

# MGM GRAND AT FOXWOODS

*A Sublime Escape*

By Krista Reiner



The MGM Grand Theater.



The pedestrian walking bridge that connects Foxwoods to the MGM Grand.



A classy, clean lobby greets guests at MGM Grand at Foxwoods.

When you dream of the ultimate resort getaway, what do you see? A colossal suite with a top-shelf wet bar? A ridiculously comfortable bed with luxuriously soft sheets? An indulgent facial at an upscale spa? A shopping spree at your favorite boutiques? Or perhaps an all-night dancecapade at a trendy club? Well, it's time to wake up, because the MGM Grand at Foxwoods is the destination of your dreams.

Owned and operated by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) in Mashantucket, Conn., the MGM Grand at Foxwoods opened May 17, adjacent to the country's largest casino resort—Foxwoods Resort & Casino. At 2 million square feet, the MGM Grand is the perfect complement to Foxwoods, offering much more than your typical casino. Its spacious 4,000-seat MGM Grand Theater, first-class convention facilities, 21,000-square-foot full-service spa, 825 guestrooms and suites, modern entertainment lounge, and 50,000-square-foot gaming floor combine to create a modern, hip flight of the imagination.

For Joe Perini, vice president and project executive for the Perini Building Co., working on a project of this magnitude was a surreal experience—although nothing his team couldn't handle. "We recognized that the MGM Grand at Foxwoods would be a tremendous project," Perini said. "We have experience working with tribal nations and are currently working with MGM MIRAGE on CityCenter, so there were expectations of a successful project on everyone's part."

Despite a grueling accelerated timeline and the painstaking care taken to ensure Foxwoods' guests were undisturbed during the construction process, the MGM Grand opened on time and on budget. To make it happen, Perini knew he needed the perfect team. "The biggest single factor in any project's success is the project team," he said. "We were fortunate to have a talented group of Perini professionals, design professionals, owners and owner representatives."

According to President Robert Kelly of Innovation Project Development, another crucial component to the project's success was ensuring the lines of communication were open and operating. "Even with the exceptional lineup and a casino/tribal management team well-versed in the design and construction process," Kelly said, "you can imagine the communication challenges that can emerge while trying to simultaneously add a program to the scope and caliber of the MGM Grand expansion while maintaining the daily operations of a facility the capacity and volume of Foxwoods."

The MPTN Executive Oversight Team, with help from Kelly and many others, was able to cut through the volume of information generated and fill the gaps in communication to keep the project on track.

And not only did the MGM Grand expansion open on budget and on time, it also did so without destroying its natural surroundings. "Preserving the land's natural beauty on the Mashantucket Pequot Reservation was, and still is, a high priority for the tribe," Perini noted. "The project is set within the Great Cedar Swamp, a pristine wetland surrounding three sides of the MGM Grand. The resort actually sits on a large rock bound by the swamp. All work had to be performed without disrupting the environment. We removed and crushed the blasted rock for placement as fill-in for other sections of the site. The 28 acres that made up the project site went through an amazing transformation without any impact to the wetlands. In addition, no wetlands mitigation efforts were required."

The MGM Grand was built to complement Foxwoods, not mimic it. Not surprisingly, then, the two properties have their fair share of differences—most notably, the crowds that they cater to. "The property was designed to attract business-oriented customers and conventions during the week, as well as appeal to a more youthful demographic," Perini said of the MGM Grand.

"There is more of a design focus on the non-gaming amenities,"



MGM Grand at Foxwoods Center Bar at the heart of its casino.

he added. "To provide more of a business atmosphere, the architects strategically placed corridors and escalators to separate the flow of convention goers from gambling traffic. The addition of nightclubs, top chef restaurants and chic retail has added an upscale element that complements the existing amenities at Foxwoods."

These MGM Grand offerings are the perfect escapes to attract a youthful crowd. The ultra-fab two-story nightclub and 5,500-square-foot outdoor swimming pool, complete with cabanas overlooking the Connecticut countryside, open up all kinds of possibilities for fun. Guests can also select from three celebrity chef restaurants: Tom Colicchio's Craftsteak, Michael Schlow's Alta Strada and David Burke's Burke in the Box. The resort also has a wide range of luxury retail outlets similar to those found in Las Vegas.

The look of the MGM Grand is classy clean—there are no theming or Native American elements in sight. To produce this modern look, the designers used a combination of natural stone (such as Esmeralda onyx), amber-shaded glass mosaics, chrome fountains, high-end mill work and elegant lighting.

The glass enclosed pedestrian concourse showcases spectacular panoramic views of the countryside and connects MGM Grand at Foxwoods to the original Grand Pequot Casino. It also provides much-needed transportation to guests. "The concourse's people-mover moves guests between the two casinos (a 400-foot distance) in just a few minutes," Perini said.

Many features of the property were designed on a larger scale than the original Foxwoods. The new property adds 115,000 square feet of meeting and convention space, including the 50,000-square-foot Premier Ballroom, which is double the size of Foxwoods' existing Grand Ballroom and is now the largest ballroom in the Northeast. It can be configured 12 different ways to accommodate everything from tradeshow to exhibits to banquets. And the Premier Ballroom isn't the only amenity that has topped features already in place at Foxwoods; the MGM Grand Theater is now Foxwoods' top event venue. The 4,000-seat theater is almost three times the size of Foxwoods' 1,400-seat Fox Theater.

Although MGM Grand Foxwoods is not a LEED certified project, specific environmental concerns were considered. "To reduce the amount of energy the resort requires and to cut energy bills, the project team and the owner worked with the local utility to select energy saving equipment and systems throughout the facility and hotel," Perini explained.

Now the choice is up to you. You can keep dreaming of that sublime escape or you can make it a reality at the MGM Grand at Foxwoods. So wake up and smell the fresh-pressed coffee while lounging on a private balcony in your suite at the MGM Grand at Foxwoods.

## KEY PLAYERS

<i>Owner</i> .....	Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN)
<i>Owner's Rep</i> .....	Bertino Associates
<i>Specialty Advisor</i> .....	Innovation Project Development
<i>Operator</i> .....	Foxwoods/MPTN
<i>Architect</i> .....	HKS Inc.
<i>Contractor</i> .....	Perini Building Company
<i>Interior Designers</i> .....	Wilson & Associates
<i>Structural Designer</i> .....	The Harmon Group
<i>MEP Design</i> .....	FEA Associates
<i>Landscape Design</i> .....	Cairone Kaupp
<i>Civil</i> .....	Purcell Associates

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## KRISTA REINER

Krista Reiner is the Managing Editor for Casino Enterprise Management. She can be reached at (701)293-7775 or by e-mail at editor1@aceme.org.