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Oh No, the Big 40!

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Family entertainment centers (FECs) have been experiencing a resurgence of interest in recent years. In the 1990s FECs were on the top 10 lists of most desirable businesses. I remember Bailey Beeken, who started the Fun Expo back in 1991, coming to the *Play Meter* office to talk with us about the industry in general and FECs in particular. She could see a niche for a trade show and education program to serve regional fun centers that were blossoming as stand-alone neighborhood arcades were starting to fade.

The first Fun Expo was in October 1991 in Atlanta. I remember attending the 3rd Fun Expo in Nashville in 1993, and all the ones to follow. The Fun Expo flourished for a quite a while. The International Association of Family Entertainment Centers (IAFEC) was formed to serve the FEC market, later becoming the International Association of Leisure Entertainment Industries (IALEI).

The Fun Expo was sold to Reed Exhibitions and later purchased by IALEI, the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA), and the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA). The Fun Expo was co-located with the AMOA International Expo for a time (1999-2008), and then was co-located with the Amusement Showcase International (ASI) in spring 2009.

In fall 2009, IALEI merged with the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA). As IALEI did in the past, IAAPA worked with AMOA and AAMA to produce Fun Expo 2010 (the last one) co-located with the new AAMA/AMOA Amusement Expo 2010. In 2009, AAMA and AMOA had announced they were combining their respective spring and fall shows into one big spring show in 2010.

The term FEC covers small, medium, large, and super size entertainment facilities. Many are located in metropolitan areas with a large population base and an income level conducive to discretionary spending.

While there is no official definition of an FEC, it usually consists of three or more activities, such as an arcade with a redemption center, miniature golf (outdoors or indoors), bumper cars, bumper boats, laser tag, snack bar or full restaurant, batting cages, modular play structures, inflatables, party/meeting rooms for birthdays or corporate events, and outdoor rides.

It is not uncommon to see 50,000-square-foot facilities being developed today. Many companies are pursuing an aggressive expansion program. For example, this month's FEC of the Month is the new Main Event location in San Antonio, Texas. Main Event opened a new location in Warrenville, Ill., in September and plans to open two more by the end of this year.

Educational programs for those wishing to enter the FEC business are plentiful and include Foundations Entertainment University (FEU), which has been hosting multiple sessions for 10 years conducted by Frank Seninsky and a faculty of presenters; F2FEC conducted by Ben Jones, George Smith, and Rick Iceberg; FEC Dallas conducted by IAAPA; the Rookies & Newcomers program at the IAAPA Expo; LaserTag360 conducted by Creative Works; Lasertron Conferences conducted by Lasertron; and FEC Success conducted by Amusement Products.

I am glad to see that educational opportunities are matching the interest in developing and improving FECs. Even considering that the recession caused many families to stay close to home for vacations to minimize the expense of travel, there is no doubt that every community needs some kind of facility where families can go to enjoy fun activities together. That's what our business is all about: providing fun. ▲



BONNIE THEARD
Editor



We want to hear from you about any of the articles in this issue or topics you'd like to see.

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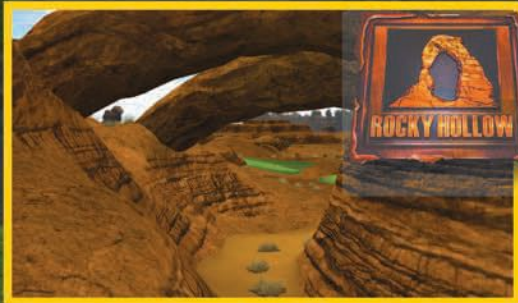
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November 8-9 in Denver, Colorado...

2014 AMOA Road Scholar Program

Strategic Benchmarking: Analyzing Aspects of Your Business for Mile High Results

The AMOA Road Scholar Program was created as a cost-effective educational program for leaders in the coin-op industry who want to invest in themselves and their businesses by participating in a quick educational event at an easily accessible venue.

This year's event will take place at the Embassy Suites Denver International Airport offering complimentary shuttle service to/from the hotel. Fly in Friday night at your leisure, the program runs all day Saturday and adjourns by noon on Sunday so you can get back home and be ready for business Monday morning.

This program is brought to you by the AMOA Notre Dame & Continuing Education Committee and sponsored by the AMOA Coin-Op Cares Education and Charitable Foundation.

Join your industry peers for a unique round table event featuring timely topics impacting your business today. Topics include:

Coin-Op Moneyball: Using Analytics for Optimum Results

Participants will examine both route management and equipment analytics.

Technology Changing at the Speed of Light

Participants will explore social/media and marketing as well as cashless technology.

The Speed of the Leader is the Speed of the Gang... Are YOU leading the way?

AMOA's Notre Dame Management Program coordinator Kara McClure will lead the discussion on change management not only helping you to understand your role as a change agent, but taking it a step further in dealing with resistance and creating buy-in with employees and customers.

**For registration information and program details, contact AMOA's Deputy Director,
Lori Schneider at 1-800-937-2662 or at llschneider@prodigy.net.**



Amusement & Music Operators Association

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HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

(WE ARE NOT REALLY QUALIFIED TO HANDLE ZOMBIES, BUT WE WILL GIVE IT OUR BEST SHOT.)

Play Meter and AMOA are teaming up to share news and information about Industry State Associations. This month, the focus is on Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.



Minnesota Operators of Music and Amusements

The Minnesota Operators of Music & Amusements (MOMA), created in 1967, was formed to foster the interests of those engaged in the operation and distribution of coin and currency-activated amusement equipment. MOMA promotes higher business and ethical standards by encouraging cooperation among members. The association sponsors statewide pool and dart league programs, conducts an annual equipment auction and has organized a MOMA Education Scholarship initiative.

Contact: Chuck Leininger, Executive Director

4508 Edinbrook Terrace
 Brooklyn Park, MN 55443
 PH: 612-363-2894 FAX: 763-657-0119
 Email: chuckleininger@hotmail.com
 Website: www.momapoolanddarts.com



President: Dale Lund
 Vice President: Tom Graham, Jr.
 Secretary/Treasurer: Scott Dean

Montana Coin Machine Operators Association

The Montana Coin Machine Operator's Association was founded in 1968 to advocate on behalf of the amusement industry. Montana legalized video gambling machines in 1985. Although VGMs have become the focus of most of our member businesses, MCMOA also hosts both the State 8-Ball and State Dart tournaments each year. In coordination with our customer associations, MCMOA works to publicly promote the hospitality industry in Montana. MCMOA holds a seat on the Department of Justice Gambling Advisory Council and engages in legislative advocacy to represent the interests of the industry.

Contact: Ronda Wiggers, Executive Director

3208 2nd Ave S
 Great Falls, MT 59405
 PH: 406-727-5659 (Office)
 406-899-5659 (Mobile)
 Email: rondawiggers@bresnan.net



President: Tim Carson
 Vice President: Charlie Mears
 Treasurer: Clint Lohman
 Secretary: Natalie Carson

North Dakota Coin Machine Operators

North Dakota Coin Machine Operators Association is an industry group formed to advocate for all facets of the amusement machine industry. Through efforts of the NDCMOA, taxation and licensing legislation were improved to be more equitable and fair to the industry. Regulatory rules have been revised to be more industry-friendly. To add more voices and become stronger, NDCMOA formed the North Dakota Coin and Tavern Association. The tavern owner members of ND-CAT, in conjunction with the NDCMOA, bring a broader base to advocate for both industries. NDCMOA also helped organize pool and dart leagues. Now the sister organization, North Dakota Tournament Association, holds annual statewide pool and dart tournaments.

Contact: Dwight Wrangham, Executive Director

301 52 Street SE
 Bismarck, ND 58501
 PH: 701-226-1938
 Email: dwightwrangham@gmail.com



President: Rick Lafleur
 Vice President: Lowell Thomas
 Secretary: Mike O'Brien

Music and Vending Association of South Dakota

The Music and Vending Association (MVA) is the voice of coin-operated vending and amusements in South Dakota. The MVA represents its members through advocacy and information on a local, state and national level.

Contact: Deb Mortenson, Executive Director

320 East Capitol Avenue
 Pierre, SD 57501
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WHAT'S NEW



Bay Tek Games

Bay Tek Games, along with a licensing agreement with .GEARS Studio, has created a skillful ticket redemption game with **Flappy Bird** using the fun, yet competitive game play of the popular mobile app that it is based upon.

Released in 2013, the mobile app has since been downloaded over 50 million times, becoming the most downloaded free app game. Due to its overwhelming popularity and addictive nature the app was removed from app stores, but the demand has prompted a re-release.

“We are thrilled to be working in partnership with .GEARS Studio. Flappy Bird is a popular and much talked about app.

We look forward to launching this game with a price point that all can enjoy,” said Gaetan Philippon, CEO of Bay Tek Games.

The simple game play features a bird moving continuously to the right. The player must repeatedly hit a button to skillfully maneuver the bird through the openings in pipes.

The game ends once the bird touches a pipe or the ground. The score is based upon how many pipes the bird successfully passes through. Players can compete for the daily high score or the all-time high score. Production units started shipping in September.

(www.baytekgames.com)

Team Play Inc.

Team Play's **Fun Stop Photos™ Gen II** is two photo booths in one and lets customers take photos inside and outside – at the same time. The photo booth comes with two touch screen LCD monitors, two dye-sublimation printers, two high quality cameras, two bill acceptors, and two free cases of media.

Both photo booths are available in the “Party like a Rock Star” arcade version and the “Tuxedo Black” Event version and features industrial-grade photo booth electronics, Quad Core processors, medical-grade power supply, internal metal frame, heavy-duty casters and leg-levelers, interlocking printer mounting bracket, huge print capacity, security features, and screen status icons.

All of the Fun Stop Photos™ Gen II photo booth prints can be personalized with stylish borders and dazzling graphics, to include your custom message and logo on the photo booth prints. Photos taken inside or outside can be printed on two-inch by six-inch photo strips or four-inch by six-inch photo prints. The wide-angle cameras capture group photos with as many as 15 plus people. Customers can order as many photo booth prints as they want.

In addition to personalized photo prints, both of the photo booth's LCD touch screens can display graphics personalized for your location or event. With Team Play's free photo booth software update, customers can post their photo booth pictures to social media. (www.teamplayinc.net)



Gametime Ltd.

PicnMix by Gametime Ltd. is a new vending machine and the only one that can vend softer type loose candy as well as traditional harder varieties.

The user chooses up to six different types of penny candy and then dispenses a set weight of product direct into a self-contained cup.

The ROI is very quick and enables operators for the first time to offer bulk loose penny candy in a theft free and hygienic manner. The price per vend and the cabinet are customizable. According to Gametime, there is no other product on the market that can vend bulk candy this accurately using unwrapped product.

The machine is ideal for theaters, bowling centers, family entertainment centers (FECs), retail outlets, and almost any unmanned areas. For distribution inquiries, e-mail Dan Perkins (dan@purenovelty.co.uk). A video demonstration can be seen at (www.picnmixvending.com).

Global VR

Redline Rampage made its debut in April as a conversion kit. This “combat-driving” game has turned older, low-earning games into exciting, new, high-earning attractions. Now this highly anticipated title is available as a dedicated game.

This unique piece appeals to players of all ages and experience. Operators can choose to turn the combat feature on or off making it appropriate for all locations. The beautifully designed marquee will attract players from throughout the location with its stylized design and special effects lighting. (www.globalvr.com) ▲



The Walking Dead

Stern Pinball has announced the availability of its Pro and Limited Edition (LE) models of its newest game inspired by the hit AMC TV drama, “The Walking Dead.”

The game includes multiple zombie toys at familiar locations from the show such as the Prison and Cell Block C. A brilliant high-definition zombie-filled art package heightens the player’s excitement. Players fight to survive the zombie apocalypse alongside series icon Sheriff Rick Grimes by battling zombies and completing in various missions.

The LE version offers unique special effects such as a fish tank with illuminated sculpted zombie heads and a motorized crossbow assembly that allows players to launch the ball anywhere in the game. The LE mirrored backglass with exclusive art adds to the experience.

“The Walking Dead” story has captured the intrigue of audiences for years, from the popular comic books to the hit TV series. We are thrilled to serve such a passionate fan base and to bring this game to pinball fans,” said Gary Stern, Chairman and CEO of Stern Pinball. (www.sternpinball.com)

“The Walking Dead” is based on the comic book series written by Robert Kirkman and is published by Image Comics. The drama tells the story of a group of survivors the months and years after a zombie apocalypse. The hour-long drama will return for its fifth season on Oct. 12 on AMC. ▲



The Walking Dead LE



The Walking Dead Pro



COINMAN

Jerry Johnston



Amusement Unlimited
Eugene, Ore.

By Bonnie Theard

This page above:
Jerry by his Chicago Coin Jukebox pinball and framed backglass artwork from Stern Pinball's Monopoly and Ripley's Believe It or Not (two of five presented to Jerry by Stern).

Opposite page above:
Jerry and long-time partner Al Lindley, who is retiring and recently received an Appreciation Award from OAMOA.

Opposite page below:
Jerry and his wife Carol in Portland, Ore.; Mt. Hood is in the background.

Next March, at the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) Annual Breakfast Meeting during the Amusement Expo 2015, Jerry Johnston of Amusement Unlimited will move up from his current post as First Vice President to President.

Jerry was elected to the AMOA Board of Directors in 2003 and has served in a number of posts over his years with the association.

Amusement Unlimited operates a wide range of entertainment products: air hockey, ATMs, bulk vending, countertops, foosball, jukeboxes, pinballs, pool tables, and redemption. The company was established in 1974.

When *Play Meter* caught up with Jerry he had just returned from a camping/fishing trip to Steen's Mountain in southeast Oregon with his wife Carol and 10-year-old grandson Ty.

Oregon is beautiful country, as past AMOA Presidents who have attended the Oregon Amusement and Music Operators Association (OAMOA) Annual Meeting can attest. Eugene is known for its scenery, recreational opportunities, and focus on the arts. It is also the home of the University of Oregon (Oregon Ducks).

Jerry is an unabashed fan of the team. The entrance to the 4,000-square-foot office is highlighted by a Chicago Coin pinball named Jukebox, given to Jerry by a customer, and framed backglass artwork presented to him by Stern Pinball. The Jukebox pinball also holds AMOA mementos and Oregon Ducks items.

Jerry entered the amusement industry with two partners in 1974. In 1976 he and partner Al Lindley became the sole owners. Al, now 84, is retiring this fall.

This year has been one of change for Amusement Unlimited, which has six full time employees and four part time employees. The company has some chain accounts in Portland and central Oregon and has contracted with operators in those areas to service those accounts.

Jerry said, "These are operators that we have a business relationship with, who are members of OAMOA. It has really helped our service. We are not driving for hours and we are saving on fuel."

Like most amusement companies, the biggest challenge in the last few years has been the economy. "Oregon took the recession harder than most states," explained Jerry, "the reason being our timber industry, which is related to the housing industry. We operate in many small towns that depended on the mills.

"Another challenge is servicing our accounts and still making time to get out, look for new accounts, and take advantage of new opportunities. Our sales effort is something we are always working on."

Salesmanship is a priority for Jerry. At the AMOA Notre Dame Management Program Class XVI he presented a session on salesmanship along with Randy Bergman of Darrt Amusement in Buffalo, N.Y. (a member of the AMOA Board of Directors).

Jerry believes in the value of continuing education. Jamie Rust, General Manager of Amusement Unlimited, recently graduated from the Notre Dame Program Class XVI.

"Salesmanship is how you build your business," said Jerry. "I compare it to golf. All the top golfers take golf lessons every year. They need to keep up their skills and salesmanship is no different."

Jerry attended the first AMOA Road Scholar Program in Chicago in November 2013 and will attend the second one Nov. 8-9 in Denver. Jerry said, "There were 50 people at that program and every person I spoke with had something positive to say about it. One



of the benefits of going to such an event is that you get to use what you learn by networking with the other attendees. Being able to go to a seminar and meet great operators from all over the country is invaluable.”

When asked what areas of his operation are the most successful today, Jerry said, “We continue to place ATMs, and our music (all digital jukeboxes) business and crane business are both steady.”

Jerry operates traditional amusement equipment in a state that has state-run legalized video gaming. Jerry described it as “the 80-pound gorilla in the room.” Space allocated for those machines (two to six depending on the location’s volume of business) means less space for other equipment.

“In small locations you may not have room for other equipment; it can impact you that way,” said Jerry. “Many of those locations could not survive without the gaming. But there are some opportunities, especially with ATMs.”



Jerry became active in AMOA by attending the trade show. “The number one value of the association for me is the trade show,” he said, “I have never missed a show. At the show you find ideas, build business relationships and contacts, and network with fellow operators. One good idea could end up benefitting you for years, whether it’s a new piece of equipment or a new type of equipment.”

He has been involved with OAMOA since the early ‘80s. “I care about the industry where I make my living. I take care of my family, my employees, and my customers. It’s important to be involved in your state association and the national association. After I got on the AMOA Board of Directors I made more business contacts and more friendships that are just priceless.”

Jerry mentioned one case where those friendships came into play when he was approached by a national chain to put in a new type of equipment. “Commissions were not ideal, but that’s

a challenge I would normally jump on,” said Jerry. “There were some red flags. I counseled with my employees and I called another operator I know through AMOA and listened to him. I decided to pass on this project and it was the right decision.”

Does Jerry have any advice for newcomers to the industry or other operators? “Number one, go to the Amusement Expo. The format changed this year with a full day of seminars. It looks like the education lineup for 2015 will again be strong. Plus, the Industry Gala Reception will be the evening of the education program so you can go directly into socializing and networking. It looks to be a fantastic day.”

He has a philosophy on old games: “It’s easy in this business to store equipment. Those old games don’t make money. I work hard to not have old equipment in a warehouse.

“The public wants newer equipment. We need to make new agreements with customers to allow us to put in better equipment. That’s part of salesmanship. Being diversified is one of our strengths. We try to match the right machines for every demographic.” ▲

Battle, bump, and race

tap into the inner child



Above: Riders use the new Amusement Products Shockwave Electric Bumper Boats. **Top right:** Racers compete for fastest time using Amusement Products' go-karts.



of small electric cars. Bouts of hysterical laughter leap from your diaphragm as you keep him pinned by bumping him over and over till the whistle blows and it's game over. The kid gives you a nod of respect as you both leave the arena. "Next time," the kid yells as you walk away.

Bumper cars are as popular today as they were 80 years ago, says Tami Dean, General Manager of the Ride Development Co., a bumper car manufacturer. "What other ride offers children, teenagers, parents, and grandparents the opportunity to 'battle' and 'bump' each other in a safe and fun setting?"

Ahead of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo in November, *Play Meter* spoke with several manufacturers of bumper cars, bumper boats, and go-karts about their products and the appeal of the "bump" and the "race."

AMUSEMENT PRODUCTS

Amusement Products began in 1960 operating a miniature golf course, but started building go-karts in 1975 after operating 26 go-kart tracks since 1972. Today, the company focuses its largest developments on electric powered and electronically controlled bumper cars, bumper boats, and go-karts.

Time is running out, but your focus never wavers. You're on the lookout for that snotty kid who was making faces at you during a round of miniature golf, but you can't seem to locate his bright orange T-shirt. Your foot lightly taps the gas pedal in anticipation, ready to pounce like a stalking panther.

Then you see him. He's gotten himself cornered and you make your move, weaving through a shifting maze

By Tim Meyer

THUNDER VOLT

SPEEDWAY

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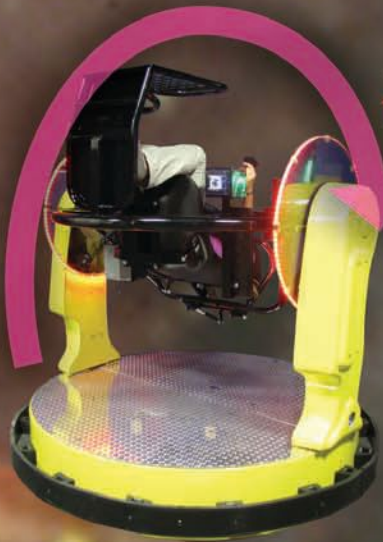
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800-438-3558



Amusement Products developed its own Dynamo Electric Go-Kart Operating System and the Thunder Volt Electric Go-Kart Operating System in the late 2000s.

The Dynamo system allows the attendants to do everything but steer the kart remotely. The track attendant can speed up, slow down, start, and stop each kart individually or all at one time using the Dynamo wireless remote control.

The Thunder Volt system combines the efficiencies of the Dynamo system with an on-board message and sound system that includes race sounds, a crew chief with racing tips, an announcer to call the race and the safety messages in the car, and a computer generated engine noise.



Top: J&J Amusements bumper boats in action. **Middle:** J&J Amusements go-karts on the go. **Bottom and inset:** Funopolis in Commerce, Ga., an award winning fun center, worked with Castle Golf on its bumper boats and go-kart tracks.

The Spin Zone electric bumper cars are also controlled using the remote control Spin Zone system. They also don't need a specialized electric floor. These bumper cars will run on wood, concrete, and ice.

What makes the Spin Zone electric bumper cars different is the Spin Zone target. If a rider hits another car in the target zones the hit driver goes into an uncontrolled spin for two to three seconds.

The Shockwave Electric Bumper Boats have proven themselves to be the fastest and longest running electric boat in the world (up to 12 hours), says President Dutch Magrath III. These advances, along with unique operating systems like the AUTOSTART control system for gas go-karts, are just a few of the many tools Amusement Products has uniquely developed. Features of the electric bumper boats include efficient custom-made motors, the 24-volt system, and the largest weight capacity.

Amusement Products also manufacture a host of other attractions, including ball pitchers, fiberglass animals,





Above: Shaller Enjuneering go-kart Single Seater.

soccer machines, and more. Amusement Products is also a one-stop shop for all family entertainment centers (FECs) through consulting and design.

FORMULA K LTD.

Formula K began as the third Grand Prix-type facility in the U.S. in 1976. Thirty years later, manufacturing has become its primary business and has built more than 14,000 go-karts that include 16 different models available for all ages. Most of these go-karts and Grand Prix cars are still in use today.

Formula K continues to service every kart it has ever built. It also supplies parts and makes custom replacement parts for most any other go-kart manufactured by other companies. The company's goal is to continuously improve its products by striving to be innovative in the development of new products that add excitement and safety to the family entertainment industry. Its focus is always on safety and ease of maintenance. Formula K also consults and designs custom tracks.

KIDDIE BUMPER BOATS

Kiddie Bumper Boats is the original manufacturer of the kiddie bumper boat. It has served clients for over 35 years in almost 100 countries. The

company's products are made in the U.S. and will last a lifetime, says Susan Doyle, Sales Coordinator. Kiddie Bumper Boats offer two sizes: the Kiddie for the one-and-a-half to six-year-olds and the Big for the seven to 12-year-olds. All parts are stainless steel with a solid rotor molded polyethylene hull and sturdy inflatable material. Kiddie Bumper Boats stands behind its products with a one to five-year warranty.

J&J AMUSEMENTS

For over 39 years and across 57 countries J&J Amusements has been supplying fun centers with safe, high quality bumper boats and go-karts. Whether it's a small, family-operated park or a large, corporate theme park, J&J can accommodate any size location.

"After designing and patenting the bumper boat in 1975, J&J Amusements refined that original design to get where it is today; building and distributing the safest, most reliable bumper boats in the world," says Sales Assistant Kevin Derrickson. The electric Blaster Boat accounts for over 90 percent of J&J's bumper boat sales, with its all-day run time, built-in water squirter, and clean, silent operation.

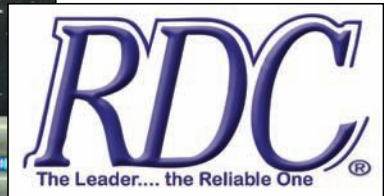
Several years ago, J&J introduced the Eagle model go-kart and it has become one of the most popular units for its ease of operation and maintenance. Due to this massive popularity, J&J recently introduced the F-22 model, which took the Eagle model's safe and reliable design a step further by adding a colorful body to allow operators more area to sell sponsorship, while still allowing easy entry of passengers and no body parts to remove for maintenance.

CASTLE GOLF

For nearly 40 years Castle Golf has designed, built, and contracted many miniature golf courses in the U.S. and internationally, but tees and putters aren't the only attraction they focus on. Castle Golf also provides site layouts, design, and construction for nearly all family fun center attractions, including go-kart tracks and bumper boat layouts.

Castle Golf does not manufacture go-karts or bumper boats, but the designing of tracks and layouts gives them a unique philosophy on the business.

Designing an FEC often includes one or more go-kart tracks as part of the overall facility layout. Castle Golf works with a number of quality providers of go-karts, each with their



Left: RDC Krazee Wh!rl bumper car.

Bumper car, bumper boat, and go-kart manufacturers

Amusement Products
www.amusementproducts.com

Bumper Boats
www.kiddiebumperboats.com

Castle Golf
www.castlegolf.com

Formula K Raceway
www.formulak.com

J&J Amusements
www.jjamusements.com

Ride Development Co.
www.bumpercar.com

Shaller Enjuneering
www.shaller.com

own style and approach to design and builds tracks appropriate for a particular go-kart, park size, and park layout. Both electric and gasoline powered karts are common today and are remarkably more efficient, quieter, and easier to operate.

Castle Golf believes that whenever possible, a bumper boat can also be integrated with other attractions, especially miniature golf courses. Operators will commonly see this in Castle Golf designs.

Smaller parks, where space is a premium, will especially find this advantageous in both design and operation. Electric bumper boats can also provide more fun than in the past with added water cannons and other fun features.

SHALLER ENJUNEERING

Texas-based Shaller Enjuneering has been manufacturing go-karts in the U.S. since 1983 and has sold over 9,700 to customers in 36 states in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and South Korea.

Shaller has six models of go-karts to

choose from: Kiddie Kart, Rookie Kart, Single-Seater, Two-Seater, SlickTrack Wedge, and SlickTrack 2000.

The Single-Seater was the original model produced. The newest model is the Rookie Kart designed for many birthday party-age riders who are too tall for the Kiddie Kart and too short for the Standard Kart.

The Single-Seater and the Two-Seater are the most popular and are designed for family tracks, either road-courses or ovals. The Slick Track Wedge and SlickTrack 2000 are High Performance go-karts equipped with a 9 HP motor, bucket seat, wide racing slicks, and a live axle. These two karts are intended for flat slick tracks, either road-course or oval.

These high performance go-karts most closely emulate “real racing,” and are intended for drivers “at least 16 years old,” says owner Roger Shaller. “This recommendation depends on the speed and height of the driver.”

Nearly everything is made from scratch in the high tech manufacturing plant that utilizes computer controlled lathes, vertical machining centers, plas-

ma shape cutters, tubing bender, press brake, horizontal saws, etc.

Shaller also does in-house powder coating. Their skilled employees are American citizens, many being employed at Shaller Enjuneering for decades.

RIDE DEVELOPMENT CO.

Ride Development Co. (RDC) is a 30-year veteran bumper car manufacturer in the U.S. with clients in 24 other countries. Similar to the coin-operated entertainment industry, RDC bumper cars appeal to family entertainment centers (FECs) and amusement owners and operators due to their small footprint and profitability.

RCD bumper cars have a minimal six-car floor footprint that occupies a space of only 600 square feet. “General appeal and reliability equals longevity and higher profits,” says RDC General Manager Tami Dean.

RDC manufacturers three lines of bumper cars: Krazee Wh!rl, Krazee Voltz, and Krazee Kidz. RDC’s most popular bumper cars are purchased along with RDC’s patented electric floor platform. RDC also offers a line of battery operated cars, children’s cars, and gasoline powered cars.

“Bumper cars are excellent investments that hold their value over time,” Dean said. “Operators want and demand quality attractions, easy installation, low maintenance, and repeat ridership. RDC bumper cars deliver on all four criteria.”

Today, families not only enjoy the thrill of bumper cars at their favorite FEC or amusement park, but they also “bump” away at bowling alleys, skating rinks, pizza parlors, and shopping malls.

Brian Cohen, Vice-President of Operations, Entertainment Properties Group Inc., is thrilled about RDC bumper cars at the company’s iT’Z family fun centers. “RDC cars have added a new fun element for our visiting guests. The bumper cars are not only fun, they have certainly con-

tributed to our success and reflect a strong return on investment.”

RDC manufactures and sells bumper cars and only bumper cars. Dean said, “RDC’s longevity is due in part to its competitive pricing, patent-protected technology, and overall

reduced operating expenses.”

Over the years, RDC has constantly been improving the technical aspects of its cars and safety requirements. RDC continues to build superior cutting-edge bumper cars that are truly innovative, safe, and reliable. ▲

IAAPA Booth #2624

RDC BUMPER CARS

The Leader...The Reliable One.

Made in USA

Proven Return on Investment

Built to Last and Low Maintenance

30+ Years Proven Reliability

Small Footprint. Big Profits.

Experienced in Serving Clients in 44 States and 28 Countries

RDC, P.O. Box 40, Independence, OR 97351 USA PH: (1) 503 606-4438 FAX: (1) 503 606-4436
 Email: sales@bumpercar.com Visit our website at www.bumpercar.com
 Member: IAAPA, RSA, BPAA, WWA, AIMS

Come for the food! Stay for the fun!



ABOVE: A vibrant new sign is the first change leading up to Fannie Farkle's 35th anniversary. **BELOW:** This cuddly bear is one of many popular Fannie Farkle's logo items.



Fannie Farkle's to celebrate 35 years

Fannie Farkle's, the longest continually operating "Family Fun Parlor" on the Parkway in Gatlinburg, Tenn., in the middle of all the action, is getting ready to celebrate its 35th anniversary in spring 2015.

Founder/owner Marion Paul, a past president of the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA), plans to mark the occasion with an open house anniversary party and invite the whole community, as she did for the 30th anniversary.

The always neat and clean entertainment center will get new decor for

the anniversary, from new carpeting to new lighting.

The first change is a new sign at the entrance where visitors to Gatlinburg catch a whiff of what's cooking: fresh-dipped, giant Ogle Dogs (famous recipe foot-long corndogs named for a local pioneer); smoked sausages with peppers and onions; and cheesesteak subs. Wash it down with a soda, iced tea, lemonade, or Hawaiian Shaved Ice.

One step inside brings visitors and locals to a wonderland of 60 games and a redemption counter and display cases stocked with desirable prizes that

range from plush to faux gemstones to collectible figurines.

Laurie Ross, General Manager, said, "Customers save points and want those collectible items, like Jim Shore's Disney Princesses. We also have items with the Fannie Farkle's logo. This is the largest number of logo items we have had in one season."



You will also find electronics, Pac-Man soccer balls, kitchen ware, the redesigned Fannie Farkle's coffee mug with new colors to match the sign in front, fishing poles, tools, and a lot more.

Paul said, "I try to have things that are ageless, timeless, and genderless. We are featuring more and more Fannie Farkle's logo items because when families are on vacation they want something with the Fannie Farkle's name and items related to the Smoky Mountains."

Fannie Farkle's also accepts requests from customers for prizes they would like. Paul travels to numerous trade events each year in search of new and different prize merchandise. "Anything you can think of, we get," said Paul. "It all flies off the shelves."

"Come for the food! Stay for the fun!" is the slogan, and Fannie Farkle's delivers with a selection of classic games along with the latest high-tech action video games suitable for all ages. Add to that list a crowd-pleasing photo booth, new redemption and novelty games, and a convenient ATM on the premises.



Fannie Farkle's is open 365 days a year from 8 am until late in the evening. Pass by any night and you will see a packed house. For more information, visit (www.fanniefarkles.net). ▲

Note: Play Meter Editor Bonnie Theard recently visited Fannie Farkle's during a family vacation.

1: Marion Paul greets the Theard family on vacation, (l-r): Brad and Michelle Theard, Valerie and Greg Theard with Lilli and Lucas (front), Paul, and Harold and Bonnie Theard. **2:** Longtime employees, (l-r): Randall Starkey, Stephanie Royer, and Laurie Ross. **3:** From left: Rugea Bogdan, Philip Kinch, and Michael Ross. **4:** It's all about the tickets for Valerie, Greg, Lucas, and Lilli. **5:** Lucas and Lilli Theard enjoy Ogle Dogs that Philip Kinch (c) prepared.

Get ready for the Main Event

It's go big or go home when it comes to fun at Main Event. The Dallas-based family entertainment center (FEC) chain's creed is "Eat. Bowl. Play." but that just covers the essentials.

One of Main Event's newest and second locations in West San Antonio is 58,000-square-foot of over 100 interactive and virtual video games, a full service bar and restaurant, billiards, gravity ropes, super-sized redemption merchandise, and of course bowling and more.

"We're anchored in bowling, but when your party comes in, whether you're seven or 77 years-old, there's something fun or everyone," says Vice President of Marketing, Sherri Landry.

Not only does the FEC offer a multitude of entertainment options, but it also builds on the idea that there's something for everyone within each attraction, especially the games and redemption areas.

The San Antonio location features 128 virtual and interactive games. Every attraction at Main Event aspires to be relevant and appealing to today's customer, says Landry.

The redemption counter, too, accommodates each and every person that walks through its doors. Called The Winner's Circle, Landry describes it as more like a redemption store, featuring options for everyone from the youngest patron who just wants a handful of candy to the more competitive player who can redeem their points for anything from bikes to high-end electronics and even game consoles.

Players of the Main Event virtual and interactive games area are not weighed down by a bucket full of coins or pockets stuffed with tickets. About 50 percent of the game area is redemption-based and uses the Intercard system of stored value cards, called the Fun card.

A guest can redeem their points right away for a smaller item or keep playing, spreading their earnings over several visits, to take home a big ticket item of their choice.

After working up an appetite playing any one of the virtual and interactive games, bowling, hanging from the gravity ropes, dodging lasers in the laser tag arena, or potting balls on the billiard tables, guests can refuel at Main Event's full-service dining or snack areas.

Food options include La Bella's Pizza, a quick service pizza stand with handtossed pizzas and gelato, sit-down service with American classic sandwiches, burgers and entrees. Main Event also has an extensive catering menu available for corporate and large groups. If you need a bit more of a kick to recharge, a full service bar is also available with specialty cocktails and beer.

The packages that Main Event offers also follow the "go big" mantra. Focused on corporate events, birthday parties, and community groups, the options are nearly endless and include full buy-out of the facility with customizable options; banquets; team building sessions; birthday parties catered to kids, teens, or adults; youth and school packages with almost 20 options to choose from, or guests can create

and customize their own event package.

If you haven't heard of Main Event, a subsidiary of Ardent Leisure Group in Australia, chances are you soon will. An aggressive expansion plan was announced earlier this year. By the end of June 2015, the company will operate 19 centers in five states, each boasting anywhere from 45,000 to 75,000-square-foot of fun. For more information, visit (www.mainevent.com). ▲



Facility:

Main Event

Location:

San Antonio (west)
8514 State Hwy. 151
San Antonio, TX 78245

Attractions:

Bowling, laser tag, billiards, gravity ropes, arcade, giant Connect Four, bar, La Bella's Pizza, gelato, and more.

Contact:

(210)521-8000
www.mainevent.com/locations/san-antonio-west-tx



QubicaAMF raises bowling to a new level

What do your parents, grandparents, and King Henry VIII of England have in common? They all played the game of bowling. New generations continue to discover bowling, which has redefined itself in recent years by becoming an anchor attraction for family entertainment centers (FECs).

QubicaAMF Worldwide has been at the forefront of bowling innovations with its BES X Bowler Entertainment System designed to maximize the appeal of bowling; exclusive new Mad Games (Monster Factory, Character Factory, Bowlin' Hood, and Battle on the Lanes); YouToons, where bowlers take their photo on the SuperTouch LCD bowler console and merge those images into the scoring animations; themed birthday party graphics; and the scaled down, Highway 66 mini-bowling with redemption capability that provides exceptional revenue per square-foot.

Left: The new Highway 66 is available in nine different themes.

Below: The new Highway 66 in the Monster theme.





Top: The Suite Spot is available in multiple themes and can incorporate QubicaAMF's new line of Harmony furnishings and BES X. Shown with four lanes of Highway 66 mini-bowling, Harmony seating, and the BES X Bowler Entertainment System.

Middle: The Suite Spot shown with six lanes of Highway 66 mini-bowling, Harmony seating, and the BES X Bowler Entertainment System.

Bottom: Super Touch LCD Console

QubicaAMF Worldwide has headquarters in Mechanicsville, Va., and European headquarters in Bologna, Italy. The company is a one-stop shop for bowling and mini-bowling products, including: scoring and management systems, pinspotters, lanes and lane care supplies, reconfigurable furniture solutions, house balls, and rental shoes. Many products are turn-key.

The company represents the combined talents of Qubica Italy, established in the early '90s and known for its automated scoring systems, and AMF Bowling Products, the American company known for the first automated pinspotter that revolutionized bowling in the early '50s. The two merged in 2005. (See the sidebar on QubicaAMF history.)

QubicaAMF has sold, serviced, and installed bowling products in over 10,000 centers in 90 countries.

Moreover, the company has installed worldwide more than 3,000 Highway 66 mini-bowling lanes, making it the product that defines the mini-bowling attraction category by itself.

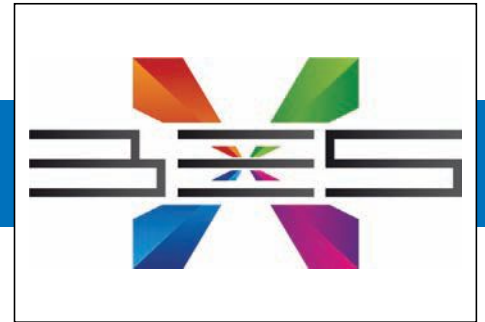
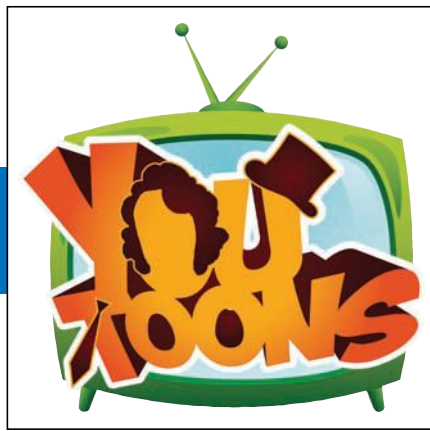
Play Meter spoke with Riccardo Cuppi, QubicaAMF Performance Equipment and Highway 66 Product Manager, and Rosa Katz, Senior Product Manager of Business Consultancy, Services, and Solutions, to find out about the current state of bowling, new products, and the secrets to the company's success.

What changes have you seen in the types of locations that have added bowling in the last five years?

In terms of type of locations we have seen the following changes:

- In downtown and metropolitan areas, development or remodeling of centers is combining bowling and a few attractions with upscale food and beverage offerings for a more VIP experience.

- In suburban areas, traditional bowling centers are adding more attractions and changing their business model to become bowling entertainment centers. These locations are interested in adding more variety and



options for their customers and wanting to attract more parties and groups.

■ At the same time we have seen FECs without bowling now adding it, especially the ones that have both indoor and outdoor activities and want to add a solid indoor anchor.

In terms of sites, we have seen less development of brand new buildings and more conversions of empty shells made available from the crisis of retail, like grocery stores or shopping centers, and we are seeing both that these facilities are included within these centers or can be on the perimeter of the center.

Why has bowling maintained its appeal with players?

Bowling is a very versatile activity and appeals to people of all ages and skill sets, from the amateur to the skilled competitor or professional. It is an activity that everyone can and wants to do. There are several reasons why:

Main reason 1: Bowling offers a mix of ingredients like competition, fun, socialization, and relaxation. There are not many other entertainment options that offer this all in one.

Main reason 2: Bowling is a group activity that is great for families, companies, social groups, etc., while many other entertainment attractions are more of an individual experience.

Main reason 3: Bowling has evolved and the bowling experience has drastically improved thanks to the technology, innovation, and products designed with today's consumers in mind. And QubicaAMF has been at the forefront of this.

What types of locations are adding Highway 66 mini-bowling?

Mainly FECs and also bowling entertainment centers, but we are seeing an increasing number of other

kinds of commercial properties adding it as well. This includes cinemas, bars and restaurants, hotels and resorts, and more.

How many lanes of Highway 66 mini-bowling are usually requested; do they coexist next to traditional bowling lanes?

Two lanes is the average request for game rooms and/or arcades, while four to six lanes is the average when a better dedicated space is available or they are looking to create a VIP space and experience.

As said before, we also have seen Highway 66 installed at bowling entertainment centers. It offers a more casual, easy, and fast experience for customers that are waiting for their lane on crowded weekends or for customers who are looking for a more casual experience than the traditional 10-pin bowling.

Will QubicaAMF introduce a new game at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo in November? What inspired this new product?

It's true. We are planning to introduce our new Highway 66 and The Suite Spot attraction. The inspiration came from market research and understanding market trends in the location-based entertainment arena. Many locations lack space, but still have a strong need for profits associated with first class entertainment for groups.

Even with the best mini-bowling solution like Highway 66 that we are installing today, we learned that there was a potential (and a desire) for innovation in areas like visual appeal, theming, digital entertainment, comfort, and group business. That was really the

starting point to research the market and better understand the unmet needs and opportunities.

As a result of this effort we have designed a new Highway 66, which is the evolution of the bestselling mini-bowling product ever, and then have combined it with the ultimate in state-of-the-art entertainment, and a modern and unique environment that maximizes socialization and comfort for groups.

How popular is YouToons, which invites players to merge their images into the scoring animations?

YouToons is extremely popular. Customers can't get enough. It is the ultimate in on-lane interactive play that makes the game even more entertaining and customers end up playing game after game to continue the fun.

As developers, it's even more exciting for us to sit back and watch as customer after customer discovers the game, sees themselves in the animations and plays, laughs the entire time, and wants to bowl more.

How is the On-Lane Redemption system being received? How does it work?

For mini-bowling, redemption is extremely popular, especially when it has been incorporated into a redemption center; while in traditional 10-pin bowling we are beginning to see an increase in interest.

As facilities are starting to evolve more into entertainment centers, redemption is gaining appeal. For the centers that are using it today, we have seen that On-Lane Redemption ties the facility together as it encourages consumers to move from the redemption center/game room to the lanes and vice versa and more party packages are

“We consider it our mission to deliver products and services that help make our customers more profitable.”

being created that include multiple areas.

Where is bowling popular in international markets?

Aside from North America where bowling is the number one participation sport, bowling is very popular in regions like the U.K., France, Germany, Sweden, Scandinavia, Russia, South Africa, the Middle East, Australia, and Asia, to mention a few.

It's also fast becoming increasingly popular in South America as well. It's a very global game. In fact, last year our Bowling World Cup had 76 countries participate and we expect to see more this year for our 50th Anniversary in Poland in November.

Do you follow a certain philosophy that has contributed to your success?

Our philosophy is very simple: We know we can't be successful unless our customers are. This is why we take innovation so seriously. We consider it our mission to deliver products and

services that help make our customers more profitable.

And we do this by continuing to invest in research and development for innovative products and services that help our customers continue to grow their businesses. This philosophy is the commitment we have made with both the entertainment industry and with our customers.

Are there any locations without bowling now that would benefit from adding bowling?

Bowling is converging and has proven to provide real benefits to any location that has other entertainment activities. It also is a perfect fit for locations with a food and beverage offering, retail environments like shopping centers, and for most vacation destination spots. If space is an issue or concern, our new Highway 66 or upcoming Suite Spot attraction will be a perfect fit.

What sets QubicaAMF apart?

QubicaAMF is the industry innova-

tor and the only company still investing and committed to stay and grow the industry. No one else invests as much as we do in product innovation every year.

Our team of over 50 product managers, designers, engineers, analysts, and programmers is the best, largest, and most experienced R&D group in the industry. Our skills, knowledge, experience, and product development is unmatched in the industry.

Some examples of our recent innovation include: BES X, offering a variety of digital entertainment options including Facebook integration, and consoles that look like i-devices where customers can take pictures, interact with other lanes, and order food and beverage.

Or, our newest Harmony furniture collection offers furniture specifically designed for the industry. It can be transformed to embrace more lanes to better accommodate groups and events of all types and sizes. For more information, visit (www.qubicaAMF.com). ▲

History: QubicaAMF Worldwide

- 1900:** AMF begins manufacturing industrial equipment as American Machine & Foundry.
- 1938:** AMF teams with inventor Fred Schmidt to perfect his idea of the automated pinspotter.
- 1946:** Pinspotters contribute to the popularity of bowling.
- 1965:** The AMF Bowling World Cup debuts in Dublin, Ireland.
- 1976:** AMF introduces the first automatic scoring unit.
- 1981:** AMF introduces the first reactive urethane bowling ball.
- 1989:** AMF introduces the first mechanical bumpers system.
- 1994:** Qubica Sorba, an Italian bowling distributor, sells over 400 lanes of Qubica scoring in Europe and the U.S.
- 1997:** Xtreme Glow-in-the-Dark bowling helps attract a new generation of bowlers.
- 2002:** Qubica grows with acquisitions including FENIX/MENDES Corp. and then focuses on traditional and miniature bowling products.
- 2005:** AMF Bowling Products and Qubica Worldwide join forces. The result: QubicaAMF Worldwide is one of the largest manufacturers of bowling and amusement products in the world.
- 2007:** QubicaAMF launches the industry's first turnkey marketing and training programs for bowling centers.
- 2008:** Customers with older automatic scoring systems can get the power of the Conqueror Pro Center Management System, which debuted in 1999.
- 2009:** Bowling becomes a redemption game with QubicaAMF's On-Lane Redemption.
- 2013:** QubicaAMF debuts BES X, the world's only Bowler Entertainment System.
- 2014:** QubicaAMF introduces The Suite Spot and a new Highway 66.

Coinage issue prompts preparation

“Don’t Change Our Change.” This battle cry resonates within our industry. According to Paula Rinker, Director of Marketing for S&B Candy & Toy Co., it was a matter of the highest priority and discussion during the recent American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) annual meeting and the Missouri-Amusement and Music Operators Association (MoAMOA) meeting, both of which she attended.

Congress has tasked the U.S. Mint with finding ways to produce coins in a more cost efficient manner, and the Mint recently accepted public comments on the mandate to research the use of alternative metals for coin production.

Changes in metallic content, shape, or size could call for anything from a simple recalibration in vending machines to the installation of new coin-accepting equipment. These refurbishments are projected to range from \$100-\$500 per vending machine. It has been estimated by several industry associations that with over seven million vending and coin-operated machines across the country, the cost of such changes will easily exceed \$3.5 billion industry wide.

Jon Cameron, Director of Coin Studies for the U.S. Mint, acknowledged the growing use of debit/cashless payment systems when he spoke at the government relations luncheon during the AAMA meeting, but cited statistics that consumers use cash 65 percent of the time when they make purchases of \$10 or less and 45 percent of the time on transactions under \$25, and that Americans 18-24 years of age make up the largest demographic that actively uses cash. Cash is definitely not going away.

So...what does this mean for the operator on the street?

The time to act and prepare is NOW. If you know a storm is coming, would you not carry your umbrella? If operators implement some or all of these measures now, it may save them some headache and reduce negative impact to their business’ bottom line if changes are made to coins, as well as increase their profitability in light of the growing use of debit and cashless payment systems by consumers.

Update Coin Mechs and Bill Acceptors: Operators should already be looking into equipping their machines with *both* adjustable coin mechs (coin comparators) and bill acceptors. If operators have traditional coin mechs only, it would be a good idea to install another one that offers more flexibility.

Even if there is no change in coinage, the dual coin mechs are a sound investment for operators as they add versatility to the machines since the operator can use them in locations that accept coins and tokens.

The adjustable coin mechs that are on the market today do

exactly that: they can be adjusted according to the size and calibration of any proposed coin or token, now and in the future. We equip each of our machines with two of these devices, which allow the machines to accept new coins as well as those currently in circulation.

Bill acceptors are key. How many 50-cent or 75-cent plays do you think your customers could enjoy from the change in their pockets?

Most people may scrape up enough change for one, or maybe two plays, and these odds are greatly reduced if your location does not have the means of exchanging loose coins, pocket lint, and gum wrappers for quarters.

Now, when they check their wallet, it is likely that they have the bills for at least three or more plays. It’s quite simple. The more convenient you make it for your customers = more plays by your customers.

My company has been following this issue, as well as consumer trends, and these features are included as standard in our new machines. We have given so much attention to the needs of the operator that our acceptors not only accept \$1, but also the new \$5 bill, which will give operator flexibility, extra mileage from their machines, and will withstand both economic and legislative changes.

Explore cashless options: Credit card acceptors as well as game card readers expand revenue earning potential when installed in addition to the traditional coin mechs and bill acceptors. Game card reader systems can also provide a bonus in such benefits as data on players’ patterns and habits, promotions, customer loyalty, and advertising.

Once again, cash is definitely not going away, but the more a smart operator enables their customers to spend their money increases both the likelihood and frequency that they will.

Act: Write to your representatives, support your local and national associations’ government relations efforts, donate to their PAC funds, and get involved with all activities that provide a forum for you to let your voice be heard.

Rinker, who serves on the Industry Promotions Committee for AAMA, traveled to Washington, D.C., in September where industry organizations and companies opposed to alterations to U.S. coins had an opportunity to conduct face to face meetings with elected officials and their staffs.

I don’t necessarily see all these proposed changes as a bad thing. Not only would operators be better prepared, but these measures will aid operators in making a smoother transition from 50 cents or 75 cents per play to \$1 per play in their locations. I think if we act quickly as an industry not only will we weather the storm, but we can also dance in the rain. ▲



By Brian Riggles

Brian Riggles is the President of S&B Candy & Toy which has been an amusement industry innovator for over two decades with its “win every time” candy and toy cranes and premium plush, toy, and candy mixes. Riggles can be reached via e-mail (briggles@sandbsales.com).



New addition:

Vanessa Cabrera of Your Social Media Mentor Inc. is the mother of a brand new baby boy. The family welcomed Matteo Michael Cabrera, six pounds five ounces on June 22. Matteo is also the second grandchild and second grandson to Vanessa's father, Emilio Cabrera of Bandai Namco. Congratulations!



Joined as one: Joe Camarota of Alpha Omega Amusement and Sales and Jennifer Chojnowski were married July 19 at Our Lady of Peace in North Brunswick, N.J. The two spent their honeymoon in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Best wishes to the happy couple.

Nostalgia at BCA Summit: Rock-Ola Mfg. Co./Antique Apparatus exhibited its nostalgic line of CD jukeboxes at the recent Billiard Congress of America (BCA) Summit in Louisville, Ky. CEO Glenn Streeter said, "The people who came to the summit were buyers. We sold 42 jukeboxes and took orders for more."

According to Streeter, who has owned Rock-Ola Mfg. Co. for 22 years and Antique Apparatus for 37 years, interest in everything related to mid-century America is popular, from furniture to cars and clothes to classic jukeboxes. The company is known for its licensed design jukeboxes and will bring out a new Elvis Presley Limited Edition jukebox with a white and black piano finish and a solid bronze medallion with an eagle and the label: Rock-Ola, Made in America.

A Rock-Ola Mfg. Co. Wallethe was clearly seen in a photo of President Barack Obama in a *Chicago Tribune* article about his visit to the Charcoal Pit, a diner in Wilmington, Del. On his way to speak about transportation and infrastructure, the President stopped at the Charcoal Pit to talk with Tanei Benjamin, who wrote a letter about her struggles as a single working mother. They sat in a booth with the Wallethe. ▲





PINBALL CURIOUS

By Jim Schelberg



Top: Yea for pinball from the Bangerters, (l-r): Micah, Reiny, Aubrey, and Shirley. **Above:** Jerry Thompson and my “grand-kids” Jaden and Eliana.

It's The PEOPLE, stupid!

Any hobby is really the same. It doesn't matter if it's pinball or matchbook covers, after a while the people you meet mean more to you than the collectable you chase.

After 23 years of giving in to the lure of the silverball, it has become the people, stupid, that mean the most! (“The economy, stupid” was coined in 1992 by Clinton strategist James Carville and is often used with “It’s” added and the subject changed to reflect the new specific focus.)

Going to more and more shows, I'm sure I challenge my office manager Jenny as she tries to keep my patients happy while dealing with me being away for weeks at a time. But she's the best and so far has been a successful juggler.

My good U.K. friend Gary Flower suggested a cross country U.S. trip this past March and I signed up right away. First stop was Southern California to visit friends. Our hosts were Reiny and Shelly Bangarter.

Sure, Reiny is a pinball guy who

designed the original Cactus Jacks and was a major part of the team that produced the recent King Of Diamonds remake, but the main attraction for me was their three-year-old twins Aubrey and Micah. Wow, what cuties!

We were invited to attend a fundraiser for game designer Python Anghelo hosted by Steve Tsobota and held in his two story guest house. (Sadly, Python passed away in April). We were treated to dozens of games, a live band playing in front of an LED dance floor, an awesome theater room, and a collection of one-of-a-kind games from Wizard Blocks to Python's Zingy Bingy.

While I expected to see Steve taking photos as he does at most shows he attends, instead he was in his pizza kitchen turning out individual sized pies from his wood fired stone pizza oven. One after another, amazing pizzas kept sliding onto the counter. He said later he was expecting “guest bakers” to come and try their skill. While we didn't get a lot of time to talk, I've

known Steve for years and he is one of the nicest guys in pinball.

Time flew and it was travel day to Vegas for the Amusement Expo but on the way we made a stop at collector Randy Peck's Nu Pike Arcade. This was featured in *PinGame Journal (PGJ)* Issue 150 but I never saw it in person. He created the feel, look, and atmosphere of the original Pike Amusement Park.

There is a ballroom...a BIG ballroom where Randy's daughter had her prom! There is a fully operational soda fountain room. And games...wow...hundreds of pinball games, all restored in neat rows and all ready to play. While we have communicated electronically, it was great to meet Randy; I could tell his is one of the good ones.



Left: Steve Tsubota lets his guests eat pie! **Center:** Texas show organizers and friends, (l-r): Ed and Kim VanderVeen, Paul McKinney, and Ken Kemp. **Right:** Real BBQ at Babe's with the VanderVeens, (l-r): Lauren, Ed, Gary Flower, Kim, Jim, and JD.

Saying goodbye to Reiny, we got on a plane to Las Vegas to attend the Amusement Expo. We met up with Tim Arnold at the Pinball Hall of Fame. Tim and Charlotte are two of my very favorite people, in or out of pinball. 'Nuff said.

At the show, I of course spent time at Stern Pinball and went over to the adjacent Nightclub & Bar Show to see the Wizard of Oz from Jersey Jack Pinball (JJP). But the *Play Meter* booth is my home away from home.

I have been attending these shows for over 20 years and for all that time I have been welcomed by the *Play Meter* staff as if I was a family member who had been away for the past year. They all really know how to give me the "Cheers" experience.

From Vegas it was on to Texas and the Texas Pinball Festival. The show is MASSIVE. It's well run, well organized, and has something for everyone; it is certainly one of the best around. I was flattered to be chosen to head the awards committee as well as to present a "Pinball in the Media" talk.

The show's organizers, Ed and Kim VanderVeen, were gracious enough to welcome us into their home for a few days after the show. Ed's a policeman and his wife is a 911 operator so you couldn't feel safer. Kids Lauren and JD, both 13, were delightful. It was great to sample some "real" barbeque.

We had to miss the Rocky Mountain show due to a conflict but that freed time to go home for the Michigan Pinball Expo. Koz runs a great show. At the Oakland University student center there are classic games and solid state games as well as JJP and a Marco Specialties display for Stern.

Hopping in the *PGJ* Mustang Cobra I cruised over (and up) to the Midwest Gaming Classic. In square feet of dis-

play space this is the biggest show by far as the entire hotel, even the lobby, is used for video or pinball display.

There was a GIANT tent set up in the parking lot just for video game vendors (Good! More room in the hotel for pins!). The speakers were in the bar! Head Dan Lossen is great; he and his crew had a MASSIVE task to accomplish and succeeded. Of course the night before we were all welcome to see the nearby collection of mega collector friend Tom Taylor.

I was able to see friend Mark Bakula and we crashed at the home of Don and Liz Caldwell. I developed something like the flu and wound up on their couch for a few days after the show. They were great to let me "couch squat" like that.

A few months later I was in Seattle with Gary for the Northwest Pinball Show. This is the friendliest show I know. Arriving four days before Gary, I stayed with organizer Jerry Thompson and his 11-year-old twins Eliana and Jaden. It was while visiting sound designer David Theil that I started to show symptoms leading to my recent surgery so I spent a lot of time on Jerry's easy chair and his kids were my

lifeboat. They called me grandpa. GRANDPA! Wow.

There should be an entire Pinball Curious focused on Avout and his Shorty's but know that if you are in Seattle a visit there is a MUST. The games, the people! Avout and the hot dogs are the best.

Brian and Shirley Cady are major organizers and while I've stayed with them and kids Matthew, Michael, and Megan in the past, not this time. But it was great seeing them again.

After the show we boarded the ferry out to Bainbridge Island to spend our traditional night with pro basketballer turned pinballer Todd MacCulloch and his family. Todd and Jenna are truly warm, inviting, down to earth people. The highlight of my visit there was the rousing "horse game" I played with kids Carmen and Dylan.

I'm writing this about six weeks post open heart surgery. I MUST mention that I have received good wishes, prayers, thoughts, and encouragements from hundreds of pinball friends. I'm humbled and grateful. Thank you all.

Pinball is producing more and more shows, the games are cool and pushing boundaries in all kinds of ways. But it all wouldn't mean much without the fantastic people one meets along the way. I began this Pinball Curious with an adjusted quote from James Carville and end it with an adjusted one from Robert Frost: "I made many pinball friends, and they have made all the difference." For more images, visit (www.youtube.com/pinjournal). ▲



Jim Schelberg, always curious about pinball, has been publishing the *PinGame Journal* for more than 20 years. Jim has about 40 games of his own but spends most of his pinball time attending events, snapping photos, and talking to people about pinball. He can be reached at (jims@pingamejournal.com); Web (www.pingamejournal.com).

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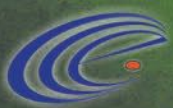
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Sureshot Redemption

Sureshot Redemption is always searching for the latest and greatest redemption merchandise. New to the line is the Recon Rover Action Cam Ready 1:16 (#33677). This new item records action video as you maneuver the rover through the streets or rough terrain. Add your smart phone or action camera to the spring loaded clip and your rover is ready to record. The Recon Rover includes a full function radio control with pistol grip controller. (www.sureshot-redemption.com)



HMS Monaco



With the start of the NFL season, HMS is offering a seasonal line of licensed NFL plush and key chains. Choose from either "hot team" NFL plush packs in regular and jumbo sizes, or customize your own assortments. The new NFL key chain program features team logo and bottle opener key chains. These key chains come packaged in see thru clamshells for easy hanging. All NFL teams are available.

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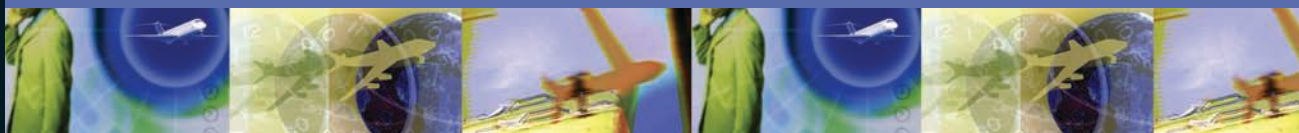
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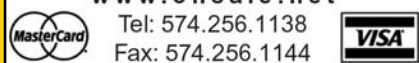
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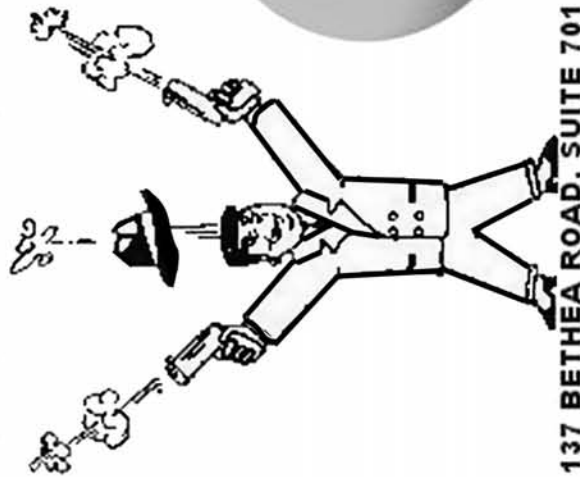
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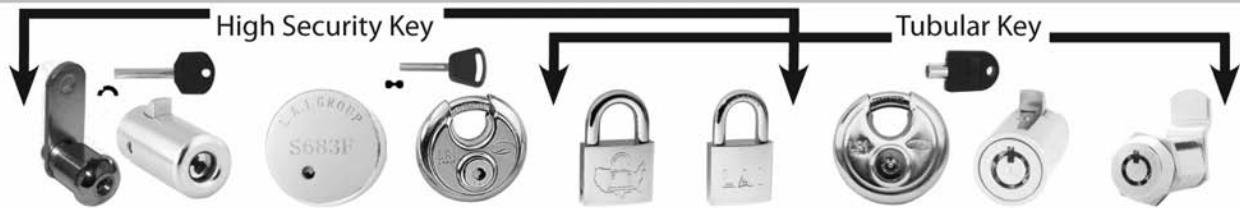
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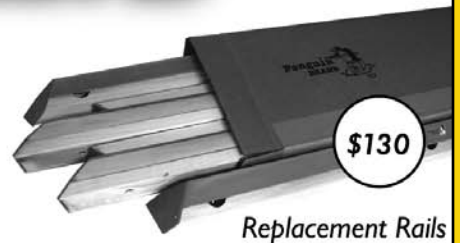
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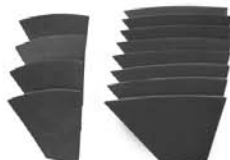
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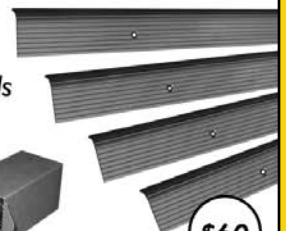
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Reservations and raw copy deadline for ALL classified ads is the 12th of the month prior to issue date (e.g., March 12 for April issue).

GRAPHIC SERVICES

The PLAY METER art staff will assist in typesetting and layout of ads to be placed in the classified section of our publication at no additional cost. Rough layouts must be provided three working days before the ad copy deadline.

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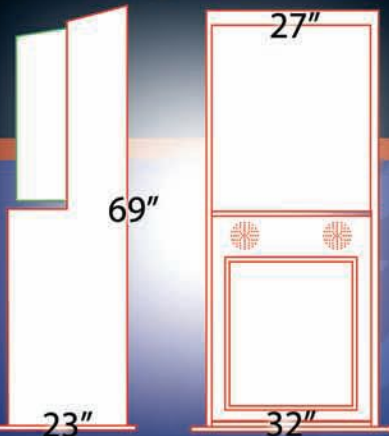
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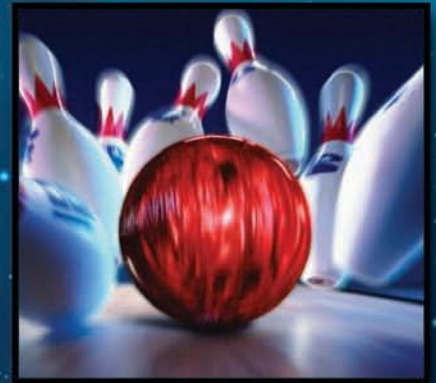
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