Bingo For Breakthrough delivers again!

The third year of Bingo For Breakthrough went off with a bang in October 2005, with a record 420 bingo clubs taking part around the country. Clubs got into the spirit of the campaign by turning pink for a week and hosting a variety of mad and inventive fundraising events. Free donation games were on offer for the chance to win a Hollie the Hippo, and members quickly snapped up the limited-edition pink dabbers.

At the time of writing £395,000 had been banked, and with well over 50 clubs yet to deposit the funds raised, everyone involved is hoping that we’ve beaten last year’s figure of £600,000. The results of the fundraising awards, as well as the final figure raised, will be announced later this month, so keep an eye on the Bingo Association web site for news.

ATEI 2006: putting the industry on show

Now in its 62nd year, ATEI is one of the leading international exhibitions for the gaming, gambling and amusement industries, attracting over 24,000 visitors from around the world. From 24-26 January, the show takes up residence at its regular London home, Earls Court. This year it will run alongside its sister show – ICE (International Casino Exhibition) – as well as a new exhibition, the Visitor Experience Show. While these three shows do address very specific markets, they are also an excellent venue for those who operate across sectors as well as those who have a focus in one area. The fact that all three shows run side by side means that a visit can be a very effective way of sourcing new suppliers, checking out the latest developments and networking. Whether you are an exhibitor or a visitor, ATEI is an industry event that is not to be missed as well as a vital part of the business year.

Our guide to the show
Since moving to Earls Court in the early 1990s, ‘The London Show’, as it is widely – and internationally – known, has attracted over 250,000 coin-op gaming and gambling industry professionals from no fewer than 173 nations. In fact, the significance of this show is such that this issue of Bingo Link also comes with a supplementary section (starting on page 11) that’s been designed to guide you around the companies that will be showcasing their machines and services at this year’s ATEI. It’s our way of saying – enjoy the show!
Happy New Year! I hope that you have all enjoyed a good Christmas period in both your business and private lives and are looking forward to an exciting and challenging 2006.

The background against which we are operating at the start of this year is still far from certain, with large sections of the Gambling Bill still lacking the detail we have been anxiously awaiting. In the meantime, changes to smoking legislation look set (at the time of writing) to compromise the nation's health as well as our business, while also putting England's legislation at odds with that of Scotland and Wales. However, rather than seeing this as an invitation to stand still, we are preparing for the busy year ahead.

Reflecting on the NBGA's activity over the last three years, it is evident that high-value games such as our Christmas one remain important, while national promotions (such as Ground Shaker) create excitement for players – both old and new. Television advertising also plays a key role in promoting the game, ensuring the health of bingo overall. During 2006 we shall be setting out to make even more use of all these key activities in the NBGA's marketing programme.

For the coming year there are two high-value games planned, the first of which takes place on Mother's Day (26 March), while the second will be taking place at Christmas (the date for this game is yet to be confirmed). Our key promotions based activity is scheduled to run after Easter with television support, while brand building based television activity is tentatively planned to run throughout Autumn – from September through to early November. To conclude the year's activity, we will once again run the aforementioned 2006 Christmas high-value game.

In July/August a new logo for The National Bingo Game is set to be implemented – the design is due to be finalised in June or July. Our current logo (in a variety of guises) has been developed with us for some time and, love it or loathe it, it is looking a little tired. Further to this, there are a number of technical developments that are set for 2006 which will be delivered through NLS (the rewrite of the DLS). These exciting plans and activities for 2006 are just an indication of what is to come in the year ahead. I will be writing to all operators and managers, as usual, with information and details of activities before they are set to run, as well as developments in advance of their implementation. But in the meantime, keep an eye on Bingo Link throughout 2006 for all the latest news of and from our bingo industry.

### National Bingo Game: key statistics

| Total prize money since the game began | £366,630,193 |
| Total prize money played for in 2004 | £59,703,875 |
| Total prize money played for in 2005 to 31 October | £44,623,603 |

**Biggest games for 2004**
- Saturday 8 May with ticket sales of 1,180,644
- Saturday 17 April with ticket sales of 962,292

**Biggest game to date for 2005**
- Saturday 22 April with ticket sales of 1,069,458

### Bingo in the media

Media coverage of stories from the bingo industry serves two primary purposes for the NBGA. Firstly, it positions bingo in the public eye as a sociable, exciting and acceptable leisure pursuit for anyone aged 18 or over. Secondly, it helps to drive new players to visit clubs.

The NBGA's work with national magazines, newspapers, radio and television programmes helps to firmly deliver on the first point, while its work with local and regional papers, radio and television helps to deliver on the second. However, both depend greatly on the willingness of winners to share their stories and the encouragement and support of club staff in helping them to do so.

2005 has been a great year for bingo in the media, which still seems ready to recognise that the game is all about having fun with people and winning. With the support of club staff we’ve had some great winners’ stories to work with, and the annual Bingo Caller of the Year Competition (see page 6) delivers a great opportunity for the media to see what this industry is all about.

Help us make 2006 another great year for bingo with stories that raise the industry’s profile and attract new players, so they too can discover the thrill of bingo.

### Number of press hits by month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer magazines</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
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<td>12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>179</td>
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**TOTAL**
- July: 133
- August: 186
- September: 210

**Quarterly total: 529**

**Year to date: 1,439**
Gala Group’s citizenship award

In December 2005, the Gala Group won the prestigious Corporate Citizenship Award at the Springboard Awards for Excellence announced at The Brewery, London.

The Springboard Awards recognise outstanding employment practice by companies and individuals, and the Corporate Citizenship Award, sponsored by the British Institute of Innkeeping, recognises initiatives that demonstrate a holistic approach to all aspects of social responsibility in licensed hospitality.

Judges consider everything from strategic planning to operational achievement, with entries needing to provide proof of innovation, achievement, evaluation and use of partnership. This year, judges felt the Gala Group exemplified this commitment, commenting that their entry demonstrated that their work in this area had led to real bottom-line improvements.

The Gala Group – which incorporates Gala Bingo and Gala Casinos – employs over 10,000 people and promotes goodwill in the communities within which they operate, fostering partnerships like the Nottinghamshire Cares initiative (which has previously featured in Bingo Link). The Cares program has also been extended to Bristol and Leeds, providing a further 1,000 hours of time and energy.

Gala takes corporate and social responsibility issues – such as responsible gaming and a greener working environment – very seriously and ensures key principles are fostered in all its relationships, including those with staff, customers, suppliers and the broader business community.

In presenting the awards, Anne Pierce, Chief Executive of Springboard commented: "The entries this year reflected the industry’s vision and effort in creating initiatives to attract and retain high calibre staff."

Association Victory on AMLD

The Association made a strong and compelling case for the retention of Amusement Machine Licence Duty (AMLD) in view of the coming uncertainty in relation to the smoking ban.

Treasury minister John Healey has acknowledged that the presentation made by the Association was effective, and therefore AMLD is being retained. It is generally thought that a Gross Profit Tax (GPT) would have been brought forward for machines, and so this has been a very welcome decision for the industry.

The Government has made yet further changes to VAT and Excise Duty legislation – some of which came into effect immediately – to bring the definition of gaming machines into line with that of the Gambling Act 2005. This means that Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) and machines used for prize gaming under Section 21 of the Gaming Act 1968 are now subject to VAT, effective 6 December 2005. Section 21 machines are already subject to Amusement Machine Licence Duty, just as FOBTs will be after the 2006 Budget.

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Peter Dean (pictured, far right), Chairman of the new Gambling Commission, reports on the launch in October last year.

The launch of the new Gambling Commission was an important landmark in the most radical shake-up of gambling law in Britain in almost half a century.

Under the Gambling Act 2005 the Commission has taken over the role of its predecessor body, the Gaming Board for Great Britain, in regulating bingo, casinos, gaming machines and lotteries. It also has new responsibility for regulating betting and online gambling.

Role and purpose

The Gambling Commission’s role is clearly spelled out in the Gambling Act 2005: to keep crime out of gambling; to ensure that gambling is conducted fairly and openly; and to protect children and vulnerable people. It has an overriding obligation to pursue these objectives and to aim to permit gambling so far as is consistent with them.

From 2007, the Gambling Commission will set new conditions under which licences are granted to gambling operators and staff, and will publish new codes of practice for the industry. It has greater powers for monitoring the industry and prosecuting illegal gambling than those of the Gaming Board.

As well as regulating operators and staff, and monitoring the industry, the Commission will advise central government on gambling. It will also issue guidance to the local licensing authorities on the granting of premise licences.

Impact on the industry

The Gambling Commission’s approach will be transparent, proportionate and consistent. Although regulation cannot be cost-free to the industry, it will be no more onerous than is required for the Commission to carry out its statutory duties. The Commission’s regulatory demands will be carefully tailored to their purpose and its operations will be modern, streamlined and efficient.

In terms of legislative changes, bingo is perhaps...
less directly affected by the Act than other sectors of the gambling industry. One change – the removal of the 24-hour rule – has already been implemented. Other changes which will take effect once the Act comes fully into force are the removal of membership requirements; the removal of statutory limits on stakes and prizes in bingo games; the removal of restrictions on the frequency of the number of games; and the permitting of rollovers on jackpots.

Timetable & consultation
Many of these changes will not have an immediate impact, as the Act is not fully in force until September 2007.

The Commission is currently recruiting a number of new staff to undertake its additional functions, and it has recently appointed a new senior management team, which includes the appointment of Phillip Brear as Director of Operations. In spring the organisation will be moving to new head offices in Victoria Square, Birmingham. Meanwhile, the London office will be closed by June 2006.

The first major task for the Commission is to undertake widespread consultation with the industry, as well as with government, faith groups, organisations – such as Gamcare and RIGT – and consumer associations. This consultation will help the Commission formulate its policies and ensure that its proposed approach will be proportionate, effective and fair.

In September 2005, the Commission published its draft Statement of Principles, which sets out the high-level values which will govern its approach to regulation. In December it released its draft Guidance to Licensing Authorities. These detailed guidelines cover both the manner in which local authorities are to carry out their functions as well as the principles they should apply. The guidelines are designed to encourage consistency in ways that premises’ licences are handled. They are also designed to ensure that operators are aware of the requirements of licensing authorities and assist them in gaining clear advice to help them understand and comply with gambling regulations.

In February 2006, the Commission will publish the draft codes of practice and licence conditions which will affect the industry in future. The publication of technical standards and compliance and enforcement procedures will take place later in the year, with the period of consultation scheduled to last until summer 2006.

The Commission will then finalise its procedures and policies, and expects to begin the process of accepting applications for licences under the new Act by January 2007, prior to the Act coming fully into force in September 2007.

The Commission wants to hear from you...
All of the Gambling Commission’s consultation documents are being widely circulated for consultation and feedback. If you would like to read any of these documents, they’re available now to download from www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk.

The Commission warmly welcomes your thoughts, comments and questions on its proposals. We hope that those working in the industry will take the time to study the documents, and contact us with their feedback. These are important changes for the gambling industry, and we would strongly encourage all those involved in the sector to have their say.
Winner 2005 Caller of the Year

Karl Seth, from the Buckingham Bingo in Old Trafford, Manchester has been crowned the 2005 Bingo Caller of the Year. At the national final held on 27 November at Mecca in Catford, London, Karl picked up the famous Golden Microphone trophy plus £500 cash and a trip to the USA. He will now become a bingo industry ambassador for 2006 and will also become a judge for Caller of the Year in 2006.

After winning the North-West regional heat in September, Karl went on to wow the thousand-strong crowd at the final and take the trophy. A classically trained actor, 33-year-old Karl has won awards for his performances and has worked extensively across the UK and Europe. Karl, who is married and has a baby daughter, says he and his family are absolutely thrilled by the result.

He celebrated his victory with a late night out in London. ‘We went out for a few drinks and a meal in central London, and it turned into quite a late night!’ Karl explained. ‘I ended up texting my entire phone book at 4:30am!’

‘It has been a whirlwind. I’m only just coming down to earth now. Immediately after I’d won, I was on a media merry-go-round. I’ve done interviews with Sky News, BBC Radio, Imagine FM, GMR ... you name it, I’ve spoken to them. Granada TV came to my club to film me when I got back and I was on the news that night. I’m really honoured to have won the title and think that 2006 is going to be absolutely amazing.’

The five other finalists will automatically have the right to defend their Regional Champion titles in the 2006 competition. These regional champions are:

- **North East Champion**
  Gary Wilson (22)
  from Gala in Sutton Fields, Hull.

- **Midlands Champion**
  Matt Adlington
  (24) from Gala in Scunthorpe.

- **South Champion**
  Brett Hyjjak (28)
  from Gala at Butlins, Bognor Regis.

- **Welsh Champion**
  Robert “Will” Willard (29)
  from Mecca in Cwmbran.

- **Scottish Champion**
  Graeme Garioch (51)
  from Mecca in Aberdeen.

We would also like to give a big thank you to all the people who helped to make this competition such a great event, including all last year’s entrants, as well as their club managers and – of course – all their loyal supporters.
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Online – onwards and upwards

In our previous issue of Bingo Link, we looked at the rapidly expanding world of bingo online and spoke with a number of leading operators including Parlay Entertainment, Aqua Online and the bingo portal WhichBingo. A few months on, the pace of growth shows no signs of slowing, hence the claim that bingo is now the fastest growing gaming activity on the internet.

In recent months, hardly a week has gone by without the launch of yet another site, and this seems to be an indication of the readiness of many brands and companies to be associated with bingo, or extend their existing business. It is also an indication of the ease with which sites can be built, launched and run.

As further proof that bingo is taking the internet by storm in the UK, software manufacturer Parlay Entertainment has seen a further 15 online bingo sites launched using its software, all of which feature the European 90-number game and predominantly target a UK audience. In addition, the relative newcomer Virtue Fusion, which already works with Endomol, Leisure Link, Mecca and Blue Square, has become the gambling licensing partner for Invox, an AIM-listed company which specialises in the promotion of home gaming to the UK market. Invox, which is also involved in other mobile gaming activities, currently runs both crownbingo.com and bingoopoly.com (launched in November 2005). December also saw Coronation Street get in on the bingo act through ITV, with the launch of a heavily branded version of bingo through its website. The intention is to further promote this on television.

The online bingo player

Despite the rapid development of online bingo, it currently appears to be drawing the majority of customers from the online environment, rather than eating into land-based bingo business. However, as PC ownership increases and more homes sign up to the web, this may not always be the case. With no accurate statistics available on the number of land-based players also playing online, estimates vary from as few as 3% to as many as 20%.

Winning over customers

In setting up sites, all operators must fight for customers who, due to the online environment, may be fickle in terms of where and when they play – after all, a change of online club is only a click away! Like land-based bingo, the prize fund is a key draw, coupled with how well the site is run. In November 2005 Bingos.com awarded what is believed to be the largest single prize on a bingo website, handing over $103,100 US (nearly £60,000). With many sites being run on networks rather than standalone, it will become increasingly attractive to partner other sites and pool prize funds in order to create a larger headline prize to compete with larger bingo sites and other forms of gaming. The fact that the land-based bingo industry is accustomed to operating this way (and has created the National Bingo Game as an administrative structure for doing so) means there is a clear opportunity to ensure that existing operators retain their dominance of the bingo market.

In the UK, online bingo is in its infancy, but with networked solutions so readily available, the barriers to entry are low. However, successfully running a site and ensuring its long-term profitability requires considerable planning and maintenance.

Herotech is one company that has chosen to specialise in the area of development and maintenance and works for independent brands, as this is where they believe the future of UK online bingo lies. They are also aware that there are a number of potential problems that may face an operator who signs to a networked site.

To network or not to network...

Some online operators believe that online bingo is simply a catch phrase to lure female gamblers in and on to casino based games. Such sites generate anywhere from 50% to 95% of their income from online slots and other gambling games. Alternatively, some operators recognise that only 50% of female bingo players participate in other forms of gambling, and that a strong and united community, which many female online bingo players are seeking, will greatly increase the player retention. The addition of slots and instant games may increase the mainstream appeal of a bingo site, enabling operators to make more from the player in the short term, but they are unlikely to hang around, whereas a site that provides customers with a second home, new friends and a strong support base to call on when required is like a life-long friend and will be visited regularly.

Unlike online poker networks, the inherent community dynamic in UK online bingo may leave some bingo networks struggling to retain players. Many large organisations become obsessed with rapid liquidity, drawing a false parallel with poker. As a result they share one game and community with multiple front ends (skins). Players who have signed to a number of front ends soon realise that the game is essentially the same and review the brands they play. So while smaller operators with smaller marketing budgets have a case for using a bingo `skin', players are becoming increasingly frustrated with these `skins' and consolidation becomes inevitable.

However, once an operator signs to a bingo network, they can’t leave easily, regardless of the contract. Customers can become enmeshed in the larger network, and separating them from their network community may mean an operator loses customers and faces a PR nightmare. But the lesson may be to choose your network wisely, rather than not to join at all.
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And this year you will be treated to a comprehensive portfolio of products for the bingo market, all tried and tested and all with the ability to deliver high returns for customers, throughout their lifetime on site. The range includes £25 classic AWPs, Section 21 video-based games and £500 totally random machines.

Barry Knowles, director of sales for Barcrest Group, says, ‘ATEI is the key event in the industry calendar and we’ve pulled out all the stops for 2006 with a cracking selection of products for bingo clubs. We’re returning to our original position at the front of the hall where visitors can easily find our stand, and our friendly and knowledgeable sales team will be welcoming guests and demonstrating our games. We look forward to seeing you there!’

Barcrest Games
For the lucrative Section 21 market, Barcrest Games will be showing off its revolutionary new concept: Rainbow Riches, a five-reel multistake video game with 20 paylines. Rainbow Riches features Bronze, Silver and Gold progressive pots and the ‘Rainbow Bonus’, which awards large cash wins. The brand new ‘Road to Riches’ feature awards wins up to £500 on all stakes. On the eye-catching progressive top box, Rainbow Riches accumulates a percentage of players’ stakes into the progressive pots, with the gold pot worth anything from £250 up to £500. By adding the optional themed hotboxes, two or more machines can be linked together to share the progressive feature. The games can be further enhanced with themed infill boxes to add extra ‘pizzazz’. Rainbow Riches has three stakes, 50p, £1 and £2, and up to £500 can be won from all stakes. Players can increase their stakes for a higher percentage return. Rainbow Riches is housed in the Rio Video Cabinet, which has been enhanced for improved performance, serviceability and aesthetics.

Also at the show will be the legendary Elvis Top Twenty® for Section 21. The game features the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll in video and audio clips that maximise player appeal. This 20-line game, with overlapping lines on a 5 x 3 grid, offers cash prizes that can be won by matching 3 or more symbols or via bonus features; scatter wins are also available. The £500 All Cash top prize can be won at all the stake levels and can also be won from the bonus features and scatter wins. Players can choose to play 50p, £1 or £2 stakes. Available either in the Rio Video Cabinet or Sit Down Multiplier to suit any location, Elvis Top Twenty also offers promotional posters to attract new players. Last but certainly not least for Barcrest’s Section 21 games is Cashino, a multistake, 20-line game complemented by attractive scatter bonus features. Cashino features twin TFT screens with superior video technology, a ‘no hassle’ £1,000 hopper, and downloadable collection data via USB key. Cashino is housed in the enhanced Rio Video Cabinet.

It comes complete with a distinctive top box to create ‘wow’ factor and point-of-sale promotional materials to help venues create extra interest. Elvis has also given classic £25 machines from Barcrest Games the Rock ‘n’ Roll treatment! Super Streak, Red Hot Roll and Gold Rush are known and loved by players in bingo clubs and arcades around the country, and they have now been upgraded with the addition of Elvis music and images. Housed in the enhanced Rio Cabinet, these machines offer endless possibilities for bingo clubs and arcades. They can be sited as standalone machines, integrated into the Showtime wave or, for ultimate impact, can be supplied with optional Elvis-themed topboxes, hotboxes and infill panels to provide a stunning Elvis display.

Vivid Gaming
Random Keys, the latest game in the outstanding Totally Random range from Vivid Gaming, is a Vegas-style wide-reel machine with a £500 jackpot. A second set of reels provides a new top feature for players to enjoy. For extra impact, the machine can be complemented by the addition of the Totally Random topbox, wave and infill box accessories. Random Keys is housed in the Rio W Cabinet, which has been enhanced for improved performance, serviceability and aesthetics and has increased hopper capacity.

Bell-Fruit Group
Bell-Fruit Group’s reputation as a class act in the bingo sector is largely thanks to a strong core AWP line-up and, lately, its Section 16/21 products.

After the success of Random Spinner in the lively Section 16/21 market, Bell-Fruit Games pulled out all the stops to unveil no less than four new games at Preview 2006. First out of...
the blocks is Hi Roller, a sophisticated take on the ever-popular Video Poker, with a random feature wheel in the top glass. Like Random Spinner and all Bell-Fruit’s Section 16 games, Hi Roller offers multistake options and the chance to win £500 cash on any stake.

Second is Tornado, which boasts a stormy-weather theme with features like ‘Winds of Wealth’ and a unique whirlwind-effect 3D reel in the top glass.

Crazy Fruits are given the Section 16 treatment on Random Winner, a five-reel, five-winline base game with Winning Streak feature game.

The fourth product in the line-up boasts the hottest licence of the year: Triple Bullseye features the famous Bully character and a voiceover from the legendary scoremaster Tony Green. This game allows all three customers to play the plasma screen feature game simultaneously.

All Bell-Fruit Section 16/21 games come complete with top box, note acceptor and point-of-sale materials.

**CMS/Thomas Estates**

As S16/21 matures, operators are continually asking the question: which S16/21 machine is the one to buy? CMS believes it now has the answer.

Major factors operators are looking for in these machines are that they are top earners that will bring in fresh income, that they can be swapped easily to new games (ideally category B/C games in the future), and preferably that they are ones whose designers have a real vested interest in delivering a new game that is as good as any other out there, without forcing you to purchase a new cabinet.

CMS/Thomas Estates say that their games are all designed by operators for operators, with the guarantee that there will be great games for the cabinet in future – as they will need them themselves!

As an example of their commitment to earlier games, the company has released Eggstra lines, a five-reel video £500 Section 16 game, either as an upgrade to their earlier roulettes, or as a new game. It is also available in a multi-player arena format – which, by the way, is proving especially popular with the ladies.

**Edward Thompson Group**

A major leap forward for electronic bingo will be on show from the Edward Thompson Group. A completely new version of the Edward Thompson Group’s hand-held bingo terminal has been seen in test sites across

**Deith Leisure’s recommended list of performers in the machine market**

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Deith Leisure

As one of the leading independent suppliers in the industry, it is Deith’s aim to provide bingo operators with the best products, from the best manufacturers.

We are the largest distributor in the UK, handling exclusive product from Astra, Barcrest, Vivid, Red, Electrocoin, Gamesoft, Project Coin, Bell-fruit, Mazooma, QPS, JPM, and JVH,’ says a company spokesman. ‘We are also second to none for our technical support team, consisting of full service spares on next day delivery, a dedicated technical support team that is happy to help with any technical issue, and a national transport network insuring quick delivery across the UK from our Nationwide depots.’

Deith Leisure’s extensive machine portfolio consists of all the leading AWP’s, Clubs, Section 16/21 and Change Machines including the leading club machines from the Barcrest Group, the leading change machines from Thomas and all the number one AWPs across the UK such as Astra Bullion Bars Arena 4 Player.

Astra Games

This year Astra has been enjoying success in all sectors, particularly with its Slotto family of Section 21 machines.

Party Games Slotto and its multi-player sibling Megaslot have managed the significant feat of attracting new players as well as retaining popularity with core customers. This was most evident in the bingo sector, where Slotto made an immediate impact.

‘Party Games Slotto is an attractive machine which draws the attention of the player,’ noted Astra sales director Alan Rogers. ‘And once customers start playing, they appreciate the fast, exciting game and come back for more. Slotto is now developing into a brand which the player is actively seeking out.’

Lee Harford, senior machines manager at Gala Group, who has also experienced the unique appeal of the brand, said: ‘Slotto has been, so far, the most significant gaming innovation for the Section 21 sector. It’s exciting, easy to play and delivers a unique entertainment experience to our bingo machine players. Gala’s nationwide investment illustrates our confidence that Slotto delivers something different to our members.’

Other Astra machines popular with bingo players include Megaslot – Astra’s four-player multi-player with a 26-inch TFT screen-top feature. From the original Party Time to Party Time Arena, Astra multi-players have always worked extremely well in the sociable bingo environment. On the AWP front, Bullion Bars Deluxe and Arena continue to perform well.

So that covers off the machines – but what (or who) else might you want to see on the day?

Well, here is our promised hit list!

For great prizes and door gifts, we suggest Just Everything, ACE and PMS International to be top of your list. They offer a great range of items covering all price and quality points.

If you are looking to speed up the handling of ‘the hard stuff’, stop off at Scott Tod, Cummins Allison, Scan Coin and Cash Handling Systems. Or if you want in-club access to the folding stuff, try Omni Cash.

We all know who to go to for tickets – Edward Thompson and Cowells Arrow – and they’re both here, but no exploration of all things bingo would be complete without ECM, so we asked them for an update of their CV.

ECM

The UK’s one-stop solution provider for all gaming requirements, ECM work closely with the gaming industry and regulators as both an innovator and manufacturer to provide revenue-generating products to suit every budget.

ECM systems power the UK’s National Bingo Game, and innovations such as the Digital Link System (an audio/data-conferencing concept) have emphasised the company’s world-leading position.

ECM’s range of cash bingo equipment is the UK’s standard, and from simple shuttlecards to complete linked systems, ECM supply it all.

To look after every aspect of a club’s paper bingo games, ECM offer stage bingo controllers and are now the UK’s sole suppliers of TED, a hand-held “ticket minder” which electronically holds a player’s bingo tickets for a complete session. It enables players to easily play more than six tickets simultaneously, and also assists visually impaired players.

From the operator’s point of view, TED can reduce costs associated with paper tickets – and more tickets in play reflects in a higher prize board.

ECM’s ClubTRACK™ family of products represents a major step forward in the field of club management, as it enables the integration of all club activities into one easy-to-use database system which allows access to information in meaningful formats. With ClubTRACK, clubs can track their members by what they’ve won, how much they’ve spent on Stage Bingo, Prize Bingo, machines, or their spend at the bar and buffet. ClubTRACK offers all of these functions, providing an information system that is unrivalled in this market.

So there you have our hot hit list – we hope you enjoy the show!
MINTEL International report

BINGO UK 2005 – the latest research report from Mintel International – shows that the bingo industry has been buoyed by an increase in the average spend per head, despite falling admissions. Mintel found that the spend per admission rose to £27 in 2005, up 35% on 2000. The greater influx of younger, occasional players, has been another major source of growth. Mintel’s exclusive consumer research shows that the number of 18-24 year olds interested in bingo has risen to 8.4%, significantly higher than the average of 6.4% among the general adult population. Encouragingly for bingo operators, these customers are more likely to spend greater amounts on games and ancillary items such as food and drink, which further boosts revenue. Nevertheless, older women from the lower social class segment still remain the industry’s core target. Indeed, just 1% of the upper ‘A’ and ‘B’ social class groups claim to play bingo regularly.

New and old appeal
The obvious dilemma for operators is how to appeal to young, infrequent players as well as older regulars. With Mintel’s research proving that bingo players fall mainly into two camps – those who play to socialise and those who play to win – they claim there is little point in trying to add other non-gambling leisure activities into a bingo hall, as players are unlikely to utilise these facilities fully.

Membership changes
The key for operators is to ensure that bingo becomes part of a regular repertoire of leisure activities. For that reason, Mintel believes the creation of links with local restaurants, pubs or clubs, or targeted loyalty schemes, would be more beneficial. Part of the social appeal is playing with friends or people you know, and the lifting of membership rules is a change that will create a more flexible environment for both operators and players. Groups will be free to drop in and play and, consequently, there is the opportunity for increasing the appeal for groups of friends on a social night out – such as hen nights and office parties.

Successfully addressing this issue may also help soften the blow to the bingo market that may come with the implementation of the proposed smoking ban.

BA discount offer
If the information published in this report is of interest, you’ll be pleased to know that the Bingo Association has negotiated a discount of 10% for all members when buying Mintel’s report ‘Bingo UK, 2005’ between 18 January and 18 February 2006.

To purchase your copy for the discounted price of £895 (+ VAT), or for more information about the full scope of this report, contact Helen Henley. Call +44 (0)20 7606 6000 or email hhenley@mintel.com.
Once again, Breakthrough has been amazed by the support shown by operators, staff and members.

Chief Executive Jeremy Hughes said: ‘The fundraising achievements of the bingo industry continue to astound Breakthrough, and I would like to thank all club staff and members for their support. To raise over £1 million in just two years is fantastic and we are well on the way to raising over £600,000 this year. I look forward to working together in the forthcoming years towards our vision of a future free from the fear of breast cancer.’

Bingo For Breakthrough has gone from strength to strength in this award-winning campaign, with 2005 being the third year that the industry has supported Breakthrough Breast Cancer. Even before the fundraising results are known, 2005 has been a record-breaking year. Among the achievements were:

- BIG TICK Award from Business In The Community
- Entry for no less than 5 Awards
- Record levels of press coverage achieved nationally and locally
- Unprecedented levels of celebrity support with many celebrities – from Coronation Street, Graham Norton, Gary Lineker – participating in events

In addition, the campaign has gained a range of great coverage with features in TV Quick, Heat, OK!, Daily Mirror, Daily Star, Take it Easy, Inside Soap, and Reveal, as well as lots of fantastic regional coverage.

The work of building a partnership over a prolonged period of time is starting to pay dividends, as Bingo For Breakthrough starts to achieve recognition for raising substantial sums of money. The Association has decided to continue its support of Breakthrough in 2006 and 2007, after which it will undertake a review.

The date that has been set for this year’s Bingo For Breakthrough week is 22-29 October (the final week of October) which will coincide with Breast Cancer Awareness month. Having achieved so much in 2005, the Bingo For Breakthrough team are excitedly planning the new activities and materials that they will produce to help clubs as they build upon the great work that has already been achieved.

- If you have any ideas or would like to use the BIG TICK logo on your company stationery, call Laura Jones at Breakthrough on 020 7025 2493.

Let’s hair it for bingo!
Staff at Carlton Club in Elgin wore pink wigs and hosted a pink day.

Bra-tastic
General Manager David Riley and the staff at Gala Scunthorpe wore their bras on the outside for a day.

Family Fun Day
Customers and staff at Gala Stevenage

All aboard!
Staff members at Mecca Bingo in Hartlepool were a little weary following a sponsored bike ride.

Details for the 2005 Fundraising Awards will be published in Issue 73 of your Bingo Link.

Scalped!
Activities at Sun Valley Social Club in Clifton included a head shave (above), customer versus staff dart matches and a pub crawl.

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Continued from Page 1
Possibly the world's largest and most significant gaming trade show, G2E (more formally known as the 'Global Gaming Expo') celebrated its fifth birthday when the ribbon was cut at the 2005 opening.

Year upon year the show goes from strength to strength, offering new pavilions and features and increasing attendance, and the 2005 show proved to be no exception. Total attendance exceeded figures for 2004 by 6%, with a grand total of 26,603 gaming industry professionals in attendance. This included some 4,656 attendees from 99 different countries including Aruba, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Korea, Latvia, Macao, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and Venezuela, to name but a few. The exhibition floor also featured an increasingly international flavour, with more than 100 companies (20% of exhibitors) from outside the United States.

Games and beyond
The show has also seen an increase in interest in non-gaming amenities, as these increasingly form part of the total experience offered by leisure venues within the gaming industry. The single largest growth segment for the show was the food and beverage sector, which experienced a 33% increase on 2004.

‘We are particularly proud of this fifth successive year of attendance growth at G2E,’ said Frank J. Fahrenkopf, Jr., President and CEO of the AGA. ‘Our ability to produce across-the-board increases year after year indicates we are keeping pace with the changes in our industry and providing industry executives with exactly the products, educational opportunities and networking connections they need to succeed in today’s global marketplace.’

The Bingo Pavilion at the show proved to be a popular destination, with the advent of online bingo introducing a whole new audience.

G2E will move to its new, permanent location at the Las Vegas Convention Center in November with the show for 2006 taking place on 14-16 November.

For more information, visit the G2E website at www.globalgamingexpo.com
Gala has revealed artist's impressions of its new club in The Point on Shenley Road in Borehamwood, opening later this month.
The club offers seating for 900 people and parking for up to 240 cars. The new style is modern and boasts state-of-the-art facilities including comfort cooling and non-smoking areas to maintain air purity, excellent disabled facilities, a bar and a diner.

‘The new Gala Club will be the most luxurious bingo club in the area,’ says John Stevens, General Manager. ‘The modern facilities and design will ensure that this will rival the best leisure facilities in the region. We're all tremendously excited about the opening and about revealing it to our members for the first time.’

There will be numerous events to celebrate the opening of the new club, including a star studded launch party on Thursday, 19 January. The existing club in the Boulevard Retail Park will close on Wednesday, 18 January – the night before the launch party – ensuring there is absolutely no disruption to its members.

INDEPENDENT OPERATORS AND MANAGERS, DON’T WAIT OR YOU WILL BE TOO LATE.

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I guarantee a higher % return to the operator/affiliate than any other site. A minimal set-up cost will be charged against your return.

Contact Patrick Duffy on 07879 844 344 or email patrick@thepalaces.com, or write to 14 Yallop Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR31 6 HA
Bingo World Expo caters to the global community

An American based trade show, Bingo World Expo, has resurfaced on the Bingo Link radar. This bingo-specific trade show has been going for 10 years, during which it has experienced both upward and downward attendance trends. In line with the increased popularity of bingo around the world, the show is once again in a growth cycle and is expanding its offerings in terms of both its trade exhibition and conference programme.

Bingo World Expo takes place 7–9 March at the Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas and offers a bingo-specific conference programme. While many topics will have a strong, and in some cases exclusively, American focus, many of the issues considered will be more general, such as:

- Web site development
- Bingo around the world
- Attracting younger players
- Point-of-sale systems and player loyalty programmes
- Email marketing techniques.

The show is supported by many well-known names including Arrow, Video Gaming Technology and Planet Bingo. For more information visit www.bingoexpo.com

Winners of Hollie the Hippo Competition

Thank you to all of you who sent in competition entry forms to win our popular fundraising mascot – Hollie is clearly a much-loved character!

The lucky winners are:
- Alexander Forbes, Carlton Bingo, Fraserburgh
- James Allan, Quayside Bingo, Lossiemouth
- Anne Robinson, Royal George Bingo, Edinburgh

Lucky Scotland! Thank you to ACE for providing us with such a great mascot/prize for Bingo For Breakthrough 2005.

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07850 333987 or E-mail simonk@qservices.co.uk

“Business solutions to your business problems”
Barry Cameron has spent most of his life involved with bingo; his family started operating the County Theatre Bedford in the 1960s, followed by the Invicta Chatham and the Palais Peterborough, amongst others. As a director of The Regent Leisure Group – at one time the largest independent (non PLC) bingo operator in the UK – Barry has had experience with all aspects of the bingo business, and this experience has been put to good use with Senator Public Relations. This London based agency works closely with the leisure and entertainment sector, and Barry is now looking to work more closely with the bingo industry again.

‘I love the bingo business,’ says Barry ‘and would welcome the opportunity to work with current operators in this exciting and expanding market.’ If you are interested in public relations support from a professional who understands the bingo business, call Barry Cameron on 020 8906 7720.
ECM Systems Ltd starts 2006 with the appointment of Stephen Parker as their new Customer Service Manager. This new, high-level role was established at the end of 2005, and Stephen will now take responsibility for service and support, spearheading ECM’s drive to put customer satisfaction at the heart of its ongoing development strategy.

After more than seven years as European Technical Services Manager for epos peripherals specialist TransAct Technologies, Stephen set up his own business to develop a new epos terminal for licensed independent betting offices. ‘Practically every bingo hall in the UK is powered by ECM gaming technology,’ said ECM’s Operations Director, John Macdonald, ‘which is a testimony to the quality and reliability of our products and systems. But in almost every case our systems are mission critical – if they fail, play stops.

‘That’s why customer service and support is so important to ECM. But it’s not just about putting things right that have gone wrong. By working closely with our customers we can anticipate difficulties and resolve issues before they become problems. We therefore welcome Stephen to the team.’
BINGO OPERATIONS

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**TED**

wireless electronic bingo minder

Want to increase ticket sales without finding new customers, add to your prize board and boost your bottom line? Then ask us about TED today. No capital investment is required, you only pay if your TEDs are used, £1.50 per TED per session.

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