

Seating solutions for stadiums & arenas are primarily focused on flexibility and premium upgrades, as feature-writer, Steve Traiman, found out when interviewing a number of the leading global vendors.

# TAKE YOUR SEATS

*New Yankee Stadium in The Bronx, NY, USA, recently had Irwin Seating Company's Model 71.12.12 Signature seating installed, which is an upholstered outdoor product.*

IMAGE: IRWIN SEATING/JON DENKER, CAPS

Stadiums and arenas around the world are more focused on seating than ever before. With the continuing trend to multi-purpose facilities, which must easily shift from a sports to an entertainment set-up, flexible seating solutions are now built-in to plans for new venues, and increasingly sought for renovations to older buildings.

On another level, with the global economic downturn affecting attendance at many sports and entertainment events, upgraded seating for more premium areas is high on the demand list for older stadiums and arenas, particularly in the campus market.

A good cross-section of many of the leading suppliers of seating in North America, Europe and Australia offer some targeted insight on the marketplace. Included from North America are American Seating, Clarin Seating, Irwin Seating, Seating Solutions, Spec Seats, Staging Concepts and Track Seating. From Europe and Australia we have comment from Audience Systems, Daplast and Arena Seating/Product People.

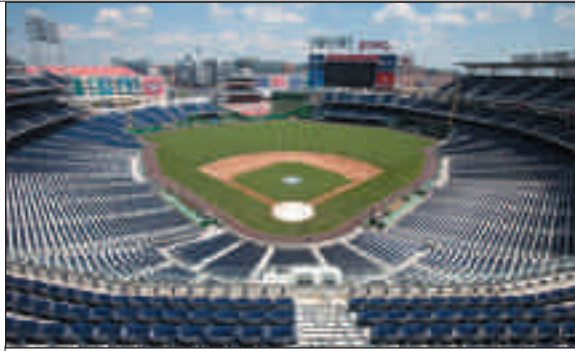
## Major Trends Cited: North America

Many of the leading vendors of arena and stadium seating are very much in agreement on the key trends in the global marketplace for all types of sports and entertainment venues.

At Irwin Seating, based in Grand Rapids, MI, Bill MacLeod, Director of Business & Sales Development, commented: "We see clients asking for flexible use of space, and premium seating upgrades including upholstered seating for outdoor applications."

For Track Seating, Spring Lake, MI, David Southwell, National Sales Manager, advised: "The most important trend is the utilisation of telescopic platforms: for indoor arenas with variable-rise telescopes, allowing a building to be designed with many different event configurations; and outdoors for stadiums with weather-resistant finishes."

"The main trend that we continue to see in arenas and stadiums is the transition to premium seating models for premium seating areas. Luxurious premium seats in front row courtside and club areas give high-paying patrons what they expect — a great experience," said Steve Luttazi, Senior Vice President, Sales, Sports & Entertainment, at Clarin Seating, Lake Bluff, IL.



Among the newest major projects for American Seating is the 41,888-seat MLB Washington (DC) Nationals Ballpark.

IMAGE: AMERICAN SEATING

Doug Oswald, Marketing Manager, Architectural Environments at American Seating, Grand Rapids, MI confirmed: "Stadiums and arenas are looking for individual project customisation and seating design variations for specialty areas including the bowl, club, loge and suite sections."

"Facilities are looking to add value and are creating more fan areas, as well as more premium seating or more comfortable regular seating sections," observed Mike Clarity, Sales Manager, Seating Solutions, Commack, NY. "A lot of facilities are being built with less individual seats, but are providing fans with more room per seat to make for a more comfortable experience."

Jordan Hergott, Vice President of Sales, Spec Seats/Staging Systems, Chicago, advised: "Due to the worldwide economic situation, to minimise capital expenditures most older facilities are handling seating renovations internally — buying component parts and using existing personnel to handle replacement issues. We do see more requests to create special seating areas like a 'gold circle' to generate additional sponsorship revenue. Another trend is for worldwide logo chairs — special seating area chairs with team, venue, company, or event logos."

For Staging Concepts in Minneapolis, MN, Kari Hayden, Marketing Director said: "Whether it be for demountable seating risers, ADA infill and outfill seating, or vomitory infill seating areas, more and more arena and stadium venues are requiring flexibility with their seating installations."

### Major Trends Cited: Europe

At Daplast in Cordoba, Spain, Patrick van Gestel, Sales Manager, observed: "Whether it's on the request of stadium or arena architects, clubs or owners, they all want their 'own' customised seat."

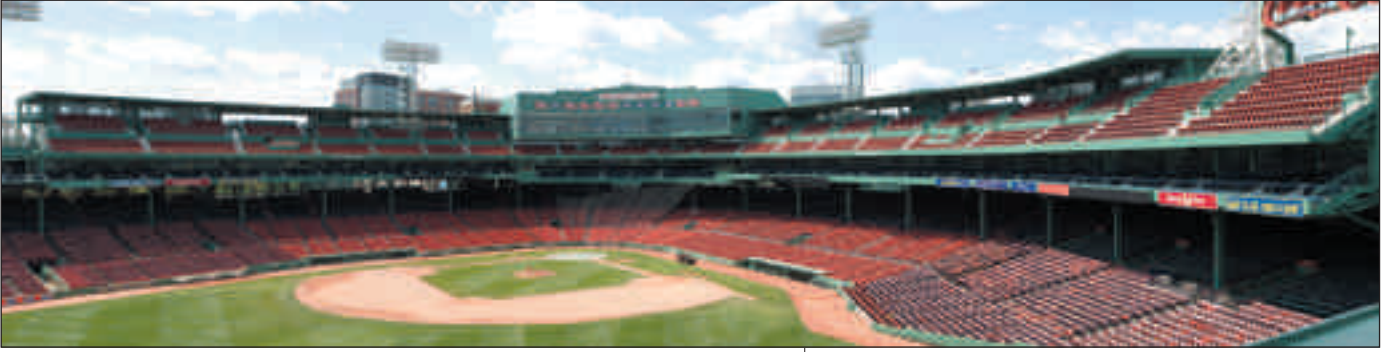
Nina Parmenter, Group Marketing and PR Manager for Audience Systems Ltd in Westbury, UK, said: "Increasingly clients are looking at 'future-proofing' seating layouts to maximise their options going forward. They are also looking for assurance that they can change the specification level of seats in the future — by creating wider spacing or upgrading the seat itself, for example."

At Arena Seating in Hungerford, UK, Sales Director Dave Withey noted: "We've seen growing demand from sports and entertainment clients for a demountable grandstand that provides sightlines configured specifically for each event, with a seating system that is safe, comfortable, and cost-effective, which is why we developed Clearview." Sheldon King, Business Development Manager, added: "More venues are looking to maximise their revenue opportunities with special events that require innovative temporary seating solutions to attract premiere sports and entertainment bookings." ➔



Quicken Loans Arena, home to the NBA Cleveland Cavaliers, features Clarin's VIP Chairs (courtside) and 4400 Chairs (behind).

IMAGE: CLARIN SEATING



*When the renovation is complete in Spring '11, American Seating will have replaced 36,500 seats at Boston's historic Fenway Park.*

IMAGE: AMERICAN SEATING

## New & Improved Products: North America

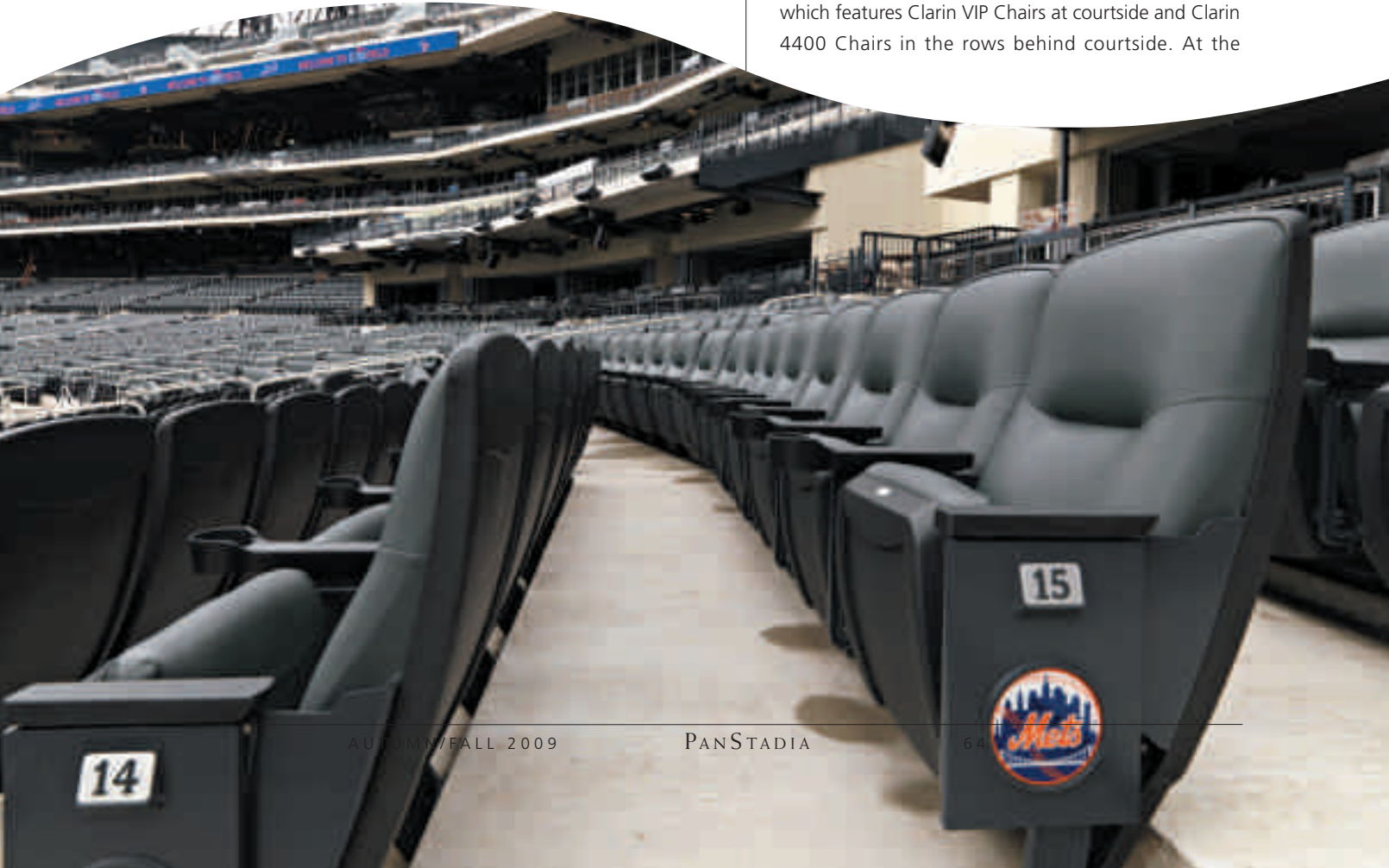
As for new and improved products to meet the needs of modern stadium and arena venues, Irwin Seating's Bill MacLeod noted: "Among recent stadium and arena projects using some of our newest products and innovative seating solutions are our Signature model 71.12.12 outdoor upholstered luxury chairs, which are installed at both the new Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, for the MLB New York Yankees, and the new Citi Field in Queens, for the MLB New York Mets. Both Sprint Center in Kansas City, MO, and Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL Indianapolis Colts, are using our fixed seating and telescopic platforms, with Sprint Center also utilizing our variable rise platform system. We also installed dual-rise platforms at the new 15,000-seat Intrust Bank Arena in Wichita, KS, opening in 2010 for the CHL Wichita Thunder, and at the recently renovated Ford Center in Oklahoma City, home of the transplanted NBA Thunder."

*The new Citi Field in Queens, NY, for the MLB New York Mets, installed Irwin Seating Company's Signature model 71.12.12 outdoor upholstered luxury chairs.*

IMAGE: IRWIN SEATING

At Track Seating, David Southwell reported: "Our newest seat is the Othello chair, which is being installed at the new 5,800-seat Independence (MO) Events Center in suburban Kansas City. Another recent project was new seating for the 14,500-capacity Dunkin Donuts Center in Providence, RI, home of the AHL Providence Bruins and Providence College Friars hockey teams, as part of the US\$48m renovation completed in 2008. We've also focused on developing the most complete line of telescopic seating products, which allow a building to be designed with the same type/comfort of seat from the telescopic seating areas to the fixed seating areas on concrete. We introduced our newest product to the market, a variable-rise telescopic system, at the IAAM Convention in Boston this summer."

For Clarin Seating, Steve Luttazi advised: "Our newest seats are the Club Series Chair and Contour Series Chair, both new to our Premium Series line. Among major recent installations are the Quicken Loans Arena, home of the NBA Cleveland Cavaliers, which features Clarin VIP Chairs at courtside and Clarin 4400 Chairs in the rows behind courtside. At the



*At the University of Alabama's Bryant Denny Stadium, Seating Solutions installed a custom-designed bleacher with individual chairback seats to create an end zone Field Suite.*

IMAGE: SEATING SOLUTIONS

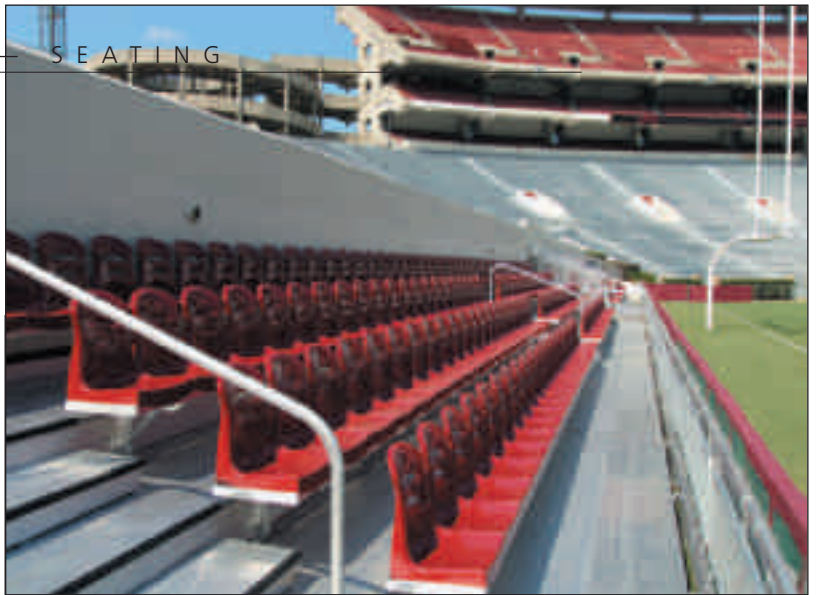
## TAKE YOUR SEATS

Edmund P. Joyce Center in South Bend, IN — home to the University of Notre Dame's Fighting Irish basketball and volleyball teams — recent renovations include the new Clarin Club Chair for the players' team bench and VIP patrons courtside."

American Seating's Doug Oswald noted: "We're very proud to have offered the first fixed seating solution to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and have continued to come up with innovative products for sports and entertainment venues. Our solutions are found in some of the oldest, most famous sports stadiums in the world, as well as some of the newest, and we are capable of outfitting everything from the front row to scout seating to the upper deck to suite seats. Recent projects include upgrades to be completed in 2011 at historic Fenway Park, home of the MLB Boston Red Sox — our first sports seating project when the ballpark opened in 1912, and the new 41,888-seat MLB Washington Nationals Ballpark in Washington, DC.

At Seating Solutions, Mike Clarity advised: "Our newest product is the Maximus, which is a one-piece-designed contour seat with lumbar support that permanently attaches onto any new or existing bench seating. Maximus is the same size as a typical flip-up style chair at less than half of the cost without sacrificing any comfort or durability, and with its one-piece design it is maintenance free. One recent installation was 13,000 seats at Pocono (PA) Raceway to help the venue create a new premium seating section other than existing suites. Another is at the University of Alabama's Bryant Denny Stadium in University, home of the SEC Crimson Tide. We built a custom designed Field Suite using the new Maximus chair in the South End Zone as an added premium seat revenue source. We also do a lot of high school stadium work, with a recent example at Dodge City (KS) H.S. where we upgraded existing bench seating to permanent individual chairback seating, with dual goals to increase season ticket sales and create more sponsorship revenue. We also offer other creative solutions, including our DreamSuite open air suite and BleaChair lines."

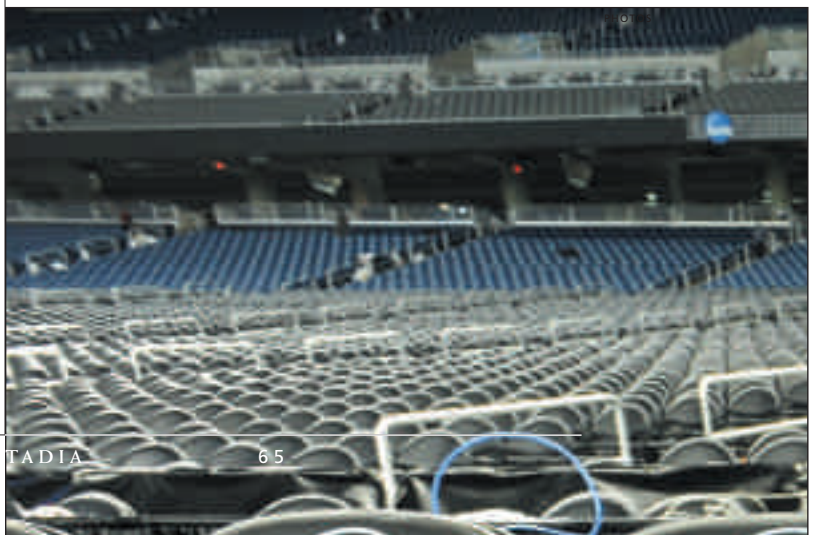
Spec Seats' Jordan Hergott said: "As the official NCAA supplier of portable seating, Spec Seats devel-

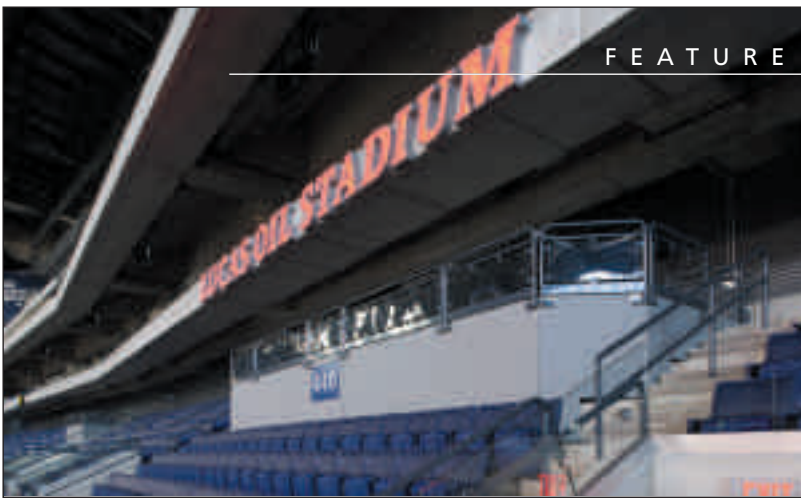


oped a 'Special Spacer Bracket Adapter' that can change seating capacity for special events, using portable folding chairs with removable ganging brackets. While standard chairs are 18.25-inch on-centre, our special spacer and ganging bracket can create chairs with 20-inch spacing, letting the event planner create wider spacing for patron comfort. Working with architect HKS and Staging Concepts, we helped set an NCAA Final Four attendance record with over 72,000 fans in added portable seating at Detroit's domed Ford Field, home of the NFL Lions. With our input and that of Staging Concepts, HKS designed a new configuration that positions the basketball court at the 50-yard line and raises it about three feet. This allowed us to bring in portable seating with 30 rows of risers, giving us the additional room to build downward, closer to the action, while maintaining sightlines so fans could see all the way down to the court. The NCAA purchased 30,000 portable Spec Seats that also will be used at future Final Four events. Other new products are a Ganging Bracket that allows both a radius configuration for an arena set-up and/or straight alignment; a special safety Locking Device for portable independent uplift seats to lock in the down position for child safety protection; and a special Channel Bumper strip that snaps into the double tube and channel of

*Detroit's Ford Field used 30,000 of Spec Seats' portable chairs and Staging Concepts' risers to accommodate 72,000 at the NCAA Final Four tournament.*

IMAGE COURTESY OF NCAA





*Staging Concepts designed, manufactured and installed custom seating risers, camera platforms and an ADA outfill area — pictured here — at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, IN.*

IMAGE: STAGING CONCEPTS

Spec Seats' folding chairs. Spec Seats has introduced the ultimate in outdoor portable folding chairs 'Super Chair' — with or without folding arms — most recently installed at the new Yankee Stadium."

At Staging Concepts, Kari Hayden confirmed: "We are in the business of custom/bespoke solutions for the arena and stadium market. As one example, at Ford Field in Detroit for the NCAA Men's Final Four Basketball Tournament, we worked with architect HKS, the Colonnade Group and Spec Seats. Our demountable seating riser system equipment added 15,000 seats to the set-up and we helped with the design that moved the basketball court from the end zone to the centre of the stadium, which is home to the NFL Lions. Another example is Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL Indianapolis Colts. Working with architect HKS and general contractor Hunt Construction, we designed, manufactured and installed custom/bespoke seating risers and camera platforms throughout the stadium, as well as an ADA outfill area."

## New & Improved Products: Europe

For Daplast, Patrick van Gestel noted: "With our own in-house installation crews, we've developed a strong knowledge and 'do-ability' base for both new arenas and stadia, and renovation projects. For the new 12,500-seat Caja Magica or 'Magic Box' arena in Madrid, Spain, built for the 1000 ATP Tennis Masters tournament, we worked with architect Dominique Perault to design what we call the Model POP seat. Made of copolyester, the completely transparent red seat not only provides resistancy, durability and comfort, but also creates a unique atmosphere within the venue, as each seat is lit from below to complement the 'transparent' poly-bicarbonate arena walls. Other recent projects include a full redevelopment of FC Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium — the largest in Europe — replacing all 98,000 seats with our AB tip-up model; VIP seats for FC Twente's stadium upgrading in The Netherlands; design, manufacturing and installation of seating at the Poliforum Arena in Cancun, Mexico; and the new 25,000-seat Rommel Fernandez, Panama's National Stadium."

Audience Systems' Nina Parmenter outlined: "To help our stadium and arena clients 'future-proof' their seating, we specify an adaptable mixture of fixed seating, fixed and mobile retractable platforms, removable seating, loose chairs, and flexible modular staging, with six different layouts created for ExCeL in London. We are right now launching a new chair, Blaze, for both indoor and outdoor venues. The chair's rail-mounted design gives complete flexibility in

spacing, and the chair features include auto-tip armrests, and removable upholstered pads ('onserts'), which can be added or removed by the operator. The seat, back and rails are all 100% recyclable. Our retractable platforms are also constantly



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*Daplast installed its new Model POP seating at the Magic Box Arena in Madrid.*

IMAGE: DAPLAST

evolving to keep up with our clients' requirements, which have led us to create ever more large and complex systems. For the NEC, we are installing a massive 37-row retractable unit, with two rows of seating on each platform to allow the venue to accommodate the most spectators within the available height. For ExCeL, we are providing the retractable units with locking and positioning pins to help operators locate the units accurately in each of six different venue configurations. For Wembley Arena, we provided a combination of fixed seating for tiered areas, and removable 'matrix' seating for the floor. We also installed a low-rise retractable system with removable chairs, helping to give the best possible sightlines (within the height available) to those towards the back of the arena."

At Arena Seating, Dave Withey observed: "For more than 40 years we have installed world-class permanent seating, stadium seating, and demountable seating systems in Premiership football clubs, international cricket grounds, rugby stadia, and venues of all sizes. We also supply over 400 events per year throughout the UK and internationally with temporary event seating. Our international clientele's need for a demountable grandstand with event-centred sightlines led to an exhaustive design and development program, which is why we developed the Clearview system. Providing a compact and cost-effective system incorporating a new purpose-built seat, it is now available to our clients. We're also proud of our role as exclusive distributor of 'The BOX Seat' from Sydney-based The Product People in Europe and the Middle East, and look forward to launching the next generation Mark II model later this year (see exclusive story in PanStadia, Spring/Summer'09 issue). Recent projects include: The Brit Oval's VVIP seating balcony, with its specially upholstered luxury seating, was designed to provide additional comfort in a spectacular environment for the club's VVIP guests. We designed the facility in brushed aluminium and glass, using 70 seats based on our Congress seat with weatherproof vinyl upholstery, individual armrests and cup holders. We also installed temporary grandstand seating at the other grounds visited by the touring Australian national team, including 4,638 seats at Old Trafford, 3,645 at Edinburgh, 10,766 at the Rose Bowl, 8,427 at Durham, 336 at Lords, 793 at Edgbaston, and a further 218 seats at The Brit Oval. At the Sydney Cricket Ground, we put in a revolutionary 'Polygon' modular seating stand of stackable polygons that provided a rapid seat installation that was moved around the ground by the operational staff."



*Audience Systems' refurbishment of Wembley Arena includes the fixed seating (foreground), removable matrix seating stacked up (in the centre) and the low rise retractable platforms (to the right).*

IMAGE: AUDIENCE SYSTEMS/WEMBLEY ARENA

Arena's Sheldon King added at IAAM'09: "We're very pleased with the response to our new Mark II model at the Convention, and with our new relationship with Arena Seating. Our company offers fixed seating solutions alongside a comprehensive temporary seating service with a fleet of over 50 semitrailer installation trucks, 100 support personnel and our fully systemised highly compact seat (The BOX Seat System) in tandem with our fully adjustable Clearview parabolic mobile grandstand." He also advised: "We are also strongly focused on the legacy and revenue opportunities for our customers."

## Market Expansion & Outlook: North American Firms

While most seating vendors concentrate on their North American or European 'home' markets, virtually all are looking to expand their products to other global areas. Overall expansion opportunities have most suppliers cautiously optimistic for future business into 2010 and beyond.

Track Seating's David Southwell explained: "While we presently concentrate in the North American markets, we are targeting both the Asian and the European markets for future expansion through our parent company, Shape Corporation, and its worldwide manufacturing presence in the automotive and office furniture markets. As a result, we are conservatively optimistic about the future. We are seeing a lot of pre-planning and budgeting, as well as projects trying to buy early and 'lock in' today's pricing, which is very favourable from an historic perspective."

Irwin Seating's Bill MacLeod noted: "We have a strong project backlog for 2010."

At Clarin Seating, Steve Luttazi said: "We sell our products worldwide, with the majority of our international sales coming from Europe — a small percentage we're looking to grow in the near future. We are optimistic with our outlook for 2010 with new arena and stadium projects on the horizon including the 18,000-seat Consol Energy Arena in Pittsburgh, PA, for NHL ➤

## TAKE YOUR SEATS

Penguins; 20,000-seat Amway Center in Orlando, FL, for the NBA Magic; and the 22,000-seat Louisville (KY) Downtown Arena for the University of Louisville Big East Cardinals.”

For American Seating, Doug Oswald observed: “Our sports and entertainment business is minimal outside of the US and Canada, with Mexico and South America our primary expansion targets.”

Seating Solutions’ Mike Clarity noted: “We do most of our business across North America, with some clients in other countries. A few areas we are looking to expand to are Dubai and the Caribbean. Going forward into 2010, we see a lot opportunities to work with both new facilities to create a new type of premium seating, as well as with existing facilities to upgrade areas to premium seating with some of our creative seating solutions.”

“We’ve completed arena and stadium projects throughout the US, parts of Canada, and parts of Europe,” Staging Concepts’ Kari Hayden confirmed. “Our target areas for expansion are global, and we have a positive outlook going forward into 2010. We’re currently in talks regarding both new stadium projects and other projects that were put on the backburner and are now coming back to life.”

### Market Expansion & Outlook: European Vendors

Daplast’s Patrick van Gestel said: “About 25% of our sales are outside Spain, from New Zealand, to Chile, and from Hong Kong to Canada, with a large presence in Central and South America. For 2010, while major projects are slowing down a bit or postponed, some countries are making ‘special’ anti-crisis funds available to reactivate construction projects including arenas and stadia.”

“Audience Systems has always operated globally,” Nina Parmenter advised. “While our largest installations for 2009/10 are the LG Arena at the NEC, and ExCeL — both UK projects — we have significant international prospects, and would expect at least 50% of our arena and stadium business to be outside Europe in the next five years. The market looks extremely active for us in the short to medium term. The ExCeL Arena will be installed in 2010, and we have a number of promising prospects worldwide, not least for the 2012 Olympic venues in London.”

At Arena Seating, Dave Withey observed: “With our Clearview demountable grandstand system for temporary events, and our exclusive distributor agreement for ‘The BOX Seat’ in Europe and the Middle East, we’re very positive on our outlook for 2010 and beyond.”

From this excellent cross-section of seating trends, products and technology, it’s obvious that both new arenas and stadiums, and those facing major renovations or upgrades, will be looking to industry suppliers for creative solutions to their seating needs. ★

*Sheldon King with 'The BOX Seat — Mark II' at IAAM'09 in Boston (main pic) & inset, Emirates Stadium has 'The Box Seat — Mark I' installed.*

IMAGES: ARENA SEATING

