

Kiss plays its
End of the Road
tour at TaxSlayer
Center.

SPOTLIGHT

Solidmi



THE MIDWEST REGION'S venues enjoyed strong returns in 2018, buoyed by a solid economy and big-name touring shows. The first full year of Detroit's Little Caesars Arena heralded a major new facility in the region and attracted some of the country's top touring acts, while bolstering the revival effort for one of the Midwest's bellwether metropolitan areas.

Weather occasionally interfered with plans during 2018, but affected arenas adjusted to accommodate both artists and fans. Venue staff also worked around continuing improvements and renovations, keeping the shows on schedule in venerable facilities such as Wrigley Field even as physical changes required savvy planning. — *Tom Gresham*

dwest

**BIG ACTS AND A BIG NEW
VENUE MARK A BUSY
YEAR IN THE HEARTLAND**

THE CIRCUIT

TaxSlayer Center in Moline, Ill., finished No. 4 among Mid-west Top Stops venues in the 10,001-15,000 capacity range.



SOME OF THE MIDWEST'S TOP-PERFORMING VENUES SHARE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THEIR YEAR

TAXSLAYER CENTER, MOLINE, ILL.
Scott Mullen, executive director



How was your year?
 2018 was a solid year for us. The economy is doing well and people

are buying tickets.

Big shows

We had some big names in 2018 with full houses for Blake Shelton, Styx, REO (Speedwagon) and Don Felder, and 5 Finger Death

Punch. Alice Cooper, Jim Gaffigan, the Beach Boys, Alabama, Lindsey Stirling and Cole Swindell also had strong showings as did World's Toughest Rodeo, the Missouri Valley Conference Women's Basketball Tournament, the (Harlem) Globetrotters, Monster Jam, Theresa Caputo and Impractical Jokers.

Big changes

We installed a new Wi-Fi system throughout the complex as well as a new security camera system and a new point-of-sale system for F&B.

What went right?

We were able to land a Paul McCartney show that will play here in June. With the entire lower bowl priced at \$255, we were concerned that there might be price resistance, but it sold out in minutes back in September, resulting in the highest-grossing concert in our 26-year history (nearly \$2 million) and proving that our market can handle high ticket prices for marquee acts.

What went wrong?

Summer was very slow and competition from surrounding festivals, fairs and casinos continue to drive artist guarantees up. Increased

competition from other arenas is also cutting into profit margins.

THE HUNTINGTON CENTER, TOLEDO, OHIO
Steve Miller, general manager



How was your year?

2018 was one of the strongest years since we opened in 2009. We

had 16 concerts in the building and all sold very well. Our family show business also continues to do well. 2019 is shaping up to be a strong year as well.

Big shows

Two sold-out nights of Tim McGraw and Faith Hill in June, Jeff Dunham sold out, and Godsmack and Shinedown also sold out.

Big changes

No major changes this past year, but our building is 10 years old now so in 2019 we are putting in new Ephesus LED sports lights and also a new videoboard and ribbon board with our partners

with Daktronics.

What went right?

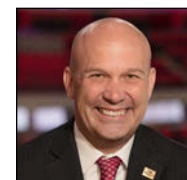
Strong ticket sales throughout the year for the majority of the shows kept the momentum going of Toledo selling tickets.

What went wrong?

Bitter cold weather in the winter months made it take a little longer to get everyone in the building since it took them longer to get to the building. We were able to work with the shows to hold start times slightly so everyone got a chance to see the entire show.

LITTLE CAESARS ARENA, DETROIT

Chris Granger, group president, sports and entertainment, Ilitch Holdings



How was your year?

We received a tremendous response in our first full year of op-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

WRIGLEY FIELD



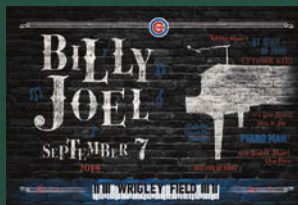
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2018
SHOWS



WE LOOK FORWARD TO ADDING YOU TO OUR FUTURE ALL-STAR LINEUPS

THE CIRCUIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 58

eration at Little Caesars Arena — ranking third in the U.S. and sixth worldwide for concert ticket sales as reported by *Pollstar*. We hosted more than 400 ticketed and private events in the 2018 calendar year and are very humbled to have won 17 total awards. ... Most importantly, we provided Detroiters and the people of the state of Michigan another opportunity to enjoy the great things happening in downtown Detroit.

Big shows

There were almost too many to list, but Justin Timberlake, Shania Twain, Lady Gaga, Harry Styles, Radiohead, Drake, Bruno Mars, Maroon 5, Kevin Hart, Elton John and Foo Fighters were all very successful shows and received great feedback from our guests. We also hosted the 2018 NCAA Men's Basketball Championship first and second rounds and had crowds of more than 20,000 for all three sessions. Michelle Obama's "Becoming" book tour was also a

great success in mid-December. Red Wings and Pistons home games continue to be pillar events for us.

FOX THEATRE, DETROIT
Chris Granger

How was your year?

The theater celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2018. To mark this milestone year, the Fox saw one of its strongest years on record — ranking eighth worldwide for concert ticket sales and sixth in the U.S., drawing over 400,000 guests as reported by *Pollstar*. This was a jump from the previous year's No. 22 ranking and is a testament to its versatility in hosting world-class programming that spans all genres and demographics. The venue's annual Theatre Series also closed with a 75 percent increase in total attendance during

the 2017-18 season, offering 16 more performances than the previous year.

Big shows

From John Legend, Tim Allen, Neil Young, Bill Burr, David Byrne, "A Charlie Brown Christmas Live On Stage," André Rieu, Maxwell, the Piano Guys to Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker — all proved guest favorites with capacity crowds. We also saw great success with iconic artists hosting sold-out multi-performance engagements from comedy favorites Mike Epps and Katt Williams to Nine Inch Nails' explosive dou-

ble-play and Michigan's own Greta Van Fleet headlining the Fox for their venue debut with three sold-out shows in December.

Big changes

2018 marked the first full season under 313 Presents. The joint-venture partnership between Olympia Entertainment and Palace Sports and Entertainment proved to strengthen Southeastern Michigan as a top touring destination. ... The result continues to be more quality, more shows, and more activity to downtown Detroit and the region.

WRIGLEY FIELD, CHICAGO
Carl Rice, vice president, Chicago Cubs



How was your year?
We had an incredible year in 2018. From the music side, starting the

summer with Jimmy Buffett returning to Wrigley Field — his 2005 show was our first show here — and to have him come back here was something that was really exciting, especially because Jimmy is such a big Cubs fan. And then to go in a whole different direction and have Def Leppard and Journey the following night was really pretty cool and showed the flexibility of the ballpark. We also had two nights of the Foo

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64

Detroit's Fox Theatre (above) turned 90; Little Caesars Arena packed them in.



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TOPSTOPS MIDWEST

Ranked by tickets sold. Based on data from concerts and events in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin Feb. 1, 2018-Jan. 31, 2019, as reported to Pollstar. Data updated as of March 19.

RANK	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	CAPACITY	GROSS	SHOWS
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MORE THAN 30,000 CAPACITY

1	Wrigley Field, Chicago	343,073	42,495	\$29,292,378	9
2	Soldier Field, Chicago	291,263	63,200	\$36,970,340	6
3	U.S. Bank Stadium, Minneapolis	229,238	66,200	\$23,381,045	5
4	Ford Field, Detroit	185,706	46,000	\$19,077,813	4
5	Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City	167,517	76,416	\$15,720,617	3

15,001-30,000 CAPACITY

1	Little Caesars Arena, Detroit	663,372	20,000	\$45,301,917	59
2	Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Ill.	597,988	19,000	\$37,416,480	67
3	Ruoff Home Mortgage Music Center, Noblesville, Ind.	588,023	25,000	\$22,059,090	38
4	DTE Energy Music Theatre, Clarkston, Mich.	542,787	15,040	\$22,880,515	48
5	Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul, Minn.	521,095	18,500	\$36,328,567	50

10,001-15,000 CAPACITY

1	Van Andel Arena, Grand Rapids, Mich.	252,535	12,000	\$18,112,578	28
2	Intrust Bank Arena, Wichita, Kan.	124,875	15,000	\$6,912,383	32
3	Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, S.D.	116,223	12,000	\$8,884,597	15
4	TaxSlayer Center, Moline, Ill.	99,884	12,000	\$4,057,451	25
5	Resch Center, Green Bay, Wis.	82,151	10,500	\$6,090,559	18

5,001-10,000 CAPACITY

1	Huntington Bank Pavilion at Northerly Island, Chicago	134,329	8,734	\$7,222,825	17
2	Huntington Center, Toledo, Ohio	129,590	8,000	\$7,384,246	24
3	Starlight Theatre, Kansas City, Mo.	104,554	7,800	\$5,690,557	24
4	Aretha Franklin Amphitheatre, Detroit	96,890	6,000	\$4,575,772	26
5	Michigan Lottery Theater at Freedom Hill, Sterling Heights, Mich.	92,405	7,200	\$3,849,804	20

2,001-5,000 CAPACITY

1	Chicago Theatre, Chicago	389,854	3,604	\$23,419,266	142
2	Orpheum Theatre, Minneapolis	316,657	2,670	\$27,392,575	139
3	Fox Theatre, Detroit	256,393	4,800	\$14,702,052	71
4	Des Moines (Iowa) Civic Center	211,711	2,744	\$18,441,620	103
5	Rosemont (Ill.) Theatre	198,540	4,400	\$14,332,761	75

2,000 OR LESS CAPACITY

1	First Avenue, Minneapolis	156,948	1,550	\$3,467,825	163
2	Thalia Hall, Chicago	111,391	925	\$3,340,346	161
3	The Intersection/Showroom, Grand Rapids, Mich.	95,436	1,700	\$2,217,009	110
4	Vic Theatre, Chicago	80,001	1,300	\$2,754,064	74
5	Newport Music Hall, Columbus, Ohio	75,894	1,400	\$1,805,318	96

Note: Capacity shown is legal capacity listed in Pollstar database. Compiled by teamboxoffice@pollstar.com.

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THE CIRCUIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 60

Fighters and two nights of Pearl Jam with sold-out crowds for all of those shows. Then selling out the Luke Bryan show, the Billy Joel show and Fallout Boy at the end of the summer. Having Fallout Boy, a Chicago band, come here and finish our 2018 season was pretty special.

Big changes

We've been renovating the ballpark over the last five years, and we've had to work the concerts into the renovation plan. We're renovating and restoring the ballpark to increase its longevity but also to return it to what it looked like around its historic heyday, the 1930s.

What went right?

We had a really good mix of

artists, and we're very fortunate that we have a great relationship with our local promoters. We're able to kind of balance whoever the promoter is here and not be locked into any one type of setup or stage. The blend of these artists with our Wrigley fans also works really well. We were able to continue to show how Wrigley is a special place for artists to come to and play.

What went wrong?

It rained too much. We had to evacuate the stadium for two shows. But in both cases the fans stood with us and they all came back after the rain and enjoyed what were special evenings. Did they go wrong? Yeah, but it also was a highlight because everybody worked together to make sure the experience ended up being a good one.

**STARLIGHT THEATRE,
KANSAS CITY, MO.**
Rich Baker, president and CEO



How was your year?

2018 marked my fifth season at Starlight Theatre, and

I'm proud of the continued growth at this historic venue. 2018 was a wonderful summer under the stars with top-notch live entertainment.

Big shows

"Love Never Dies" was one of the largest load-ins we've had here at Starlight. With fantastic sets that re-create the magic and allure of 1907 Coney Island, the show traveled in an impressive 11 trucks and translated beautifully to the Starlight stage. It was the Kansas City premiere of the show, as was the Gloria and Emilio Estefan hit story of "On Your Feet!" For concerts, we had one of our most diverse series yet, with shows ranging from hilarious comedy acts like Trevor Noah and The Impractical Jokers to a very unique rock experience with Evanescence and Lindsey Stirling. The latter opened their national tour at our venue, and it was a hit with Kansas City audiences.

Big changes

In the offseason, we added four state-of-the-art "mega-fans" to keep summer nights at Starlight even cooler. They're whisper-quiet, so no show is interrupted — but patrons are even more comfortable than before. We also made significant gains in our ADA improvements throughout the venue, which will continue into the coming years.

What went right?

In addition to major improvements throughout the venue, Starlight continued to set the standard for customer service and guest experience at live entertainment events in Kansas City last year. All of this while presenting premier national touring Broadway shows, concerts, and education and outreach programming!

What went wrong?

With live entertainment, something's always bound to go wrong. It's how it's handled that's important.

**DES MOINES CIVIC CENTER,
DES MOINES, IOWA**
Laura Sweet, vice president and chief operating officer, Des Moines Performing Arts



How was your year?

2018 was a great year for Des Moines Performing Arts (which

owns and operates the venue, as well as Cowles Commons, Stoner Theater and Temple Theater). We celebrated our 40th anniversary season, completed several physical improvements to our venues and continue to explore ways to grow and better serve Iowa theatergoers.

Big shows

Over the summer we welcomed "Hamilton" to the Des Moines Civic Center for three weeks in June and July. Other highlights included Disney's "Aladdin," Alice Cooper, Leslie Odom Jr. in concert with the Des Moines Symphony, Johnny Mathis and David Byrne.

Big changes

We completed an over \$3 million construction project that included installing bollards to both the Des Moines Civic Center and our outdoor venue, Cowles Commons. ... (We) hosted the country's first-ever performing arts emergency readiness tabletop exercise with Department of Homeland Security officials. We invited colleagues from across the country to observe.

What went right?

DMPA considers our education initiatives a top priority. From the year-long Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards program to our Applause Series that welcome students to our venues for special curriculum based hour-long matinees, DMPA offers a wide variety of masterclasses, performances and other opportunities.

What went wrong?

Downtown Des Moines experienced fairly extensive flash flooding over the summer of 2018. The Civic Center did sustain moderate damage, but thanks to the quick response of our team and local partners our programming was able to continue without interruption. ▣

Billy Joel was part of the roster of big shows at the Chicago Cubs' Wrigley Field.



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VENUE INTRO

NEW BLUEPRINT FOR OLD ARENAS?

RENOVATED HY-VEE ARENA PROVIDES KANSAS CITY WITH A NEW PLACE TO PLAY

BY LAIRD MACGREGOR

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — For Alfonso Hayes and those who play in his Ball Up Sporting adult basketball program, the recently renovated Hy-Vee Arena provides more than just a warm, dry location to play the game they love. “It’s a central place,” he said on a recent early spring day as he watched a pickup game drift up

and down one of the building’s numerous open courts. “It’s become more like a community.”

That is precisely what developer Steve Foutch had in mind five years ago when he first considered buying and renovating long-neglected Kemper Arena, for 33 years Kansas City’s primary arena, in the West Bottoms neighborhood southwest of downtown. He foresaw a sports facility that could be used by the entire Kansas City community on a daily basis and not just by collegiate and professional teams only occasionally.

“We’re like a big YMCA,” Foutch said of the facility, which reopened in October 2018 after a \$39 million renovation. “Nights and weekends are very busy in here.”

The project, which Foutch said was the first of its kind in the United States, involved re-making a vast open floor space and seating into three levels of courts that can accommodate basketball, volleyball, wrestling, pickleball and other sports. There is also a permanent running track and provision for a five-lane, 350-meter competition surface running track. One level can also be used for banquet space.

Regional grocer Hy-Vee signed a 10-year naming-rights deal for the arena in May. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

In addition to serving the sporting and wellness needs of the local community, Hy-Vee Arena is drawing regional and national youth athletic tournaments. Recent events include a wrestling tournament and a youth cheerlead-

ing competition. Foutch said the space was booked for such events for most of 2019.

As a parent, Foutch said making the arena hospitable and comfortable for youth events was a priority in the redevelopment.

“I’ve spent a lot of time as a parent (of a youth athlete) in bad venues and bad locations. Here, the parents can come up and grab a beer and relax.”

There are seven spots for food and drink sprinkled around the main concourse of the arena with plans for more. Office space is available for rent as well, and the Kansas City Tornadoes, an NBA G League franchise, make the venue their home.

When it first opened in 1974, Kemper was home to the NBA’s Kansas City Kings, the Scouts of the NHL and the iconic American Royal livestock and horse showcase. The arena also played host to A-list concerts, the Big 8 Conference men’s basketball tournament for many years, and was even the site of the 1988 NCAA men’s Final Four, from which local favorite Kansas emerged as an unlikely national champion.

But with the opening of Sprint Center in 2007, Kemper was rendered nearly obsolete, as bigger-ticket events shifted to the new downtown venue. Before the renovation and renaming, the years of neglect were beginning to show.

“It was dark and smelly, and was hosting only a couple events a year,” Foutch said as he recalled his first tour of the building before he bought it — for \$1 — from the city.

Even so, Foutch, whose company specializes in renovating historic structures, had to do some convincing to get the City Council to approve his plans.

First challenge: There was no template to follow anywhere in the United States, no examples to cite. “We haven’t seen this anywhere before,” he said.

The second challenge was more political. Certain people of influence in the community preferred to see the building razed and the space put to some other use. But Foutch persisted with his vision and won the day. The ensuing makeover took about a year.

Now, other cities with similar empty or underused venues are beginning to come calling to see what’s happened in Kansas City. Foutch said he had spoken to a handful of cities already and had even given a tour to one visiting contingent, though he wouldn’t reveal their names.

For Hayes, the local basketball league impresario, Hy-Vee Arena has pumped new life into his organization.

“It’s put us on a different platform. The quality of the courts is incredible.” He said his organization featured about 150 players — some with professional experience — on 18-24 teams. The courts are also available for daily open gym periods, at just \$5 a head.

George Washington, who said he came from south Kansas City a few times a week to play during open gym, said there was nothing close to Hy-Vee Arena anywhere else in the city.

“This is the best thing they’ve got,” he said while taking a breather between games. “I think all of March Madness should be here.”



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