



POSITIVE VIBRATION

VIEWPOINT BY JOHN COCHRANE SALES DIRECTOR, DE BOER STRUCTURES

The event business is more challenging today than at any time I can remember in the last 24 years. Of course, virtually every sector has felt the fallout from the global economic crisis,

- increasing the pressure on companies to streamline operations, eliminate waste and to deliver more cost-effective solutions, while maintaining and improving quality of products and standards of service.

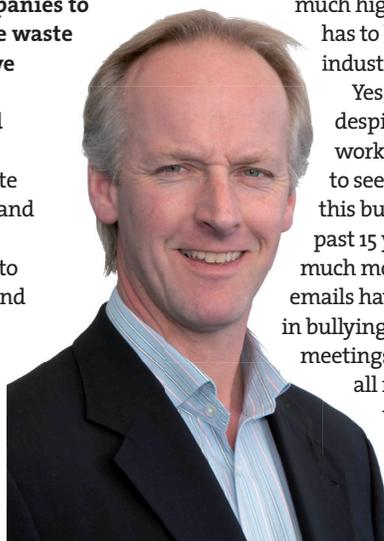
Although De Boer is in the fortunate position of having one of the largest and most diverse selections of temporary structures in the world, we still have to fight for every project. To maintain, and to expand our business has been an immense challenge.

We are operating in a more fiercely competitive environment than ever before, but there is an upside. I believe this situation has served to make the company stronger and, overall, has actually

improved the quality of service from the entire event industry supply chain. Indeed, our own relationships with our suppliers have grown closer as a result. It means all of us have to deliver to a

much higher standard to survive, which has to be a healthy situation for our industry as a whole.

Yes, it is incredibly tough, but despite the backdrop of this intense working environment, I would like to see the 'fun' element of being in this business come back. Over the past 15 years we have all had to be so much more grown up. Blackberrys and emails have tried, and almost succeeded, in bullying face to face discussions and meetings out of the door. But we should all remember how lucky we are to be working in one of the most vibrant and exciting business sectors, and we should remember to enjoy it! ●



FUTURISM...

It's an unrewarding time to be a taxpayer. You're getting proportionately less money than you were last year, and government wants a lot more of it. I'm excluding bankers and Premiership footballers in this particular generalisation; their salaries/bonuses/Treasury tricks are still in apparently bountiful supply.



Politically, there seems to be a, 'Let's see what we can get away with' mentality behind the budget cuts. Michael Gove's efforts to drop the government's £162m funding for school sports partnerships, which would have no real impact at all on the deficit anyway, one such. And while the cross party/cross country unrest it whipped up persuaded the Prime Minister to step in, he didn't stop the idea, he simply clipped its wings. Just beyond the impact of that 'initiative', close to one million kids are unemployed and getting used to a 'lost generation' label, so if I was Mr Gove, I would start to pay close attention to the likes of Dan Howson, George Smart and the Stepladder 'entertainment and careers company'. It's out to take the blinkers off the system he represents. It's a business to help young people of any means and background to explore their potential for the creative and cultural industries. And that's much more 'big society' than binning EMAs and throwing noughts on the end of tuition fees.

'Our apprenticeships provide a real world environment where you can earn and learn before making potentially life-changing decisions about further education and employment', the Stepladder website says. Kids don't need the latest apps, the coolest trainers and a cowering older generation, they need to have a genuine breadth of opportunity to make the best of their lives, to value what they do. Here's a tool to that end, that's ultimately to the considerable benefit of the event industry as well. ●

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PICTURE OF THE MONTH

EARTHBEAT: The last few months have taken the lives of some big names in the music business. US promoter Don Kirshner, Broadcast singer Trish Keenan, 'Cool Ruler' Gregory Isaacs, Don Van Vliet, aka Captain Beefheart, and Gerry Rafferty are all no longer with us. Nor is Ari Up, front girl of the mighty Slits, and subsequently with reggae collective New Age Steppers. "She had such a great ear for music," Slits lyricist/guitarist Viv Albertine, pictured, tells Access. "When I joined, we wrote *So Tough* straightaway, and Ari was still only 14. We were a gang on a mission, and it made us strong in the face of the frequent verbal and physical attacks. It's only in hindsight that people have taken us seriously." Back on the boards behind her *Flesh* EP, with a long player pending, Albertine has worked up 'last ever Slits track' *Shoulda Woulda Coulda* with *Cut* producer Dennis Bovell, as a tribute to the singer. "It was such a shock to hear about her going, it's still really hard to take. I won't be playing the song live though, it's too bloody hard," she smiles.