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LDI'S 'BACKSTAGE LAS VEGAS' BOOSTED BY WYBRON

An in-depth look behind the scenes of some the hottest venues in Sin City brought a crowd to Backstage Las Vegas at LDI 2008.

Nearly 100 industry pros toured several state-of-the-art theatres and a posh nightclub during the three-day event, which gave attendees the chance to quiz the technicians and designers who make the venues shine.

It's a great opportunity to meet others in the industry and learn from its experts, said Ellen Lampert-Gréaux, head of Backstage Las Vegas and director of LDI.

"They really get to see how different problems are solved in these different theatres," Lampert-Gréaux said of the event partially sponsored by Wybron.

Backstage Las Vegas kicked off Oct. 20 with a performance of "Jersey Boys" at The Palazzo followed by a question-and-answer session with production staff. Day two gave attendees a look inside theatres at Planet Hollywood, The Palms, and The Palazzo before heading to Luxor for a performance of Cirque du Soleil's newest show, Criss Angel's "Believe."

Day three took the group to Cherry Nightclub, a luxurious hotspot located at Red Rock Resort and Casino, and The Venetian theatre housing the Vegas version of "Phantom of the Opera," where the group caught the show and chatted with the staff afterward.

The Backstage entourage also grabbed a glimpse of a Blue Man Group sound check.

Backstage Las Vegas drew a global audience, with industry pros from Mexico, England, South America, Europe, and beyond.

"Backstage has always appealed to a wide variety of people," Lampert-Gréaux said.

That even includes a Texas cattleman.

Joe Batson may be president of Coldwater Cattle Company, but he also helps produce and sponsor the nonprofit musical "Texas," which hits the stage each summer in beautiful Palo Duro Canyon south of Amarillo.

Batson's passion for the arts has brought him to LDI every year since 2000. Through Backstage, he's been able to see inside the operations of some of the biggest productions

around – and the steps they’ve taken to stay successful, even in the face of problems.

“They’ve been through it and done it and said, ‘Oh, that’s not going to work; why don’t you try this?’” Batson said.

The biggest part of Backstage, for Batson, is the networking opportunities it offers – getting to meet others in the industry and build relationships that last for years.

Batson sometimes brings some of his production’s donors along with him to Backstage so they can get a better idea of what kind of equipment a good show needs.

“They understand why we ask for the things we do,” Batson said.

LDI has held a Backstage event every year since 1994, Lampert-Gréaux said, and since next year’s trade show heads to Orlando, some tours at Disney and Universal Studios will likely be on tap.

Batson will be there.

"We get so much out of it, it's unbelievable," he said.

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TWO PHOTOS

backstagevegas1.jpg and backstagevegas2.jpg – Backstage Las Vegas participants got a glimpse behind the scenes of several popular Las Vegas venues and productions.