

Setting the standard

ICE believes that the UK is a pioneer when it comes to new amusement ideas

INNOVATIVE Concepts in Entertainment has had an extensive presence and history within the amusements industry. From working with Electrocoin, Deith Leisure and Cromptons in the 1980s, to Brent Leisure and Namco Europe in the early 2000s, ICE has history in the UK. As of late, the past 12 years specifically, ICE has worked exclusively with Sega Amusements International in the UK market. This working relationship has allowed ICE great exposure, all while ensuring customers purchasing its products receive premium after-sales care from its distributor.

Ryan Coppola, sales at ICE, said: "ICE has benefitted tremendously in the past 12 years as the UK market has taken FEC concepts in various forms to new levels. The social entertainment concepts growing in the UK are setting a standard around the world for a new form of entertaining young adults.

"Concepts like Roxy, Boom Battle Bar, Lane7 and Carousel are showing the rest of the world the power that comes from having games and attractions in a bar-like setting."

People have always had plenty of options when it comes to socialising, but the fascination with social gaming is a fresh industry, that has only grown more and more over recent years, with venues such as those mentioned above becoming increasingly popular and showing no sign of slowing down. This is to the benefit of ICE, allowing more avenues for its products to be utilised.

"We feel Sega has played a pivotal role for us in getting games like NBA Gametime, Air FX, Super Kixx, Iceball and even our carnival skill wall games into these new concepts and it has been extremely rewarding for us watching these concepts take off and seeing the strength of the

games component to the overall success and revenues of the locations."



Iceball FX

These games in particular share the common theme of engaging in sports and physical activity, which is ideal for social entertainment venues in which there is a high energy environment. Playing and viewing sports naturally brings people together, so providing a sports mini-game within a venue that can be played within minutes recreates the thrill. They also share multiplayer features, further encouraging competitive socialisation among friends and strangers alike.

"What's nice about the market as a whole is that we have a game to offer for every type of operation. If it's a social entertainment concept in need of sports games we see NBA Gametime, Air FX, Super Kixx and now World Football Pro and even dodgeball being the popular picks. On the other hand, when providing games for a traditional FEC, products like Monopoly Roll N Go, Tons of Tickets, Whack N Win and Iceball have a historic record of being very high earners for operators in the UK."

Where an FEC can accommodate most arcade machines, operators running a competitive socialisation venue wouldn't benefit from ticket redemption machines as an example. While the competitive socialisation venues may have sprung up quickly, ICE was prepared with its wide range of games available to suit all different types of attraction.

"Then you have your seaside locations and piers all over the country that our carnival series is perfect for with games like Milk Jug Toss, Down The Clown, Bean Bag Toss and Ship Wreck. So, to sum it up, really everything works well for us in the UK and we've seen the market evolve tremendously over the years to showcasing some of the best FECs globally."

The market has evolved and ICE has been able to follow this evolution, turning it into a benefit for the company. Where in the past, bars would have a pool table to compliment the area, bars in the modern age are being operated and advertised around the amusements that are available inside. With this change, there's also a change of demographic. Arcades were previously associated with younger audiences, but it's proving to be successful with all age ranges.

Coppola sees the future being bright for the UK market. He said: "Large-scale FECs and bowling centres are growing and the revenues are strong, no doubt.

"Yes, there is a bit of an economic downturn and energy crisis going on right now, but this is a cycle and family entertainment is ageless and will never go out of style.

"I also believe that the individuals in the UK right now driving the market in our industry are extremely focused on finding solutions and overcoming these short-term challenges. Our industry has always provided great value fun."

The company was also looking forward to



A selection of ICE arcade games on location



exhibiting its products at the upcoming trade shows, particularly IAAPA and EAG. Coppola enthused: "We will have a few surprises at IAAPA this year that we are very excited to release. The trade shows continue to be instrumental to ICE's success. Past all the benefits from a business perspective, just seeing the buzz of our industry is always very refreshing.

"At the end of the day, being in a position to meet with customers and friends from all over the world under one roof is a special thing. We at ICE value the relationships that have been created over the years and being able to build on those over three or four days in person is something we never take for granted.

"The trade shows really are a one-stop shop for showing new product, listening to what customers have planned for the upcoming year and figuring out ways to work with others to help shape the future of our industry. Every bit of that is exciting to us."