

CASINO *Style* 2018

Non-Gaming Amenities for Integrated Resorts • \$10

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Official Publication of the Association of Gaming Equipment Manufacturers

BUILDING EXCITEMENT

Back to the Future

• Resorts World Catskills •

At the midpoint of the 20th century, New York's Catskills Mountains were considered among the chicest and most desirable of vacation destinations. Dozens of five-star hotels and resorts dotted the smallish peaks and valleys, providing a welcome getaway for the millions who inhabited America's largest city at that time, New York City. During the summer, a short train ride or bus trip transported visitors from the steamy city to the cool breezes of the mountains. Gambling may not have been a legal activity, but it was certainly one of the amenities offered at the mountain palaces and surrounding properties.

The Concord was a premier hotel of the region, featuring 1,500 rooms and a dining room that sat 3,000. But its mid-century heyday wound down; it closed in 1998, and was demolished soon after.

It took a few years, but like a phoenix rising from the rubble, Resorts World Catskills (RWC) made its debut in February 2018. It may replicate the success of the Concord at its height—complete, this time, with legal gambling.

The last of four “northern tier” casinos to open in the last two years, RWC has the most going for it. Only 90 minutes from New York City, it has more amenities than the other Empire State gaming halls. With almost 100,000 square feet of gaming (out of a total property square footage of 1.6 million), gamblers can enjoy the latest slot machines, table games and a poker room.

The 332 room all-suite hotel has already turned heads for its in-room amenities and contemporary style.

The best part of RWC is that it will eventually be part of a vast entertainment complex with a water park, additional food and beverage outlets



and more accommodations.

The Concord's legendary golf course, the Monster, will also be revived in a new Rees Jones design. The Monster was often rated in *Golf Digest's* list of the Top 100 American Golf Courses.

Entertainment was long a staple of the Concord—as in other “Borsht Belt” hotels—and RWC is restoring that crown as well. Singers, bands and comedians—including Jerry Seinfeld at the grand opening—will make RWC the entertainment capital of the Catskills once again.

Celebrity chefs like Scott Conant and others will resurrect the dining elegance once experienced only at the Concord. Along with Conant's Cellaio, RWC offers two Asian-themed restaurants, two sports bars, a diner, the Food Hall—RWC's buffet—and several other options.

It's only the beginning in this magical part of the country, with possibilities and plans just ready to happen.

—Roger Gros

OWNER: Empire Resorts

ARCHITECT: JCJ Architecture

FEATURES: 332 suites, 2 pools, 2 fitness centers, 100,000-square-foot casino

INVESTMENT: \$900 million



Refined Rustic

• Choctaw Casino Hotel, Grant, Oklahoma •

In the hyper-competitive Oklahoma gaming market, tribal casinos must take different approaches to attract and retain loyal customers. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is well aware of this. Whenever it opens up or renovates a property, it adds non-gaming amenities that the competition lacks.

HBG Design's architecture and interior design team worked with the Choctaw Nation on key improvements to the existing operation, with goals of alleviating traffic flow challenges. They added a new 96-room hotel tower with 23 luxury suites, an expanded pool and bar/lounge environment, new and expanded food and beverage venues, and new gaming amenities.

The Choctaw Casino Resort in Grant, Oklahoma is a great example of the upgrades the nation insists upon. With architectural duties handled by HBG, it coined the term “refined rustic” to explain the design approach. At once contemporary, edgy and rustic in its interpretation, the concept builds on the Choctaw brand's warm color palette as well as the existing property's affinity for transitional styling, natural textures and materials, wood tones and wooden trim. Designers worked to enhance the materials currently in use, while introducing several new surprises involving unique textures and distinctive detailing.

They drew inspiration from the surrounding Oklahoma landscape: tall, tan grain stalks blowing in the fields, the vast open sky above and a deep contrast of colors all helping to in-



form the palette. Designers were especially taken with the shape and texture of the area's weather worn grain silos. These aged structures have a timeless, iconic aesthetic that combines wood and metal in a multitude of patterns, textures and patinas. It is this raw materiality within a distinctive contemporary form that designers have crafted to create visual interest and consistency between new and existing building elements.

Continuity of the "Choctaw red" color accents further solidifies the expansion design within the context of the existing property and serve to reinforce the brand.

—Patrick Roberts

OWNER: Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
ARCHITECT: HBG Design
FEATURES: 96 rooms, expanded pool, additional F&B options
INVESTMENT: \$50 million



Rollin' on the River

• Tropicana Evansville •

Evansville, Indiana has 50 million reasons for excitement—in the state's first land-based casino, a \$50 million development that opened in October.

Orchestrated by SOSH Architects and Hafer Design, Tropicana Evansville showcases Evansville's scenic location on the Ohio River at the juncture of Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky. Three states within short distance of one new gaming facility? Geographically, that's triple 7s.

The project, which replaced Tropicana's riverboat casino, not only fit market needs and anticipated future growth, but is designed to transform the city by drawing customers from surrounding states, enhancing revenues and bolstering the local tax base.

Revenues were reported at \$15.7 million in March compared to \$11.6 million for the same month last year. The successful expansion played a big role.

Tropicana's 75,000-square-foot entertainment development includes a single-level 45,000-square-foot gaming floor, two new restaurants and an ultra-modern live entertainment lounge called 421. Havana-inspired colors, textures and other visual cues were woven into the design in keeping with Tropicana's brand.

Gaming elements include 1,175 slot machines and more than 30 table games including blackjack, roulette and craps. The poker room

and high-limit room became instant attractions. Live monthly tournaments include Top 3 Blackjack, Bad Beat Jackpots, Craps, High Card Flush, Mini Baccarat, Mississippi Stud, Omaha, Roulette, Texas Hold'em and Three-Card Poker. The high-limit room features high-limit blackjack and mini-baccarat with the Dragon Bonus side bet.

The casino exterior features more than 38,800 color-changing LED lights for a three-dimensional facade that engages and entertains guests. Interior wall-mounted LED video ribbons also enhance the atmosphere.

Accommodations include the on-site Evansville Hotel and boutique LeMerigot Hotel, and 10 suites with spacious living

and dining areas, master bedrooms and spa tubs.

In April, the company agreed to sell Tropicana's real estate to Gaming and Leisure Properties Inc. and merge its gaming and hotel operations into Eldorado Resorts, Inc. The \$1.85 billion deal is scheduled to close in the second half of this year.

—Dave Bontempo

OWNER: Eldorado Resorts (pending)
ARCHITECTS: SOSH Architects and Hafer Design
FEATURES: Indiana's first land-based casino
INVESTMENT: \$50 million

