

CASINO Design 2007

A ^{GLOBAL} Gaming Business publication

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Gulf Coast Rebound

Nearly two years ago, Hurricane Katrina slammed into Mississippi's Gulf Coast, destroying thousands of houses and killing hundreds of people. Now, the gaming industry is leading the recovery, while the public sector still struggles with issues such as insurance and building codes.

By Lori Hutzler Eckert and Roger Gros



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Celebrating an Industry

BY PAUL DWORIN



The headlines say it all:

- "Creating Paradise"
- "The Art of Construction"
- "Balancing Art and Design"
- "Stimulating the Mind, Exciting the Senses"
- "Create + Inspire + Connect"

These are just a few of the catch phrases we use in this issue of *Casino Design* to describe the landscapers, builders, architects, designers, contractors and engineers who are responsible for the cutting-edge projects that characterize the global gaming industry today; without them, even the most visionary of casino operators would have nothing but a vision.

It is fitting, then, that this column begin with a tribute to those companies, all of whom have supported this effort and assisted us by providing insight into the industry, as well as countless beautiful photographs and renderings. You can read more about them, beginning on page 82 of our fifth annual issue of *Casino Design*.

We begin by presenting a very subjective list of what we consider to be the most exciting and dynamic projects in the casino industry today. It was a very difficult task, indeed—not because there were so few, but because there were so many to choose from. Rather than focus on one jurisdiction, which would have been the easy way out, we wanted to provide a worldwide sample—from Singapore to Biloxi to London. We could have devoted many more pages to this effort (see page 6), but if we had we would have had to leave out several other outstanding features such as an exciting interchange between the industry's leading architects (see page 42), an examination of how the rise in construction costs is having a major impact on the industry (see page 72) and how furniture design is changing along with the industry.

We dedicated our cover story to the Mississippi Miracle—called "Gulf Coast Rebound"—partly for sentimental reasons, as we have a soft spot in our hearts for the Gulf Coast gaming industry. But, sentiment aside, focusing on the rebirth of the Mississippi Gulf Coast casino industry was an easy decision to make, because it truly is the major design story of this year—or any.

Devastated less than two years ago by Hurricane Katrina, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is on the mend, led by the casino industry, which has poured billions of dollars into the region to both rebuild an industry and a community. What took more than 13 years to develop before it was destroyed overnight has taken just two years to come back, with new casinos, new renovations and new hope. (See story by Lori Hutzler Eckert, beginning on page 16.)

The Mississippi Gulf Coast isn't the only revival, story, however. As writer Victoria Erickson so clearly illuminates, the racing industry has been revived as well with the opening of racetrack casinos, or racinos. When racinos first opened a bit more than 10 years ago, they were thrown together hurriedly, almost as an afterthought, with the idea being that "build it (a slot parlor) and they will come." No more. As Erickson shows, the design and construction of racinos has become an art in itself and the bar is continually being raised.

The latest examples of the evolution of racinos are provided by Harrah's Chester Downs, which is one of a handful of new generation racinos that are developed simultaneously with the track to provide an overall seamless experience for the better, and by New Mexico's Zia Park and Black Gold Casino, another purpose-built racetrack and racino. The bar is going to be raised even further soon, when the United Horseman of Calgary open their new racetrack-racino complex, complete with 1.4 million square feet of retail—a first for the racing industry. (See story page 54.)

And finally, *Casino Design* Editor Roger Gros managed to track down the peripatetic architect extraordinaire Brad Friedmutter for an in-depth interview which chronicles the professional life of this year's Sarno Award winner for Lifetime Achievement. (See page 40.)

Whether you're interested in the newest projects, the newest products or just the people behind them, we're sure you'll find something of interest in this edition of *Casino Design*.

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A Gaming Guy

Brad Friedmutter receives the Sarno Award for Lifetime Achievement

By Roger Gros

It was love at first sight for Brad Friedmutter when he began working for an architectural firm with clients in the gaming industry.

"I really enjoyed it; I got into it; I saw what this business is all about," he says. "I had worked banks and retail before, but the excitement and the glamour of the hotel/casino/destination resort industry was really compelling."

Friedmutter's love of and contribution to the gaming industry has won him the fifth annual Sarno Award. The Sarno Award is the highest honor for any individual involved in the design and construction of casino resorts. It is named after Jay Sarno, the godfather of casino designers, who developed Caesars Palace and Circus Circus in the 1960s. In addition to Sarno, who received the first award posthumously, previous winners include Jon Jerde, Joel Bergman and Don Brinkerhoff.

Friedmutter will receive the Sarno Award at the G2E Institute, April 10-12 in New Orleans.

Before making his mark in the gaming industry, Friedmutter's interest in architecture began to ferment in New York City, where he grew up with two artistically inclined parents.

"My mother was a school teacher in the arts and became the director of cultural arts for the board of education in New York under Mayor Koch," he says. "My father refused to have a desk job. He drove around and collected antiques, so he had an artistic sense about him, too. So I like to say I got my creativity from my mother and my entrepreneurial streak from my father."

Friedmutter earned an architectural degree from New York's well-regarded Cooper Union, where he learned to balance his artistic side with business acumen.

"At Cooper Union, I learned the importance of customer service and understanding what the business was all about and what the customer wants."

Despite those advantages, Friedmutter struggled out of the gate, but most of it was simply bad timing.

"I graduated in 1973, right in the midst of a severe recession, and had a tough time getting a job," he explains. "And when I made my first try to start my own company, my timing was a little bit off again and I hit the next recession in 1978-79."

The Wynn Pedigree

That's when gaming entered his life. He got a job with Conversano and Associates working on gaming projects.

"This company was one of the leading design firms for the gaming industry," he says. "They did all the work for Harrah's and started to do work with Steve Wynn."

Wynn liked what he saw in the young architect, and hired him as part of the design team for the Mirage.



As with so many designers and architects, Friedmutter's association with Wynn changed his life.

"I had never been around anyone like Wynn before," he says. "I was only in my late 20s at the time, while he was just in his late 30s. I was a sponge. His energy was captivating. I studied everything he said, everything he did. I attribute a lot of what I do today to those early years listening to this great man."

"As an architect, he was truly hands-on. He sat in on every minute of every meeting. He looked at everything. He challenged everything. I can't think of a better learning experience for any young architect."

But when Bally's Las Vegas came calling, and he was offered the position of vice president of design and construction, Friedmutter reluctantly left Mirage Resorts. Again, his timing couldn't have been worse. A couple years after joining Bally's, the company descended into bankruptcy, and Friedmutter was laid off.

"I knew I didn't want to go back to any of the design firms," he says. "Besides, I considered myself a casino guy now; I loved the business and even had an idea I could run one of those small restaurants in Las Vegas with slots. But I didn't know anything about that, so I decided to hang a shingle out."

It was slow going at the beginning, but Friedmutter began to call on his friends and acquaintances from earlier in his career. His first commission, however, was less than inspiring.

"We started small. My first project was to design the public-area restrooms at Bally's," he laughs. "It actually was a good job and led eventually to the design of the Strip entrance to Bally's."

Company Man

As word got out about the young architect with gaming savvy, the projects began to roll in.

"Once I started to develop a track record, and prove that we could deliver, more business started to come," he says. "It was a combination of more work becoming available, my location in Las Vegas and my willingness to work and play well with others."

Bally's delivered Friedmutter's first "ground-up" project, the Bally's riverboat in Tunica, Mississippi.

"I knew a lot of people at Bally's of course. Riverboat and barge gaming was just beginning back then, so I got

my license in Mississippi and began work," he says. "It was new territory for everyone."

Tunica became a mainstay for Friedmutter, where his firm worked on the Sheraton casino and the expansion project for the Horseshoe casino.

Friedmutter and his team have designed dozens of casino resorts in the gaming industry, including Station Casinos' Green Valley Ranch and Red Rock Casino Resort in Las Vegas, and Thunder Valley Casino near Sacramento, California; the Ritz Carlton at Lake Las Vegas; the Horseshoe Casino in Bossier City, Louisiana; and many others. The company is also responsible for expansions at Harrah's Atlantic City, Showboat Atlantic City and others.

When asked about favorite projects, Friedmutter can only relate a few stories.

"There are projects that are favorites because I think they're great designs, but some of the projects I like most I kind of just fell into," he says. "For example, in the early days when they were planning the monorail for Bally's and MGM, I got a call very early in the morning from Bob Maxey. They were looking for someone to help them with the station and how it integrated with the building. He called several architects and I happened to have been the first one to answer the phone. I was there in 10 minutes and made the deal. Even though architecturally it might not have been our best project, the notion of being available immediately has always been important to me."

One of his first projects, the Bally's entrance, is one he holds close to his heart.

"It was originally only supposed to be a place-holder until they decided what they wanted to do with that space," says Friedmutter. "For something that was only supposed to be temporary, it has a lot of legs. It was \$13 million all-in. Today, it's photographed a lot and people respond to it."

Positive Partnerships

One of Friedmutter's most profitable and fulfilling pieces of business is its partnership with Station Casinos. The company has been designing Station properties for almost 10 years, and received high marks for excellence with the design of Green Valley Ranch and Red Rock Casino Resort & Spa.

"As Station has grown into what they are today with their products and buildings, we've grown with them," he says. "GVR has been an tremendous design success for them and for us. Red Rock has been a home run for both of us. It's a fine example of how you combine entertainment design with a retro-contemporary style into a warm and inviting experience."

Elements of GVR and Red Rock have been incorporated into retrofits for existing Station casinos, such as Santa Fe Station, which recently debuted a sports book that looks and feels exactly like the acclaimed facility at Red Rock.

"The great thing is we learn with each property and are able to incorporate the best and most successful elements into subsequent designs," he says.

For someone with such vast experience in the gaming industry, it's ironic that Friedmutter's only presence on the Las Vegas Strip has been the entrance to Bally's. But that's about to change.

"We're the executive architect on the Cosmopolitan, a new casino resort on the Strip," he explains. "It's a very exciting project. You hear some of the new construction on the Strip referred to as the 'Manhattanization' of Las Vegas, and that fits the Cosmopolitan."

"It's completely vertical. All the parking is underground, there's a podium with all the gaming and retail functions and 3,000

hotel rooms rising above it. It's a total of 6 million square feet on eight-and-a-half acres.

"So now I can proudly say we're involved in one of the great projects on the Las Vegas Strip."

It's a project that is pushing the envelope of gaming resorts. Like MGM Mirage's CityCenter and Boyd Gaming's Echelon Place, the Cosmopolitan will be much more than just gaming: it includes extensive retail, great restaurants, meeting space and condo hotels. Friedmutter says that, while the mega-project is gaming's latest flavor, it's really the same thing casinos in Las Vegas always offered.

"This is just like the casino of early Las Vegas, just in a larger scale," he says. "Casinos always had specialty restaurants. They always had a spa of some sort. They always had a great penthouse suite; a great pool experience. They had retail: a fur shop, a jewelry shop and a sundry shop. It was just on a different scale. All of the elements of the mixed-use, that total experience we shoot for today, was always present in true gaming resorts."

"It's a cycle. We come back to the beginning."

CD

