

BAYERBeat

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INDUSTRY View

Partnership creates events of EPIC proportions At industry conferences, Bayer's message is broadcast in surround sound

Veterinary conferences seem to get bigger every year, and industry support for NAVC, WVC and the like is more critical than ever. Yet as the events grow in size, so does the job of making a sponsor's presence felt.

Bayer continually rises to the challenge with the help of a valuable partner, Kansas City's EPIC Entertainment, Inc. For the past decade or so, the firm has helped Bayer stage one show-stopping performance after another.

Setting the stage

EPIC, who first existed as the events and entertainment division of Starlight Theatre, was hired by Bayer in 1997 to manage and produce its entertainment at NAVC in Orlando, Fla.

"Bayer was looking for more value from their conference entertainment, and we wanted to stay busy during Starlight's off-season," says Bill Hartnett, the company's chief operating officer.

The group built on its early success with Bayer events and began marketing its services to other clients. By 2003, the business grew too large to remain a component of Starlight and was spun off as a stand-alone corporation.

Making memories

Since Orlando in '97, EPIC has brought the likes of Bill Cosby, Huey Lewis, REO Speedwagon, Trisha Yearwood, STYX and other entertainment giants to the Bayer stage.

Hartnett says the goal is always the same: Know exactly who your audience is, find an act with the strongest appeal to the target demographic,

| continued on page 2 >



STYX takes the stage for Bayer Night at WVC last February.

BAH Happenings

Stranded pets get a lift after recent floods

Although many Kansans and Missourians welcome rain in late June and July, some of our communities felt differently. Several areas received more than 17 inches of rain in 24-48 hours causing rivers and tributaries to leave their banks and flood everything in their paths.

On July 1, the Emergency Equine Response Unit (EERU), a non-profit group sponsored by Bayer, was deployed by Code 3 Associates of Longmont, Colo., in response to the stranded pets left behind when owners were forced to evacuate their homes due to rising floodwaters. Although EERU is primarily a horse ambulance and Large Animal Rescue Training provider, the group is also certified as National Responders for animals involved in natural and man-made disasters.

EERU's first stop was Iola, Kan. The small community of approximately 1,600 people found one-third of its residential community under water. Several pets were stranded and in need of rescue

| continued on page 4 >



Bayer's Kim Mathews rescues a stranded and grateful pet in Iola, Kan.

- 3 BAH, industry trying to smooth path to drug approvals
- 5 Animal Health in U.K. honors four-legged heroes
- 8 Responsibilities keep building for Meeker

Partnership creates events of EPIC proportions

< continued from page 1 |

produce a memorable performance, and never let the audience forget who brought it to them.

“We approach it from a theatrical standpoint,” Hartnett says. “We want each performance to follow a story arc, similar to a Broadway show. We take them on an emotional journey. In doing so, it creates an atmosphere in which Bayer can deliver its message to a very qualified, captive and receptive audience.”

The job is easier said than done, and EPIC takes it beyond the concert stage. They’ve helped Bayer rev up the entertainment factor – and marketing power – by tying in all sorts of trade-show booth initiatives to the grand finale, the marquis event at the end of the conference.

For example, at WVC last February, STYX was booked for Bayer Night, the culminating event of

the conference. Over the preceding three days, much of the activity in the Bayer booth focused on the launch of Advantage Multi™ and the ResQ™ puppy promotion. Contest participants had extra incentive to participate – and learn about Bayer products – because winners would be treated to a backstage, pre-concert party with the band.

Bayer and EPIC took it one step further. “In all their years performing, STYX had never brought a member of the audience on stage,” Hartnett explains. “Before the sound

check, I was talking to Tommy Shaw and a couple other guys in the band, asking them what we could do differently at this show. I mentioned bringing the booth contest winners on stage, and they said, ‘Great idea. Let’s do it.’”

Everyone in the auditorium that night got to see three of their colleagues partying with the band via closed-circuit TV, and then, in the middle of the show, saw them take the stage together before the band members escorted the three contest winners to their front-and-center seats.

Amid all the excitement, at a perfectly choreographed moment like this, is when Bayer delivers the message it wants the audience to hear.

Lasting impressions

“The show is really a device to get the right audience in the room so Bayer can achieve its business objectives,” Hartnett says. “Whether it’s 30 or 30,000 of your customers, it’s a special opportunity. We use that opportunity to do something special that makes the message very memorable.”

Bayer’s tradeshow team hears the same thing from conference-goers time and again: “I don’t know how you guys are going to top this next year!”

“There are a thousand ways to do this wrong,” Hartnett says. “But if you do it right, you don’t have to top yourself. If you consistently deliver at a high level, the perception is that each show is better than the last.”

“We want to keep people talking about it when the conference is over,” he adds. “If we don’t make it the can’t-miss event of the conference, and if they don’t walk away knowing Bayer can help them do their jobs better, we didn’t do ours.” ●



VP of Sales, Christine Pierson and Companion Regional Manager Eric Lucas with members of STYX.



Our booth contest winner receives her Tommy Shaw guitar while the cameras roll.



EPIC produces more than great concerts for Bayer. Booth activities and contests entertain audiences of all ages.