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DMX INC. During the 2008 World Series, fans at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Fla., were greeted by DMX's Citrus Burst scent. 'They loved it,' a Tampa Bay Rays senior manager said.



Deborah Cannon
AMERICAN-STATESMAN

(enlarge photo)

Brian McKinley, DMX vice president of marketing, says, 'Scent is a powerful, emotional way to connect, and it's something people remember.'



Deborah Cannon
AMERICAN-STATESMAN

(enlarge photo)

The company delivers fragrances through small machines, such as the WhisperScent, top, and through ScentSticks. It can also use a building's ventilation system.

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AUSTIN COMPANIES

Austin firm DMX aims for the nose

Sensory marketing is considered a fast growing segment.

By [Lori Hawkins](#)
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Tampa Bay Ray fans got a surprise when they entered Tropicana Field during the World Series this fall. In addition to the sounds and sights of a teeming baseball stadium, they were greeted by the distinct aroma of oranges.

The experience was part of a marketing campaign by Austin-based DMX Inc., which was hired by the Rays to infuse the rotunda with a scent called Citrus Burst.

"We wanted our fans to experience all five senses when they came to a game," said Eric Weisberg, senior manager of fan experience for the Rays. "Fans walked in and knew instantly that something was different. They loved it."

For DMX, one of the leading providers of background music for stores, hotels and other venues, the use of piped-in aromas, known as sensory marketing, is a new and fast-growing business, says Brian McKinley, DMX vice president of marketing.

As retailers, hotels and special events struggle to set themselves apart in a world crammed with advertising, the idea of using scent to create a mood or promote a product is catching on, according to Advertising Age magazine, which last year named it one of the top 10 trends to watch.

"If you want to pull people in, the experience needs to be more than visual," McKinley says. "Scent is a powerful, emotional way to connect, and it's something people remember."

DMX provides wafts of scent in lobbies and rooms for six hotel corporations, including Crowne Plaza and Four Seasons.

Italian clothing retailer United Colors of Benetton hired DMX to provide a full sensory experience at its new San Antonio store, including full-motion video and music that changes moods throughout the day: relaxing seascape sounds of the Riviera in the morning, hip lounge music in the afternoon and pulsating European club mixes in the evening.

DMX also is creating a custom scent for the store based on the company's line of fragrances, Essence of United Colors of Benetton.

For bridal magazine The Knot, DMX provided scent to accent an eco-themed wedding industry event in Houston in August.

"We had wild orchid on the bottom floor, rosemary and grapefruit in elevator and McIntosh apple in the lobby," said Jessica Zapatero of Green Lily Events. "It was something totally unexpected, and the positive response was amazing."

DMX's scents, which meet international fragrance and safety standards, can be delivered through time-released cartridges, small machines or a building's ventilation system.

Costs vary, starting at less than \$2 a day for a single machine in a limited area and increasing for an entire lobby or open setting.

Sensory marketing is one of the new areas DMX has entered since being acquired in 2005 for \$75 million by THP Capstar Inc., a partnership between local entrepreneur Steve Hicks' Capstar Partners LLC and Trinity Hunt Partners of Dallas.

The company, which was founded in 1971, moved its headquarters to Austin from California after the sale.

Last year, DMX announced its intentions to merge with its biggest competitor, Muzak LLC, and find a third-party buyer to purchase them as a combined entity.

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DMX and Muzak are the two largest providers of commercial-free background music used in stores, airplanes, elevators and phone systems.

DMX employs about 80 people in Austin and about 500 nationwide; Muzak is based in Fort Mill, S.C.

In April, federal regulators cleared the merger and possible sale of the combined company. DMX said at the time that several parties had expressed an interest but declined to name potential buyers.

In the meantime, McKinley said the company will continue to expand its sensory services.

DMX has a number of competitors, including ScentAir Inc. of Charlotte, N.C., and Air Aroma International of Australia.

The Rays plan to continue with DMX's orange scent next season, and the team is considering adding more, such as a cotton candy scent in the carnival area and a bubble gum scent in the make-your-own baseball alcove, Weisberg says.

"We want to create a magical experience, and smell has that power," he said.

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