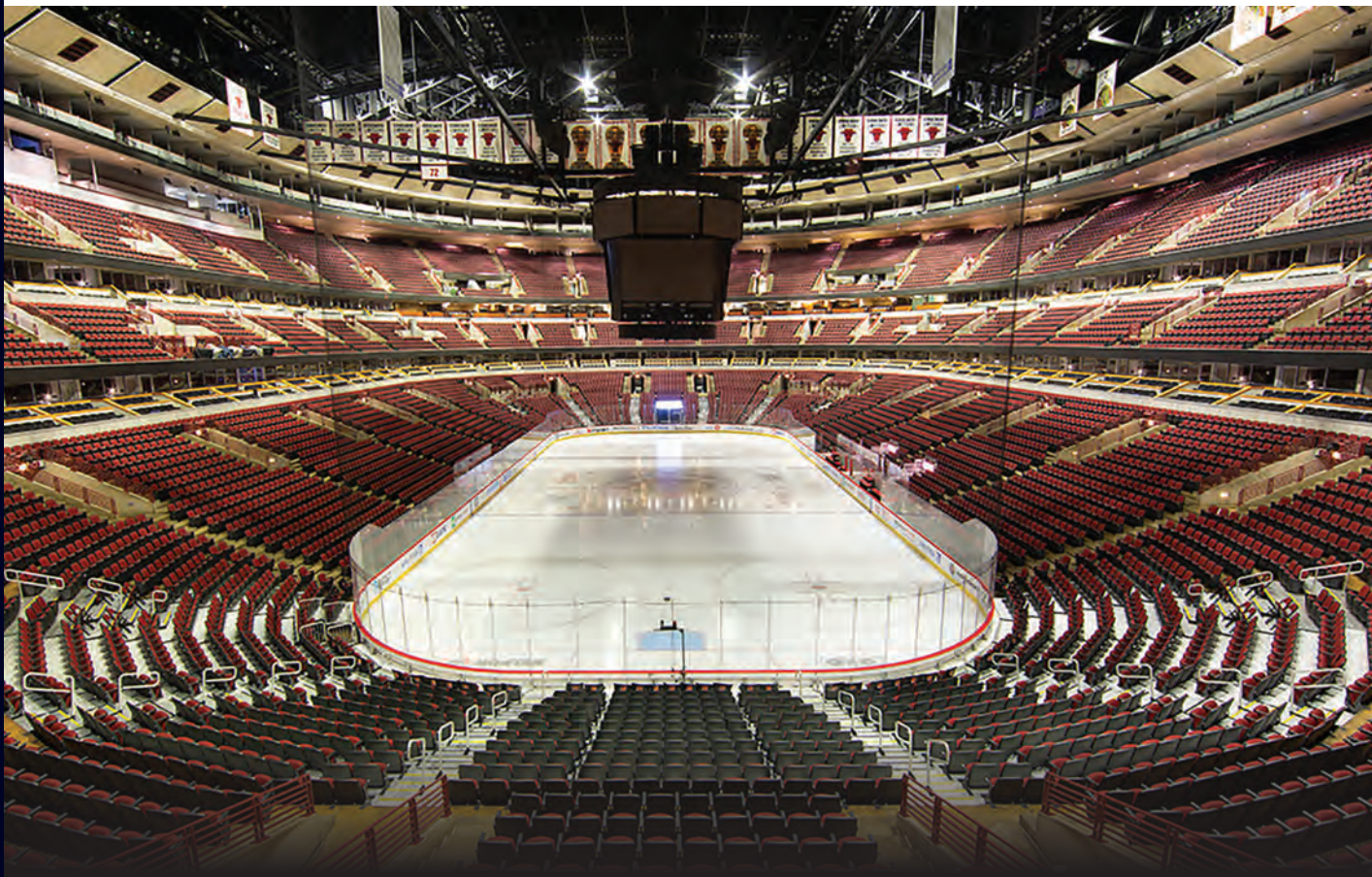


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**THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL EYES A RETURN
— AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FULL CAPACITIES**



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COURTESY BILLY BOB'S TEXAS

Seating

SETTLE IN: Spec Seats provided portable seating for The Shell, new in San Diego.

CUSHIONING



SEATING COMPANIES WEATHERED THE SHUTDOWN BY CONTINUING TO MAKE PEOPLE COMFORTABLE

BY ROB KNAPP

COVID-19 FORCED PARTS of the live industry to a halt, while others continued to hum along. Count seating companies, which continued fulfilling orders while taking on the occasional new one, among the latter.

In conversations with companies that provide seating for arenas and stadiums, theaters and convention centers, as well as other kinds of institutional facilities, executives said a healthy backlog of orders that had built up before the coronavirus-caused shutdown kept them

busy even as venues around the world had gone dark. VenuesNow spoke to the businesses as part of InVenue, a new occasional feature that offers a tour through some of the businesses that help make up sectors of the industry.

When the shutdown hit, some companies at first didn't have a way to fulfill orders. Both outside suppliers and their own manufacturing units were emptied of employees as businesses and health experts figured out safe ways for production to continue.

"Like many U.K. manufacturing

PROJECT LOG: Spec Seats

Client: Las Vegas Raiders

Cost: NA

Venue: Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas

Project: Portable seating for ADA companion, locker room, event level, and meeting rooms.

Completion Date:
July 2020

Quote:

"The beauty of our products is that they are designed and modified to meet each client's specific need. We can customize seat heights, widths, armrests, accessories and more. Also, our storage cart systems can be designed to best utilize specific space areas." — Jordan Hergott





THE FALL

PROJECT LOG: 4Topps

Client: City of Austin / Austin FC

Venue: Q2 Stadium

Completion date: March 2021

Cost: \$1.75 million

Project: Manufactured and installed all 6,000+ premium seats in the venue, roughly 750 of which are HighBack Suite Seats.

Quote: “We are no longer a seating company that lives only on the margins of new stadium builds and renovations. We have a diverse product line to do it all. When Austin FC chose our breathable mesh seats, it not only showed they care about their fans, it deepened our belief in our core mission — to revolutionize the spectating experience with products that focus on fan comfort and drive revenue.”

— Deron Nardo



businesses, concern for our staff led us to shut our factory for a period of time in spring 2020,” Gary Pillinger, sales director for Audience Systems Ltd., said by email. “Much of our supply chain shut down too.”

Coke Irwin, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Grand Rapids-based Irwin Seating, said, “In late March through the first week of May, we were actually shut down in Michigan,” where the state government was using some of the country’s most restrictive measures at the time. Irwin has just over 500 employees including manufacturing workers in Michigan and at a telescopic seating division in Altamont, Illinois.

In seeking a way forward, Irwin said, the company emphasized communication, both internally and externally. “It was a lot of networking here locally with other firms and how they were managing their way through ... to figure out how you can keep people in the building, how you could

educate them. And above all, it was about communication with our employees. It was how do you make sure that they’re aware of what we’re doing as an organization to keep them safe and also to maintain their livelihood.”

That community spirit included manufacturing 50,000 masks for local hospitals, shelters and other nonprofits in need, he said.

‘WENT OFF WITHOUT A HITCH’

But for the most part, the sector’s COVID story was about manufacturing chairs and installing them in venues, which was good news for everyone.

Maine-based Hussey Seating is fresh off playing a part in college hoops hysteria, completing a major installation at San Antonio’s Alamodome just in time for the NCAA Women’s Basketball Tournament. The job involved replacing more than 12,000 seats on telescopic platforms that were designed for the stadium when it opened.

The updated seats provide fans with additional comfort, and the efficiency of the engineering design gives the Alamodome more flexibility, something every venue is seeking, said Sean O'Leary, vice president of sales and marketing for Hussey.

"Everybody has events that you can convert from basketball to hockey, but where we really pride ourselves is how quickly, how easily can you do that? How little manpower can you use to make that happen efficiently?" O'Leary said, adding that the product must also be able to endure many years of use.

The Alamodome has 15 major configurations, he said, including one seen for the NCAA tournament that placed two courts on the floor with a curtain dividing them.

"All of this just went off without a hitch, which is a little nerve-racking when you're talking about a thousand moving parts that aren't in place until a month before the big event," O'Leary said. "But that's a great example, you know: huge engineered solution, truly multifunctional."

Hussey's other recent projects include work at United Center in Chicago and Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee, both longtime clients of the company.

Spec Seats pulled off a triple play among the three big stadiums that opened in 2020, said Jordan Hergott, the company's sales director. It supplied its custom portable chairs for Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas; SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California; and Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas.

At Allegiant, home to the NFL's Raiders, the company delivered portable seating for ADA companions, locker rooms, the event level and meeting rooms.

"With arenas, we'll do more concert floor seating for mass setups," Hergott said. "But what's really nice about our product is the flexibility and also the different areas where they can be used."

That's an advantage as big venues continue to segment their seating into more categories, offering opportunities for more differentiation in seating.

Taking Allegiant Stadium as an example, Hergott compared the

ADA companion chairs, which offer adaptations for armrests with cup holders, and locker room chairs and the different requirements for both. Both must be comfortable, but in the locker rooms, "the NFL guys will sit on our stuff, so our chairs are pretty heavy duty," he said.

Spec Seats found itself with a starring role in one COVID-era icon, thanks to its partnership with the NBA.

"We've been doing a lot of the player seating," Hergott said. "Actually, at (Walt Disney World), those were all our chairs used in the 'bubble.'"

The company has been working on taller chairs for NBA players, and with social distancing during the pandemic that gives players more space than in a traditional bench area, the chairs include some improvements.

"They don't need to have (bench seats) packed into a certain area as much ... so it gave the NBA teams and some of the college teams the opportunity to expand their player seating areas," he said. "So we designed more of a taller chair with a fully upholstered back that would be beneficial for the players."

Some non-bubble locations to spot more of Spec Seats' recent work include the refurbished Phoenix Suns Arena and The Shell, the new permanent outdoor venue for the San Diego Symphony.

'WE WANT TO MAKE IT EASY'

North Carolina-based 4Topps Premium Seating spent the last part of 2020 putting its mesh-backed chairs into several facilities. One was Q2 Stadium, the new home of MLS expansion team Austin FC, for which several seat companies supplied products.

"We did all of the premium seats for the soccer stadium, 6,000 roughly, including field suites, all the luxury suites, the club levels, so that was the biggest (project) by far, a really cool project and some new stuff for us," said Deron Nardo, 4Topps principal and president.

"We designed a sweet seat like a high-back seat, and they use that in a lot of places" in the sta-

PROJECT LOG: Hussey Seating

Client: City of San Antonio

Venue: Alamodome

Completion date: March 2021

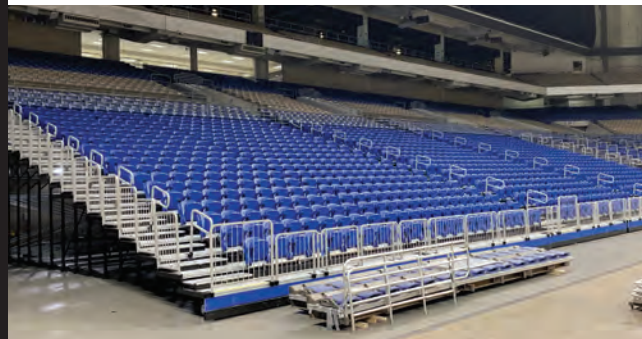
Cost: \$10 million-plus

Project: The largest telescopic platform in North America currently, the Alamodome boasts over 12,000 Hussey seats on MXP telescopic platforms.

Quote:

"This project epitomizes our focus on customer-first solution development. We worked closely with the team at the Alamodome to design a telescopic seating solution that would align with their goals. Today, you'll see the Alamodome on the national stage whether it's building two simultaneous basketball courts for the Women's NCAA Final Four, a Monster Jam event or an upcoming Def Leppard concert. Their crew is well equipped to move these systems with ease to maximize the functional space of their venue."

— Sean O'Leary



dium, he said. "We only recently started doing custom mesh colors ... so a really cool project with some of our newer features."

The mesh-backed chair is a selling point for 4Topps, but it didn't start out that way. The first thing the new company came to market with in 2011 was a half-moon high-top table with four swivel chairs that could create instant loge seats on a once-empty concourse, but "the evolution of that was it started with a plastic seat that we had another manufacturer make," Nardo said. "We designed the mesh seat, and (it) really just came down to the reaction to the breathable mesh was so overwhelming that we knew we needed to make a more robust product line with that seat."

Generating new product ideas was "as simple as looking at a stadium map," he said. "We thought, well, we have a great product for niche spaces, group areas, you know, maybe restaurants (and) bars, but, boy, there's a lot of

other places in the stadium that we know the seat will work."

Thanks to the interchangeability of parts in its system, 4Topps was able to modify that original swivel seat and create row seats as well as caster seats. "We had so much demand particularly in the college space for caster seats," Nardo said, "For whatever reason, the college football stadiums all have these terrace boxes or loge boxes where they like, like, an office chair."

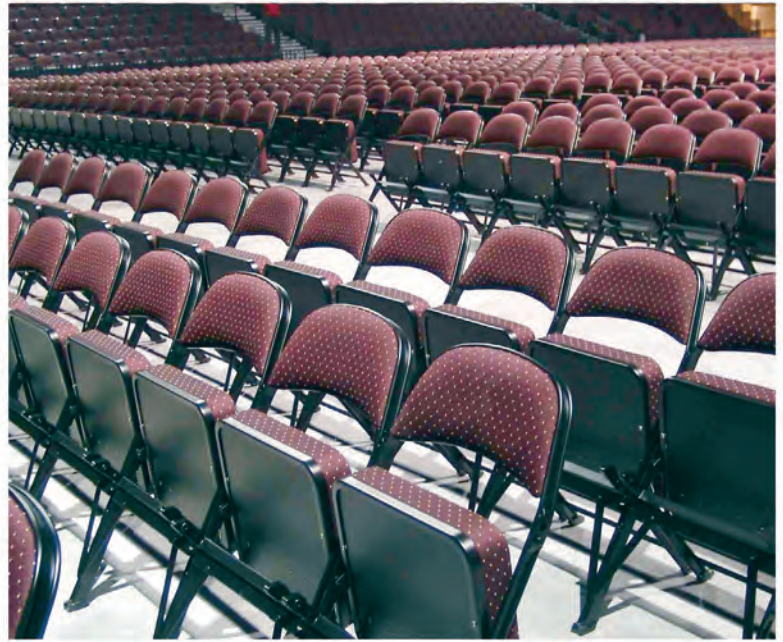
That versatility, along with the comfort of the mesh backing for warm outdoor settings, is now part of what 4Topps takes to the table when it talks to clients.

"Our goal ultimately has been to, if a team were to build a new stadium, we want to have a product for every part of that stadium and we want to make it easy," Nardo said.

Other recent installations for 4Topps include a multicolor mesh row seating installation of 2,000 or so seats at home-state

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PROJECT LOG: Irwin Seating

Client:

City of Austin/Austin FC

Venue:

Q2 Stadium

Completion Date:

May 2021

Cost:

NA

Project: The 20,000+ seat Austin FC MLS stadium was designed by Gensler and constructed by Austin Commercial. It is owned by the city of Austin. Irwin collaborated with Gensler, Austin FC, and other partners to create fan seating for general admission, clubs, suites, and a safe standing area. Custom colors and logo plates reflect the team's brand. Groundbreaking occurred in September 2019, and the stadium will host its first game on June 19, 2021. The venue will also be used for amateur sports, concerts and community events.

Quote: "This has been a great opportunity to work closely with Gensler and Austin FC to help them realize their vision for a stadium that reflects Austin's vibrant community and provides a premier experience for fans." — *Spence Benedict, director of sales, Irwin Seating*

Charlotte Motor Speedway and several Southeastern Conference projects: caster seats for football lodge boxes at Alabama and South Carolina and row seating behind home plate for baseball at Auburn.

Across the country, the soccer stadium business is booming, with three opening this season, and Irwin Seating is there for all of them.

"It's been hot," Coke Irwin said. "We just finished up the MLS stadium in Austin, Texas. We've begun work on the Columbus MLS stadium. (We're) also putting seating in Cincinnati's new MLS stadium." You can add to that the stadium for Nashville SC, which is scheduled to open in 2022.

"For the most part it's our beam mount application," he said. The chair "mounts to a beam in the general area and then you might see a little bit of differentiation in the club and the suite offerings. Some may be more traditional, our Marquee-type chairs or Signature chairs, which we often put in suites."

Q2 Stadium, the Austin MLS stadium, isn't the only project for Irwin in the Texas capital. It will also be working on the Moody Center, the arena set to open there next April.

"It's a really exciting project, a unique project in that it's on the university campus," Irwin said of the building, which will seat 10,000 for basketball and up to 15,000 for shows. "UT will be using it, but it's primarily a concert-type venue." (Oak View Group, which is developing the arena, also owns VenuesNow.)

In keeping with its hometown spirit, the company "just resealed the upper bowl at our local arena here in Grand Rapids, Van Andel Arena." The venue often shows up in VenuesNow's Top Stops lists in the 10,001-

15,000 Capacity category, and Irwin said he was proud to be part of the project.

"I guess I'll toot our own horn here in Grand Rapids," he said. "It's one of the best-run buildings in the country, and it was an opportunity that just presented itself because of how they run their business at Van Andel. They were in a good position financially, and during a period in which they weren't able to host events, they decided that it was an opportune time to replace their seating."

Among Irwin's other recent projects is the Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts in Greensboro, North Carolina, which was supposed to open about the time coronavirus shut down live events in March 2020 and is now pointed toward a fall 2021 debut.

'WE'RE STARTING TO SEE OPPORTUNITIES'

MTS Seating, another Michigan-based company, does a considerable amount of business supplying chairs to conventions centers and the hotels that serve them. Because local governments hold the purse strings to many convention centers, orders took a hit once COVID-19 shut down those buildings.

"Large convention center business has really been nonexistent because they've been paralyzed with absolutely no customer revenue coming in," said John Menas, senior vice president of sales and marketing for MTS Seating. The same is true of what Menas calls big box hotels, with 3,000- to 8,000-person meeting space capabilities.

"Now, as we're seeing that starting to open up, we're starting to see opportunities with some of these places," he said, citing a current project with the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center near Orlando, Florida.

"We're looking to see some larger venue opportunities happen soon," Menas said. "So we think that by the third (or) fourth quarter we're going to start seeing movement and (expect) next year to be the full recovery year."

In the meantime, MTS used the diversity of its client types to stay busy, including hotel chains. "We've consistently enjoyed a great deal of business, what I like to call our spec business, with large hotel chains," he said. "When you're written into their spec package, when they need something, it gets written into a proposal and then we get an order. And so that work has paid great dividends for us throughout this entire COVID crisis, because many of the limited or focused-service properties have been rather vibrant with their business activities."

Menas said the company also, like others that VenuesNow spoke to, had a backlog of business about the time the pandem-





BALCONY BONUS: At Wilton's Music Hall, a historic venue in London, Audience Systems put seats, in some cases multiple rows, in the narrow balconies.

ic struck, giving it a chance to fulfill those orders.

With that, he said, it will be good to see big convention centers get back online and return to their cycles of replacements and upgrades. "Three years ago we had an incredible cycle, a huge amount of activity with convention centers," he said. "We did the Orange County (Florida) Convention Center for 70,000 chairs."

One lesson from the pandemic, Menas said, was the wisdom in the company's decision to produce all its products itself and use raw materials suppliers who are domestic, some of them local.

"I can tell you that for items that there just isn't anything available and you have to go offshore in order to get it, those items are problematic right now," he said, "because there's so many ships that are sitting off the West Coast that are loaded with products that can't dock and they can unload."

"For us, being domestic, we control the

entire genealogy of our chair."

Among other projects, MTS Seating has 1,500 of its Mendola model of stack chairs in SoFi Stadium, which opened last year in Inglewood, California. Menas said the chair's design matches the modernism of SoCal-cool SoFi.

For U.K.-based Audience Systems, last year's factory shutdown upon the coronavirus' arrival gave way to a busy summer for the manufacturing team, Pillinger said.

"Some arts venues understandably delayed purchasing decisions until there is more certainty," he said. "Luckily, our education, arena and aftersales businesses have remained strong, which has supported our business through the last 12 months."

He spoke of flexibility as a theme in orders the company was working on, particularly tied to VIP areas. "We see more venues wanting to create highly customized VIP areas within the main body of

PROJECT LOG: MTS Seating

Client: StadCo LA LLC

Venue: SoFi Stadium, Inglewood, California

Completion Date: August 2020

Cost: NA

Project: Client specified and purchased 1,500 of the firm's 07/1 Mendola Stack Chair. Made with a high-strength lightweight aluminum alloy frame, an upholstered lightweight plywood shell with a contemporary and ergonomic design, capable of stacking 10 high.

Quote: "As the leader in Made In The USA metal frame hospitality furniture, MTS is proud to be included in the \$5 billion SoFi Stadium sports entertainment complex. Our modern Mendola stack chair is right at home in the ultra-modern aesthetic of SoFi Stadium."

— John Menas





PRED CRED: Hussey Seating recently replaced the seating at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee.

PROJECT LOG: Audience Systems Ltd.

Client: Interbuild

Venue: Multipurpose Arena, Europa Point Sports Complex, Gibraltar

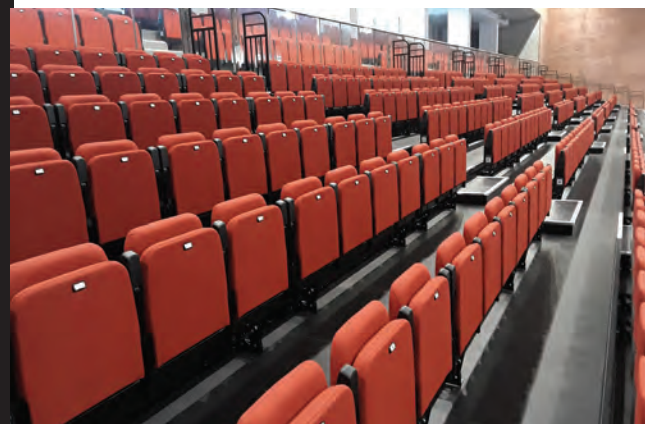
Completion date: July 2019

Cost: NA

Project: A new multipurpose hall, part of the Europa Point Sports Complex built for the Island Games. Audience Systems provided tread fixed and VIP chairs plus retractable and stacking seating to help the hall to adapt quickly for large seated events, smaller events and nonseated events alike.

Quote: "The project management, sales and installation teams were flawless from conception to completion. If I had to rate my overall experience in comparison to the many other installation works we undertake for various type of projects, I would put Audience Systems in my top three, if not THE top company I have dealt with."

— Reagan Lima, director, Interbuild



the seating. VIP guests are there not just for the hospitality, but for the vibe in the arena itself — sometimes difficult to find in the rarified atmosphere of a box!" Pillinger said.

As part of a renovation at Cairns Convention Centre in Australia, now undergoing refurbishment, Audience Systems is laying out new seating in such a way that areas can be sectioned off with removable rails to create flexible VIP zones, Pillinger said. The rails also provide space for advertising.

Another installation, at The O2 Arena in London, is "a self-contained, customized retractable seating system solely for the use of a sponsor," he said. "The seating forms part of the main arena bowl, but is accessed from an atmospheric private lounge, and is finished with high specification flooring and trims to mark it out from the general seating. It also, of course, has a great view."

Pillinger noted an increase in demand for plastic seats, partly driven by ease of cleaning in the COVID era, and said plastic is being used for installations at Meadowbank Sports Centre in Edinburgh and a new Sheffield arena.

Fabrics aren't going away, but "choices have been more driven by hygiene too," he said. "We've definitely noticed a rise in popularity of vinyl and faux leather, as

well as fabrics we are able to offer which are treated with antibacterial agent."

GA = GOING AWAY?

One question that has been asked since COVID arrived is whether general admission areas, where personal space is more difficult to regulate than in seated areas, may lose popularity. The report from seating execs is mixed.

4Topps' Nardo said he has had conversations in which venues are looking to move away from general admission in areas such as tiered picnic areas. 4Topps is now offering to lease its loge box tables and seating to organizations looking to experiment with reserved seating in those areas, in some cases as part of a revenue-sharing deal. "So we're giving them a lower entry point," he said, adding, "We're bullish on it."

Irwin, on the other hand, said his company isn't seeing that kind of appetite for reducing capacity. So GA may remain another COVID mystery until more venues hold more events at greater capacities.

One answer that seems certain across seating companies is "Yes." It's the answer those companies want to be able to give, no matter what kind of seating a client might desire. As Karol Stefanski of Poland-based Nowy Styl put it: "We will make anything you want. General seat, VIP, semi-VIP, furniture for an entire VIP suite?"

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Nowy Styl founders
Adam and Jerzy
Krzanowski

ADVERTORIAL

Nowy Styl helps people all over the world arrange their offices and public spaces – stadiums, passenger terminals, multifunctional halls, cinemas and theaters. Currently Nowy Styl is Europe's largest manufacturers of chairs and professional furniture. The growth from family business to international player would have been impossible without constant progress, while never forgetting its own history. Having never strayed from this philosophy, Nowy Styl today assists its clients in creating a reality born out of dreams. But how did it all start?

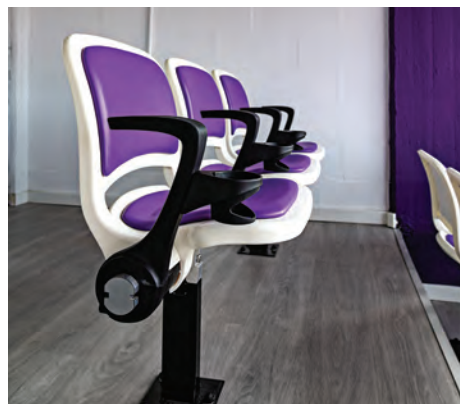
Brothers Adam and Jerzy Krzanowski founded the company in Poland almost 30 years ago, yet its history is intricately linked to the U.S. In 1990, Adam crossed the pond as a student to do a gap year working for a chair manufacturing company called Whyte. In the beginning, he was just unloading trucks, but company owner Henry Stern sensed Krzanowski's genuine interest in the business and promoted him. When Adam returned to his hometown of Krosno, where Jerzy had successfully launched a restaurant in his absence, the two brothers decided to start their own chair manufacturing business.

Henry Stern provided them with start-up support, encouraged them to open their own furniture factory and helped them build business relationships with suppliers. He didn't anticipate how this decision would change offices and public spaces all over the world in the nearest future.

The first product manufactured by the Krzanowski brothers was named Nowy Styl, which translates as "new style," and became the official company brand. The 1990s were spent expanding the product range as well as the number of markets Nowy Styl has a presence in. The company sold its millionth chair in 2000, supplying stadiums, concert halls, auditoriums, educational and medical facilities, airports, cinemas, hotels, shopping malls, countless office buildings and more, with clients including international giants like Siemens and Toyota.

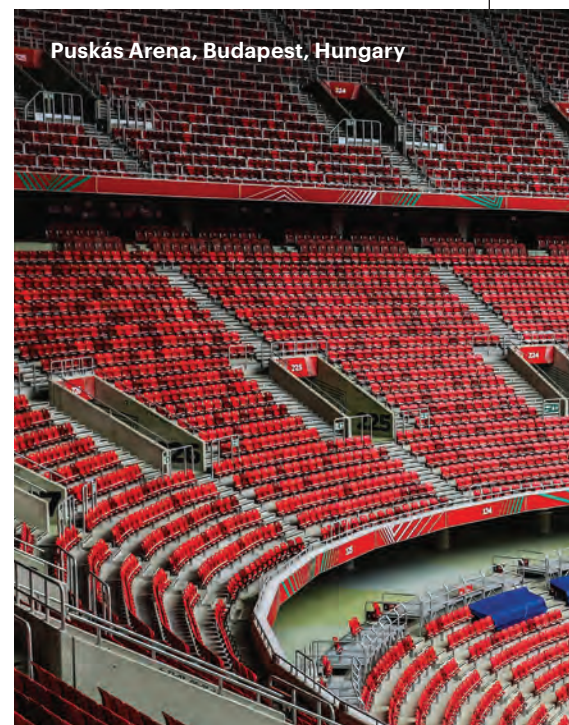
In 2006, the Forum Seating brand (now Forum by Nowy Styl) was created in anticipation of the growing demand from multi-purpose venues, including stadiums and indoor arenas. The building of the Forum brand identity was an important step in the development of the organization. The FIFA World Cups and UEFA Euros hosted across the world, from Europe to South Africa to Qatar, and the stadiums built for the occasions, came with a high demand for seats.

HOW NOWY STYL CONQUERED THE WORLD — FROM U.S. THROUGH POLAND TO EUROPE



José Zorrilla Stadium, Valladolid, Spain

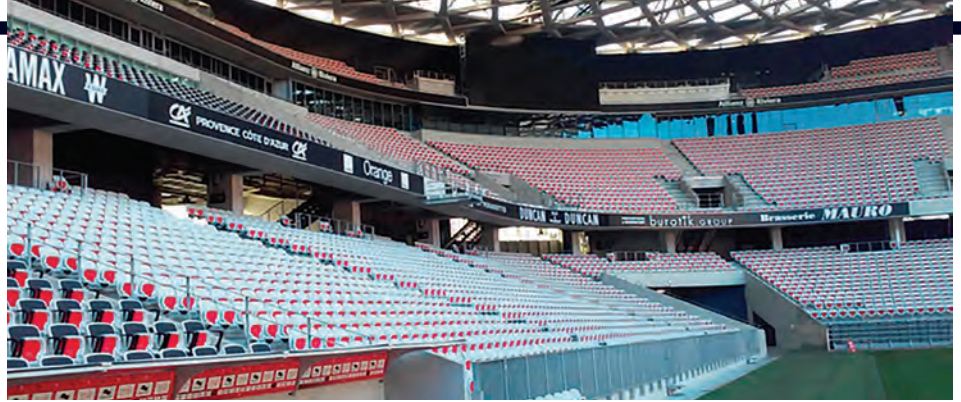
Nowy Styl has realized projects in more than 100 countries, the U.S. isn't one of them, yet. The company's International Sales and Project Support Manager Forum by Nowy Styl Karol Stefanski tells VenuesNow, that the product range first needs to be upgraded. "The stadium seats for Europe and the U.S. have different dimensions, [they're] bigger, deeper, more foam, higher backrests, a nice armrest with big cup holders. In Europe, you're just going to see the game, but in the U.S., you go to a meeting with friends. Our designs for Europe or even Qatar are considered too small," he explains.



It won't be a problem to meet the requirements, Nowy Styl prides itself on its nimbleness, keeping the entire production in-house to maintain maximum autonomy. The in-house designers are able to conceive new solutions from scratch. When 67,000-capacity Puskás Arena in Budapest, Hungary, asked the company to design the entire bowl, including camera stands, press tables and metal railings, Forum was ready. It was the company's biggest commission yet. "If one company does the seats, and another one does the railings the designs might clash. We draw all our designs ourselves, there's no clash, and usually the client gets a better deal," says Stefanski, adding, "had you asked me a year prior, if we could do such wide scope of works at Puskas, I'd have said no. But they asked, we got our guys back here to draw up prototypes and found that we could deliver."

18 production plants equipped with state-of-the-art technologies are located in Poland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Ukraine, Russia and Turkey. Their creations are presented in 33 showrooms located in Warsaw, London, Paris, Düsseldorf, Munich, Prague, Bratislava and Moscow, amongst other places. Including all subsidiaries, the Nowy Styl employs some 7,000 engineers, designers, factory workers, and the back office, which oversees production, logistics and orders coming in. Around 50 of them are working under the Forum brand, which has built a reputation for bespoke solutions that can be reconfigured easily, aimed at venues hosting a variety of event genres. "We have control over the entire production economy, all things concerning logistics, and we provide our own installation crews. It also means that if there are problems, you cannot blame anyone but yourself. It keeps us focused," says Stefanski.

Apart from a slower period in the first two to three months of the pandemic, during which most of Nowy Styl's staff worked from home, business hasn't been affected by coronavirus at all. The emphasis on reconfigurability by some clients may have increased but making it easy to add and remove seats at will has been part of Forum's philosophy from the start, even if it wasn't with distancing mandates in mind. The company has also received inquiries from clients asking how best to protect their chairs and has provided them with instruction manuals specifically created for Covid. Stefanski's overall impression, however, is that venue operators are preparing for a return at full capacity, the only return that makes sense for this business. "We are working on many projects simultaneously. We're building new plants and warehouses while creating new production lines as we speak," Stefanski continues.



Allianz Riviera, Nice, France

One reason you may not have heard of Nowy Styl is the Krzanowski brothers' habit of leaving management, staff and brand names of the many companies they've acquired over the past 25 years untouched, while injecting their unique know-how. After all, the local staff know their market best. The Germans, for instance, love sturdy-looking seats with lots of metal parts, in Finland, Nowy Styl got asked to design seats with a natural wood look. Some of the most prestigious places will sometimes forgo beauty in favor of price, as long as stability is guaranteed. In countries where soccer is a religion, a simple shell might be all that's required for an audience that's mostly on its feet anyways. The Qataris are picky, they might request 10 to 20 mock-ups before making a decision. The U.S. audience wants comfort.

"We will make anything you want. General seat, VIP, semi-VIP, furniture for an entire VIP suite? You can pay anything from €50 to €2,000 for a seat," according to Stefanski, who observes a trend that started in the U.S. and has already swept over to the UK and Europe: selling advertising space on seats. It can be a way of refinancing even the most elaborate chair, which may include USB sockets, internet connection, heating and a touchscreen – particularly in times when venue operators are thinking of ways to avoid human interactions on site. Stefanski recalls requests that were simply not feasible. "We had one inquiry from the Netherlands, where they wanted a heating and a cooling system inside the same chair," he remembers, adding that the only reason Nowy Styl didn't bother researching a way of realizing this was the small quantity ordered by the client, which would have rendered the operation economically unviable.

Stefanski's favorite project so far is the Groupama Stadium in Lyon, France, which was built for the

UEFA Euros 2016 and has a capacity of 59,186. It was designed by London-based architects Populous, who also designed the new Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London and won the bid for FC Cincinnati's new West End Stadium. "It's a beautiful, modern stadium, with a strong emphasis on sustainability. Our work there led to other projects in France. Every time we come back, it puts a smile on your face," says Stefanski.

The 2016 European soccer championship also led to another commission that exemplifies the lengths to which Nowy Styl and Forum will go in order to satisfy a client's needs: The French city of Nice had a pretty new stadium that didn't meet the UEFA's seating requirements. The operators called Nowy Styl. "They had very limited time between the regular soccer season and the tournament. Two months to replace 36,000 seats. We had to get rid of the old seats, recycle them, produce, supply and install the new ones. But when they asked, 'Can you do that?', we said, 'of course, no problem!' Even though we would usually calculate about seven to nine months to do that kind of job. But you find solutions, hire extra people if you have to, you get real creative under pressure."

In 2017, Forum began a partnership with Coastal Qatar. It licensed the production of Abacus stadium chairs to the Qatari manufacturer. It also supplied technological know-how to support the construction of a modern factory with the launch of production in the Middle East. As a result, these seats will fill six of the seven stadiums at the FIFA World Cup 2022.

Egypt is currently constructing new stadiums, as well, embedded in entire entertainment districts that will require many, many chairs. And then there's the U.S., where the market is huge and competition small, according to Stefanski. "They're building two to three stadiums every year; the MLS is growing. And then there's Spain. Valencia, Real Madrid, and FC Barcelona are about to replace their seats," he says, showing both great excitement at the prospect but little hope of winning the bid for Barcelona's famous Camp Nou. The club's in financial dire straits. "We have also supplied the seating for Real Valladolid lately – the club owned by former Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo Nazário," Stefanski concludes.

With the U.S. increasingly exporting its most popular franchises, including the NBA, NFL and WWE, there seems to be no shortage of future prospects for Nowy Styl and Forum – once people are allowed to gather again, that is. The company is in talks with OVG (VenuesNow's parent company), which is busy building arenas across Europe and wants to introduce the audience across the pond to some of the American comforts when it comes to seats. Esports has created a demand for modified chairs that is still limited but may increase. "We want to be recognized as a one-stop shop and long-term partner. We are not going to disappear tomorrow. There's no way we're not going to fulfill our contracts, even in these difficult times," says Stefanski.

And he highlighted, "At the core, Adam and Jerzy Krzanowski are still the same people they were when Adam left for the States. Throughout our growth, their motto has always been to respect and help each other. You have to be good to people, that's their and our business philosophy. They've remained grounded, never forgetting where they come from."

