McIntosh excited to learn about gambling industry

Lord Andrew Robert McIntosh, who became a DCMS minister last summer, is responsible for handling the huge Gambling Bill that the Government has been working on for several years, despite the fact that he has never been a gambler. ‘I found out I was minister for gambling after I’d accepted the job as minister for media and heritage, but it was a clear bonus,’ he said. ‘I always find it exciting to learn something new.’

As part of this learning curve, he says his early impressions of the bingo industry have been very much as he anticipated: ‘Very respectable, family-oriented and very honest.’

After a 30-year career in market research, Lord McIntosh of Haringey came to political prominence as part of the Greater London Council (GLC). He helped Labour take control of the local authority in 1981 and led the party to victory, only to be infamously ousted by current London mayor Ken Livingstone, who took on the leader’s role.

As some consolation, McIntosh was made a life peer two years later for services to the GLC and has built up a reputation as a go-getter in the House of Lords, even being shortlisted for The House Magazine’s peer of the year 2003. This could be due to the wealth of jobs he has had since entering the chamber: opposition spokesperson for education and science (1985-7), the environment (1987-92) and home affairs (1992-7) as well as government spokesperson for the treasury (1997-), trade and industry (1998-2003), culture, media and sport (1997-2001), Scotland Office (2001-2) and transport (2002-3). He has also been deputy leader of the opposition (1992-7); deputy chair of committees (1997-2001), deputy speaker (1999-2002) and deputy chief whip (Captain of HM Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard, 1997-2003).

Despite all this, he describes his 1962 wedding to Naomi, with whom he has two sons, as his proudest moment.

Caller of the Year 2003

Mike Vyse from Mecca in Swansea

Bingo Caller of the Year always gets a good turnout but the 2003 national final was the best ever, thanks to great finalists and supporters who were stars in their own right. Gala in London’s Surrey Quays on Sunday 30 November was a visual spectacle and the atmosphere was amazing.

The media coverage was unprecedented. Competition entrants were instrumental in ensuring that the media’s attention was drawn to the bingo industry and as a result helped secure a great deal of valuable publicity. The competition starts in May each year and builds through second rounds in early August with regional finals in September and October. The Premier Bingo Club in Kirkcaldy got the round of regionals off to a flying start on 26 September thanks to Manager George Hawthorn and his staff.

Coach parties of supporters from all over Scotland were greeted by Scottish flags, free bottles of bubbly on every table and a piper playing Scotland the Brave, who led the contestants into the club.

Testing times

After being interviewed by the judging panel, the six contenders took centre stage and the full house of customers, plus a film crew from BBC Scotland, were treated to a showcase of talent and calling skills from Ian Carroll (Gala, Kilmarnock); Roy Cunningham (Gala, Falkirk); Bert McDonald (County Bingo, Port Glasgow); James O’Kane (Gaia, Glenrothes) and Paul Ryan (Beach Bingo, Denny). Once the marks were added up, the judges declared that James, who had entertained everyone with a rousing rendition of The Proclaimers’ hit 500 Miles, was the Scottish regional winner and representative at the final.

The following week, the judges were at Buckingham Bingo in Bradford, with Manager Peter Minshull at the helm. Despite taking over as Manager just 48 hours before the event, Peter and his team rose to the occasion. Representing the North were: Alan Stockdale (Gala, Carlisle);
Gala has the answer

Gala Bingo has been sponsoring a new quiz show, ‘I’m the Answer’, hosted by Dale Winton. Using short screen ads called idents and bumpers at the start of the show and at the beginning and end of each commercial break, Gala will clearly mark its involvement with the show, which has a daily 5pm half-hour slot on the ITV network. To add a fun feel, 24 introductory scenes were shot, featuring two Mancunian Gala bingo-goers, Leslie and Fiona. In each one, Leslie speculates that she has the answer to some of life’s little mysteries, like crop circles and belly button fluff.

Richard Sowerby, Sales and Marketing Director of Gala Bingo said, ‘We are delighted to have found a sponsorship opportunity with such a highly regarded new show as I’m the Answer. It provides us with a highly relevant property in terms of our target audience and the brand essence of Gala Bingo.’

Bingo in the news

Summer is usually a particularly low period for bingo stories in the media, however, July and September proved to be very successful months for getting the bingo-ing message out there, with a number of stories running in national daily papers. Scotland saw the most bingo media coverage in July, by quite a few points. In August the North West and West Midlands caught the bingo buzz and in September the North West remained very busy.

At the time of going to press we had not received cuttings for the final quarter of 2003 and were not able to give an overall summary of coverage for the year – this will follow in the April issue. However, the final quarter of the year saw a lot of activity: Bingo Caller of the Year regional and national finals; Bingo for Breakthrough; two £500,000 Special Games; the introduction of Gross Profit Tax and the publication of the Draft Gambling Bill. A very busy quarter for both consumer and business stories.

Press coverage July–September 2003

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Condolences

Our sympathy goes out to Peter Hargreaves and his family. On 29 November Peter’s son, who shared the same Christian name but was also known as Jay or Little Pete, was killed in a motorbike accident. Jay, 25, was travelling from his home in Folkestone to Eastbourne when his motorbike hit a road sign on the A259, just outside Hastings. He was rushed to the Conquest Hospital in Hastings where he died shortly after arrival. Police do not believe that another vehicle was involved.

Jay leaves a wife, Melanie, who he had married in May of last year and who also works at Deluxe Clubs. He will be greatly missed by family, friends and colleagues.

Nelly packs her trunk

In the last issue we offered two of the Bingo for Breakthrough elephants as prizes to two lucky readers. I am pleased to say that they have found homes with Simon Jones, from Top Ten Bingo, Milford Haven and Patsy Mackie from Gala, Irvine. Thank you to all who mailed in.

Gala’s sponsorship ad for ITV quiz show ‘I’m the Answer’
Launched in March 2003 by Network Gaming Limited, the National Flyer game has been gaining popularity and media coverage.

Designed specifically for CIU Clubs, the game is played nationally through a draw, which is broadcast directly into clubs via satellite TV channel Club Vision. It’s giving the clubs a great opportunity to entice more people through their doors with, on average, over 400 clubs participating in each National Flyer game.

Initially the game provided instant opportunities to win numerous full house prizes of up to £5,000. The Triple Grand was then launched, providing three extra chances to win £1,000. But the most interesting development has been the launch of the £25,000 Giant Snowball accumulator in July, which has already resulted in the biggest ever prize to be won in a social club, and achieved a fair amount of local publicity.

The possibility of receiving a free widescreen TV system, together with a full support and maintenance package has proved to be a popular inducement for clubs to get involved, along with the added entertainment value of the game for their customers. John O’Brien of the Done-Our-Bit Club is just one of many who feels positive about the game: ‘When I first heard about National Flyer I thought it was a superb idea and couldn’t understand why someone had not thought of it before. It has worked well for us and been a huge success in terms of ticket sales. It also gave a terrific boost to our bar sales. As word got round, more people started playing and it became really popular – people don’t want to miss it! It brings many more people into the club and greatly improves the quality of entertainment we provide for them.’

The Managing Director of Network Gaming, Jeremy Collis, said, ‘This is a great opportunity for any club, adding big jackpot excitement to the club. It’s a truly visionary project under the leadership of the CIU and can help to encourage new members as well as more regular attendance from existing members.’
Foster quick off the blocks to look into bingo taxation

The Liberal Democrats, not wanting to be left out of the reshuffle news, have appointed a new Spokesperson for Gambling, 56-year-old Don Foster MP.

Foster found himself thrust into the limelight in the 1992 election when he beat the high-profile Conservative Chris Patten in the constituency of Bath. The Preston-born education lecturer has also had experience as a management consultant and as such has found himself the Liberal Democrat’s Education Spokesperson for a number of years. He is quickly getting to grips with his new role and has been looking at the bingo sector in particular.

Fair play
Foster said, ‘Bingo is a national institution. As MP for Bath, where there’s a very successful bingo hall, I welcome the positive community-building benefits that bingo can offer. And as the new Lib Dem Spokesman on Culture, Media and Sport, I’m determined to see that bingo gets the support it deserves.’

He has also pledged to investigate the Government’s handling of the taxation reform for the bingo industry. ‘One of my first priorities on gambling is to look into the discriminative taxation on bingo. This is particularly important at a time when the Government is likely to push forward plans to expand the market in other areas of gambling. It’s ludicrous that thousands of regular bingo players are paying more tax than punters playing high-stakes poker.’

The more support for the bingo industry at parliamentary level, the easier it will be for its voice to be heard on taxation and deregulation issues, so the backing of a leading Lib Dem is very welcome.

Committee experience means Kirkbride is well prepared

Being handed the role of Shadow Culture Media and Sport Secretary just a week before the Government published the draft Gambling Bill may seem like a daunting prospect, but Bromsgrove MP Julie Kirkbride is better placed than most in her party to understand the complicated new legislation.

Forty-three-year-old Kirkbride has already scrutinised the Government’s gambling proposals as a member of the Culture Select Committee and so new Conservative Leader Michael Howard could be said to have made an easy decision in making her the latest Shadow Gambling Spokesperson.

Kirkbride grew up in Halifax, her mother worked for sweets giant Rowntree Mackintosh based in the town and the young girl developed an early interest in politics; at just 14 she had signed up for the Young Conservatives. The interest in politics continued through her education at Cambridge University, where she became Vice President of its Union Society, and the University of California in Berkeley.

If her career had developed differently, Kirkbride could have found herself writing for Bingo Link! She started a career in journalism in 1982 with Yorkshire Television in Leeds before moving to the BBC in 1986 as a news and current affairs researcher/producer in London. She also worked for ITN’s parliamentary unit before moving to the national press in 1992 as the Daily Telegraph’s Political Correspondent and eventually Social Affairs Editor on the Sunday Telegraph in 1996.

This was her last job in the media as she was elected MP for Bromsgrove in 1997, the same year she married fellow Tory MP Andrew Mackay.

The couple had their first child in October 2000, a boy called Angus, who now frequently accompanies his mum when she visits her constituents in Bromsgrove.

Although she has admitted to not being a gambler herself, Kirkbride has developed an understanding of how the industry works through her time on the select committee. Her knowledge will no doubt prove useful as the Gambling Bill progresses.

News
Scrutiny process provides opportunity for change

The Gambling Bill is currently undergoing prelegislative scrutiny, a process that the Government hopes will iron out all the legislation’s potential problems and make sure it has a smooth run through parliament.

The prelegislative scrutiny process is a relatively new one, the Gambling Bill is only the third major piece of legislation to be subjected to the procedure, although there has been a growing number of smaller bills that have also been going through the process.

The scrutiny is being carried out by a specially appointed joint committee consisting of eight members from both houses and the three main parties. The committee is being chaired by Conservative MP for Ryedale John Greenway, who spoke at last year’s Bingo Association AGM.

Greenway was so keen to help steer the Gambling Bill through Parliament that he resigned from the Tory front bench so that he could specifically concentrate on the legislation.

He says the prelegislative scrutiny process provides members of the bingo industry with the real opportunity to make any changes to the Gambling Bill and the committee has already taken written evidence from those parties who wanted to make their voices heard. Further sessions of oral evidence will be heard throughout this month and February.

What do you think?
Greenway commented, ‘It’s for those people within bingo who disagree with the Government’s conclusions and would like to see bingo kept as a ring-fenced product. Those who want to see it maintained as a night out for people who like going to bingo on a certain night and don’t think they’re actually involved in gambling. It’s up to them to make their case.’

The industry has been impressed with Greenway’s grasp of the situation as well, but he believes that is only half the battle: ‘People can see that we understand where the problems are but understanding the problem and finding a resolution is not going to be easy. I am very mindful that some of the smaller bingo clubs would like to preserve the bingo club as it is now. We have to find a way where that can be the case. But equally some of the bigger operations want to have bingo within a big casino/leisure mix and the Government clearly intends to do that. We have to find a mechanism to make it work for both sizes.’

Greenway has also been stressing that the industry should not refer to the process as deregulation as it implies there will be no controls. He believes that the correct term is modernisation as there will still be some sensible limits to what can be done post-Gambling Bill. He is working on the framework that will allow progress but at the same time avoid potential for problem gambling.

Room for change
The scrutiny committee has been given until 8 April to make its report to the Government in which it will say where it agrees with the DCMS proposals, where it thinks there should be changes and where it believes a different emphasis will be useful. Greenway is hoping that his committee will meet that deadline and he believes the report will hold some sway over the future legislation.

He said, ‘The Government will then have to look at what we’ve said and take it into account. That’s what happened with other reports that have had scrutiny committees, like the Communications Bill, chaired by Lord Puttnam. That committee made some recommendations that were quite different to what the Government wanted. In the end the Government had to give way on some issues. So we do have an opportunity to say where the Government has got it right and where it has got it wrong. We will rehearse all the arguments in the report.’
Karen Winstone (Walkers Bingo, Selby); Darren Glover (Mecca, St Helens); Bernard McGuinness (Gala, Salford) and Clyde Webber (Mecca, Blackpool). Both Yorkshire Television and BBC’s Look North were there to cover the event and talk to some of the enthusiastic players. They all showed great self-assurance during their interviews and tremendous showmanship on stage, giving the judges a difficult task, but it was the knowledge and confidence of Alan Stockdale that won them over, making him the North’s Best Bingo Caller and securing his place in the national final.

**Let me entertain you**

Next, it was the turn of the Midlands to showcase its caller talent, at Mecca in Acoc’s Green, Birmingham. Manager Alan Fox and his Assistant Dean Williams were in charge of ensuring everything went smoothly. Central TV and BBC Midlands television filmed the event and talked to the contestants: Matt Adlington (Gala, Scunthorpe); Kelvyn Davies (Mecca, Stoke on Trent); Simon Cook (Gala, Tamworth); Mandy Gargan (Flutters, Coalville); Max Rayner (Mecca, Norwich) and Peter Winterton (Gala, Wednesbury). The bingo knowledge and on-stage personality of Kelvyn Davies earned him his regional title and place in the final.

Castle Leisure in Newport Road, Cardiff, home of the Bingo Caller of the Year 2002, Peter Lewis, hosted the Welsh regional final. Manager Jodie Jellie and her staff had strung a huge banner outside the club announcing the competition. Everyone knew they were in for an excellent day when they were welcomed by a sea of Welsh flags and free bubbly for all. Contestants Colin Baker (Castle, Canton); Tony Beverley (Mecca, Wrexham); Mike Broad (Castle, Bridgend); Mike Vyse (Mecca, Swansea) and Terry Whitelock (Empire, Neath) were all put to the test. Mike Vyse’s astute understanding of the bingo business won out in the end, aided by his ability to get the whole club joining in with his on-stage rendition of the Elvis classic *The Wonder of You*.

The last of the regional finals, for the South, was held in Reading, at BJ’s Luxury Bingo. Assistant Manager Debbie Beggs and her staff created a carnival atmosphere, which gave the three TV camera crews covering the event something to show. The contestants were all well prepared and highly professional. Mike Barnes (Leo Leisure, Eastleigh); Ricky Denton (Mecca, Wood Green); Brett Hyrjak (Gala Butlins, Bognor Regis); Billy Macleod (Gala, Brighton); Dawn Milton (Mecca, Harlow) and Melanie Ceazar (Gala, Stratford) made it a difficult decision for the judges. However, Brett Hyrjak’s bingo knowledge and showmanship won him the South of England title and the last place in the final.

**And the winner is...**

Having whittled down the initial 80 entrants to five regional winners, all involved were anxiously waiting for the London final, to see who would take the title for 2003. The five winners and their partners arrived in London on Saturday 29 November, where they enjoyed an afternoon of sightseeing and shopping before attending a fabulous dinner at the Tower Thistle Hotel, overlooking Tower Bridge. At dinner, the chairman of the judging panel, NBGA Chief Executive Paul Talboys, gave a welcoming speech and advised all the finalists to relax and just enjoy the evening and the next day’s event. Fellow judges also attending the dinner included Chris Murphy, the editor of *Coinslot*, Patrick Bowler, the very first Bingo Caller of the Year, who won his title in 1994, and Gloria Pattinson, from Pattinson PR, the competition organisers.

The following morning it was down to business at Gala in Surrey Quays, where Manager Craig Hobson and his team had done an amazing job of ensuring that everything ran smoothly. It was a full house at the club, with barely a seat to spare, which made for a great atmosphere. Each competitor was interviewed and observed by the judging panel before lunch, when they were marked on their knowledge of the rules of the National Bingo Game and their broader understanding of the bingo business. The afternoon’s proceedings were compered and hosted by breakfast TV’s favourite presenter, Lorraine Kelly. As Master of Ceremonies, Bobbie Bragg introduced each contestant on stage for them to showcase their skills and call a single game. After the five presentations the results were very close.

The finalists were all called back on stage to receive their certificates and hear the judges’ decision announced, which was broadcast live by a Sky News television camera crew. The hushed audience of over 1,000 avid supporters and bingo fans erupted in celebration following Paul Talboys’ announcement that Mike Vyse, from Mecca Swansea, was the new Bingo Caller of the Year. Mike was immediately thrust into the limelight to collect his trophy, with photographers vying for his attention.

The following week Mike was sent for formal media training to help him deal successfully with the media in his role as ambassador for the bingo industry. He now has to decide when in the coming months he wishes to enjoy the wonderful prize of a week long, all expenses paid trip to Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Congratulations Mike Vyse, Bingo Caller of the Year 2003!
Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Regulations made under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 will bring into effect on a staged basis the provisions of the Act, requiring businesses to make reasonable changes in order to provide equal access for disabled and able-bodied customers. The latest regulations will not come into force until October 2004 but will affect even the smallest employers.

As these requirements are only nine months away, now is a good time to start making preparations for how your organisation is going to meet this new piece of legislation. Put simply, businesses are required to take all reasonable steps to give disabled people access to their services. In the case of bingo clubs, the obvious issues are those of access to the premises and the facilities inside. Things that might be done include installing ramps as an alternative to steps both inside and outside the premises, installing an induction loop for the hard of hearing and installing a disabled toilet.

Exceptions to the rule

Many Association members have already taken relevant action to comply with the requirements of the Act. However, an important point to bear in mind is that businesses are required to act 'reasonably' in complying with the legislation. As some buildings do not easily lend themselves to structural changes without extensive work or excessive cost, companies operating from such premises may be exempt from these requirements.

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Cabinets enabling clubs to display upcoming promotions and stamper cards can also be supplied, on the condition that these units are used solely for Just Everything products. The company can also provide small orders to customers for AWP machines, as well as door giveaways and stamper cards.

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The first ever Bingo for Breakthrough week took place last year from 18-24 October, as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, with the aim of helping to raise funds for Breakthrough Breast Cancer. As you can see from these pictures, spirits were high and the mood was pink.

The week was an amazing success, with more clubs joining in to support this cause than on previous occasions. The sale of special pink dabbers that some clubs bought for the week managed to raise £13,000 and they were much in demand by players. At the time of going to press the total raised was £344,608.35. Bingo Association Chairman Sir Peter Fry said, ‘Once again the industry and players have demonstrated what an exceptionally generous and fun-loving group they are. The amount of money raised this year is staggering and this is just our first year. What a truly great result and congratulations to all who took part.’

Breakthrough Breast Cancer was amazed at the amount of money raised and by the generosity of operators and players. Chief Executive Delyth Morgan said, ‘Breakthrough Breast Cancer is delighted that 380 bingo clubs across the country signed up for Bingo for Breakthrough during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. We have been astounded by the hard work and dedication shown by all staff and members and the total amount raised so far is phenomenal.’

The final amount raised and the results of the fundraising awards will be announced later in January.

We hope that you are all looking forward to getting into the pink again for Bingo for Breakthrough 2004!
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Bingo players warned about bogus callers

Local police teamed up with Top Ten, Yeovil to provide a valuable community service, seeking to prevent crimes by warning players and staff about bogus callers – the kind who might help themselves to your ‘full house’.

Crime Reduction Officer Brett Gitsham visited the club to advise people how to protect themselves and their property, particularly during the darker winter days. PC Gitsham, who was Assistant Manager at the bingo club 13 years ago before leaving to join the police, said, ‘It’s important to tackle people’s fear of crime and we can do that by making them more aware and more prepared.’

Top Ten Business Manager Barry Richardson-Smith came up with the idea during a meeting to set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme near his home. He said, ‘Brett came up to me after the talk and reminded me that he once worked at the club. It seemed an obvious thing to ask him to make a return visit and talk to some of our older members, many of whom live on their own and can be quite vulnerable. The club is more than just a place to play bingo. There’s a real community spirit here and the more we can do to help our customers, the better.’

A first time for Just Everything

To celebrate its inaugural appearance at this year’s ATEI, where the company will showcase its wide selection of prize and gift merchandise, Bingo Link has items from Just Everything’s current range to offer to four lucky readers.

For a chance to win one of two talking cookie jars, an Easter chick or a set of stainless-steel cookware, please complete the Bingo Link competition entry form or put your club name, address and personal details on a postcard, and send it to:

Just Everything Competition, Bingo Link, Lexham House, 75 High Street North, Dunstable, Beds LU6 1JF.

All entries must be received by 28 March 2004. Winners will be notified in writing.

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Inaugural online bingo awards launched

WhichBingo.com, the net’s recognised independent source for ‘all things bingo’, has launch the inaugural search for the Online Bingo Site of the Year and also the New Online Bingo Site of the Year.

The online bingo sector of online gaming is constantly increasing in size and importance. As it began to mature and develop, WhichBingo felt that it was the right time to honour those sites at the forefront of this most vibrant online gaming sector.

The aim of the awards is to recognise and reward excellence in online bingo, as voted by the most important constituent of the game, the players. Sites attempt to replicate the engaging activity of club bingo, providing not just bingo but other amusement and social opportunities, as would be available in a club, in order to retain players. Online players are twice as quick as club players to vote with their feet and go elsewhere, as an alternative site is only ever a ‘click’ away.

The Site of the Year award is open to all ‘pay-to-play’ sites, regardless of software provider and the New Site of the Year award is open to any new online bingo site that launched during 2003. The awards were decided by a player vote during December 2003, the results of which are due to be revealed this month.

Phil Fraser, who is the owner of WhichBingo.com, said, ‘We want to praise and recognise those sites that consistently deliver enjoyment and satisfaction to their players. There are some great sites out there doing a fantastic job. Those players need a forum to register their appreciation of the service these sites supply. We are very excited about these awards.’

Full details can be found at http://www.whichbingo.com/soty.

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Popcorn monster attacks world record

Godzilla, usually found at the centre of a scene of carnage, has been smashing things again as a 16ft replica of the movie monster made entirely out of popcorn launched its attack on the world record books.

Created to commemorate the 65th anniversary of Stirling’s Allan Park cinema, which was built in 1938 and contains two screens plus the bingo club, the giant sculpture of movie monster Godzilla by Edinburgh-based artist Emma Herman Smith took a month to complete. The sculpture was made solely out of popcorn and adhesive and weighs in at over 1,000kg (one metric tonne). If each piece of popcorn used in the sculpture were to be laid out end to end, the line would run from Stirling to John O’Groat. Christine Wright, Manager of Carlton Cinemas, said, ‘Building Godzilla has been a monster project but we wanted to celebrate the Allan Park’s 65th anniversary in style. This is a tremendous milestone, especially considering that the cinema, to this day, remains independently owned. This is the first time that a giant popcorn sculpture has ever been created in Scotland and we’re now waiting to hear from Guinness World Records to see if we qualify for entry.’

Artist Emma explained, ‘For the attempt to be recognised we had to create a free-standing sculpture made entirely of popcorn and glue. To add to the problems we could only make sections of 26 inches or less because of the difficulty of getting Godzilla onto the balcony. ‘It’s the first time I’ve ever tried working in popcorn and it has been one of the most unusual projects I’ve agreed to do. Popcorn isn’t the easiest material to work with so this has been very much a labour of love. I’m delighted to be associated with the event and really pleased with the end result.’

The sculpture was unveiled at a red carpet ceremony in late October. As part of the weekend’s celebrations, movie-goers were treated to four classic pictures, including Stirling’s very own film, Braveheart.

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gaming on the move from

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It is hard to believe that ATEI has been going for 60 years! The first Amusement Trades Exhibition (ATE) was hailed as an event ‘for progress and prosperity’ and took place in Seymour Hall, Seymour Place, London W1 on 21-24 February 1939. Over the years the show has reflected the mood of eight different decades and it still remains a show ‘for progress and prosperity’ in the gaming industry.

While its essence may remain unchanged, the show has moved with the times and is now the leading UK amusement industry trade show, with an international reputation. Last year saw a record number of delegates attending and a record number of exhibitors from overseas. The announcement of UK gaming deregulation raised political interest in the 2003 show, with 10 UK politicians attending, including the Rt Hon Richard Caborn MP, the minister then responsible for gambling.

Showstoppers

Peter Rushbridge has managed the show for 13 years and Bingo Link asked him if there was anything he would like to change. ‘I’d like to correct the misperception that ATEI is a gambling expo. Low pay-out gambling is an important part of our product mix but there’s so much more to interest international buyers.’

The 60th ATEI opens at London’s Earls Court Exhibition Centre on 27 January. Visitors to the 2004 event can expect to see new products and services from more than 60 sectors, including traditional hardware such as videos, gaming machines, pushers, novelty games, redemption pieces, sports games, music systems, kiddle rides, photo kiosks, security systems, money handling systems, vending, swag and plush – to name but a few – through to the latest in touchscreen developments, i-gaming applications and content delivery solutions.

Last year’s all-time record of 273 exhibitors looks set to be broken this year with 271 companies having already confirmed their stand space at the time of going to press. They represent 24 nations, with 113 (42 per cent) of suppliers based outside the UK. The strongest delegations of non-UK exhibitors are from Italy and Spain (20 each), closely followed by the USA (19). Germany heads up the rest of the field (seven exhibitors), with five each from Austria, Taiwan and the Netherlands, four from Belgium, three each from France, Japan, South Korea and the Ukraine, two each from the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Ireland, Poland and Portugal and one each from Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Hungary, Russia and the Slovak Republic. A veritable United Nations of gaming.

Fifty-two companies are making their ATEI debut this year, one of which, Just Everything, has attended previously as Just Jewellery. Drawn from 15 countries, the list comprises 20 first-time exhibitors from the UK, seven from the USA, five from Italy, four from Spain, three each from Germany, South Korea and the Netherlands and one each from Denmark, France, Hong Kong, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia and the Ukraine. In addition to these new names are many familiar ones, including Ace Ltd, Barcrest Games, Bell-Fruit Games, Cowells Arrow, Crown Direct, Cummins-Allison, De La Rue Cash Systems, Deith Group, Edward Thompson, Electrocoin, Maygay Machines, Mazooma Games, PMS International, Prestige Seating Technology, Red Gaming, Scott Todd Developments and Vivid Gaming.

Bingo Link caught up with leading machine manufacturers The Barcrest Group (stand 870) and Mazooma (stand 1240) to see what they had to offer the bingo sector.

Barcrest’s best

Barcrest was formed in 1968 by John Marshall and Eric Horley and since then it has continued to expand. In 2001 The Barcrest Group formed Red Gaming and launched Vivid Gaming, bringing its brand total to three. At the 2003 show The Barcrest Group created a stir with its huge stand and spoof on airport departures and airline food. This year the company looks set to repeat that triumph with the largest stand at the show, called The Venue, where it will be showcasing almost 200 machines from Barcrest Games, Vivid Gaming and Red Gaming. However, rather than exhibiting machines in clusters based on brand, different sections of the stand will target different sectors of gaming, grouping product from all three brands together, as appropriate. All three Barcrest brands operate on a shared technical platform, allowing some machines to be linked together to create a Showtime Wave feature. Data is taken from a number of machines and, depending on take,
one machine is selected to ‘run-hot’, paying out a much higher rate than usual. This allows machines to be presented together, sharing data, while still operating separately as the law currently requires.

The stand will see the launch of the newest Barcrest Group Horizon cabinet for UK AWP games and will feature a number of machines across the brands in the stunning new cabinet design. Various new reel-based and video products for all markets will make their debut at the show, with a few new takes on players’ favourites.

Paul Terroni, Managing Director (Sales and Commercial) at Barcrest Group said, ‘There is a fantastic buzz about this year’s show. We have designed our stand to provide easy access to our comprehensive range of products for each individual market sector and will be launching some interesting new product developments.’

Alongside the latest AWP machines housed in the new Barcrest Group Horizon cabinet, the Pub & Bar area of The Venue will showcase Barcrest Games’ new prize vend machine and Red Gaming’s first video AWP in a brand new cabinet. Video Star will be displayed in a range of exciting new cabinets for a number of different sectors and Barcrest Games will be launching its brand new SWP.

Each of the Barcrest Group brands will present a variety of products for the UK Bingo & Club sector, including a brand new hi-tech club machine from Barcrest Games, and Vivid Gaming will unveil its new selection of totally random £25 AWP products. Vivid will also introduce a new addition to its phenomenally successful £500 jackpot machines, Winning Ways, Spectrum and Golden Roll. One of Barcrest’s newest products is Golden Keys, a single-player game specifically for the bingo and arcade market. It’s a lo-tech game, incorporating an eye-catching 3D top reel with an entertaining feature that awards extra spins from the top game. Sales Director Barry Knowles said, ‘We are delighted with the excellent test results from Golden Keys, which have caused a buzz around the trade. The market has been waiting a long time for the next legendary single player and Golden Keys is showing great potential.’

In the Gaming Centre sector at The Venue, Vivid will be showing its new multi-player and Barcrest Games will be showcasing its innovative new two-player game, as well as a range of variations of the massively popular Video Star products in a selection of different cabinet styles. Vivid’s new range of totally random £25 AWP products will also be found in the Gaming Centre, with tantalising single-player games from Red Gaming.

Barcrest Group’s range of international products is growing ever stronger and a diverse selection will be available on the stand. To launch the latest New Genesis game for the Netherlands, the Dutch world darts champion will be on hand to demonstrate his skills. Also for the Dutch market, Barcrest Games will be unveiling a brand new five-player game. For the German, Hungarian and Ukrainian markets, Video Star promises to be a popular attraction, and games for Italy, Spain, Norway, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the German payout market make up the portfolio with all three brands strongly represented.

New from Mazooma
Based in Newark, Nottinghamshire, Mazooma Games is part of the Bell-Fruit Games group and is one of the industry’s newest and brightest development houses. Specialising in the domestic market it has built and sustained a sizeable share of the UK
sector. Mazooma also develops products for export and has achieved great success in the German market. It produces top-earning games for the bingo AWP sector, such as Pac-Man, Golden X, Tic Tac Two, Red Hot X, Shake, Rattle and Roll and Golden Game. The Golden Game three-player is a sure-fire focal point wherever it’s sited, with strong take-up from the majors and independents alike. The top-selling three-player game since its introduction almost two years ago it’s still going strong. Its pedigree can be traced back to the Golden X single player and, more recently, the Red Hot X, which is still very much alive and kicking in the Mazooma range. Armed with the licence for the world’s most famous board game, Monopoly, Mazooma has various new products that use its iconic imagery, including a new three-player to take on all-comers. The new version sees the top-box game entered with a special winning combination on any of the base machines. Two live £25 jackpots made up of 10p pieces either side of the top-box reels can be won with three red Chance symbols on the win line or three blue Community Chest symbols. The sound of the coins dropping is enhanced with sample sound effects, adding to that feel-good win factor. The coins are cleverly recycled back into the pots via escalating hoppers. This exciting new game will be on display at the show. However, topping the bill will be the latest Big-Screen Monopoly, a multi-position, sit-down game with a 42-inch plasma screen to display the animated characters, play pieces and famous London streets from the board game. Entry to the Big Screen is achieved with a special winning-reel combination. This starts the Monopoly game, where throwing dice moves you around the board, gathering wealth as you go. The use of licenced imagery on machines was a clear trend at last year’s G2E Expo in Las Vegas. However, many operators prefer to avoid the licenses as initial fees and negotiations for share of box can be difficult and costly. The quest to attract more players to ‘pay-to-play’ bingo games has led Mazooma to introduce a range of Vegas Style Video Fruits. Housed in a gold framed, classic US casino-style cabinet, they offer a range of easily interchangeable games, including American Poker, Pac-Man, Snake House, Frank’n’Fruits and Band Aid. Pushers, which attract players who may not play fruits but recognise the coin pusher from seaside holidays, are marketed under the Jumping Bean banner. Headlining at ATEI will be the new eight-player Monopoly Wonders of the World Feature Pusher. This up-to-the-minute game presents a 10p Pusher, where a feature reel is triggered during the game, awarding cash prizes. The machine is fitted with multi coin-mechs. Mazooma’s experience has shown them that most bingo players prefer a basic format, with clear artwork, lighting to help them follow the game and entertaining sound effects. The three-player top-box offers a competitive element and encourages social interaction. The winning player enjoys the feel-good factor of being seen to be a winner, encouraging others to want to beat the winning run.

ATEI is at Earls Court, London on 27-29 January 2004. For more information, including free entry badge registration, visit www.ateonline.co.uk/ATEI.
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