

Hitting the headlines

➤ Prize Farm officially launched

TAKING an amusement machine into American bars with a cash payout has always been a tricky one for any supplier, but AMI Entertainment reckons to have cracked that one with Prize Farm, given its official launch at the IAAPA trade show in Orlando in November.

But it was also something of a watershed for AMI, the group which includes the Rowe jukebox line and the Megatouch touchscreen games. According to the experts on the American market, jukeboxes (along with ticket redemption games) is a sector which is emerging well from the recession into which the industry plunged in 2009. And Megatouch continues to thrive against a background which has seen two of its principal touchscreen rivals run into financial troubles.

Mike Maas, president and CEO of AMI Entertainment Network, is perhaps seeing the fruits of several years of hard work to breathe new life into the company. Restructuring, repositioning and rejuvenating a business that has been around a long, long time was no easy job.

Now he is pushing out successful jukeboxes, seeing new markets opening for Megatouch and is firing on all cylinders at a whole new market. "We can't get Prize Farm into every jurisdiction in the US," he said. "But there are 29 in which it could fit and we have the game approved for around half of them – Florida is the latest." The 29 jurisdictions are not necessarily those which permit casinos – they are those which permit street gaming of one kind or another. "There is a lot of history with gaming in the streets and operators and their customers have a perception of gambling which is not necessarily reality."

Prize Farm is a real departure for AMI, something very, very new in a sector which it has not touched until now. "It is difficult to invent something and expensive and time-consuming. We know that not everything which we may do will be instantly successful but we have spent around four years working on this and other projects and we are only about half-way through the transformation of the company which we planned. We fixed a number of issues which we had, quality problems and

➤ UDC in Adrenaline deal



UNITED Distributing Company has signed an agreement with Canadian manufacturer Adrenaline Amusements to distribute its products in the UK.

Adrenaline entered the market earlier in the year with its Kaboom! ticket redemption game and launched its second product, Touch FX, in November at the IAAPA Attractions Expo. UDC will also present this at the EAG Expo in London this month.

UDC's Michael Green told *InterGame*: "I have known the Lachance family for a number of years and am delighted to have the opportunity of working with them. Marc brings a fresh approach to the company which is itself relatively new as well. There is no doubt that Adrenaline has developed a totally new concept in Touch FX and we are very excited about the future success of the system and library of games. Touch FX was without doubt one of the stars of the recent IAAPA show, which was evident whenever you visited Adrenaline's stand.

"The industry needs new ideas and technology and Adrenaline has clearly demonstrated its ability to create something new and exciting. We will be displaying the machines at the show in the three-player configuration that was presented at IAAPA. It will also be available as a single and double unit."

a general stagnation in products. We had the innovation of the RX cabinet and our Firefly, both typical of what can be done. The Megatouch Aurora and Prize Farm have come out of the same stable of creativity, even evolutionary."

Maas said that 2011 would be a good year for the company, with the industry seeing things which will be both new and innovative. "AMI is now a strong company following a period which has seen multiple companies merging and streamlining. Throughout it all we have kept the best of the best and we now have an amazing pipeline of products to come. We need a little more economic wind in our backs first."

Prize Farm, he said, was created out of the Paragon machine developed by subsidiary company Games Warehouse in the UK. It was originally built for niche skill games with prizes markets in Britain. "We have decided that we are a niche entertainment product provider and within that sector we are broadly based. That means that if you are talking about the international market in touchscreen games, and bar/restaurant entertainment, anywhere in the world then we have the products to fit that market."

Looking at the international business in touchscreen games, Maas was reluctant to speak directly about the financial difficulties into which two of his principal competitors had fallen this year. Has the market matured or declined? Are players and operators falling out of love with touchscreen games? "I don't think it is complicated. There is a general movement away from amusement gaming towards casino gambling. Given a choice between the chance of winning a lot of money or having a lot of fun, most people will prefer to have fun trying to win a lot of money! That is reality. The US has very few states which allow gambling outside of a casino. Illinois has announced that there will be 40,000 machines permitting limited gambling in street locations. As a result very few amusement sales have occurred in that state since; the market is stagnant.

"What is happening in other countries varies. The UK used to be a huge Megatouch market and we bought Games Warehouse and helped kill Megatouch there! Every market is different and we find that some Megatouch markets go up while others go down. Mature touchscreen markets like France, Germany, Spain and elsewhere go through cycles."

Maas said that keeping AMI horizontally integrated, rather than vertically integrated like some of his competitors who have run into difficulties, was the key. "Within those boundaries we have to stand for quality of product, quality of service, fair prices and good people. We have a history of supporting our products and we'll keep carefully to that."

Meanwhile, he promised more diversity in the AMI product line in the coming years.

➤ Agora deal completed

THE buy-out of the major Agora group of adult gaming centres in the UK, has been completed. The acquisition by the shelf company Minmar (929) Ltd, gives it an immediate 100-location operation, all in southern England, on a line from Birmingham down to Southampton.

The acquisition, which has been in progress for some weeks, involves all of the Agora assets. The plan is that they will operate under the trading name Las Vegas Gaming Ltd.

Neil Chinn has joined the board of the new company and is one of four directors. He told *InterGame*: "There are a number of units in the new group which we will now look at and rebrand. We first have to sort out which of the locations we will keep and which we will dispose of. That will take time, so too will the installation of a new Playsafe system throughout the operation. We also have to go through a great deal of retraining of staff."

He added that the group will adopt a policy of purchasing all of its equipment and will not share its cashbox.