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With Renovation Complete, LA's Memorial Coliseum Readies For Concerts

by TIM NEWCOMB

SPOTLIGHT

Staff at the newly renovated United Airlines Field at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum know the 96-year-old venue has an unparalleled history when it comes to major events, whether sports or concerts. From multiple Super Bowls and Olympics to U2 and Bruce Springsteen, the venue has legendary status in its history. The Coliseum hopes to regain that status as early as 2020 by attracting events of all sizes, including the largest full-bowl concerts available.

"We are proud of our history, but are looking forward to adding crown jewel events," said Josh Rooney, chief revenue officer for the Coliseum. "We will look to continue to build on the legacy and history of this building and bring it into the future



MEET ME AT THE COLISEUM: August marked the opening of the renovated L.A. Coliseum with a 77,500-capacity venue – 70,000 for concerts – with new seats, a seven-story Scholarship Club Tower, a 3,000-capacity premium space with a mix of suites, clubs, loge seating and even a 500-person rooftop deck with views of downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood.





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CLUB WITH A VIEW: The renovated 1923 Club, named for the year Memorial Coliseum opened. The venue has since been the home of the USC Trojans as well as a site for historic concerts by the likes of Bruce Springsteen and U2.

Gus Ruelas / L.A. Memorial Coliseum

and add to it.”

After years of construction, August marked the opening of the remade historic venue, built originally in 1923. Not only did the facility remake itself into a 77,500-capacity venue — 70,000 for concerts — with every seat new, but it spent \$315 million to add a seven-story Scholarship Club Tower, a 3,000-capacity premium space with a mix of suites, clubs, loge seating and even a 500-person rooftop deck with views to the field, downtown Los Angeles, the Hollywood sign and beyond.

“When you have a conversation with a promoter, it is huge to have those amenities to offer,” said Kevin Daly, director of events and customer service for the Coliseum. “We are looking at private events now that we have space to host meetings, functions, sit-down dinners and we also have the opportunity to play concerts now in a variety of different setups.”

With those luxury amenities not in existence before at the historic stadium, Teresa Guy, director of booking and partnerships, said that starting in 2020 and 2021 expect to see

them “aggressively going after those full-bowl shows,” along with the ability to do half-house and smaller capacity summer series events and concerts. She also said they hope to create new events and then host them annually.

“With all the new seating, the increased aisles, adding WiFi, handrails, it is more of an attraction,” Daly said. “The look of it is pretty amazing.”

While University of Southern California football was the main driver for the renovation, football season won’t preclude the Coliseum

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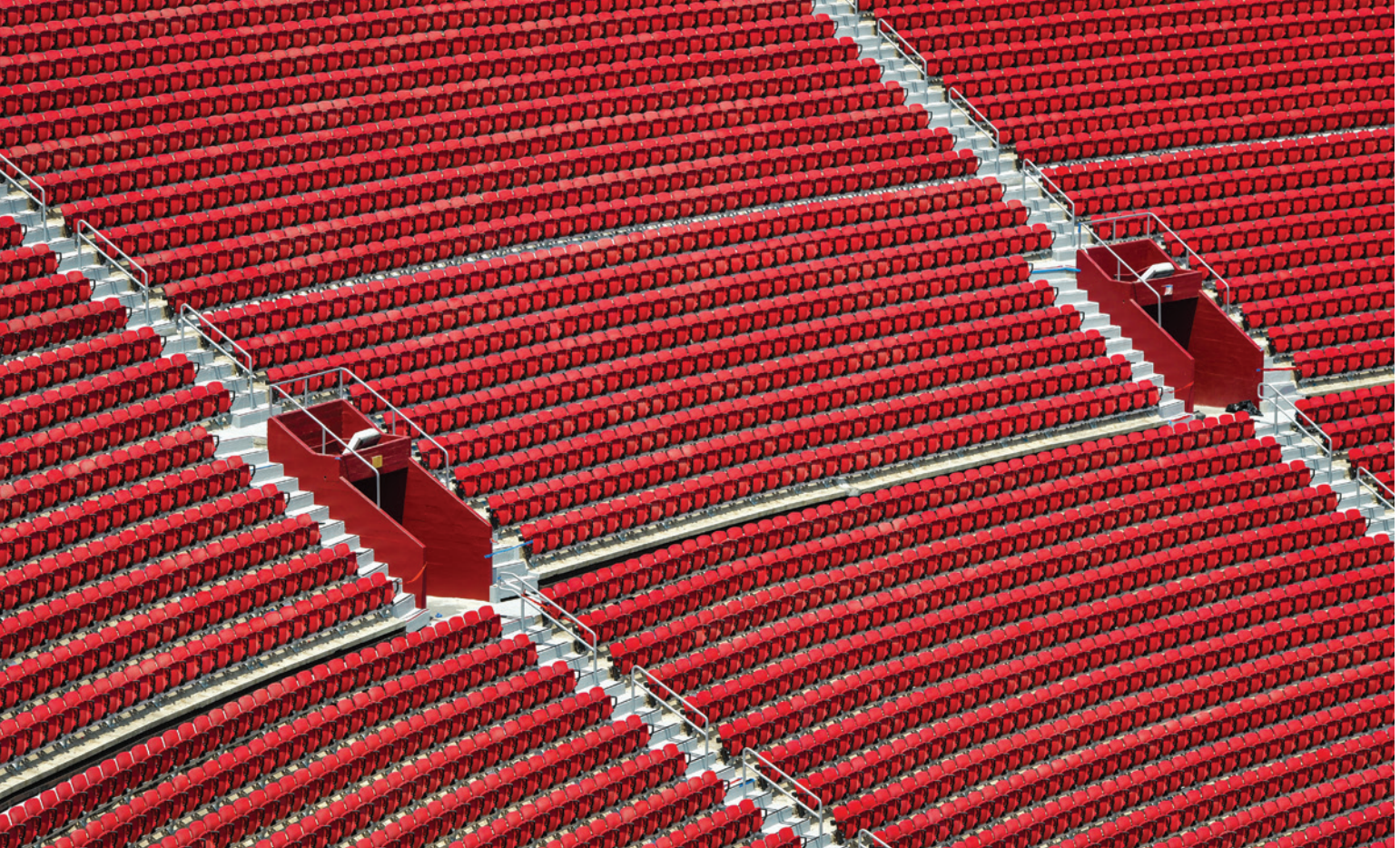
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John McGillen / L.A. Memorial Coliseum

NOT AN OLD SEAT IN THE HOUSE: Part of the Memorial Coliseum's \$315 million renovation included all new seating.

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from going after concerts during the heart of football, allowing for a concert season that runs from March through November in the mild climate of Los Angeles.

By laying synthetic track around the playing surface and adding artificial surfaces behind the two football end zones, even during the playing season of football or FIFA soccer, Rooney said they will have the capability to skirt around the playing field and set up a full-bowl stadium concert or cut-down show.

Rooney said promoters have told the Coliseum team that their stadium has an advantage in the fall when it comes to hosting full-bowl concerts because of the L.A. weather and the availability of the venue to book a concert without having to shut down for football. The main competitors to the Memorial Coliseum in the Los Angeles area for full-bowl concerts will be the new NFL venue in Inglewood, which will host two different NFL teams making their availability scarce, and the Rose Bowl, in Pasadena, north of the city and host to UCLA. "We are able to access the field without damaging the playing surface, especially during set-up and tear-down," Rooney said. "We are able to minimize the risk to the field during the football season."

Guy said to expect to see the Coliseum really go after concerts of all types in 2020 and beyond, looking to kick off a summer series and then build in more activities and events while attracting full stadium shows. "Already by next summer you will see a lot more activity," she said.

With a 160' by 80' field-level concert stage pad and a 40' by 60' available stage decking, the venue can also handle a festival-style footprint. The new LED stadium and field lighting will enhance all events, organizers said.

But it won't just be concerts at the newly renovated Coliseum. The Scholarship Tower opens up opportunities to attract clients during football games



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BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN (second right) along with The E Street Band's Nils Lofgren, Clarence Clemons and Garry Tallent perform the final show of their 'Born in the USA' tour on Oct. 2, 1985.

and major concerts, but the space can easily convert to host a mixture of events throughout the year. The upgrades also refurbished the historic peristyle and Olympic Plaza outside, opening up those spaces, along with the new 1,100-capacity club lounge and 500-capacity rooftop deck, to additional events.

"We look forward to using all the venues in the building and grounds of the Coliseum itself," Rooney said.

By creating new premium space, not only

does it help attract new events, but Rooney said it helps the building live up to the modern expectations of a night out, whether with the ability to create a high-end experience or bring fans to the venue earlier with updated kitchens and concession spaces. "We will be able to deliver a high-end experience to the event goer through the upgrades and really go after a segment of business the building wasn't able to do so prior," he said.

The location of the Coliseum in Exhibition

Park, next to the USC campus, a mixture of museums (the new Lucas Museum of Narrative Art is slated to open in 2021) and the 2018-opened Banc of California Stadium, gives the Coliseum an advantage, Daly said, from ample parking, easy vehicle access and a nearby LA Metro stop.

The renovation and additions also improve the venue's ability to host filming events. "We are not just a historic backdrop, we also have a modern backdrop," Daly said.

While the Coliseum doesn't plan to see a major jump in events this quarter, by the time spring hits, they expect to build well beyond the roughly 260 annual events they hosted prior to the start of the renovations. Plus, they can do so with much more ease, no longer needing temporary staging to handle the variety of opportunities.

"As people become aware of the new inventory, the phone is ringing much more off the hook," Guy said. "I am excited for people to be aware of opportunities for private, corporate events, filming and all that. We are here to host it all." ★

John McGillen / L.A. Memorial Coliseum

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