Bingo Caller of the Year

Six fantastic representatives of the bingo caller’s skills have won through to reach the finals of this year’s Bingo Caller of the Year competition.

The judging panel was current Bingo Caller of the Year Karl Seth, Gloria Pattinson, competition organiser from Pattinson PR and the NBGA’s Steve Baldwin. The high standard made the judging very difficult but the panel finally, after much deliberation, agreed on six regional champions.

The regional winners are:

- **North West**: Chris McHenry – Buckingham, Middleton, Manchester
- **North East**: Gary Wilson, Gala, Hull
- **Scotland**: Alan Kerr, Gala, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh
- **South**: Brett Hyjak, Gala, Butlins Bognor Regis
- **Midlands**: Barbara Miller, Mecca, Gloucester
- **Wales**: Mike Broad, Castle Leisure, Bridgend.

The first regional final was the North West, at the Buckingham Bingo Club in Old Trafford, professional home of current Bingo Caller of the Year Karl Seth. The club was decorated with balloons and manager Andrea Cassells and her superb staff rolled out the red carpet and made everyone very welcome, with players treated to a steel band, free bubbly and excellent lunch.

Contestants David Sharpe (Buckingham, Hyton); Andrew Lee (Gala, Carlisle); Allen Musa (Mecca, Dingle); Chris McHenry (Buckingham, Middleton) and Gareth Meredith (Empire, Blackpool) took to the stage and were interviewed on their knowledge of the game before demonstrating their showmanship and calling skills. They had obviously all worked very hard on their excellent routines but it was first-time entrant Chris McHenry who took the regional title and became the first recipient of the specially designed Regional Final trophies, sporting the new NBGA logo and livery.

The judging team then moved on to the Mecca Bingo in Hartlepool for the North East final, where a warm welcome awaited. Club manager Stuart Booth and his team of cheerful staff organised a really great day. The Mecca Stars provided an excellent cabaret and the club looked spectacular, decked out in balloons, with posters and Caller of the Year table-talkers. The event had been well promoted to the club’s regular players, who were out in force and delighted by the all-in programme, free bubbly, lunch and a box of chocolates.

Gary Wilson (Gala, Hull) was defending his regional title against a line-up of strong contenders: Danielle Borthwick (Pit, Castleford); James Butler (Mecca, Sheffield); Michael Edwards (Gala, Nottingham); Liz Forster (Gala, Grimsby) and Jon Isbell (Gala, Newcastle). It was an exciting and very close final but defending champion Gary took the highest marks and retained his title.

Then it was down to the Southern regional final at the Gala Club in Poole. Club manager Alan Haycock and his staff put on a really warm welcome for players with a superb rock n’ roll group to entertain them. As the cabaret went on stage, the contestants: Brett Hyjak (Gala, Butlins Bognor Regis); Bobby Blunt (EJs, Reading); Lee Courtney (Gala, Bexleyheath); Dave Gibson (the Crown, Bognor Regis); Andrew continued on page 4

Make your voice heard

How strong is your brand and identity? Are you holding onto your existing customers as well as enticing new players? And how do you persuade them to play at your club rather than anywhere else?

The bingo business is increasingly competitive, with a tough leisure market having been made more so for land-based businesses by the advent of online gaming through the internet. The competition for customers is fierce and is coming from the vast range of entertainment and leisure options available.

Brigid McMullen, Creative Director of The Workroom, an award-winning design and integrated communications agency, says having a strong brand can make all the difference to being heard in a noisy marketplace.

In this kind of environment it is doubly important that your business stands out and gets noticed and a strong brand and continued on page 10
news

The National Game
Quarterly news and update from Chief Executive, Paul Talboys

I am pleased to be able to report that the new National Bingo Game corporate identity has been rolled out, spearheaded by a new national television campaign and new website, supported by in-club point of sale.

The new identity, complete with audio branding is the result of 11 months work and has given the National Bingo Game a more contemporary look, which will enable it to communicate more effectively with both new and existing players.

The new television campaign features several real players in everyday locations sharing their enthusiasm for bingo, which comes across as being very genuine. These players are also part of the new website and of the regionally-based PR activity that will be happening over the coming months.

2006 is rapidly drawing to a close and has proved to be an interesting year. Afternoon National Bingo Games are firmly established, enabling clubs to offer life-changing prize money twice a day, seven days a week, and Friday night’s Big Number provides an exciting twist to the night’s game, so much so that this year’s special Christmas game on 22 December will take this format.

The introduction of the smoking ban in Scotland has hit clubs north of the border hard and is an indication of the effect the ban is likely to have in England and Wales when introduced in 2007. However, the year is far from over, with Bingo For Breakthrough later this month and our seasonal Christmas game.

With the implementation of the new Gambling Bill rapidly approaching, 2007 is set to be a year of challenges and opportunities, which the industry must meet, master and exploit. Thank you for your support in 2006 and I look forward to working with you all in 2007.

As this is the final issue of 2006 May I wish you all a prosperous New Year.

Bingo in the media

In the second quarter of 2006, June is the only month to show a slight year-on-year increase in coverage, with both April and May showing a significant drop.

While there has been no discernible increase or decline in the number of National Bingo Game winners agreeing to publicity, some women’s weekly national titles have rejected editorial they would previously have been expected to accept.

This issue has to date only arisen in women’s weekly titles move into the online bingo market similar issues may arise.

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Quarterly total: 316 Year to date: 687

In terms of regions contributing most to coverage achieved nationally available media outstripped all regions in April, but Scotland claimed honours for both May and June with 16 and 25 per cent respectively.
news

Gala presents Mrs Osbourne

Gala Bingo is the proud sponsor of TV personality Sharon Osbourne’s new talk show, Mrs Osbourne Presents, which is currently airing on ITV.

The sponsorship deal, worth around £2 million, sees Gala Bingo branding featured on 40 episodes of Mrs Osbourne Presents from 29 August to 30 October, and includes branded trailers, interactive features, on-line tie-ins and mobile interactive sponsorship.

Kate Howe, Gala Coral Group marketing director, says: ‘This sponsorship is a fantastic opportunity for Gala Bingo. Mrs Osbourne Presents is aimed at our bingo playing demographic and will reach existing Gala members as well as targeting potential new ones. We’re extremely excited to be bringing the Gala Bingo brand to ITV.’

Bingo for Breakthrough week back with a bang

Pink hair, bed pushes, crazy outfits... it’s that time of year again! Bingo for Breakthrough 2006 is nearly upon us as 22 October rapidly approaches.

Once again the Bingo Association is teaming up with Breakthrough Breast Cancer for what promises to be the biggest and best Bingo for Breakthrough week to date.

A record 420 clubs are taking part this year between 22 and 28 October, and 5,000 gorgeous pink bunnies are poised, ready to be won in games of bingo taking place across the country.

Celebrities have done us proud again this year! From Lorraine Kelly to David Bailey, they have taken up their trusty dabbers and doodled away to create some great and genuinely original piece of artwork, all of which are up for auction during the week. Go to www.ebay.co.uk from 22 October to see all these works of art, celebrating what it means to be a woman, produced using dabbers!

Get online and bid – you might just be lucky!

Good luck to everyone taking part, every donation is needed and wanted, no matter how small.

St Minver is delighted to announce the successful launch of Castle Bingo online.

Come and try it with 20 free tickets!

ENTER PROMO CODE: CASTLE

“We’re very proud of our online bingo - whilst we’re still firmly focused on the clubs themselves, we couldn’t afford to ignore the opportunities that it presents. That’s why we selected St Minver to operate our online bingo – our respective skills make for an excellent product and partnership.”

Lisa Morgan, Marketing Director, Castle Bingo

Thinking of launching an online bingo and gaming channel? Contact peter.woodfine@stminverltd.com or call 0207 182 7903 to find out more details.

www.stminverltd.com
continued from page 1

Kerkhove (Gala, Worthing); and Dawn Milton (Mecca Harlow), were each interviewed by the judges. Following a superb lunch, contestants showed off their calling skills. Again, experience in the competition proved decisive and defending champion Brett Hyjak took the Southern trophy.

It was then time to find our Scottish Bingo Caller of the Year, at the new Carlton Bingo Club at Fife Leisure Park. Manager Christine Wright and her team worked hard to welcome the hundreds of players who travelled to support their favourites.

Defending champion Graeme Garioch (Mecca, Aberdeen) was up against Steven Coyle (Gala, Kilmarnock); Nicky Davies (Gala, Darnley Glasgow); Alan Kerr and Alan Brown (both from the Gala, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh) and Craig Lees from the Carlton East Kilbride, who all gave very creditable performances. We also had a special contestant — Daily Record journalist Craig McQueen, who secretly trained as a bingo caller so that he could write a feature on the competition from a different angle. Although the judges didn’t include his marks in the contest, he gave a good account of himself by playing the bagpipes for his showmanship demonstration and giving a faultless calling of a bingo game. But the real star of the day was Alan Kerr, who took the Scottish title.

The Midlands final was at Shipley’s Club in Weoley Castle. Manager Andrew Zebeneika and his team put on a marvellous show and helped ensure that the day went off with a real bang. The club was decorated with balloons and supporters were treated to an excellent cabaret and an all-inclusive programme, which included lunch.

Having moved up into management, defending Midlands champion, Matt Adlington was not eligible to enter, so the contestants were: Kelvyn Davies (Gala, Stoke); Andrew Healey (Shipley’s Kidderminster); Barbara Miller (Mecca, Gloucester); Mark Lunn (Mecca, Wednesbury Cross); and Danny Taylor (Gala, Leicester). They gave some very polished demonstrations of showmanship. The audience and judges were very appreciative and it was hard to choose a winner. But Barbara Miller came out on top.

The Welsh regional final was at Nantgarw, at the Castle Leisure Club. Manager Anthony Poley and his team gave the judges, contestants and supporters an excellent welcome and ensured the day went smoothly. The club had been decorated and supporters received a free lunch, bubbly and sweets, as well as being royally entertained by a superb Welsh tenor. The contestants were: Peter Lewis (Castle, Newport); Robert Will Willard (Mecca, Cwmbran); Mike Broad (Castle, Bridgend); Shaun Homewood (Mecca, Swansea); James Thain (Castle, Newport Road, Cardiff) and Wyn Richards (Castle, Neath).

The contestants acquitted themselves well when quizzed on their knowledge of the game and awkward situations that could crop up in their working life. This section is always the most uncomfortable part for the contestants and they were much more relaxed when it was time to show an appreciative audience what they could do behind the microphone. Each demonstrated their showmanship, with a mix of comedy, an impression of Shirley Bassey and even a touch of the Full Monty. Of course, the Welsh final would not have been complete without some excellent singing too. The judges had a doubly difficult time choosing a winner but awarded the last place in the national final to Mike Broad.

So, we now have our final six contestants, who take part in the national final on Sunday 26 November, hosted by the team at Gala, Surrey Quays, south east London.

Each of our six regional winners and their partners will be guests of the NBGA for the weekend. They will stay at the luxury Thistle Tower Hotel, overlooking the Tower of London and the world-famous Tower Bridge. Judges Karl Seth and Gloria Pattinson will be joined by Paul Talboys, Chief Executive of the NBGA. Good luck to all of the finalists.

Warm thanks to all the clubs

Now in its 12th successful year, this year’s competition has already produced a considerable amount of positive publicity for bingo — none of which would be possible without the participation of ALL those who enter and the hosting clubs. It is not just those who make it to the regional finals that make this a great competition, but ALL those who enter. It is very exciting to see new faces entering and rewarding to then see those same people coming back, getting better and more confident each time, raising the standard of professional bingo calling.

The host clubs also play a key part in ensuring that each final is an event in itself, worthy of audience enjoyment and media attention. In recognition of this, an award is made each year to the club and staff that hosted the best regional final, based on five key points:

- Pre-event liaison and planning.
- Club decoration and atmosphere.
- The facilities and welcome for players.
- Provision for contestants, judges and organising team.
- Cooperation from the club and staff.

It was a very close call but the judges decided that the Mecca Club in Hartlepool was the overall winner of Best Regional Final 2006. Congratulations to Stuart Booth and his team, who went that extra mile to ensure that contestants, their supporters and the judges had a superb day.
feature

Brett Hyrjak is congratulated by his fellow contestants and the judges proudly holds his trophy.

No nerves at the Midlands final.

North West

A steel band entertained at the North West final.

North East

Chris McHenry took the North West title against tough competition.

Scotland

Barbara Miller celebrates her win with fellow contestants.

Wales

Mike Broad with the other Welsh finalists.

Alan Kerr and the other Scottish contestants display their awards.

No nerves at the Midlands final.
It's a big deal for Bell

The Deal or No Deal TV game show, hosted by Noel Edmonds, has captured the imagination of television audiences like no other, quickly earning its place in current popular culture and the tag of 'hot property'.

Its success is due in no small part to the unusual and compelling format, including elements such as eliminating boxes, beating the banker, deciding whether to Deal or to No Deal. All these familiar and exciting features have been replicated in the new AWP from Bell Fruits Games.

All the familiar TV elements are there for the player, enhanced by sounds and visuals from the show. To add an extra dimension to game play there are also some additional sound bites recorded especially for the game by deal master himself Noel Edmonds.

The Deal or No Deal AWP created a stir right from the start, producing exceptional test figures followed very quickly by full approvals and now promises to be as big a star and success as the show itself.

ATEI – 2007

ATEI 2007 will be the first show under new owners, following BACTA’s sale of the show to Clarion Events. The venue remains the same, but the show’s significance continues to grow.

Bingo Link will have a full round up of exhibitors and key stand and events in our January issue.

Crown Leisure chooses new PR agency

Crown Leisure has appointed industry specialists Gaming Co Europe to handle the group’s PR and Marketing. Crown has been looking for some time to have a more effective PR and marketing voice and had spoken to a number of agencies over recent months.

Dean Harding commented: ‘We were looking for a company that was experienced in the industry and could offer services across all aspects of the group’s activities. Gaming Co Europe Ltd has specialised in this industry for more than five years and we felt that this allowed us to have immediate input for the implementation of our PR and marketing plans.’

Deith Group outsources spares

Deith Group has announced the appointment of Hazel Electronics as its key supplier for all spare parts. The Kent-based company will take over all non-warranty spare part and service orders for all video, novelty and non-Deith/CMS gaming machines.

Matthew Deith explained: ‘Part of our long-term strategy is to out-source certain parts of our business, by appointing professional, dedicated companies to carry out certain functions more effectively. The arrangement with Hazel Electronics is the first step. We are very happy to appoint Ray Hazelton and his very experienced team who we know will provide a very efficient service.’
The biggest show in gaming

The Global Gaming Expo (G2E) is now in its sixth successful year and continues to grow, offering visitors from all over the world stronger reasons than ever to pay it – and arguably the most famous gambling destination in the world – a visit.

In addition to the show, which takes place a little later this year on 14 to 16 November, there is also a training and seminar day on 13 November. While many of these seminar programmes deal with local (US) issues a broad number of them address topics and issues that are relevant globally. In addition to the general areas of the show there are also an ever-increasing number of special pavilions, each dealing with a specific issue or area of business. This year’s pavilions include: Bingo, Diversity Exhibitor Programme, Club and Casino Management Technology, Entertainment and Event Management, iGaming, Security and Surveillance, and Technology.

Bingo was one of the first areas of the show to receive its own pavilion in 2004 and this year plays host to a number of key exhibitors including Jumbo Technology, Planet Bingo, Game Tech International and Electronic Gaming Solutions.

Full details can be found at www.globalgamingexpo.com

Don’t miss Eyes Down

Issue 5 of Eyes Down, favourite reading of bingo players everywhere, will be delivered to clubs on 16 October.

Once again, it’s packed with features, from an interview with Wire in the Blood star Robson Green on why he puts family first to the latest on Bingo for Breakthrough.

There is a special three page Christmas gift guide and advice on how to stay sane over Christmas. Plus, features on the newest hair looks, festive fashion to shimmer in, tips for treating yourself to a home spa day and ideas for half term breaks with the kids.

All this, plus pages of puzzles, a short story by top author Carole Matthews and all the latest news about bingo.

Make sure your members don’t miss out on this free bonus created especially for bingo players.

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Buckingham Bingo is forging ahead with the opening of a new club in Preston and the reopening of a club in Corby.

Buckingham Bingo was founded in 1970 when it opened its first club in Preston. Based in Manchester, Buckie as it is affectionately known, operates 11 successful clubs and is shortly to make it 12, with the opening of a new club in Preston.

Under ownership of The Cambos Organisation, Buckingham Bingo has been developing quality clubs for more than 30 years and is the north of England's largest independent bingo club operator, with more than 2.7 million attendances per year across its 11 sites.

Last year Close Brothers, a leading independent corporate finance advisory firm, brought Buckingham Bingo to the attention of private equity group ALCHEMY. In December 2005 ALCHEMY bought an 80 per cent stake of Buckingham, for £54 million.

In May this year Buckingham bought Stardust Bingo in Corby, from Hamblin Leisure and is investing £1.5 million in the site. The refurbishment will take 15 weeks and is due for completion early November. With the new club in Preston opening early next year too, the team at Buckingham, lead by CEO Andy Cunningham, are clearly improving the customer playing experience and moving forward the Buckingham business.

The new 27,000 sq. ft. flat floor club in New Hall Lane Preston is fully disabled- and deaf-compliant and will offer players an exciting and modern environment in which to spend their leisure time. The 1,200 seat club will have everything players have come to expect in a modern bingo club, including 100 per cent density on MCB. The opening of the club will create 50 new jobs and it is Buckingham's intention to operate both sites in Preston.
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identity is a significant component in achieving this. It is a key differentiator, as it should encapsulate what your business stands for and create an emotional connection with your customers that gives them something to believe in. It’s why people choose Starbucks coffee at £3.50 when they can buy a coffee elsewhere for £1. Or why a child absolutely must have the new Nike trainers or the latest Sony Playstation. Or possibly why a bingo player may be more loyal to one operator than another.

**What’s different?**

What is it that makes each club different? Rather than considering just the functional aspects such as product offering, good customer service or standard of delivery, what does each club offer over and above this? What’s the big thought or idea that drives a business?

Mobile phone network Orange did it brilliantly with ‘The future’s bright. The future’s Orange’, representing optimism and potential – both very powerful emotions. Another is Nike’s “Just do it”, meaning anyone can go for their dream.

The National Bingo Game is looking to create a similar consumer connection with its new identity, communicating the message that it is an authoritative brand, which is trusted but also full of fun, excitement and anticipation. In the bingo industry, as in every other, effective branding or a recognisable identity gives you credibility and a competitive edge because it is what makes you different and meaningful to your customers. A strong brand will form the foundation for all your marketing activity, so that you always communicate a consistent message wherever it is seen, from the signage outside your door, to the posters in-club, the way you display your table talkers, the way your staff treat your customers, through to stationery and website.

**Strong foundation**

Brigid McMullen says that Marks and Spencer is a good example of a brand that has done this well. It has been consistently true to its core values of quality, value and dependability, making it one of the most iconic retailers in the UK despite a critical slump in business a few years ago. The fact that the turnaround in fortune came with a review of the branding from the old Marks and Spencer to the new ‘Your M&S’ is no coincidence. Importantly, however, M&S’s core values remain the same as they always have been, just presented and communicated in a fresh, relevant and contemporary way. Creating a brand is exciting and
rewarding and will repay the investment in it many times over.* Currently there are three million regular bingo players in clubs across the UK and younger players are being attracted into the game. With so many challenges facing the industry, including the smoking ban, now is the time to make sure you hold onto your share of those customers by investing in your brand. A strong brand invigorates business and creates a foundation from which to grow and diversify, ensuring you keep your loyal customers, attract new ones and create a competitive, adaptable business.

*Every £100 a business spends on design increases turnover by £225, according to The Design Council www.designfactfinder.co.uk

The Workroom is a brand consultancy that created the new National Bingo Game brand and identity. For further information, tel: 020 7608 0840 or visit www.workroom.co.uk
Legislation update

The pending new legislation is now on its final 12-month countdown, with much of the detail still yet to be resolved. Many consultation documents are yet to be issued and reported back on and the piecemeal approach to releasing papers only hampers the process further, making informed, measured responses difficult at best.

At the time of writing, no less than 16 papers were being consulted on (see table opposite).

The outcome of these consultations will be critical to the final shape that the new legislation takes in implementation and to its impact on the future of the bingo industry.

For further information, visit the Bingo Association website at www.bingo-association.co.uk

CONSULTATIONS ON

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Staff at Carlton Bingo, Scotland’s largest independent bingo operator, are having voice coaching lessons to help them call the winning numbers for their customers.

Carlton’s trainee managers all had a session with professional voice coach Lisa Dickson from Sing Studio as part of their regular training. Lisa passed on a few top tips on voice projection and breathing exercises to make sure that bingo numbers are heard by the ‘full house’.

With thousands of people visiting Carlton Bingo each day making yourself heard can be a little tricky. Karen Hazlett, HR manager for Carlton Bingo, said: ‘Some of our venues can seat 2,000 players and no matter how quiet they are, there’s always some noise in the background. The training was fun and although it felt a bit strange at first, we’ve been practising deep breathing and projection techniques to make sure that we are as clear as possible when we call the numbers.

“We’re thinking about offering similar training to our customers, so that we can easily hear them shout for house!”

Voice coach Lisa is based in Edinburgh and has a lot of experience in getting the best sound out of even the shyest of would-be public speakers. Recently it was suggested that almost all workers who need to speak to a large group of people on a regular basis would benefit from voice coaching and the advance breathing techniques it involves.

Lisa Dickson said: ’There is a lot more to making yourself heard than simply shouting. I teach people how to make their voices heard without
news

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

G.C.
Gambling Commission

DCMS
Department for Culture Media and Sport

C.A.P.
Committee for Advertising Practice

DoH
Department of Health

W. Ass.
Welsh Assembly

G.A.2005
Gambling Act 2005

H.A.2005
Health Act 2005

D.C.A.
Department for Constitutional Affairs

Last Updated
25-Sep-06

in fine voice

deafening those nearby or making pets run for cover. Much of the success in singing is simply about breathing techniques so I’ll be showing the callers some ways to make sure they don’t run out of puff during a long stint at the podium.

Even with their new training, Carlton Bingo staff will be avoiding the temptation of reality TV stars everywhere and making a record. However Carlton Bingo has come up with a run down of songs that could be about bingo, but aren’t. See the panel to check if you agree.

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Title Name/Initial
Surname
Company name
Company address
Town
County/state
Post/zip code
Country
Nature of business

note this!

The JetScan 4161 mixed note scanner from Cummins can detect counterfeits

Counts and sorts notes fast
Flashcard technology for quick and easy software upgrades
Integrates with industry standard software

The standard JetScan 4161 is available without counterfeit detection

We also provide a range of note and coin counters and sorters
survey reveals
all about online
bingo players

The online gaming environment continues to move apace and online bingo is no exception. While poker may have claimed significant column inches at the outset of online gambling, bingo is so much more accessible to your average online surfer than poker and has therefore caught up very fast.

Computers have speeded up so much since their invention and the internet has created all kinds of new business opportunities and models for delivery. However, understanding online consumer behavior has not moved in parallel. While the internet has made tracking consumers very easy and, as such, there is no shortage of quantitative information, obtaining qualitative information on online consumer behaviour is as demanding as it is in the bricks and mortar world. Yet it is this information that gives greater understanding of motivations and decision processes and therefore, is more useful in respect of predicting behaviour.

One of the UK’s leading online bingo network operators, St Minver, has recently undertaken its first steps into collecting vital qualitative information about online bingo players, with the largest survey of UK online bingo players to date. The research, which involved 2,667 people, provides detailed insights into who online bingo players are, their interests and online habits. St Minver managing director Leigh Nissim agreed to share the top-level findings with Bingo Link.

Who are they?
Mostly female aged between 25 and 45, the UK’s online bingo players are housewives, office administrators, teachers, nurses and shop workers. More than 78 per cent have children, with the average player having two kids. They enjoy going on self-catering holidays including camping and caravanning as well as drinking at the pub and going out to eat. Tesco and Asda are their favourite supermarkets and the Sun and the News of the World are the most widely-read national newspapers. Other online activities include shopping and emailing, with eBay outstripping the competition as the most visited website by a long way. More than 60 per cent of players smoke. Seventy three per cent of players read a newspaper daily.

What do they do?
The vast majority of online bingo players can also be found playing at land-based bingo clubs (40 per cent play at least once per month; 19 per cent play weekly). The spend on online bingo varies, but is usually based on how much they would spend each week in land-based clubs. Light users spend around £10 to £30 a week, with medium users spending £30 to £60 a week and heavy users spending more than £60 a week.

Players tend to play more games for smaller jackpots – they are more interested in making their money go as far as possible than staking it all on the chance of winning a large amount of money.

Online bingo players are fairly promiscuous, with 67 per cent choosing to play on a number of different sites rather than remaining loyal to any one site. Players do like the email newsletters and find them useful. They do not however, want to play or receive alerts via their mobile phones.

Why do they do it?
Players play for cash. Cars and holidays were highly desirable prizes but money was number one. When selecting a site, the most important factors players look for are that the site is run by a brand they trust and that the mechanism for withdrawing and depositing their cash is straightforward.

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

Your on-line players will play with someone else if they don’t play with you, so get your linked/affiliate site up and running now!

I guarantee the highest % return to the operator/affiliate than any other site. Minimal set-up cost and charged against your return.

Contact Patrick Duffy on 07879844344 or email patrick@thepalaces.com, or write to Bingobritain Company Ltd, 14 Yallop Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR31 6 HA

just the competition winners – issue 74

The lucky winners of our competition in issue 74 were:
Carl White, Mecca Reading who wins a wicker hamper for four;
Fiona Doyle, Gala Bournemouth, who wins a summer play set;
Edwina Lewis, Palace Bingo, who wins a fridge/grill combo.

Thank you to everyone who sent in entry forms and a big thank you to our competition sponsors Just Everything.

Win a Christmas bear in our easy competition

Cuddle up to this delightful white Christmas teddy by winning our festive competition. We have four of these smashing bears to give away, courtesy of PMS International. For your chance to win one, write your name, club name and club address on the back of a postcard and send it to: Christmas bear competition, Bingo Link, Lexham House, 75 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1LF

Closing date is 30 November 2006.

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## News

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| Key companies in online bingo

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Promotions and jackpot size were far less important. Players like to use online bingo to socialise and chat rooms are important to them. Almost half of the people questioned liked to chat while playing and the rest enjoyed watching what others were talking about. The biggest reason people are unwilling to play for cash is their worry about giving their card details.

The survey was carried out by St Minver Ltd, 4th Floor, Middlesex House, 34-42 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JE

Tel: +44 (0)207 182 7900 www.stminverltd.com
Why Are these bingo players smiling?

Your players will smile too when your bingo club launches online.

Parlay Entertainment is organizing the UK's biggest network of independent bingo club operators who want to get into the online game.

As the world's leading provider of online bingo software, we'll show you how easy and affordable it is to launch your club online.

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London’s other Palace

The Palace Bingo Club in London’s Elephant and Castle has to be the closest bingo club to that other well-known palace, Buckingham, which resides just the other side of the River Thames.

In keeping with the area’s urban regeneration plans, The Palace Bingo Club has undergone a £2 million refurbishment programme. To celebrate the club’s re-launch last month, TV star Andy Whyment, who plays Kirk Sutherland in TV’s Coronation Street, was invited to cut the ribbon.

The London Palace Bingo Club is at the top of the Elephant & Castle shopping centre and has up to 15,000 players each week.

Happy Birthday to Gala Bingo – 15 this month. Gala Bingo has seen some incredible growth during its teenage years.

Since the management buy-in bought 130 clubs from BASS in 1997, Gala Group, or as it became known earlier this year, Gala Coral Group, has certainly not let the grass grow under its feet.

Here are some of its milestones:

- December 2000 – move into casinos through the purchase of 26 Ladbrokes Casinos from Hilton Group.
- February 2003 – Candover and Cinven acquires the group for £1.24 billion
- August 2005 – Permira takes a stake, valuing Gala Group at £1.9 billion.
- October 2005 – acquires Coral Eurobet and becomes one of Europe’s largest integrated betting and gaming companies.
- January 2006 – acquires County Bingo Clubs in Scotland.
- February 2006 – acquires Leo Casino in Liverpool from Dolby Management.
- March 2006 – acquires 41 VC Bet retail shops from Victor Chandler.

As a result of this rapid expansion Gala Coral Group currently has 174 bingo clubs, 31 casino, 1,400 licensed betting offices and a rapidly expanding e-commerce dimension to its business activities.

It’s Europe’s leading integrated gaming company and Britain’s largest private company, employing more than 17,000 people in the UK. Gala Bingo is the industry leader with around 32 million admissions and typically pays out more than £28 million in prize money each week.
Smoking ban update

The smoking ban in Scotland has been in place for seven months and continues to have an adverse impact on trading in Scottish clubs. The conditions experienced in Scotland are a very clear indicator of what can be expected in England and Wales when the ban comes into effect.

At the time of going to press, the anticipated date of implementation in Wales was April 2007 and in England May 2007.

Reports from Scotland suggest, at least initially, that use of online bingo sites has increased since the ban came into effect there and that trading conditions for bingo halls remain tough. Players are arriving later, temporarily leaving clubs in intervals and leaving earlier, in order to smoke.

The Bingo Association has been lobbying hard with Scottish media and politicians throughout the summer and early autumn, as part of build impetus towards a broader national campaign. As consultations on the new legislation, due for implementation in October 2007, progress it would appear that the industry may face further financial burden through the proposed new charges for licence fees.

The proposed increases are substantial and will come at a time when the industry is least able to meet them. When combined with a tax burden that still sees bingo as the most heavily-taxed gambling activity in the UK, these increases seem punishingly burdensome.

The overarching future regime under which the industry will be forced to operate is not equitable, nor does it place the industry in prime position to obtain maximum benefit from deregulation.

As with so many things, timing is everything and the proposed schedule of implementation for all the changes currently facing the industry only serves to make their impact worse.

One step ahead as ECM offers training

One are the days when balls and tickets were the sum total of a bingo hall’s gaming system. Continual innovation by ECM Systems means that most modern clubs are packed with technology. To keep the club operational, engineers must quickly and efficiently diagnose and rectify any problems.

To help, ECM Systems is providing a comprehensive range of training courses, aimed at a variety of levels for those working with ECM equipment. In offering staff training it is hoped to reduce system downtime in clubs. ECM’s training uses a highly interactive approach to ensure effective learning, comprehensive course documentation, and reflective assessment, giving the opportunity to obtain ECM accreditation. Ian Creer, ECM’s training manager, said: ‘Having the opportunity to observe and re-create faults in a controlled environment promotes knowledge retention and provides a valuable experience for engineers.’

Many ECM customers have already taken advantage of training, Gala Bingo Engineers’ Manager Darren Nickless said: ‘I was very pleased with the high standard of training. The engineers gained a lot of knowledge in just one day and benefits more than compensated for the cost.’

Courses start at £100. Tailored courses can also be arranged. For information, contact Ian.creer@ecmsys.co.uk or call 01964 672991.

Beacon burns bright for Riva

Simon Hannah, well known in the bingo industry, has led a venture that resulted earlier this year in the purchase of Thomas Estates’ holdings of bingo clubs and adult gaming centres (AGCs).

In June 2004 Hannah led a management buy-in to Mayfair Bingo, supported by private equity from Luke Johnson’s Risk Capital Partners. This covered six clubs, mostly trading as Riva (Heaton and Welbeck in Newcastle). In December 2004 Mayfair acquired Pasadena Bingo in Pudsey and in 2005 opened a new club in Newark. In April Hannah engineered a management buy-out from Risk Capital with equity from Hermes Private Equity. In August Riva Gaming – which now incorporates Mayfair Bingo – was formed and bought the Thomas Estates business, which included one of the biggest and most successful clubs in the UK – Cricklewood. This brought three further clubs and 24 AGCs under Riva’s ownership and management.

With 11 bingo clubs and 24 adult gaming centres Hannah has no intention of letting Riva Gaming rest-up and last month the business was granted a licence to open a casino in Northampton, which he Hannah hopes will happen early next year. In addition, there are plans for a new bingo club in Sutton, South London and other ventures under consideration.

Have you what it takes???

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n: Nicholas Hill
a: Ascot Bingo Ventures Inc,
43-51 Wembley Hill Road, Wembley HA9 8AU
e: nick.hill@ascoatbingo.com
t: 07850 547 103
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- Winnings paid back to player accounts

For more information contact ECM’s sales team on 01964 672000
sales@ecmsys.co.uk www.ecmsys.co.uk
General Managers

Nationwide

At Mecca Bingo, we believe life should be about great customer experiences. Making enjoyment our number one priority, we’ve changed the face of bingo from a simple game into an exciting lifestyle choice for millions of people. However, even more exciting than this is the opportunity we’re offering you to become part of it. And because we offer you lots of prospects, the sky’s the limit when it comes to your career progression.

You’ll have responsibility for your own club, a multi-million pound business. As an experienced General or Deputy Manager with leadership skills, you’ll have the commercial acumen needed to succeed in this fast paced, technologically driven environment.

Previous experience in a management role in a customer focussed organisation is essential. And with first-rate communication and numeracy skills, you’ll also have the kind of entrepreneurial qualities needed for your business to flourish. Ambition and confidence are essential.

If you wish to take advantage of this excellent opportunity, please send your CV and covering letter, quoting reference BL1, and stating the details of your current employment package, to: david_balls@rank.com

Closing date: 27th October 2006.