

# *play* "The Operators' Choice" **METER**



**Cover Story:**  
Operator of  
the Year:  
Rick LaFleur  
of I.F. LaFleur  
& Son

**Amusement  
Expo:**  
Transition  
complete

**Game List:**  
Equipment  
at a glance

APRIL 2011

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of the Year:  
Rick LaFleur**

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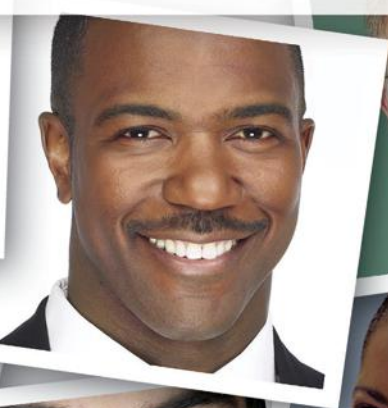
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*Play Meter's* Amusement Expo coverage features 25 pages chock full of information about this year's show. This issue includes a game list displaying the newest equipment, highlights, *Play Meter's* awards, the AAMA awards, operator interviews, and a scrapbook of photos from the Las Vegas event. Check next month's issue for a continuation of the coverage.

## 64 Critic's Corner

With a focus on nostalgia, Josh and Zach Sharpe have rated two new games based on classics. This month's column discusses Super Monkey Ball Ticket Blitz from Sega and Frogger from ICE.

## 66 NAMA Preview

The National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) will be hosting its annual OneShow in April in Chicago. This issue previews the keynote speakers, educational opportunities, and schedule of events.

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## On the Cover

Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son has modeled his business on the motto "articulate, activate, and associate." We spoke with LaFleur about his business, his family, community involvement, and moving forward in a down economy.

*Photo by Portraits by Misti, Rugby, N.D., also photo on page 25.*

# Where Games and Music Meet

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Call it the year of pirates and frogs. If the game themes at the Amusement Expo 2011 in Las Vegas are any indication, we're in for a year full of amphibians and roguish pirates. Merchandise suppliers also featured pirate items in anticipation of the big-screen film, Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides," coming May 20.

For example: Elaut USA introduced Treasure Hunt, Elaut/Falgas debuted the Pirate's Boat kiddie ride, ICE displayed Frogger and Treasure Quest, Namco released Frog Frenzy, and Team Play brought Pirate's Booty to the marketplace.

The comprehensive game list included in this issue is a testament to the vitality of the industry, as are the statistics from the show. The transition from two coin-op shows, one in the fall and one in the spring, is now complete; with all levels of the coin-op community settling into the spring show as "our show."

The Amusement Expo had much to offer: a free seminar program that was well attended, even though the meeting rooms were far away from the exhibit floor. It appeared that the distance did not dampen the enthusiasm for knowledge, nor did the time of day since the earliest sessions boasted good attendance. Credit part of that to the first day scheduling seminars before the show floor opened at 1 p.m. This was the second year for that format, and it worked again.

In addition, the National Bulk Vendors Association (NBVA) Expo was co-located, with its own pavilion within the aisles of the Amusement Expo. A crossover day with the International Pizza Expo in the next exhibit hall was the icing on the cake, or should I say the sauce on the pizza. The American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) sponsored a pavilion at that show with several of its factory members represented.

For good measure, toss in the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)-sponsored Family Entertainment Center (FEC) Summit for even more educational opportunities. The result? A show that produced overwhelmingly positive comments, which is refreshing.

Speaking of positive, there is no one more positive about the future of the industry than Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son in Devils Lake, N.D., *Play Meter's* "Operator of the Year 2010." LaFleur is a third generation operator who has been in the industry for 37 years. His dad, who is 87, comes to the office every day, which speaks to the family's work ethic and commitment to the industry.

LaFleur said of his company: "We have a plan and continue to build. You either mine the industry or you build the industry. Mining makes you vulnerable."

"Our business model is constantly changing," commented LaFleur, adding, "all levels of the industry should understand each other and come away stronger."

To learn more about LaFleur, turn to the Cover Story in this issue.

So much was happening March 1-3 that a trade event supplement is scheduled for the May issue, to include special events, seminars, meetings, and game reviews at the Amusement Expo along with coverage of the NBVA Expo and the International Pizza Expo. Enjoy the photos, awards, operator comments, and other show coverage this month. ▲



**BONNIE THEARD**  
Editor

**We want to hear from you about any of the articles in this issue or topics you'd like to see.**

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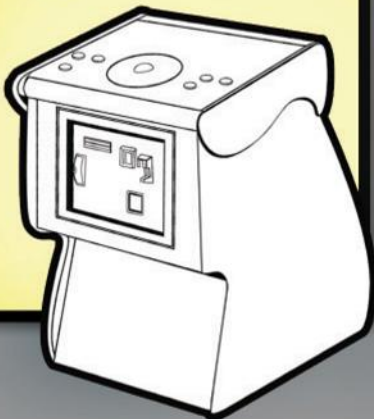


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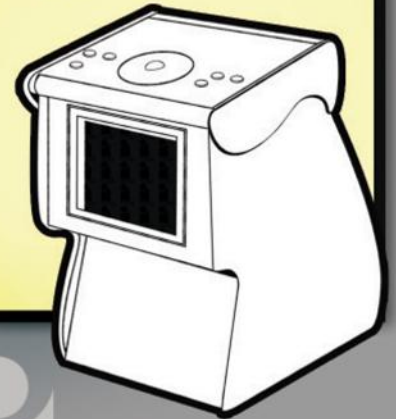
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# Operator of the Year

By  
Bonnie  
Theard

“Our family bond is the part of our business that I truly most appreciate,” said Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son in Devils Lake, N.D., a third generation operator with 37 years of experience in the coin-op industry.

I.F. LaFleur & Son is truly a family business. Rick and his brother Boyd work closely together. Their father, “Izzy” (Isadore) LaFleur Jr., is 87 and comes to the office every day. Rick said Boyd is “one great partner,” and their father Izzy “is like another brother who possesses impeccable vision.”

Rick is a Vice President of the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA). Along with fellow AMOA Vice President Mary Lavine of Bullseye Games he conducted the AMOA Council of Affiliated States Meetings of 2011 and 2010, maintaining the lively pace needed to cover the packed agenda.

He firmly believes in these three words: articulate, activate, and associate, which he puts into practice every day whether he is dealing with locations, fellow AMOA members, or members of his state association (the North Dakota Coin Machine Operators Association).

Rick has a special talent: He really listens to what others have to say and values their contribution to a discussion. He is the personification of the Golden Rule; his favorite creed is: “Love one, friends to many, good will to all.”

Rick is well known in his community, having been named Outstanding Citizen by the Devils Lake Chamber, Outstanding Young North Dakotan for



The I.F. LaFleur & Son management team, seated, (l-r): Rick, Izzy, and Boyd LaFleur; standing, (l-r): Lexie LaFleur Dion, Dustin LaFleur, Nathan LaFleur, Blake LaFleur, and Birttin LaFleur.

1992 by the North Dakota Jaycees, and Sportsman of the Year by the Devils Lake Anglers.

In addition, he is the President of the Coin and Tavern Association of North Dakota, a sister organization of the NDCMOA; Past President of the Devils Lake Community Development Corp.; and he received the North Dakota Community Leadership Award from the Greater North Dakota Association.

## COMPANY HISTORY

The company was founded by Isadore LaFleur Sr. in 1925 as the LaFleur Music Co., which sold pianos, band instruments, and sheet music.

Rick said, “They had an extensive inventory on lease. Used pianos would arrive by rail, be refurbished, and leased on monthly terms to homes and businesses. The company had music stores along the northern portion of

# Rick LaFleur

I.F.  
LaFleur  
& Son



# COVER STORY

**Near right:**  
The Northwest  
Piano Co.

**Far right:**  
I.F. LaFleur Sr.  
and Jr. in front of  
the Northwest  
Piano Co.

**Below:**  
Wurlitzer Model  
51 (1938) at the  
I.F. LaFleur & Son  
office.



North Dakota in Williston, Minot, Grand Forks, and Devils Lake.”

He continued, “Wurlitzer convinced my grandfather to try an automatic music box which you could play by inserting a coin. As the cash flow increased, the piano business was sold. The first fleet of vehicles was old Fords with the trunks removed. Music was the primary entry into coin-op with the early electromechanical shuffle alleys, bowlers, gun games, and pinball games that followed.”

Today the company has 32 employees, many with long tenure.

Rick said, “I could not do what I do without the office staff. It’s not me; it’s what we do collectively. Life’s journey would not be complete without them. I’m thankful for their efforts and their friendship.”

He added, “We are very happy and proud to have Blake, Nathan, Dustin, Lexie (Dion), and Britton LaFleur as part of our management team.”

## RICK'S EARLY YEARS

Like many of his peers, Rick literally grew up in the coin machine business. It was easy to visit his father’s

shop and warehouse because the family home was two blocks away.

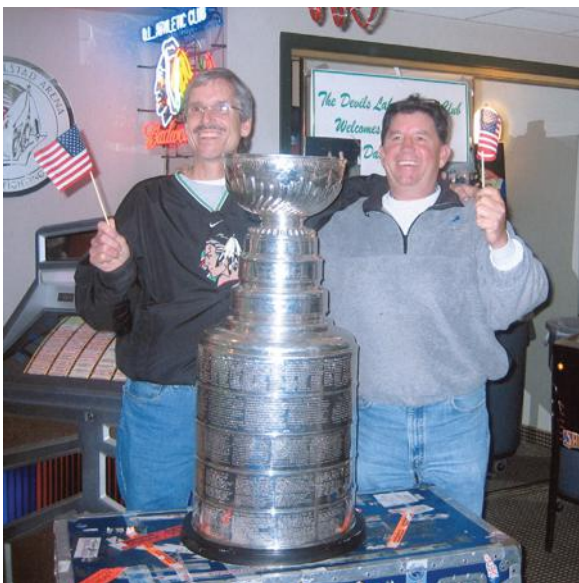
Rick recalled, “A simple stroll down the alley provided great entertainment, much to the chagrin of the service men. ‘Can I help?’ ‘Can I help?’ had to have been a painful beckon to those who had to put up with the constant banter.

“It was from those early days that I knew I was going to learn how to fix pinball games someday. These are fond memories that spawned an early passion for the business. I pity the poor guy who was told I could drive the truck because I had my driver’s permit. I still remember how bad the brakes were on that old Ford pickup when I rolled through the first stop sign.”

Rick and Boyd joined the company in 1974 after working many summers while in school. Rick attended the University of North Dakota and majored in accounting and aviation (he holds an Advanced Ground School Instructor Rating).

He mentioned the benefits of working with family: “We have the ability to move ahead together as a unit without having to worry about what the other person is doing. There is an old saying, ‘Don’t try to follow in someone else’s footsteps, they will be too big or too small.’ We walk together and use our talents as best we can. We’re always respectful of each other’s opinion.”





**Left:**

Rick and Boyd LaFleur with the Stanley Cup, taken in the Devils Lake Club Suite 2005 during the World Junior Hockey Tournament, Engelstad Arena GFKS, home of the Fighting Sioux.

**Middle:**

At the AMOA Mid-Year Meeting 2010: Rick (l) with fellow AMOA Vice Presidents Mary Lavine of Bullseye Games and Hal Williamson of Gardner's Up North.



**Below:**

Signing The Truth in Rock Act, seated, (l-r): Dwight Wrangham of the NDCMA, Gov. Hoben, and Sonny Turner of The Platters; standing, (l-r): Rick LaFleur, Fred Mueller, and Roxie Turner.



Rick does extensive traveling among the company's three offices and continually looks for expansion possibilities. Referencing the importance of communication, he said, "We've made a practice of having a weekly meeting to share our thoughts. We give everyone a voice in where we are going next."

**BUILDING LEAGUES**

Rick is quick to credit Boyd's role in the development of the company. Rick explained, "Shortly after we joined the company we began organized annual pool tournaments where we brought in 64 of the A and B players from our locations to compete for \$5,000 in prizes with no entry fees other than qualification in the locations. The winner and runner-up of the location championship matches advanced to play in the A or B division, respectively.

"It allowed us to begin the process of providing our locations with added value. It was a great place to begin the formation of leagues since we had already identified the players. Boyd shouldered the major part of this effort, along with our father."

Rick added, "Leagues are a very important component of our operations. Having organized activity in your locations on a weekly basis not only improves your cash flow but also solidifies your partnership with your locations. We have had pool and dart tournaments and leagues for over 30 years. It's a seed every operator should plant when given the opportunity. It

may be a while before the benefits are fully revealed, but you truly get out of it what you put into it."

The tournaments and leagues are conducted through the North Dakota Tournament Association (NDTA), which is composed of six operators with league interests.

The state pool event was held in mid-February and welcomed 1,200 players. I.F. LaFleur & Son runs four company events and four events with the NDTA. The biggest event of the year, the Extravaganza, is conducted in cooperation with Modern Coin and includes 170 dart teams and 80 pool teams competing under one roof.

Rich has observed different dynamics in pool and darts: "Pool players are more methodical and develop strate-

gies like a chess match. Darts is a wide-open game with an instant result. There are commonalities; the culture is the same in that you have your team mates and enjoy being together."

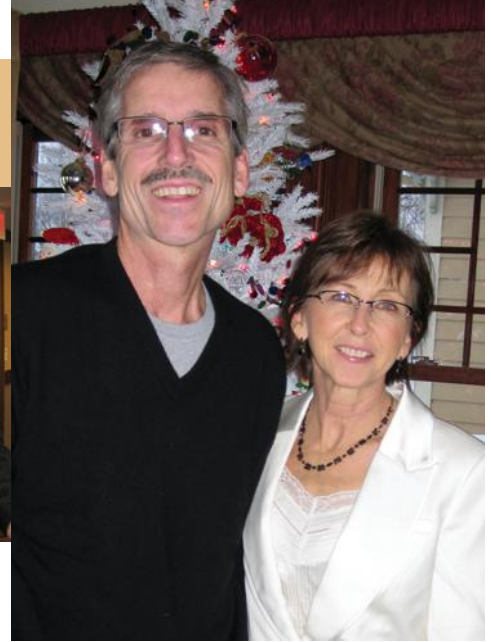
**EQUIPMENT**

I.F. LaFleur & Son operates all categories of equipment, from digital jukeboxes to ATMs and from video games to redemption games in North Dakota and Minnesota. The company supplies the equipment and redemption center merchandise in eight family entertainment centers (FECs). According to Rick, 90 percent of the revenue stream is from redemption.

"Redemption is a diversification that is not affected by smoking bans," he said. "It will be there as long as you take

**Right:**  
Rick LaFleur (l) at the AMOA Council of Affiliated States Meeting 2011 with Mike Zolandz of SNR Denton.

**Far right:**  
Rick and Shirley LaFleur, Christmas 2010.



care of it. Nothing runs on autopilot.”

Jukeboxes on the company route are 100 percent digital; that music model was adopted early on. Rick said, “Everyone tiptoed their way through digital jukeboxes. There were some trying times with a lot of tough decisions to make, not only the idea of sharing revenue but knowing that the company you were dealing with was financially healthy and moving forward.”

The company entered the ATM arena two years ago. Rick spoke about that transition: “You are the trusted advisor to your locations because you have been with them for years. You don’t have to make a cold call regarding ATMs. The marriage is complete. Simply call the location and say you are coming by to visit and that you have something that will be good for them.”

He continued, “ATMs do not take cash from one machine and put it into another. It’s the reverse. You are putting cash into the location to be spent on your equipment. There is a hidden increase in value. ATMs have been validated publicly.”

## INDUSTRY CHANGES

With over three decades in the industry to his credit, Rick spoke about the many changes he has witnessed: electromechanical to electronic and digital systems.

“It’s been amazing,” he said. “As operators we have always hunted cash flow, and it has certainly shown up in unusual places. I remember pulling full cash boxes and the momentum it provided in plotting the direction of the company and influencing our buying habits. In the early days we did not have to deal with as many obstacles to business freedom as we do today.”

He added, “It’s true in every business that the one thing that stays constant is change. If you don’t bring flexibility to the equation, someone else will.”

The company embraced change and diversified long ago. Rick advised: “Diversify, diversify, diversify. If you are not doing redemption, do it. If you are not doing ATMs, do it. If you are not doing leagues, do it or try it again. And by all means get to the trade shows and state meetings. If you don’t have a state meeting, start an association. In other words, don’t wait for someone else to do it.”

When asked to identify the major issues facing operators in 2011, Rick said: “Identify your problems and minimize them. Invest in your company as much as you can, and do not forget to invest in yourself. There will always be waves, the big ones for now are waiting out the economy.”

Is the customer base also changing? Rick said, “Some things remain the same; People like to do things outside of their home. They want to go out and be with their friends. Our industry has always been the gateway for that type of activity.”

He continued, “The real assault on entertainment is coming from hand-held communication devices. At some point you can’t just be looking at your phone and texting people; you want to be with them. The challenge for our industry is how to harness that new connectivity and use it to our advantage.”

## ASSOCIATIONS

Rick spoke about the importance of industry associations: “The AMOA is invaluable to our state association. It is the ideas and exchange of information that allow us to look toward our goals

without having to reinvent the wheel. It’s the sharing of ideas and information with the AMOA and its members that allows us to accomplish these tasks with the greatest potential for success.”

Rick’s first involvement in the state association came with a proposed bill to raise the license fee per machine from \$10 to \$50. “There was a PAC-MAN view of the business,” he said, “that our industry can take whatever is thrown at it. The state legislature did not understand the background and support mechanism of our industry and how that license fee would be a hardship. We set out to develop close relationships with our legislators and were able to get the proposed fee hike dropped; and a master license fee approved.”

He added, “When it comes to legislative issues, you have to be known. Legislators have to know who you are, and not just during the session. We actively support events throughout the year. We have partnered with the North Dakota Hospitality Association to work on some of these events to achieve a higher impact. You would be surprised how you find out what your next obstacle will be because of the contacts you have made.”

Personal relationships count. Rick referenced banks, for instance: “Banks have a difficult time understanding our industry. Many had their chin bumped in the 1980s when we saw the first market adjustment on the video side.



Family gathering, front row, (l-r): Dustin, Mark, Lindsay, and baby Emily, Lexie, baby Maddie, Bill, and Leslie; back row: Rick and Shirley.

“One of the most important aspects of a loan is the character of the person applying for the loan. A personal relationship with your lender is very important. The bank had better know who you are before you look to finance an expansion of your business. That’s not a bad philosophy for any business, especially ours.”

Rick is proud of having worked with Dwight Wrangham, Executive Director of the NDCMOA, on The Truth In Rock Act, which has been adopted by other states. Wrangham is also a North Dakota legislator.

This Act amends the North Dakota Century Code and prohibits false and misleading advertising. It protects the public and artists by establishing that at least one member of a performing group must be from the original recording group for a performance is to be billed under that group’s name. If that criteria is not met, the performance would be a “salute” or a “tribute” concert.

### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Rick and his wife Shirley have four children: Lindsay LaFleur

McDaniel, Alexis “Lexie” LaFleur Dion, Dustin LaFleur, and Leslie LaFleur. Lindsay and Leslie are both recipients of the Wayne E. Hesch Scholarship. Lindsay is a Dr. of Pharmacy and Leslie is at Antioch University in Seattle in the Family Therapy Doctorate Program.

Rick is passionate about his family, the industry, and his community. He has been involved in flood and water issues in his state.

“We have simply been besieged with problems as North Dakota has been hit with flooding,” he said. “Devils Lake has gone up vertically 30 feet in the last 11 years and has over 300 miles of shoreline, which has wiped out farms and livelihoods. For 10 years I chaired an organization working on water issues and made trips to Washington.”

While interviewing Rick for this article, he remarked that he had received several e-mails recently from industry members who are ready to lend a helping hand in the event that North Dakota experiences serious flooding this spring. That kind of

friendship is what makes this industry special.

### MOVING FORWARD

How is Rick moving forward in this economy? “We’ve looked at our sources of revenue and taken steps to enhance it,” he replied. “We work to keep digital music, pool and dart leagues, and redemption centers healthy. We’ve diversified into ATMs. You have to diversify because we have all seen the tide change in each one of those disciplines over time. In three words: don’t stand still.”

He added, “I want the message to be one of ‘keep at it; don’t give up.’ While it’s hard to remain positive, ‘woe is me’ doesn’t work very well. You can choose to observe or you can engage.”

Rick’s hobbies are old cars and hockey. When asked what lessons he learned from hockey that would apply to business, he said, “Teamwork, developing a work ethic, and trying to stay out of the penalty box.” ▲

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2000	.....	Dock Ringo
2001	.....	Ray Shroyer
2002	.....	Jeff and Kama Reed
2003	.....	Chris Warren
2004	.....	Andy Shaffer
2005	.....	Gary Brewer
2006	.....	Jason Rubin
2007	.....	Phil Juckem
2008	.....	Larry Elbert
2009	.....	John Neville
<b>2010</b>	.....	<b>Rick LaFleur</b>

**Congratulations Rick!**

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 you're the best!**

★ ★ ★

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**TouchTunes**  
INTERACTIVE NETWORKS

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**PLAY METER**  
**OPERATOR OF THE YEAR**

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# Rick LaFleur Operator of the Year

*a deserving honor*

*Congratulations*

*From your friends at*



**Congratulations Rick!**

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Remarkable Man***

*from your  
friends at*



# Payment Alliance International Congratulates Rick LaFleur the Ralph C Lally II Operator of the Year!

A hearty Congratulations to Rick LaFleur from everyone at Payment Alliance International on winning the Ralph C. Lally II Operator of the Year award!

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## Industry embraces

## Spring show



**LEFT:** AAMA celebrated its 30th anniversary with a giant cake, (l-r): David Cohen, Sal Cifala, John Schultz, Jennifer Anker, and Tina Schwartz.

**ABOVE:** Hal Williamson (r) of AMOA hands the keys to the Chevy Malibu to Royce Green, who accepted the Hesch Raffle grand prize for R.A. Green of Rosemary Coin Machines.



The consolidation of the industry's fall and spring trade shows into one big spring event is now complete with the second Amusement Expo, which concluded March 3 in Las Vegas.

The show was sponsored by the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) and the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA), and co-located with the National Bulk Vendors Association (NBVA) Expo, which had its own pavilion within the Amusement Expo exhibit floor.

As an added bonus, badge holders from the Amusement Expo could visit the neighboring International Pizza Expo, and vice versa. A total of 313 attendees from the Pizza Expo came to the Amusement Expo. AAMA also hosted a coin-op pavilion at the Pizza Expo.

Statistics for the 2011 Amusement Expo are: 135 exhibitors compared to 101 in 2010; 372 booths compared to 306 in 2010; 22 new exhibitors; and 21 returning Fun Expo exhibitors. There were 1,522 buyers compared to 807 in 2010, and 1,228 non-buyers compared to 1,063 in 2010.

Education opportunities were plentiful. The Amusement Expo seminar program posted solid turnouts for six sessions. The Family Entertainment Center (FEC) Summit sponsored by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) also drew attendees to a full program of topics relevant to FECs.

During the AMOA Annual Business Meeting, new principal officers were formally introduced: Donovan Fremin of Delta Music, President; Andy Shaffer of Shaffer Services, First Vice President; John Pascaretti of Wolverine American, Treasurer; and Bobby Hogin of Hogin Amusement Co., Secretary.



AMOA Innovator Award to TouchTunes, (l-r): Michael Toker and Charles Goldstuck of TouchTunes; Bobby Hogin of AMOA; and Steve Brecher, Dan McAllister, and Ed Rivera of TouchTunes.



AMOA Innovator Award to Apple Industries, (l-r): Lenny Vasile, Mike Bloomfield, Neal Rosenberg, Mel LaForce, and Allen Weisberg of Apple and Bobby Hogin of AMOA.

Also at the meeting, AMOA presented Innovator Awards to these companies: Apple Industries for the Pix Place Photo Kiosk, Coast to Coast Entertainment for the Stage 1 Crane Controller, and TouchTunes Interac-

tive Networks for the Virtuo Digital Jukebox.

The American Amusement Machine Charitable Foundation (AAMCF) hosted its 12th Annual AAMCF Charity Golf Tournament at



With the award for Best Exhibit Design, Small Booth, (l-r): MEI's Tom Vogt, Chris Felix, and Ray Cox.



With the award for Best Exhibit Design, Medium Booth, (l-r): AMI's Terry Lacher, Megan DePaul, and Bryan Aune.

the Las Vegas Country Club. AMOA held its annual raffle to benefit the Wayne E. Hesch Scholarship Fund.

The Hesch grand prizewinner of the brand new Chevy Malibu was R.A. Green of Rosemary Coin Machines in South Carolina. The car was accepted on his behalf by Royce Green of Green Coin Machine Distributing of South Carolina.

## **“Consumers spend 40 percent of their time on smart phones and applications for those phones.”**

Dates are set for Amusement Expo 2012: March 14-16 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. These dates will again overlap with the International Pizza Expo 2012, which is set for March 13-15.

### **FLOOR TALK**

Comments on the quantity and

quality of equipment on display were uniformly positive for all categories. For operator comments, check *Play Meter's* traditional “One-Minute Interview” page in this issue.

At the Raw Thrills/Play Mechanix/Betson booth, Mark Struhs of Raw Thrills said, “I give this show high marks. We are seeing buyers and our distributors.”

He added, “Raw Thrills is strong across many different product lines, not just one. One of the strengths of the industry is that we are so diverse, creating equipment for different types of venues.”

Peter Betti of Betson Enterprises said, “We’re surprised by how active the show has been.”

Frank Seninsky of the Alpha-Omega Group and Comfy Edutainment Centers, the edutainment firm that designs children’s activity systems, commented, “The show has been great. The numbers are bigger than last year.”

Seninsky said a good percentage of FEC operators had come by the booth, adding, “That component can really build this show.”

Tracy Sarris of Comfy Edutainment said, “FEC attendees feel that this is exactly what they need to offer for children from one to five years old. They tell us there are limited attractions available for this age group.”

Sam Zammuto of Arachnid Inc. said, “The show has been tremendous; I give it a nine on a scale of one to 10. It seems like there is a change in attitude. Operators are saying, ‘I have to have some new equipment,’ and they are willing to learn about the equipment.”

“I’ve seen customers I have not



With the award for Best Exhibit Design, Large Booth, (l-r): John Schultz of AAMA; Steve Brecher, Charles Goldstuck, and Marc Felsen of TouchTunes; and Brian Glasgow of W.T. Glasgow Inc.



AMOA Innovator Award to Coast to Coast Entertainment, (l-r): John Maurer and Gary Balaban of Coast to Coast and Bobby Hogin of AMOA.

seen in four years, plus new customers!" remarked Sondra Doyle of Sureshot Redemption. She rated the show this way: Tuesday, excellent; Wednesday, great; and Thursday, good.

Dan Clarton of TouchTunes Interactive Networks commented on the company's new Virtuo digital jukebox; "We have to stay ahead of consumer expectations. We took no shortcuts with this product; this is a completely new platform called an open stage platform. It will allow the outside to design applications to be used with our product."

He continued, "The way consumers consume entertainment is changing rapidly. Forty percent of their time is spent on smart phones and applications for those phones."

Clarton recalled that when he came to the company in 1998, "The company had a vision to change the landscape of music in our industry. It's been really satisfying to see that over the years we have built our

presence from no footprint to having 46,000 units in the field and 3,000 customers."

***"There seems to be a change in attitude. Operators are saying, 'I have to have some new equipment.'"***

Marc Antoine Pinard of Adrenaline Amusements said, "We've had very good traffic. This is truly an operator's show. Attendees heard about our TouchFX, which was shown at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo 2010."

Chi Babich of distributor Game Exchange of Colorado, offered, "We met a lot of new people, met existing customers, and took some nice orders."

Rich Babich added, "This show is in the middle of a territory that has been void of distribution since the closing of Reno Game Sales and Struve Distributing. People are look-

ing for equipment. We are glad to offer sales and support for customers in this region."

Tom Vogt of MEI commented, "Everyone I talked to was positive about the show. Numbers are up and the floor is busy."

Peter Stolarczyk of Kalkomat USA Inc. spoke about a new way his company is helping operators: "Promotions are key in this business, which is why we now make it possible for our customers to go to our Web site to access tools that help promote events at their locations."

Look for more information on the special events and seminars at the Amusement Expo, as well as full coverage of the NBVA pavilion, in the May issue. ▲

## Norm Farber

*BFC Enterprises Inc.*  
St. Louis, Mo.

"I come to the show to get ideas and to meet with other members of the industry, which I feel is more important than the equipment. I get information on the equipment whether I come to the show or not; it's that exchange with other people that matters most to me."



## Donivan Molitar

*Donivan's Vending Service Inc.*  
Eau Clair, Wis.

"I found this show to be educational, and I made so many new friends that it will take me at least a week to sort through all the information and contacts. It's been an incredible experience. I'm glad to see the larger number of attendees this year."



## William Fannasy

*National Novelty Co. Inc.*  
Harrisburg, Pa.

"I've only missed one show since 1972. I place a high value on the networking and fellowship at the trade shows. I also come to see what's new and exciting first hand. The 10-month wait for the new TouchTunes digital jukebox was worth it."



# One-Minute Interviews



## Bret Thevaos

*Owl Music Co.*  
Charlotte, N.C.

"The equipment here is quality; the exhibitors really stepped up their game. Everyone showed equipment we can use. What we purchased at the show is going to be good for us. The manufacturers are listening to operators now. I'm excited about the future based on this show, if it continues like this."



## William Thevaos

*Owl Music Co.*  
Charlotte, N.C.

"We were pleasantly surprised with the attendance and the opportunities at this show. The atmosphere was great; it felt like the good old days. The trip was very rewarding. We saw a few things we can use. The show is upbeat, and that's catching. It's a feel good thing for me. It's more upbeat than last year."



## Angel Portugues III

*All Brands Vending Co. Inc.*  
Tampa, Fla.

"If I come away from the show with one or two new things that I can apply to the business I'm doing great. The amusement industry was simple in the past, but not today. The days of just rolling in the games are gone. The industry has to move forward with the newest technologies." ▲



The Amusement & Music Operators Association recognizes the recipients of the AMOA Innovator Award presented during the 2011 AAMA/AMOA Amusement Expo conducted March 1-3 in Las Vegas. They are:

- *Apple Industries*
- *Coast to Coast Entertainment*
- *Touch Tunes Interactive Network*



*Apple Industries*



*Coast to Coast Entertainment*



*Touch Tunes Interactive Network*

# Congratulations!



*A program of the Amusement & Music Operators Association, in conjunction with the AAMA/AMOA Amusement Expo.*

# 2011 amusement expo



From left: Jack Kelleher of AMOA, Mark Daniel, Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son, and Sonny Turner of The Platters.



Accepting the *Play Meter* Operators' Choice Award for Best Touch Screen Countertop: Mike Maas (l) and Jeff Kallis of AMI Entertainment Network.



From left: Bonnie Theard of *Play Meter*; Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son, Operator of the Year 2010; and Carol Ann Lally and Carol Lally of *Play Meter*.



Holding the *Play Meter* Operators' Choice Award for Best Redemption Game, (l-r): Jenna Woeipse, Holly Meidl, Mark Lenke, Rick Rochetti, Mike Olsen, Adam Ambrosius, and Todd Louthain of Bay Tek Games.

## Play Meter presents spring awards

**P**lay Meter presented its annual "Operator of the Year Award" at this year's opening ceremony of the Amusement Expo in Las Vegas. The recipient for 2011 is Rick LaFleur of LaFleur & Son Inc. in Devil's Lake, N.D.

The award is named for *Play Meter* Founder Ralph C. Lally II, an operator who valued integrity, hard work, education, and service. LaFleur embodies all those qualities.

LaFleur & Son, Inc. is a family business that began in 1925. Rick LaFleur

has grown up in the coin-op business and joined the company in 1974.

Bonnie Theard of *Play Meter* announced his win by repeating his motto of "Love one, friends to many, good will to all."

After the opening of the exhibit floor, *Play Meter* staff visited manufacturer booths to present the 2011 "Operator's Choice Awards," which are voted by *Play Meter's* operator readers who respond to the annual State of the Industry Survey.

Awards were presented in the fol-

lowing categories: Best Video, Terminator Salvation from Play Mechanix/Raw Thrills; Best Pinball, Iron Man from Stern Pinball; Best Redemption, Big Bass Wheel Pro from Bay Tek Games; Best Countertop, Megatouch Rx from AMI Entertainment Network; Best Jukebox, Allegro MX-1 from TouchTunes Interactive Networks; Best Table/Sports, Great 8 Pool Table from Valley-Dynamo; Best Bulk Vendor, 60 & 80 Series from Northwestern. ▲

# 2011 amusement expo



Accepting the *Play Meter* Operators' Choice Award for Best Table Game, (l-r): Chance Pack of Champion Shuffleboard, Mike Prendergast, and Dave Courington of Valley-Dynamo.



Holding the *Play Meter* Operators' Choice Award for Best Jukebox: Charles Goldstuck (l) and Steve Brecher of TouchTunes.



Eugene Jarvis of Raw Thrills receives the *Play Meter* Operators' Choice Award for Best Video from Carol Ann Lally (l) and Carol Lally of *Play Meter*.



Diane Olsen (l) of Northwestern Corp. receives the *Play Meter* Operators' Choice Award for Best Bulk Vendor from Carol Lea LeBell of *Play Meter*.



Gary Stern of Stern Pinball accepts the *Play Meter* Operator's Choice Award for Best Pinball from Carol Lally (l) and Carol Ann Lally of *Play Meter*.



Past Operator of the Year honorees, front row, (l-r): Jason Rubin of AJ Video Amusements, Jeff and Kama Reed of BJ Novelty Co., Gary Brewer of Brewer Amusement, and Phil Juckem of All Brands Vending; back row, (l-r): Andy Shaffer of Shaffer Services, Steve Epstein of The Broadway Arcade, Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son Inc., Jim Stansfield of Stansfield Vending, and Don Hesch of A.H. Entertainers.

## AAMA honors excellence



**AAMA Supplier of the Year, (l-r): Frank Happ of Suzo-Happ, Tom Happ of Suzo-Happ, David Cohen of AAMA, Jim Brendel of Suzo-Happ, and John Schultz of AAMA.**



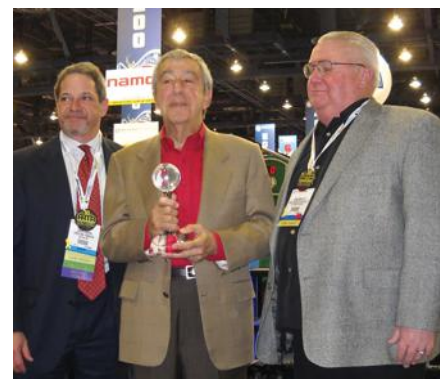
**AAMA Manufacturer of the Year; (l-r): David Cohen, Dan McAllister, Charles Goldstuck and Steve Brecher of Touch Tunes, and John Schultz.**



**AAMA Distributor of the Year, (l-r): David Cohen, Bob Geschine and Peter Betti of Betson Enterprises, and John Schultz.**



**From left: Tony Shamma, Vince Gumma, Frank Gumma Sr., and Cortney Black Kinzler of AVS.**



**Frank Gumma Sr. of AVS receives the AAMA "Lifetime Achievement Award" from David Cohen (l) and John Schultz of AAMA.**

The American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) presented its annual awards during the opening ceremonies of the Amusement Expo on March 1 in Las Vegas. David Cohen, President of Firestone Financial Corp. and Chairman of AAMA, joined John Schultz, President of AAMA, in making the presentations.

Frank Gumma Sr., Senior Vice President of long-time distribution firm American Vending Sales (AVS), received the

annual "Lifetime Achievement Award," which is presented to an industry leader with an outstanding reputation and a humanitarian spirit.

For the first time the association presented an award for "Supplier of the Year 2010," which was presented to Suzo-Happ Group. The company has three offices in the U.S. and one in the U.K.

The award for "Manufacturer of the Year 2010" was presented to TouchTunes Interactive Networks. The award is deter-

mined by outstanding ratings and quality customer service.

The award for "Distributor of the Year 2010" was presented to Betson Enterprises, which has 11 offices in the U.S. The award is determined by several factors including sales, quality of service, and enthusiasm.

Distributor members of AAMA vote on the manufacturer award and manufacturer members vote on the distributor award. ▲



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Distributors Platinum Partners Club honorees.

## Firestone announces Platinum Partners

A highlight of Amusement Expo 2011 in Las Vegas March 1-3 was the announcement of Firestone Financial Corp.'s prestigious Platinum Partners for 2010.

This is the fifth year that Firestone has bestowed this recognition on selected manufacturers and distributors. Members of the Platinum Partners Club are chosen for their innovation and leadership roles in the industry and for being among Firestone's top clients during the prior year.

Jim Hines, Firestone's Vice President of Sales, noted that all of the award recipients have received this honor in the past.

"We have relationships with some of these clients going back two or three decades, a dramatic illustration of how we're here for the long term, and the bonds of trust we have built," said Hines.

He added, "We're also recognizing that the leadership of these companies has not flinched in the face of a challenging economy. They chose instead to retool, rethink, and invest. And when they needed to offer financing to their customers, they came to Firestone."

Firestone President and AAMA Board Chairman David Cohen announced a donation to the American Amusement Machine Charitable Foun-



Manufacturer Platinum Partners Club honorees.

dation (AAMCF) in honor of the Platinum Partners.

Cohen said, "Manufacturers play a vital role in the coin-op industry. They create exciting products that stimulate sales, and make machines even more attractive through innovative finance promotions in partnership with Firestone."

He also commended distributors for providing customers with the equipment and service they need to run and grow their businesses, even in recent challenging times. Cohen said, "It is your salesmanship and relationships with the operators that have allowed all of us to be part of this industry."

Upon announcing the winners, Cohen remarked, "We never take you or your business for granted. One key reason for our success really is 'attitude.' Rather than adversaries we've come to know you and your businesses very well. You and Firestone truly are partners. Your success is our success."

Since 1993, Firestone has provided over \$1 billion in financing to the industry. In 2008, Firestone was named to the Inc. 5,000 list as one of the 5,000 fastest-growing private companies in the U.S.

Approximately 75 percent of its business comes from repeat customers. Founded in 1965,

Firestone also provides financing solutions to businesses in other industries requiring equipment financing, such as fitness.

When asked about Firestone, Kevin Fritz, Vice President of Finance for Betson Enterprises, said, "It's important to have a relationship with a lender like Firestone. Not only do they offer low interest rate loans, they also take great care of our customers."

The 2010 Firestone Financial Platinum Partners Club honorees are: AMI Entertainment Network, American Vending Sales, Brady Distributing, Ecast Inc., Green Coin Machine LLC, H.A. Franz & Co., H. Betti Industries, JVL Corp., Mountain Coin Machine Distributors, Moss Distributing, Raw Thrills, Shaffer Distributing, and Touch-Tunes Interactive Networks.

For more information, call (617)641-9276; Web ([www.firestonefinancial.com](http://www.firestonefinancial.com)). ▲



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**April 27-29**

**NAMA OneShow**

Chicago, Ill.  
McCormick Place  
tel: (312)346-0370  
fax: (312)704-4140  
web: www.namaoneshow.org

**April 28-30**

**Georgia Amusement & Music Operators Association Meeting**

Atlanta, Ga.  
Hilton Atlanta Northeast  
tel: (770)574-7761  
fax: (770)574-8388

**April 29-May 7**

**NDA Team Dart**

Las Vegas, Nev.  
Bally's Las Vegas  
tel: (317)387-1299  
fax: (317)387-0999  
web: www.ndadarts.com

**May 5-7**

**GTI Expo**

Taipei, Taiwan  
Taipei World Trade Center  
tel: +866-2-27607-407-10  
e-mail: gametime@taiwanslot.com.tw  
web: www.gtiexpo.com.tw

**May 9-12**

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web: www.aalara.com.au

**May 21-24**

**National Restaurant Association Show**

Chicago, Ill.  
McCormick Place  
tel: (312)853-2525  
e-mail: (312)853-2548  
web: www.nraregistration@restaurant.org

**May 26-30**

**BullShooter Finals**

Rosemont, Ill.  
Hyatt Regency O'Hare  
tel: (800)435-8319  
e-mail: loric@bullshooter.com  
web: www.bullshooter.com

**May 26-June 4**

**VNEA International Pool Championships**

Las Vegas, Nev.  
Bally's Las Vegas  
tel: (800)544-1346  
e-mail: info@vnea.com  
web: www.vnea.com

**June 2-3**

**Music & Vending Association of South Dakota Meeting**

Oacoma, S.D.  
tel: (605)224-1114  
e-mail: mvasd@midconetwork.com

**June 6-9**

**Clean Show**

Las Vegas, Nev.  
Las Vegas Convention Center  
tel: (404)876-1988  
fax: (404)876-5121  
web: www.cleanshow.com

**June 16**

**Ohio Coin Machine Association Meeting**

Columbus, Ohio  
tel: (614)784-9772  
e-mail: ocma@the-ocma.org  
web: www.the-ocma.org

**June 16-19**

**VNEA Jr. Championships**

Mankato, Minn.  
Verizon Wireless Center  
tel: (800)544-1346  
e-mail: info@vnea.com  
web: www.vnea.com

**June 21-22**

**Wisconsin Amusement & Music Operators Conference & Show**

Brookfield, Wis.  
Sheraton Hotel  
tel: (800)827-8011  
e-mail: wamomax@aol.com  
web: www.wamo.net

**July 21-23**

**Amusement & Music Operators of Texas Convention**

San Antonio, Texas  
Crowne Plaza Riverwalk  
tel: (512)472-1043  
email: amot@amot.org  
web: www.amot.org

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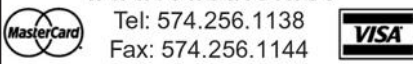
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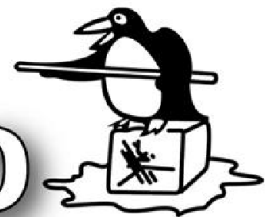
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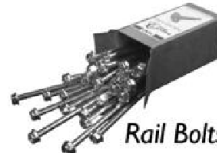
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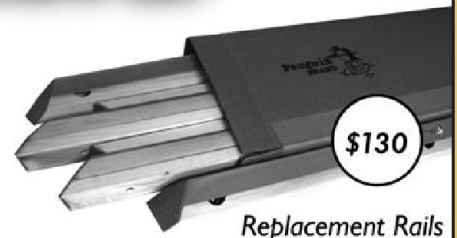
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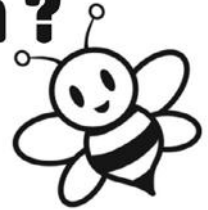
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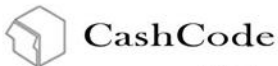
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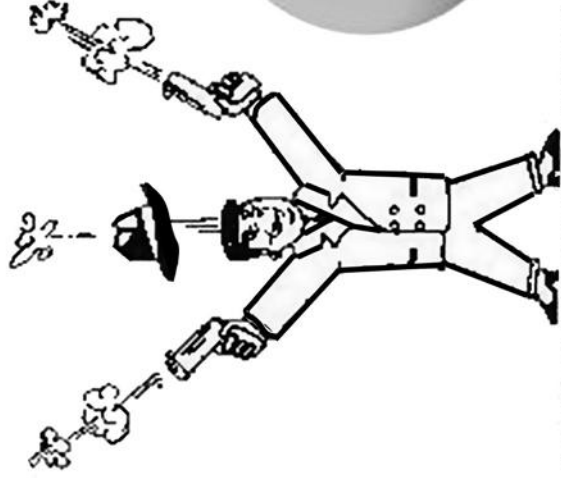
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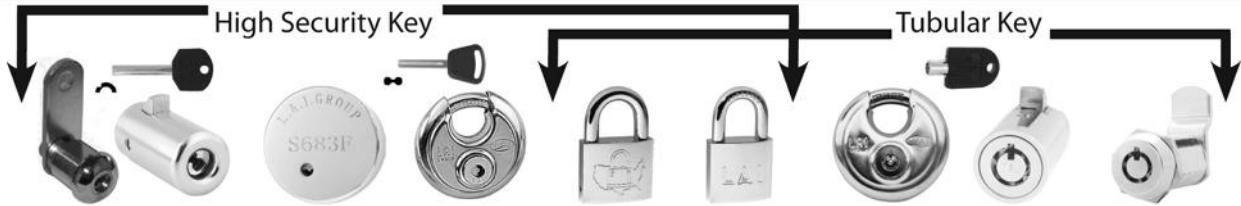
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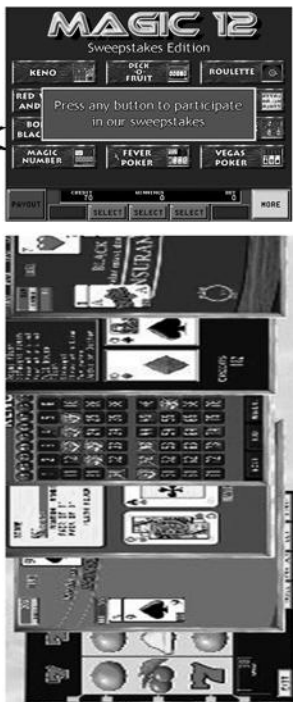
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