

2021 VENUESNOW ALL-STARS

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A wide-angle photograph of the interior of UBS Arena at Belmont Park. The space is vast and modern, with a high ceiling featuring a grid of recessed lights. Large windows line the walls, and the floor is highly reflective. A sign above a glass entrance on the right reads "BELMONT PARK".

WELCOME TO THE CELL

THE NEW YORK ISLANDERS FINALLY HAVE A NEW HOME, AND IF THE PREMIUM AREAS IMPRESS YOU, WAIT TILL YOU SEE THE REST OF UBS ARENA
BY DON MURET



GRAND INDEED: The grand lobby is the big entrance to big events that are coming to UBS Arena.



NEW YORK ISLANDERS fans have waited for what seems like an eternity for a first-class hockey barn to match their passion for a team that got lost in the NHL's top market over its tenuous home ice situation.

The Blue and Orange Army finally get what they deserve with UBS Arena.

All of those proposed arena developments over the past 30 years, including the ambitious but ill-fated Lighthouse Point mixed-use project as part of revitalizing Nassau Coliseum, are a distant memory now.

The new \$1.5 billion red brick fortress that sits next to historic Belmont Park fits the needs of the Isles' most fervent supporters and

those new to the sport out for a night of entertainment.

Oak View Group, parent company of VenuesNow, privately funded the project as part of New York Arena Partners, a partnership that includes the Islanders and Sterling Project Development. OVG runs the building.

The arena's swanky bunker suites and clubs are exclusive and impressive, but it's the basic amenities in public spaces that speak to puckheads. For those that packed the no-frills coliseum during the Isles' glory years winning four consecutive Stanley Cups in the 1980s and put up with a poor fan experience after the team switched home games to Barclays Center, an NBA arena shoehorned for the NHL — a beer's for you.

There are plenty of watering holes to make that celebratory toast. UBS Arena has eight bars accessible to all fans with open views to the ice.

It starts with the large Heineken Red Star Bar, which sits at center ice on the east side of the main concourse. It's 42 feet long and 20 feet wide, one of four bars branded for the team's beer partner. All arena patrons will pass by that destination themed with Heineken's familiar green color scheme as they walk up the stairs from the grand lobby.

Supporting those bars are the multitude of drink rails dispersed pretty much everywhere on the concourses for fans to perch their adult beverages and hang out during intermission when those hallways get crowded.

"There are lots of drink rails; it's an underrated thing," said Mike Sciortino, UBS Arena's senior vice president of operations and assistant general manager. "At other arenas, you buy food and drink and there's nowhere to put it. We have them wherever possible."

The big welcome starts with the spacious grand lobby at the northeast corner, spanning 11,000 square feet and topped by a starry sky ceiling design. From that vantage point, patrons can look up and see a good cross-section of the arena, from the main concourse up to the suite level.

For Islanders games, MSG Network will set up its broadcast deck overlooking the grand lobby, Sciortino said.

Several design elements com-



JUST ADD ICE: The NHL Islanders' new home has a capacity of 17,000 for hockey.

memorate New York landmarks inside the 745,000-square-foot arena.

To recognize its neighbor Belmont Park, the 116-year-old horse racing facility next door, there's an emblem of a BP medallion embedded in the floor of the grand lobby and on several locations of the facade.

The red brick exterior matches the track's grandstand design.

The half-dozen lanterns adorning the exterior corners harken back to the original Madison Square Garden, which was built in 1874 and demolished in 1925.

In addition, the white tile way-finding columns bring touches of Grand Central Station to the concourses.

All told, 96 varieties of tile are part of the building decor,

including what are some of the nicest restrooms at a big league arena, said Hank Abate, president of arena operations.

"Fans will see a venue that acknowledges the history of the site and classic New York," said Tom Pistore, UBS Arena's president of commercial operations. "They're going to feel the class of New York coming out in a nostalgic way and respectful to the parklike setting."

The seating bowl respects the opinion of many that feel no sport matches the experience of watching hockey live. The lower bowl has 9,000-plus seats to keep the highest number of Isles fans as possible engaged in the action.

The upper bowl splits into two smaller sections, bringing everything closer to the ice. Standing

at the back of the 200 and 300 levels, patrons are never more than a nine-row walk-up to their seats, Sciortino said.

Both concourses have large outdoor terraces that will be used as much as possible pending weather conditions, driven by the concert market at a building designed as much for live entertainment as hockey.

The Heineken Terrace, an 8,650-square-foot space in the upper deck, has roof cover and overlooks Paddock Park at the racetrack. During Belmont Park's two seasonal meets in the spring and fall, fans can watch thoroughbreds trot on the green space below, Sciortino said.

Combined, the arena has almost 17,000 square feet outdoor gathering space, said Kurt

Amundsen, senior principal at project architect Populous.

At ground level on the southeast corner, the 7,300-square-foot Belmont Hall restaurant faces the track with an outdoor dining patio. Inside, the restaurant has a direct path to the suite lobby for premium seat holders.

The premium spaces take the Islanders VIP experience to a new level with 56 suites and six club seat offerings.

The most exclusive are the 18 Spotlight Suites at event level, the arena's version of bunker suites. Those buyers have access to the first row of seats along the glass. The elevated riser supporting those seats are a difference maker.

At other NHL arenas, those "ice seats" are sunk below the



SHINING ON: The Spotlight Suites are tied to the first row of seats along the dasher boards.

dasher boards without providing a clear line of sight, said Peter Luukko, chairman of OVG Facilities. At UBS Arena, “it’s just an incredible seat,” Luukko said.

A few Spotlight Suites are designed with one-way window views of the Islanders walking on and off the ice.

The Spotlight Club itself, a 2,500-square-foot room that’s part of that mix at event level, is effectively a large version of the suite product, providing an opportunity to see both the Islanders and visiting teams pass by its windows. It’s situated at center ice. Capacity is 130.

Midlevel, the 37 Belmont Suites come with a permanent wet bar fronting the hospitality space, a twist on suite design to help keep patrons connected to the action on the ice. The same intent goes for the 12 fixed seats, pushed forward a bit further into the bowl than other traditional suite configurations, Sciortino said.

Suites are priced from \$300,000 to north of \$600,000 a year, depending on the product and location, Pistore said.

Club seats, depending on location, run \$10,000 a person per seat up to \$50,000 for the Spotlight Club.

For all premium seats, terms are three, five, seven and 10 years. The average length is eight years, he said.

A few weeks before the Islanders were set to play their first home game on Nov. 20, most inventory was sold except for a few hundred club seats. The Islanders feel they’re in good shape overall considering the competition.

“There’s not a more fierce market in pro sports than New York,” Pistore said. “We knew that coming in and had the benefit of being the last building to open, so while it’s a challenge it’s also a blessing. From the amenities we were able to build into our package, stuff that some arenas can’t offer in the market like parking, it’s helped us overcome any of those challenges.”

For the suites, it was almost exclusively new buyers making those purchases, Pistore said. Nassau Coliseum, before it was renovated four years ago, didn’t



ALL ABOARD: The white tile wayfinding columns pay tribute to Grand Central Station.

have much of a suite product. At Barclays Center, a tiny fraction of customers purchased suites for Islanders games.

All told, the Islanders essentially started from ground zero to sell suites with the majority of purchasers coming from Nassau and Suffolk County and the Long Island district. Pistore said it was a compelling draw for a community that has never had a venue of this quality.

“Given the affluence as well, they’ve responded,” he said. “The Manhattan customer is still

involved but this is going to be the home of the Islanders and tapped into a Long Island base.”

An estimated 30% of previous Islanders season-ticket holders upgraded to club seats, happy that they finally get access to the amenities that weren’t available at Barclays Center and Nassau Coliseum, he said. Overall, there’s a broad base of premium options, some focused on hockey and others tailored more to the live music experience.

The Dime Club, with 11,000 square feet of hospitality space

SNEAK PEEK: A few Spotlight Suites at event level provide views of the Islanders' path to and from the ice.



on the west side of the main concourse, is the largest of two sideline clubs. It's named for the arena's banking partner and is tied to four center sections of 1,300 seats.

One floor above on the suite level, the UBS Club, situated at the south end facing the stage, showcases the arena's loge box concept sold in two-seat and four-seat packages. The setup for the 22 units is a mix of chairs and stools.

The 23,547-square-foot club is open to the seating bowl. The small television screen or tablet, a standard amenity with the loge product, has evolved at UBS Arena to a larger flatscreen at the rear of the box.

"A lot of this was long-standing fans that may have left the Islanders' environment because those amenities weren't there or up to par," Pistore said. "They've seen the new venue now (at the preview center) and it shows them what was possible, all against the backdrop of the pandemic."

The center-hung videoboard, produced by Daktronics, has main displays measuring 26 feet high and 35 feet wide.

The board is large but not overbearing, Sciortino said.

Early in the development, there were discussions over the dual videoboard concept, which took root at Climate Pledge Arena, home of the NHL expansion Seattle Kraken and another OVG project. In the end, the decision was made to go with a single board, Amundsen said.

One aspect of UBS Arena that does mirror Climate Pledge Arena are production spaces for touring shows.

Those areas extend from the eight loading docks and 52,000 square feet of marshaling space, to the four star dressing rooms and a dedicated kitchen to avoid having to prepare meals for crews in the loading dock.

The rigging grid has a total capacity of 400,000 pounds, which as it stands now, is more than twice the load for the live entertainment industry's most extravagant productions.

All told, the back-of-house design provides for greater efficiency for setup and teardown of concerts resulting in promoters saving roughly 30% to 40% in production costs to book events at UBS Arena, Luukko said.

"We have the sports compound and artist compound, dedicated areas for the Islanders and for shows," he said. "It's all about the ability to be working with both areas and the two don't meet. We're not robbing Peter to pay Paul in terms of dressing rooms and catering."

The arena is second to none for touring amenities for a venue with live music as a second tenant, Amundsen said.

"The only thing that limited us at all in Seattle was the existing roof structure," he said. "This building will perform extremely well financially. Operationally, tours will love coming here, not only for the market, but for the ease of touring. It will be very attractive to a number of shows." 🍷

ARENA'S FOOD SPECIALTY IS THE BIG APPLE

BY JAMES ZOLTAK

NEW YORKERS SHOULD feel right at home amid the food and beverage offerings at UBS Arena. Concessionaire Delaware North Sportservice has partnered with several Big Apple-area brands and plans to showcase traditions such as a "Sunday gravy" package with sausage, meatballs and braciole.

Local eateries featured at the NHL venue include The Harrison, with three arena outlets offering cheeseburgers and fries. The Floral Park firm is also Sportservice's partner at Belmont Hall, the arena's 700-seat restaurant.

Other local brands with an arena presence are Mighty Quinn's Barbeque; Milk Bar, a bakery and dessert concept featuring signature Cereal Milk soft serve; Blue Line Deli & Bagels, whose iconic blue and orange bagels and sandwiches will be served at the arena's marketplace locations; and Brooklyn-born Sausage King of New York, whose products will be available in concessions and premium spaces.

Shaq's Big Chicken, co-owned by former NBA star Shaquille O'Neal, is a concessions item as well. Those chicken sandwiches are also served at Climate Pledge Arena.

Local sourcing is prioritized with 75% of ingredients coming from within a 300-mile radius of the arena, depending on seasonal availability, according to Sportservice officials.

"When we talk about bringing a premium experience to the concessions environment, this is the arena we're going to be doing that in," said Anthony Kleinman, Sportservice's assistant general manager at UBS Arena.

Similar to Climate Pledge Arena, another NHL arena project tied to arena developer Oak View Group, the marketplace concepts offer hot, freshly prepared items and grab-and-go snacks and beverages as

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Next Level Sandwiching: Donald Rosner (above left), of Huntington, N.Y.-based Blue Line Deli & Bagels, with NBA Hall of Famer Shaquille O'Neal (left and above right), co-founder of Big Chicken, at UBS Arena holding their next-level sandwich collaboration "The Islander" featuring a crispy chicken breast topped with Buffalo sauce, cream cheese, blue cheese and served on Blue Line Deli's iconic blue-and-orange Islanders-inspired bagel.

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OVG shifts the food service mode from the belly-up concession stand format.

Traditional concessions fare extends to Chinese, deli sandwiches, cheesesteaks and chicken tenders.

Kosher, vegan and gluten-free foods are also part of the mix.

Portable carts will carry popcorn and nachos, sushi and barbeque, plus Vide canned cocktails and Illegal Mezcal craft cocktails. Beer and other canned beverages will be available at grab-and-go locations.

Two Amazon-powered Just Walk Out markets will also be added to the mix at or soon after opening, Kleinman said.

"With 13 marketplaces, you're getting great premium culinary food served hot in front of you as you walk into a stand and it's all on your own," Kleinman said. "Instead of standing in line waiting for their food, (guests) have an open-air environment where you're going

to be able to walk in and enjoy the freedom of picking what you want, looking at the food being cooked in front of you, understanding what the food is and then being able to check out and go."

Mobile ordering and self-service kiosks will help streamline the process, Kleinman said.

"We're going to have many locations where mobile ordering is going to be integrated and you can order right there and walk up and be able to just grab your food and go back to your seat," he said.

Belmont Hall will be open to the public on event days, said Ted Donnelly, Sportservice executive chef at UBS Arena.

"It's going to be that beer hall feeling with high-top tables and picnic benches where people can come and order as they please from servers walking around with handhelds," Donnelly said.

"What we're doing across the entire arena is simple food done really well, with maybe a little twist on it," he said. "When we're making

a sausage sandwich it's not just a link sausage on a bun. It's shaved sausage where we're bringing it back to life on a flat-top grill so it gets a little more crisp and it sits nicer up on a bun. Our tacos are traditional street-style."

Sportservice's operation extends to the arena's 56 suites and five clubs.

"With our Sunday gravy in the suites, we've got braciola (various meats rolled in cheese and bread crumbs and fried), meatballs and sausage, all in a traditional red pasta sauce served with pasta," Donnelly said. "Our inclination is to serve simple foods done right."

Kleinman said it's been a big plus for Sportservice to be involved from the design phase of arena development. The vendor sent people to Kansas City, home of arena architect Populous, to offer input on the "overall flow of the kitchen spaces, overall look and feel of the concession stands and how we wanted to design the equipment into them."

"Time was taken to do it right and put



every piece of equipment in the right spot and design for the right flow so we can execute the mission without causing too much commotion," he said.

The arena's 13 bars will have cocktails on tap and frozen drinks, with opportunities to showcase local and national brands such as Notorious Pink wines, Heineken, Illegal Mezcal and Patron.

"We'll have some fun cocktail ideas in our premium spaces and on the concourse as well," Kleinman said. "Heineken is our big sponsor so that gives us an opportunity to really showcase some of their brands. We're very excited about that piece."

New York is a food mecca, which means the bar is set high, and at UBS Arena, the quality of offerings will trump quantity, Donnelly said.

"Be brilliant at a few things and people will respect you for it," he said. "Anthony and some of the team members had the opportunity to go out

to Climate Pledge Arena to see their opening weekend and there are things we took away, some things they did that went really well."

"Some of the technological aspects are similar and we're trying to stay ahead of the game with crunch points and other aspects of the operation," Donnelly said. "There's always more to learn and it's going to be a fun first few months nailing down the operation and getting it into lockstep."

Staffing has been a challenge, but the excitement of opening a new arena has played in Sportservice's favor. The company has made good use of online resources like LinkedIn, Indeed.com and other sites in its recruitment efforts, Kleinman said.

"You know what's been working best? Word of mouth," he said. "We've gotten people on board and now we are seeing some of their friends come down. It's definitely starting to turn around." ▀

SPONSORSHIP TOTAL NEARS \$50 MILLION MARK

BY DON MURET

THE NEW YORK Islanders have generated close to \$50 million in annual sponsorship revenue for UBS Arena, an impressive feat considering several deals were done during the pandemic and lengthy shutdown of live entertainment venues.

The \$50 million number includes the 20-year, \$400 million naming rights deal for UBS Arena, signed with the Swiss investment bank, confirmed Tom Pistore, the arena's president of commercial sales.

Oak View Group's sales agency, OVG Partnerships, worked with the Islanders to sell arena sponsorships.

"Over a two-year run, we will surpass that number," Pistore said. "In a competitive market, it's an achievement to be able to sell from zero during the pandemic and a testament to Dan Griffis, Evan Levine and OVG's team."

The strategy was to sign as many global blue chip brands as possible to "make sure the project gets its due status in the ecosystem," he said. "We're trying to honor and respect their great fans that bring a lot to the game atmosphere, but elevate the brand profile."

UBS, Heineken, Northwell Health, Verizon, BMW, Hyundai and Coca-Cola are six examples. They're all founding partners, signing multi-year agreements valued at seven figures annually.

A few weeks before the Isles hit the ice on Nov. 20, more deals were in the works with potential partners in the gaming and cryptocurrency categories, Pistore said.

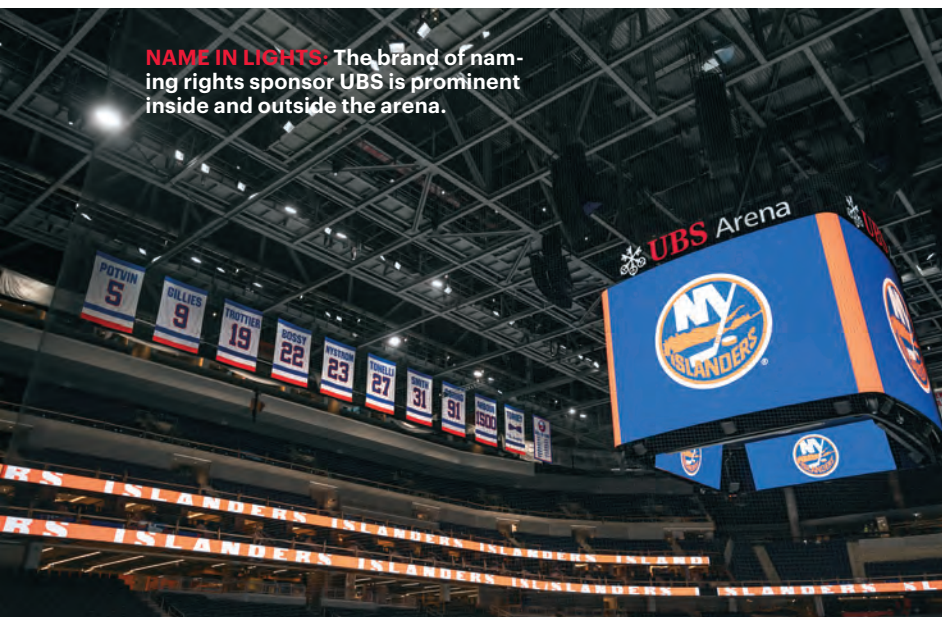
"We're still in the evolving stages of the gaming space, understanding New York state has taken a very deliberate approach," he said. "We're on the cusp of waiting for the state and Belmont Park to get out front in terms of understanding the landscape."

As of early November, OVG was close to signing a crypto partner, which is a fairly broad category, Pistore said.

It's also a hot category as that form of

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NAME IN LIGHTS: The brand of naming rights sponsor UBS is prominent inside and outside the arena.



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payment technology evolves into a mainstream platform. One crypto firm, FTX, has signed multiple deals with teams and leagues, and bought naming rights for the NBA arena in Miami.

"Sponsorship is about brand affiliation and creating fan loyalty," Pistore said. "I'm not an expert on their

platform and other facets, but from a branding perspective, it can place an emerging category like that at the forefront."

Whether a deal extends to using crypto as payment for tickets, concessions and merchandise at UBS Arena has not been determined. OVG and the Islanders would consider it if it was important to their partner, he said. ▣

BELMONT ENTRIES

Companies who have sponsorships with UBS Arena announced as of Nov. 12.

Blue Line Deli	Moët Hennessy
BMW	Northwell Health
Canidae	Patron
Coca-Cola	Philly Pretzel
Dime Community Bank	The Pinot Project
Globalization Partners	PPG
Harman/JBL	Shah's Halal
Heineken	Ticketmaster
Hyundai	UBS
Illegal Mezcal	Verizon
Imperial Dade	Winters Bros.
Jake's 58	XL Fleet

COURTESY TEAM

VENUE PROVIDES A NEW YORK LUXURY: PARKING PLACES

BY DON MURET

UBS ARENA FEATURES a standard amenity that stands apart from most arenas in New York — ample on-site parking. It's a basic feature in the venue world but in New York's five boroughs, it's a rare sight and comes at a premium.

For the Islanders and arena developer Oak View Group, it's critical to get it right. Parking and the navigation of traffic tied to sports and entertainment facilities is typically top of mind for the ticket-buying public.

If parking becomes a big headache for those customers, teams and venue operators will hear

about it.

At Belmont Park, a five-level, 1,500-space elevated parking structure is under construction across the street from the arena on property owned by the New York Racing Association, which runs the horse racing track next door.

For Islanders games, it's reserved for premium seat holders.

Those patrons will use a surface lot next to the parking structure until it is completed, said Mike Sciortino, UBS Arena's senior vice president of operations and assistant general manager.

Elsewhere, there are four parking lots reserved for arena events, the biggest of which is Emerald

Parking with 600 spaces on the north side of the track. Some lots are across the Hempstead Turnpike with walkways to the arena.

Shuttle buses will run from the Emerald lot. For those hoofing it from that lot, it's a bit of a walk, Sciortino said, but they're protected by a covered walkway, which stretches 30 feet wide.

All told, there are about 5,500 parking spaces, most within walking distance of the building. It's roughly the same number of spots at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, New York, where the Islanders played for 40-plus years.

A check of Ticketmaster, where parking can be purchased, showed that the fee was \$45 excluding convenience charges, for

the Harry Styles concert on Nov. 28, the arena's first live music event.

For concerts, parking is \$5 more than for Islanders games, according to the UBS Arena website.

For many event goers, public transportation may be the best option. Arena officials estimate up to 3,000 people plan to use trains and buses to get to the facility depending on the event and day of the week, Sciortino said.

In addition, a new Elmont station along the Long Island Railroad near the arena was set to open late this year. It's the first new stop for that line in 50 years. A second station close by, Queens Village, will be operational in 2022.

"The beauty of this arena is that you're in an urban setting with adequate land and public transportation and ride share, all in one," said Peter Luukko, chairman of OVG Facilities. "It's the best of both worlds, which is unique among New York arenas." ▣

COURTESY TEAM

Section 329 Lives On in the 200 Level

BY DON MURET

NASSAU COLISEUM, DESPITE its shortcomings as a dated 1970s-era facility, had one endearing feature that's been brought over to UBS Arena, the new home of the NHL's New York Islanders.

Back in the day, the spotlight was on Section 329, situated in the upper corner of the coliseum, behind the goal where the visiting team shot twice and above the tunnel from the ice to the home locker room.

The section became widely known for the Blue and Orange Army, a supporters group representing a collection of high energy season-ticket holders and die-hard fans. The tradition was carried over to Barclays Center, where the Isles played five years at the Brooklyn arena.

In a sense, the section became the NHL team's version of the Black Hole, where some of the NFL's most passionate and creatively dressed fans congregate in the end zone at Las Vegas Raiders games — and before that, in Oakland and Los Angeles — to intimidate the visiting team.

At UBS Arena, the Islanders and developer Oak View Group paid homage to Section 329. Don't get confused, though; it's sandwiched between sections 228 and 230 at the north end where the Islanders attack twice.

During the design process, the Islanders tweaked the section numbers to reflect the special relationship with the Blue and Orange Army, project officials said.

There are about 180 seats in Section 329 with the last few rows designed as safe-standing spaces with small flip-down seats sold as a season ticket for \$1,079. The layout is similar to outdoor soccer stadiums in North America and in Europe where safe-standing seats are common for supporters sections in the end zones.

"This will be one of the best spots in the arena for hockey," said Mike Sciortino, UBS Arena's senior vice president of operations and assistant general manager.


The Blue and Orange Army was part of conversations early in the design process. Major League Soccer teams have done the same thing for years to get fan input on facility development.

Much like the soccer version, there will be chanting, singing songs and banging on drums among Section 329 inhabitants.

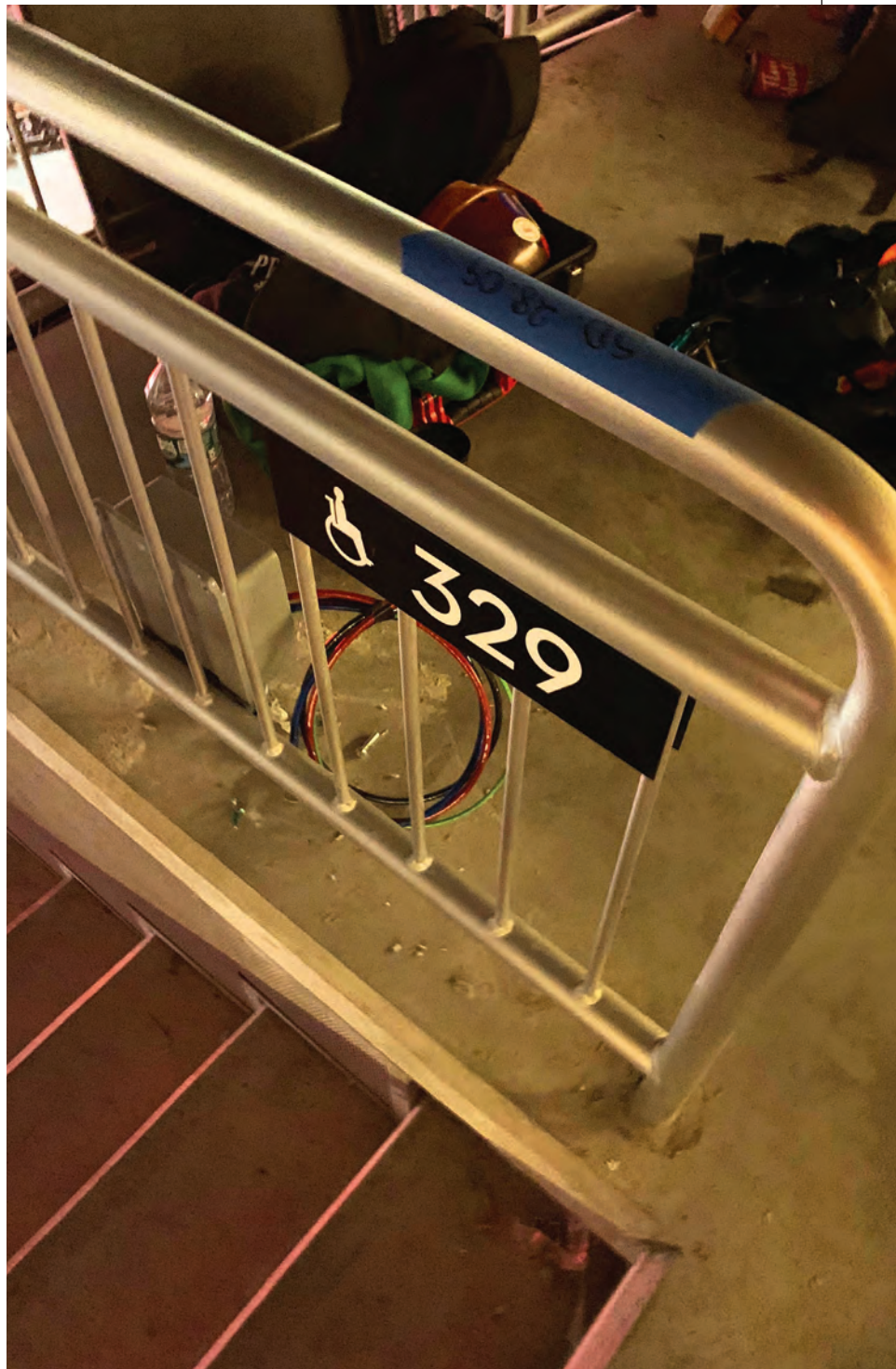
"It's intended to accommodate those fans who probably aren't going to sit down a whole lot during hockey games," said Kurt Amundsen, senior principal with Populous, the arena architect. "It's going to be an uncomfortable place to play for visiting teams because of that little section right there. Everyone is going to know they're there."

A large concessions space, the Tailgate Bar, sits directly behind Section 329, which is situated at stage end.

Section 329 is thought to be the first safe-standing section for a big league arena. Some college basketball arenas have the same functionality for student seating, he said.

"Some of those arenas have incredibly steep seating bowls behind one one basket to distract the visiting team shooting free throws with a wall of fans behind them," Amundsen said. "This is a little bit of a play on that." 

IT LIVES: The Islanders' most passionate fans will be found in a section designed in part with safe-standing spaces, with soccer supporters' sections in mind.



THE SOUL OF THE BUILDING



PROGRAMMING CZAR MARK SHULMAN WILL USE HIS NYC EXPERIENCE TO BOOK NEW ARENA

BY ERIC RENNER
BROWN

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE a New York arena play, and artists visiting the market now have five to choose from: Manhattan's iconic Madison Square Garden; Brooklyn's Barclays Center; Prudential Center, across the Hudson River in Newark, N.J.; Nassau Coliseum, the New York Islanders' old home, which went through a \$165 million renovation; and the new UBS Arena, the Long Island venue located just east of the city in Elmont, N.Y., which will host its first public concert – pop star Harry Styles – on Nov. 28.

As UBS Arena debuts in America's most populous metropolitan area, home to more than 20 million people, Mark Shulman, the venue's senior vice president, programming, will help secure world-class acts and events to complement the games of its NHL tenant, the New York Islanders, and lure in legions of prospective artists and fans.

Shulman arrives at UBS after 17 years at AEG Presents (the final three as senior vice president of AEG subsidiary The Bowery Presents) with a wealth of knowledge about what makes the market tick – not just for fans in New York City, but for those in surrounding locales like Long Island, southwest Connecticut, and Westchester County.

When VenuesNow, whose owner, Oak View Group, is the develop-

er and part of the joint venture that owns UBS Arena, connects with Shulman in early November, he's marveling at the sprint to the finish as the arena's construction team puts the final touches on the venue.

"These days, from the morning to the afternoon, things change dramatically," he says. "The building is getting its soul."

It's a soul that'll soon be on display to the masses, with performances on the books in the coming months ranging from country star Eric Church to rock legends Genesis to colorful comic Sebastian Maniscalco. Shulman shared his thoughts about the market, the venue, and the types of programming he wants to bring to it.

How did you end up in this role at UBS?

Early in 2020, I had made the decision that it was time for me to seek something new. I actually put in my notice [at AEG] in February of 2020 and I gave five weeks notice. ... When the opportunity came up to work on the UBS Arena, it became a no-brainer. This was the opportunity to bring this amazing venue to life – to introduce it to the marketplace was an opportunity that I could not turn down. It's been an incredible experience; it's enabled me to continue to grow in my own experience while bringing so much of what I know as a promot-

er to the venue. I've drawn upon that in working with promoters in the marketplace, all of which I've known for a very long time, to create what we believe will be the most promoter-friendly venue possible.

What will make it the most friendly to promoters, in your estimation?

Our tagline for the venue is "Made for music, built for hockey." It's not a sports-primary venue. It is a sports and music-primary venue. ... As we built out our team, it's highly experienced concert professionals ... staffing it in a way that people have experience on the promoter side, so they understand that which the promoter is trying to achieve and how we as a venue can help amplify and augment their efforts.

What promoter lessons did you learn at AEG and The Bowery Presents, and how are you applying them at UBS?

We as promoters always are doing our best to satisfy the artist's vision. Oftentimes, particularly in bigger markets, when you would try to do that, there were impediments at the venues. It turned into a lot of "you can't do this" and "you can't do that." We want to be a venue where 99% of the time, unless it's a safety issue, the answer is "yes," and we're going to figure out how to make it happen.





GRAND OPENER: Harry Styles (as Dorothy at a Halloween concert at Madison Square Garden) will perform the first public concert at the arena Nov. 28.



EYE OF THE TIGRES: Los Tigres del Norte, shown in a 2020 performance, will perform March 12 at the arena.

What differentiates New York City proper from Long Island, and how are you taking that into account as you set about establishing UBS Arena?

UBS Arena is going to reshape the way artists play in New York. While we are on Long Island, we are literally on the border of Queens and Long Island. Opening [in November 2021] is the new Elmont, Long Island Rail Road train station, the first new Long Island Rail Road stop in 50 years. The station is going to service four different train lines, so you're going to get from Penn Station [in Manhattan] to this arena direct in

30 minutes, and then it will continue all the way out Long Island depending on your destination. You couple that with thousands of parking spaces and this tremendous rideshare lot that we've worked with Lyft and Uber to develop, and you now rethink where people will gravitate. We believe that we're going to be the closest and easiest access venue for a wide swath of that New York area – not just Long Island, but Westchester, southwest Connecticut, Queens, Bronx, etc. The incredibly large and diverse fan base within 30 miles of this venue makes it so that at any time on any artist's routing, it can fit in. It's

just a matter of where else they're playing, and I don't believe it in any way negates anyone playing anywhere else, because you will see artists who will play all of [the New York market arenas], and every different permutation of these four different venues.

What's your pitch for artists to play the venue? As a brand-spanking-new arena, you're going to be able to accommodate the most cutting-edge tours, for one.

There is not a touring arena show on the planet that does not easily fit into this building. Its capabilities are unmatched. The production managers who have come in have just looked at it, and it's like they can't even believe what they're seeing. Then we pivot to that artist experience in our artist campus. When they come in, they're gonna have a very comfortable place to spend their day and prepare for their show. Then, lastly, when they get on that stage, the arena itself, it's the largest lower bowl in the New York area. It's a beautiful design, where the maximum number of fans are as close to that stage as possible. And we've had two acousticians working on the project, so what you will have is a great sounding show as well. You put all the pieces together, and we think it's a winning combination.

New York City proper gets all the love and national media attention as this hotspot of music – and rightfully so – but Long Island has a pretty deep musical history itself.

It's a very deep history, when you look at everything from 50 years of Nassau Coliseum, but also Jones Beach, legendary shows that happened at Belmont Park – a lot of people don't even realize that so many shows actually happened at this site over the years. It's a very hardcore, music-loving fanbase, a very deep history. We're starting a new chapter for those fans, bringing shows that they previously needed to travel to go see to their backyard. And as fans get introduced to this venue, as it develops its personality, we know that we are going to set off in new paths that previously weren't available to that incredible fanbase. We will, over time, follow the fans' lead, because they are going to tell us with their engagement with the venue what they most want to see.

Your strategy will evolve as you see what fans respond to, but are you focusing on any specific genres? Or do you just want all the big arena tours?

I really wouldn't say it's either. In programming the venue, it is about unlocking genres and types of shows for all of our different diverse fans. That includes Latin shows, K-pop shows, classic rock shows. Everyone who lives in the area should feel as though they have a piece of ownership in this venue. I want everyone who looks at [the calendar] to find something that intrigues them.

How special is it to bring Harry Styles into UBS to open the venue up?

When we were able to share what this arena was about with Harry, he was enthusiastic about making it happen, and to be able to have him finish his tour at our venue is a tremendous honor. The show sold out immediately; the demand was off the charts. To have his dedicated, engaged fanbase be the first music fans to come into the UBS Arena is a completely magic combination, because we are going to be able to deliver to them a Class A experience to go with one of the greatest touring artists on the road right now. 