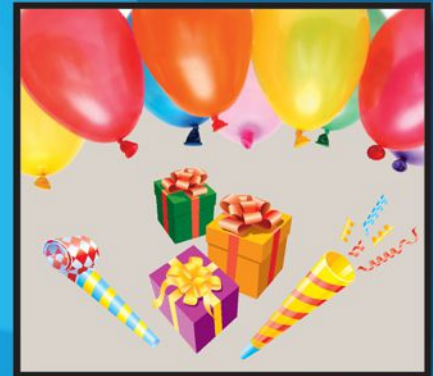
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Jeffrey Apfel & Anthony Neri, President of Pizza Putt, USA.

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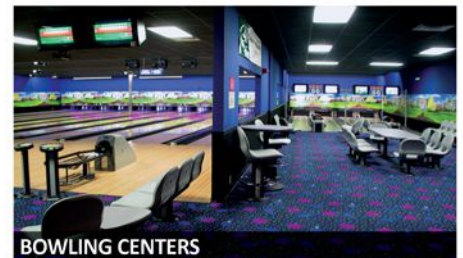
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BPAA hosts Bowl Expo

The Bowling Proprietors Association of America (BPAA) recently hosted its Annual Bowl Expo at the Gaylord Texan in Gaylord, Texas. Attendees represented over 30 countries.

Monday began with the 79th Annual Meeting. John Snyder was re-elected as BPAA president. Cathy DeSocio will assume the office of president at the conclusion of Snyder's term next year, becoming the first female president in BPAA history.

Howard Davis of Rock Hill, S.C., Mike Hall of Severna Park, Md., and Juliet Ridgeway of Filer, Idaho, were three at-large directors elected to two-year terms.

The following received BPAA awards: Pat Ciniello, Victor Lerner Award and induction into the BPAA Hall of Fame; Bob Gudorf, V.A. Wapensky Award; Mark Voight, President's Award; Parker Bohn III, Dick Weber Bowling Ambassador Award; ESPN Radio's Mike Greenberg and Mike Golic of Mike and Mike in the Morning, Media Award; Fred Borden, Bowling Coaches Hall of Fame; Marion Ladewig, Bowling Coaches Trailblazer.

On Monday evening, Gregory Hudson (Ford Lanes, Dearborn Heights, Mich.) won the Sixth Annual Karaoke Contest. Second place went to Kenya Gilstrap (Shenaniganz, Rockwall, Texas)

with David Gonzalez (East Hampton Bowl, N.Y.) taking third.

Former NFL Hall of Fame quarterback and businessman Roger Staubach delivered the keynote speech during the Wednesday General Session. Steven Foster, Lucky Strike CEO, addressed attendees on Thursday during the Bowl Expo Super Session.

Keith Hamilton, Luby Publishing President, was elected as Chairman of the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame (IBMHOF) board of trustees.

The newest IBMHOF exhibit celebrating "50 Years of Women's Professional Bowling" was unveiled during A Night At the Campus where Expo attendees ate, drank, and toured the campus and the IBMHOF.

The trade show floor featured over 300 exhibitors and many visitors both Wednesday and Thursday with lots to see, taste, and touch.

Sponsors for the event included QubicaAMF, Budweiser, Pepsi, Gatorade, JaniKing, Georgia Coffee, American Airlines, Sysco, North Pointe, Nationwide Bank, and Game On Foods, amongst others.

A variety of educational opportunities were available including workshops and seminars in the following categories: technology lab, marketing and sales, money management, human resources and customer service, outside the four walls, food and beverage, youth, TIPs certification, pro shops and coaching, USBC certifications and training, and IBPSIA certifications.

Pre/Post Activities included discounted tickets to Six Flags Over Texas and Hurricane Harbor and a Grapevine Wine Tour.

For more information, call (800) 343-1329; Web (www.bpaa.com). ▲





All that jazz in New Orleans:

Bob Snyder of Bob Snyder & Associates/National Games Laboratory, recently traveled to New Orleans for the 2nd Annual New Orleans Traditional Jazz Camp held at the Bourbon Orleans Hotel in the historic French Quarter. Jazz musicians from around the world come for a full week of collaboration and an opportunity to play at a variety of venues throughout the city.

One highlight of the camp this year was a Second Line/Tumble Parade in the French Quarter. Snyder is in the crowd (right side), playing his trombone. Second Line parades have their origins in jazz funerals that are a celebration of life. Second Line parades are like a walking party and can be impromptu events or held as part of festivals or weddings. Major components are dancing in the street, brightly colored clothing, and the requisite decorated umbrellas.



New addition: Maggie Kapinos, Programs Manager for the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA), and her husband, Paul, welcomed their newest family member, Julia Zofia, on March 8. Little Julia weighed 7 lbs. 7 oz. and measured 20 inches long. The family also includes big sister Delilah and big brother Simon.

Wizard of Oz on the Jersey Shore: In June, Elaut USA delivered four Wizard of Oz coin pusher games to locations on the Jersey Shore: to Jenkinson's South Arcade in Point Pleasant, Lucky Leo's in Seaside, Six Flags Great Adventure, and Gateway 26 in Wildwood.

Jack Guarneri, President and CEO of Elaut USA, proudly said, "This game belongs in every large family entertainment center (FEC) in America." Marty Shapiro of Gateway 26 commented, "The players are three deep on the game from the minute we open until the minute we close. I have never seen a game like this."

The reach of the game is spreading with two units in Ocean City, Md., and one to Orlando. According to Guarneri, Elaut USA is taking orders from FEC owners who want the game for the upcoming fall season. Brady Distributing is the first U.S. distributor to take orders for the game. ▲



Ecast

remains relevant through R&D

Ecast strives to make new-age jukeboxes featured entertainment in locations.

“The closer your business model matches current consumer behavior, the better your chances of success.”

This quote from John Taylor, CEO of Ecast Inc., was made in the March 2007 edition of *Play Meter*. At the time we were worlds away from a new language that included words such as Apps, Facebook, FourSquare, and Twitter. Dictionaries of the time did not include these words. “Social media” was an unknown term. Smart phones were in their infancy.

Taylor hit the proverbial nail on the head. The next year, Ecast introduced the EQ digital jukebox, which won an Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) Innovator Award.

Since then, Ecast has improved, refined, and enlarged the capacities of the EQ, culminating in the Juke 4 software and a Social Media Bundle with a multitude of benefits for operators and locations.

EMERGENCE OF THE EQ

What led to the development of the EQ? Taylor said, “We developed the EQ and our new Revo jukebox with consumer and technology trends in mind. We were aware that the flat

panel HD display technology prices were going to rapidly come down, and we expected that consumers would continue to expect media to become more interactive, high resolution, immersive, and expansive.

“This translated to larger, more media rich interactive displays to attract and engage consumers for music and other forms of complementary media services. The broader the media landscape, the greater the possibilities for delivering compelling media to the consumer.”

Scott Walker, Vice President of Network Operations, said, “The AMOA Innovator Award was very much appreciated and validated our thought processes. From there we were able to improve on the UI with our latest release on the Juke 4, which we debuted at the Amusement Expo in March and is now deployed across our EQ network.”

“We integrated social media in the EQ in 2008; for 2011 we introduced our Social Media Bundle, which is far advanced from the initial offering launched in 2008.”

Walker commented, “Ecast is tracking its product development and inno-

vation to consumer behavior. The Social Media Bundle directly addresses this strategy. We have given operators and location owners the huge marketing power of social media. It not only drives engagement among consumers because they use social media, but it also provides the opportunity to push promotions, so it's a marketing platform as well. The bundle also includes other applications to create a better experience while music is being played on the jukebox."

The Social Media Bundle helps keep patrons engaged so they stay longer in a location and have more reasons to use the jukebox. For example, if a patron selects a song by The Rolling Stones, as the song is playing the content in the top portion of the EQ shows photos from the band on its Facebook page and provides information on Stones events. The Social Media Bundle also provides a competitive edge, as well as control over content and messaging. Images can be uploaded for special events and promotions; a stream feeds from a location's own Facebook and Twitter accounts; and venues can stream Twitter feeds by topics such as the World Series or March Madness. The goal: to add value for the operator channel, locations, and consumers.

BREAK FROM TRADITION

Walker said, "There is a whole new generation of patrons in bars and they are accustomed to discovering music through rapidly emerging social media services. The EQ and our upcoming Revo enables them to interact with music and media via touch screen technology and social media that is familiar and com-

elling to them. That's the attraction for them."

He continued, "Now today's consumer can play a song from an artist on Facebook, check in on FourSquare, follow Twitter feeds, and see rich dynamic media related to the music delivered in a method they know."

Ecast also develops media campaigns that include a pre-release program in which a new album is released to the network of Ecast jukeboxes prior to the album's commercial availability. These are robust, comprehensive campaigns that require an investment of Ecast manpower.

Walker said, "These are interactive media campaigns that not only promote pre-releases, but sometimes include concert ticket giveaways, and data capture. It's a fully integrated campaign that has huge marketing value for the artist."

One recent campaign involved the popular artist, Lady Gaga. Not only could consumers

hear Lady Gaga's new single, "Judas," from her new album, *Born This Way*, but they could also access Lady Gaga's social streams on social media sites Facebook and Twitter while socializing with friends at their favorite bars and clubs with EQ jukeboxes.

Walker said, "If we sold that campaign to Lady Gaga it would probably be a six-figure campaign. We see how campaigns drive engagement in the jukebox. The higher the engagement of the consumer, the higher the cash box. We need to stay relevant with the consumers. These campaigns provide value for the artists and the record labels because we can measure the amount of engagement with the artist prior to, during, and after the campaign."

The bottom line for Walker: "It's all about relevance. It's important in this industry that we keep our solutions



Executive Team, (l-r): Scott Walker, Vice President, Channel Sales and Development; John Taylor, CEO; and Ron Nitafan, Vice President, Finance.

relevant. Ecast has always been a leader in this effort.”

Ecast has a dedicated team devoted to obtaining music licenses for the network and maintaining the music library. A portion of that team focuses on the promotional aspects of the music.

Walker said, “The beauty of music is that there are so many choices.”

JUKE 4 DEPLOYED

Ecast recently announced that its significant software upgrade, Juke 4, has been deployed to EQ jukeboxes across its entire network of EQs.

According to Walker there are three main components: 1) an enhanced search that makes it easier to find popular music that consumers want to hear; 2) incorporated recommendations for similar music (five options provided); and 3) an artist-based option for the newer consumer.”

RIGHT: Development Team, (l-r): Alla Nif-taliyeva, Manager, QA; Ricardo Gomez, Manager, Engineering; Darren Clark, Chief Architect; Kate Haley, Software Engineer; and Jim Van Nest, Junior QA Engineer.

Walker explained, “Traditionally, jukeboxes had an album interface. The new UI allows patrons to go to the artist’s page, and based on popularity it will show all the catalogues of the chosen artist. We still cater to the patron who has a certain way of discovering and selecting music. Juke 4 is a new UI option that is more advanced for the music patron who is accustomed to online music services that are so popular today.”

ADVERTISING POTENTIAL

In 2006, Ecast unveiled several innovations, among them interactive



Creative Team, back row, (l-r): Adam Sax, Flash Developer; Shaun Tungseth, Senior Graphic Designer; Wes Romine, Director, Social Media Sales; Chris Goumas, Senior Vice President, Marketing and Media Solutions; front row, (l-r): Seth Hamlin, Art Director; Jeff Schuenke, Senior Flash Developer.

advertising and a digital video juke-box. What’s the status of these two areas?

Taylor said, “We continue to invest in our interactive advertising platform to enable highly dynamic branded mini-sites and performance based media solutions that integrate social media capabilities with information relating to the actual location.”

Regarding video, Taylor said, “We have more fully integrated video throughout the jukebox experience but we have not productized the video jukebox due to unsatisfactory economics. We were unable to license necessary content with terms acceptable to the operator channel and the market.”

Walker added that patrons are disinclined to pay a premium for music videos and the content owners were looking for a higher share of the revenue so this model was not going to be a money maker for operators, adding, “If you don’t have enough content, this model does not work.”

WHAT'S NEXT?

No matter what strides a company makes, R&D is always moving forward. What’s next for Ecast?

Taylor said, “We will continue to make investments and improvements in our media offerings by integrating additional media services that deliver consumers and locations a richer media experience and operators with superior economics.”

He added, “From day one, Ecast’s overarching goals on the R&D front have been about delivering an enhanced music experience to improve profitability across operators’ routes while giving them the flexibility to manage their business and optimize revenue by location. With our latest product line extensions and UI innova-

tion, we are delivering on that goal.”

Ecast is poised to introduce two new products that are scheduled for release in late August or early September. Ecast will join with its distributors for regional events in the fall to provide ample opportunities for operators to sample those products.

Walker commented, “We appreciate our distributor network, which provides sales, marketing, and financing to our operator channel.”

That operator channel has had a profound influence on the new products. Walker said, “For the past three years we have listened to the needs of our operator channel and used our platform to transfer key functionality of the EQ into a smaller package that will be aggressively priced.”

While the EQ features a 40-inch screen, the new jukebox will have a 27-inch screen and the same award-winning features of the Juke 4 software upgrade. Named Revo, as in

revolutionary, the new jukebox model has been designed with extensive feedback from the field.

metrics are significantly higher, which translates to higher coin drop.”

Ryan Smith, Director of Network

“The beauty of music is that there are so many choices.”

The second product, Boost, is also based on the needs of the operator channel. Walker said, “Our customers have been very clear about extending the life of existing hardware and incorporating the UI, all at a competitive price.”

Boost is a kit that will extend the life of existing Legacy Ecast-powered music devices in the field, some of which are seven to eight years old.

Walker noted, “Boost will allow those Legacy hardware systems to run all the functionality of the Juke 4. We know from early feedback that the engagement

Sales, will expand the network sales force prior to the release of the new products.

Ecast has been diligent in garnering firsthand feedback from operators who represent different parts of the country. Through group meetings, in-person meetings, and phone conferences, manufacturer and operator have gained a better understanding of each other’s business models, challenges, and achievements.

For more information on Ecast, call (866)443-2278; Web (www.ecastnetwork.com). ▲



Music Team, (l-r): Shane Case, Sysems Engineer; Terry McBride, Systems Engineer; Laura Pontious, Music Validation Coordinator; Scott Cunningham, Music Data Entry Coordinator; Shelly Hogan, Director, Rights and Licensing; Mason Bushard, Lead Publishing Data Specialist; and Nicole Sanchez, Publishing and Licensing Specialist.

Coinman

When you have been organizing and running leagues for as long as Marshall Kohtz you've seen everything. Almost. As Marshall says, "I started in 1980 and I learn something new every day."

Marshall is the League Coordinator for Valley Vending Service (VVS) of Cozad, Neb. His coin-op career began in 1976 running qualifier pool tournaments and foosball tournaments. "In 1980, Stan's Music and Games in Lincoln, Neb., started team pool leagues as we know them today," said Marshall. "In 1992, VVS bought Stan's Music and Games and kept me as League Coordinator."

While leagues are well known for being demanding and rewarding, leagues have been affected by a number of outside influences such as smoking bans and the current economy.

Marshall said, "Lincoln has been non-smoking for three years; the state went non-smoking one year ago. We did see a dip three years ago and our leagues reached a plateau. Leagues don't go up and down a great deal."

He added, "The economy has played the biggest role because some of our regular players don't have jobs. Players may switch from playing two or three nights to only one night. Most of our leagues are joined by people who want to have a night out. In the past they may have come an hour earlier or stayed after the matches until the bar closes. Now they may not stay that extra time. Someone who had \$50 set aside for the evening now has only \$20 to spend."

VVS promotes leagues for pool, darts, foosball, and shuffleboard. All VVS leagues are sanctioned with regional and national associations and



Marshall Kohtz
Valley Vending Service (VVS)
Cozad, Neb.

players join to be eligible for tournaments. VVS sent eight teams to the VNEA Championships this year and 45 players to the National Dart Association (NDA) Team Dart.

Marshall noted, "Some players allocate their vacations to coincide with championships."

If anyone has any doubts about the value of leagues, Marshall simply says, "There is nothing that creates a loyal customer better than leagues. The cost is minimal to join, less than a movie at the theater. The optional expense is how much they want to spend on food and drink when they play."

Does Marshall have any advice for an operator just venturing into a league program? "Don't take lightly the time and money these people dedicate to support what we do. The same goes for bars. If a bar gets involved in your league program, it can use that as a tool to bring people into the location."

He added, "Advertising and promoting the bar costs a lot of money, but leagues do not. Smart bar owners recognize the value of leagues. Every bar is looking for an inexpensive way to bring people into their business. The upfront expense of leagues to a location is minimal."

Marshall offers good advice: "Spend time building relationships with players and locations. Know your customers and show that you are interested in them. If you have a strong relationship you can continue to run the league the way it should be run."

Lastly, "Make everyone understand that you are all working for the same product: we're all on the same team and we're out to have some fun. If leagues are not fun, people won't come back." ▲

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Marshall's **top 10** tips for tavern league coordinators

10

Develop goals and a plan.

If you are doing this for an eight to five job you had better give up now. This is a very demanding job with a lot of rewards.

Leagues promote a sport as an inexpensive source of entertainment for players of all skill levels in a program that is professionally coordinated. Be fair to players and locations; be innovative; listen to new ideas; and make a conscious commitment to bring new players into the league system to increase business by putting people in tavern locations playing on your games.

9

Learn all aspects of your product. This is ongoing.

8

Don't turn down good help. Make sure they are properly trained.

When I started I did it all. As the leagues grew it was obvious I couldn't keep up with everything. Put volunteers in positions where they are best suited: posting banners or flyers, making announcements, running mini-tournaments or extra events such as Speed Pool. Bracket people and referees need to be trained and tested. Mistakes can be made by anyone but experienced people can often catch a mistake before it affects the tournament. Send referees for pool leagues to the Valley National Eight-Ball Association (VNEA) Referee Certification Class. This will add credibility to them and your program.

7

Be organized. Players look to us to provide stability and answers.

6

Build a network. Your excitement

about the fun of playing will rub off on your players and bar owners. They will get other people involved and sell your product for you.

One of the biggest challenges is to light a fire under the bar owners. They stand the most to gain with the least up front expense. Many bar owners pay registration and sanction fees, buy T-shirts, buy a complimentary drink, and pay entry fees to extra tournaments.

Bar owners should be aware that league players need to feel wanted and appreciated; they are making a seven-month commitment. League players love good service and will tip accordingly. Set equipment with plenty room to play comfortably. Make sure games are clean and in good working order. Anything you can do to help promote leagues in your tavern is money in your pocket.

Certain players have a knack for getting their friends to join the fun. Encourage the bar owner to realize the business that players bring in and to reward those efforts. Don't discount the recruiting potential of a captain who is difficult. He often brings in good people who soon build their own teams.

5

Respect the time and money commitment people are making to support you.

Many players are willing to play on several different league nights. The low cost of leagues is one of our biggest sales points but we all know that players who like to get out and socialize can easily spend \$30 to \$100.

Although we have a full range of players, the majority are blue-collar workers who have to watch how their

expendable income is spent. They are subject to layoffs and job changes. Be thankful that they decide to spend their hard earned money with us. Whenever I run into a group of players I often close our conversation with, "Thanks for playing."

4

Make sure players know that the league director, players, and locations are all on the same team. Players need to learn and respect that you are the leader. Leagues have to be fun for all involved, including the director.

3

Base decisions on what is best for the league, not one location, team, or player. Your style will evolve if you stay consistent. Develop a system you can count on so you don't have to re-invent the wheel for every situation.

2

Be diplomatic, not abrasive. "People person" is not just a catch phrase.

1

Get to know your players and develop a professional, working relationship with them. They are going to be around for years. I have been to a lot of weddings, funerals, and graduation parties, and made hospital visits. I have players who began in 1980 when I started leagues and they are still playing today.

It's important that your league partners know you care about them as a person. A lot of our players may not have much of a personal support system. Your league may be their family. Lastly, never underestimate how seriously players take their entertainment. ▲

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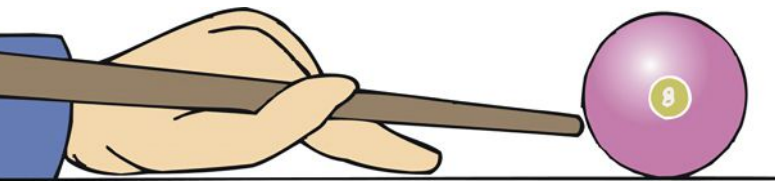
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On the Spot

What is your best advice on league management and league promotions?

Kris Gilmore, Troy Vending, Arizona

It is key to have a personable league director and/or coordinator who are involved with the players.

One of the best tips for organizing and promoting leagues is getting the location owner involved. Educating the location owner and their staff about the benefits of leagues is key to a successful program. Leagues increase food and drink sales for the establishment. This also means more tips for the bartenders and waitresses. Offering incentives to the staff for signing up teams can be a great way to motivate them to get their customers to join the leagues.

Troy Vending utilizes our company Web site to post all of the schedules, stats, and tournaments for our leagues. Players have access to their stats within hours of playing their matches. Facebook and Twitter are also tools we use to keep our customers informed of upcoming events.

Brandon Hedley, Rich & Junie's Coin, Iowa

Our company has been conducting leagues for more than 20 years in pool, darts, foosball, shuffleboard, and also video sports games. We have a full-time league coordinator, who has been building our program for the better part of 15 years.

What has worked best for us is listening to the players, finding out what they like and how they want leagues to be structured, and getting feedback. Our league coordinator is on a first-name basis with the players.

In terms of promotions, we do co-branding with local beer distributors to produce posters, as well as to supply T-shirts, prizes, and other giveaways for players. That relationship makes it easier to afford these items and do more advertising.

While we have done local radio commercials to help generate interest, we mostly promote the leagues in our bar locations. We use our company Web site to help draw traffic to our tournaments and leagues. The idea is to make it easy for players to sign up, especially new players. We also keep players updated on sign-up deadlines and league start times through social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Daniel Cribbs, WL Perry Music Co., Florida

I've been conducting leagues for 26 years. The main thing is to get good team captains. If they take care of their responsibilities with the players it runs smoothly. We get the bar owners to recruit players for their teams.

It's been tough to get teams together now because of the economy. Five or six years ago we ran as many as 30 teams in a session, but not so today. We run a short summer session and a longer winter session. We do two separate leagues on Tuesday and Wednesday. Our leagues usually start in August.

We have a summer session because we don't want any of the players to be gone for too long and forget about us. Our players still want to play in the summer, but may drop from five-man teams to three-man teams. You want to keep the interest in your teams up in the summer.



Rick LaFleur, I.F. LaFleur & Son, North Dakota

We've done pool and dart leagues for more than 25 years. Prior to that we did pool tournaments for 15 years. Leagues are remarkable. They take time to build. Don't expect instant results. You won't see the fruits of your first efforts right away. You have to be willing to promote and get your hands dirty. You truly get what you put into it.

We always found that the partnerships that you have with your locations are pivotal. When they begin to see the benefits of league play they are fully on board. It's not 100 percent; not every tavern owner will embrace the idea. Some will surprise you. The majority "get it" because it is a huge benefit to them.

When you add that value to the location they are not just looking at the cash box but looking at what you do to bring customers into the location. It strengthens your relationship. Leagues are a big piece of the puzzle when it comes to maximizing the opportunities in your locations.

If you throw up a sign-up sheet one day and expect to come back and see it filled, you will be disappointed. The locations must recruit team captains and players. When their best customers realize how much fun they will have, it's like a light bulb going off. It does not take long once you've established those building blocks.

Many different approaches to leagues have been successful. There is excellent support from the manufacturers with programs that make it easy for you to do things that were difficult before, such as crunching all the numbers. Even with that help, there needs to be that personal touch. Believe in what you are doing.

Hal Williamson, Gardner's Up North, Wisconsin

It's a lot of work and effort to run leagues. You have to make the players and the owners of the locations understand what you are trying to do and to abide by the rules. That's the hardest part. Locations have to participate. If they don't help promote the leagues there won't be any players.

Also, it's costly for the operator to run leagues; for example, the cost of computer software. It's not a simple process, but the rewards are there.

Another big issue: Be sure that you have safeguards in place to protect the funds for the program or there could be a shortage. It's wise to have a system that requires two signatures for any transfer of funds. ▲



TRON: Legacy pinball



Josh and Zach Sharpe

Stern Pinball returns with another game celebrating a major movie.

After dabbling in the music genre with its last game, Stern jumps right back into the huge movie license theme with its latest, TRON: Legacy.

With an almost 30-year gap between the original “TRON” movie and “TRON: Legacy” movie, we are definitely anxious to see if players are willing to line up and drop some quarters into Stern’s personal Flynn’s Arcade.

To help promote and celebrate its latest release, Stern once again teamed up with the International Flipper Pinball Association (IFPA) to host TRON: Legacy launch parties across the U.S.

In total, over 1,000 pinball fans attended these launch parties that offered players the chance to test out the newest game as well as compete in tournaments with a chance to win cash, prizes (including a signed TRON 3D backglass and Stern merchandise) and World Pinball Player Ranking (WPPR) points to increase their worldwide ranking.

To say these launch parties were a success would be an understatement. Stern already has plans to continue this tradition in the fall for its next release.

With that being said, it’s time for the Sharpe brothers to enter the grid.

TRON: LEGACY PINBALL/ STERN PINBALL

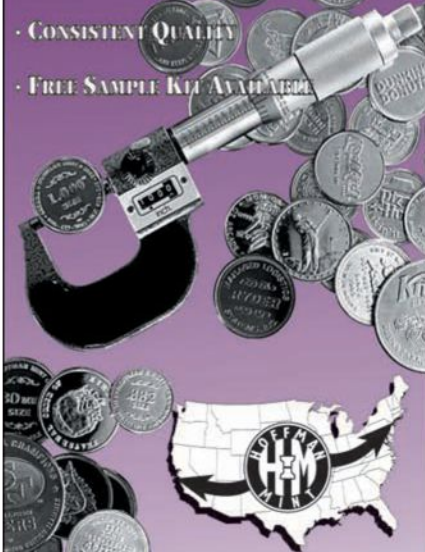
Pros: It’s been three years since Stern has utilized a third flipper in one of its designs and the first game to feature one since the change in philosophy was established in Big Buck Hunter.

The design team incorporated the flipper well by using it as a vehicle for high reward shots, while making sure that most casual players are able to advance through the majority of the game’s features without using this third flipper.



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CRITIC'S CORNER TOO!



Stern has done an excellent job of incorporating the TRON theme in a nice package of strong music and sounds, custom speech, movie quotes, and great artwork, including a 3D lenticular printed backglass.

Physically, the recognizer is a great toy that really complements the theme well. It doesn't feel like a forced toy, and it definitely puts some interesting spin on the ball and simulates the disc battle from the movie perfectly. Players have to be on their toes to save the ball, and then fire it right back into the recognizer to win the battle.

Regarding the rules, Stern has catered to the novice player by having a variety of features available throughout different depths of game play.

Between the three multiballs (Light Cycle, Quorra, and Disc Battle), players can also collect TRON awards, Zuse scoring, GEM hurry-up, and combos, leading to a couple of wizard modes further into game play.

This should prove to be plenty of action to keep players entertained during game after game either on location or in their homes.

Cons: Unfortunately, this seems to be a reoccurring theme with a lot of new Stern titles and that is missing the boat in regards to the release date of

the company's game.

TRON is no exception, being released over six months after the movie was in theaters and already available on DVD. While diehard fans will be easy to please with a TRON theme, has the general public simply forgotten about this movie?

With no sequel in production and the movie franchise being in limbo for the moment, is the TRON franchise strong enough to give this game legs on location? If there are no further TRON movies released, will this title be considered timeless without subsequent movies for the franchise to bank off of?

With the philosophy shift to shorter ball times and more randomness, TRON is by far Stern's longest playing and most controllable game. While most players will enjoy the ability to play longer for their dollar on location, we're concerned about how this may limit the game's earning potential on location.

Overall: The TRON theme lends itself very easily into the arcade/pinball genre and Stern definitely did the theme justice. While this was a dream title for many enthusiasts out there, we're concerned with the mass appeal the game will have, especially years down the road, if no sequel comes to pass.

We've seen Stern hit some grand slams on movie franchises (Pirates of the Caribbean, Batman, Spider-Man, Iron Man, and Avatar). Only time will tell if TRON: Legacy will be lumped into this list. ▲

Overall rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

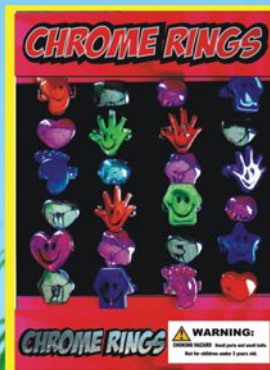
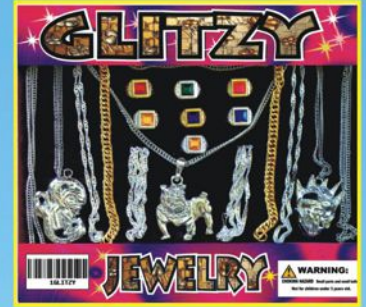
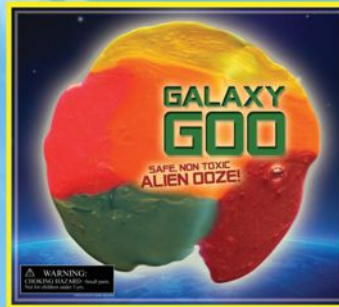
With a father like Roger Sharpe, the original "Cornered Critic," it is probably no surprise that sons Josh and Zach share a true passion for the coin-op industry. Former pinball champions, both are recognized as being two of the finest players in the world. But their interest and skills have grown far beyond the silver ball to embrace video games and attractions of all types.

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Medeco Security Locks recently announced the newest addition of Nexgen XT cam locks to the eCylinder product range. These electronic cam locks are ideal for a wide variety of applications, from retail fixtures to cash handling equipment and custom OEM products.

The Nexgen XT technology is now available in cam locks, padlocks, t-handle cylinders, and door lock cylinders, making it a complete solution for equipment and facility applications. User scheduling, audit logs of entry, and key expiration are unique and valuable characteristics of the product, which is a direct retrofit replacement for mechanical cam locks.



“Nexgen XT is an exciting new technology that gives our customers the ability to take access control functionality into all types of applications,” said Mark Imhof, Director of Engineered Security Solutions at Medeco. “And best of all, there is no hard wiring. Just install the lock and program the keys.”

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Have you ever wanted to try Sno-Kones®, but were worried about the space? The new Sno-Flake (#1886) is the perfect machine for small spaces. It's easy to move and clean, and can even be used for rentals. It measures 22.8-inches high by 20.2-inches wide by 10.3-inches deep.

The Sno-Flake is a more compact version of the profitable Sno-King (#1888), but still has the same powerful motor to quickly cut through ice. It runs on a standard, 15-amp plug, has a strong .25 HP motor, and the thick cabinet insulates the ice for longer service capabilities. The Sno-Flake is also UL and Sanitation listed.

For more information, call (800)543-0862; e-mail (info@gmpopcorn.com).

Estecom introduces Multi-Touch panels

ShadowSense E-Series Multi-Touch Intelligent Panels are now available from Estecom. The E-Series touch screen integrates Estecom's touch monitor technology and design tooling to create a cost effective multi-touch solution. The product is specifically geared for industrial, high-usage applications that find multi-touch functionality, display quality, and reliability critical.



The combined Baanto and Estecom solution offers 2D and 3D optical tracking technology, highly accurate multi-touch performance with up to four simultaneous touch points, touch detection of objects as small as two millimeters in diameter, and support for any type of input including finger, glove, credit card, pen, and stylus.

Mechanical design is equivalent to systems designed for ELO Models 1739L, 1939L, 1938L, and 2239L.

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web: www.coin-op.org

August 19-20

Missouri Amusement Operators Association Conference
Lake of the Ozarks, Mo.
The Inn at Grand Glaize
tel: (417)831-0405 or (816)231-6600
fax: (417)831-5479 or (816)231-6599
e-mail: klee@kinneybilliards.com

August 24

Michigan Coin Machine Operators Meeting
Bath, Mich.
Hawk Hollow Golf Course
tel: (517)708-2916
fax: (517)708-2918
web: www.mcmoa.com

September 13-15

Gamexpo
Budapest, Hungary
tel/fax: +36-1-306-3837
e-mail: avexteam@axelero.hu
web: www.gameexpo.hu

September 23-27

AMOA Mid-Year Board Meeting
Savannah, Ga.
Hilton Savannah DeSoto Hotel
tel: (800)937-2662
e-mail: amoa@amoa.com
web: www.amoa.com

October 1-4

National Association of Convenience Stores Show
Chicago, Ill.
McCormick Place
tel: (877)684-3600
e-mail: show@nacsonline.com
web: www.nacsonline.com

October 3-6

Global Gaming Expo (G2E)
Las Vegas, Nev.
Las Vegas Sands Expo & Convention Center
tel: (203)840-5662
e-mail: inquiry@reedexpo.com
web: www.globalgamingexpo.com

October 3-7

World Waterpark Symposium & Trade Show
New Orleans, La.
Ernest Morial Convention Center
tel: (913)381-6734
e-mail: patty@waterparks.org
web: www.waterparks.org

October 12-14

ENADA Rome
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Roma Expo Centre
tel: +39-0541-744-214
e-mail: g.zoni@riminifiera.it
web: www.enadaprimavera.it

October 13-15

Surexpo
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Warsaw International Expocentre
fax: +48-71-359-0851
e-mail: office@wigor.wroc.pl
web: www.wigor-targi.com

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e-mail: brkpinball@aol.com or mpacak@aol.com
web: www.pinballexpo.com

October 27-29

Attractions China
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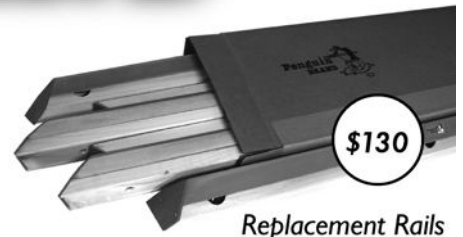
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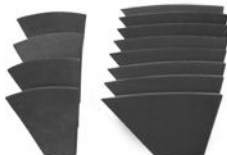
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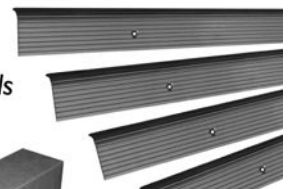
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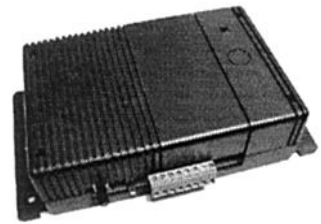
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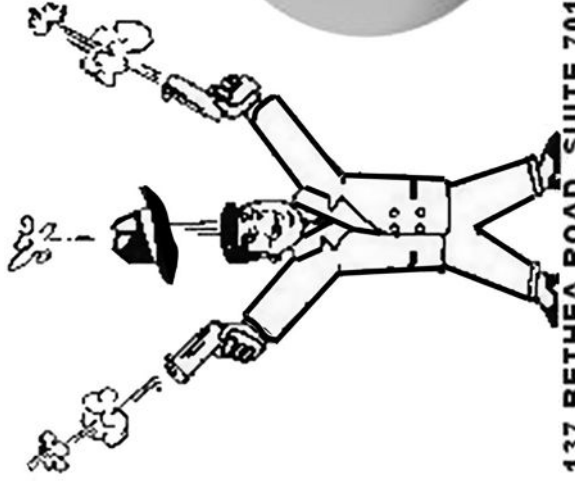
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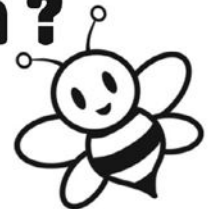
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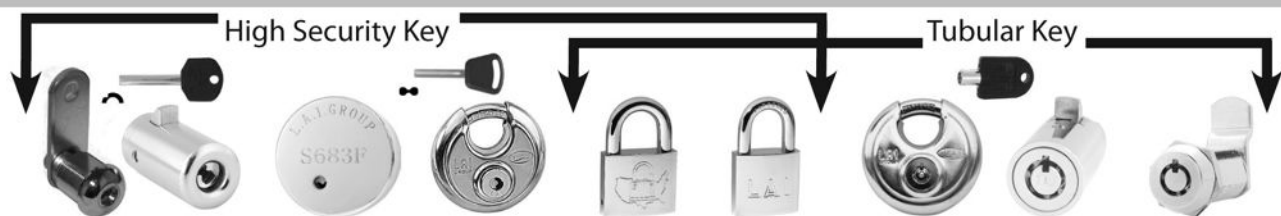
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