

## Adieu F-bleau, hello Hollywood?

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Look what just fell into the S&G mailbag:

*Beginning January 1, 2010 Penn National Gaming will partner with RPM Advertising to develop and execute a brand identity for Hollywood Casinos. The full service assignment will incorporate research, brand development, media planning/buying, creative execution, production services and direct marketing. Penn National, one of the top five gaming companies in the world, owns and operates seven Hollywood Casinos across the country including facilities in Aurora, IL; Bangor, ME; Baton Rouge, LA; Grantville, PA; Lawrenceburg, IN; Bay St. Louis MS; and Tunica, MS.*

Forgive me if I have a coughing spasm after reading Penn National describe itself as "one of the top five gaming companies in the world." I suppose it would depend on your definition of "top" (number of facilities and/or employees, market cap, etc.) but in an industry that contains **MGM Mirage Harrah's Entertainment Wynn Resorts, Las Vegas Sands, Boyd Gaming Station Casinos** and even woebegone **Trump Entertainment Resorts** the best Penn could hope for in terms of name recognition would be eighth place. (Enter RPM, stage right.)

As for the marketing alliance, given the timing of the belated decision to try and unify the brand, it looks like Penn is going to attempt a Harrah's in reverse: acquire a Strip property (**Fontainebleau**) and then create a company-wide brand-loyalty program to incentivize customers to visit its shiny new megaresort.

Sounds a bit cart-before-horse to me but, after today's bulletin, it's no stretch of the imagination to suggest that F-bleau could soon become **Hollywood Las Vegas** or some close variant thereof. At least in terms of brand equity, it would represent a step or two up from F'bleau, whose name recognition factor is now entirely negative.

**Green shoot?** Weekday room rates for early December at **Vdara** have nudged upward to \$145/night (from \$129) according to **J.P. Morgan** analysts.

**What's wrong with this picture?** The media night for **Wayne Newton's** new Tropicana show, *Once Before I Go* (could we have that in writing?) looks more like a *Dancing with the Stars* tour stop. In addition to former contestants **Sabrina Bryan** and **Jennie Garth**, four *DWTS* regulars -- including **Cheryl Burke** and **Kym "Tina Sparkle" Johnson**-- will be on hand.

Except for Ms. Johnson, who's presumably in town to rehearse current partner **Donny Osmond** the quartet is available because they've all been eliminated. (For instance, **Alec Mazo** helped Olympic swimmer **Natalie Coughlin** dance her way to a premature exit.)

Trouble is, they'll be in the audience and the Wayner will be onstage. Wouldn't you prefer the reverse proposition? And since Newton is strictly a short-term proposition for the Trop (six months and out), would it be too much to hope for a Vegas offshoot of *DWTS* as his successor?