

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Over 1,400,000 square feet (130,060 square meters)

Event fetes Birmingham's homegrown idol

Riverchase Galleria is in Hoover, near Birmingham, Ala. The area's received national attention for being the home of Ruben Studdard, the winner of the second season of "American Idol," the hit singing-contest TV show. Birmingham's also home to the show's fourth-season runner-up, Bo Bice.

So when Hoover native Taylor Hicks became a finalist during the show's fifth season this spring, the town went wild.

"Idol" sends its three finalists to their hometowns, where an "Idol" production crew follows them to various locations. Segments are filmed for broadcast on the show the following week.

Riverchase Galleria was quick to realize that "Idol" would need a large local venue if Hicks became one of the three finalists, and partnered with the city of Hoover to stage a concert in the mall's Atrium Court.

Hicks not only became a finalist, he went on to become the overall winner of "American Idol," earning a recording contract as a prize. On the day he came home, Riverchase Galleria had a mall full of adoring fans to greet him.

Implementation

The mall worked in advance with Hoover city officials and the local Fox News affiliate to stage a homecoming that included a brief concert by Hicks.

Riverchase provided the concert venue, its Grande Atrium, with a 16-by-24-foot stage and a 20-by-10-foot banner backdrop, space for an audience, a red carpet leading to the stage and VIP seating. A reception lounge was created in the adjacent office tower for members of the Fox crew, "Idol" production staff, Hicks, his family and VIPs.

The city provided sound equipment and police for security; Hoover High School sent cheerleaders and its jazz band. Fox provided local media personalities, promoted the event and broadcast live from it. When Hicks became one of the "Idol" top three finalists on May 10, details of the event — two days later — were announced on Fox's nightly news and posted on the Web sites of the mall, the city, the Hoover Chamber of Commerce and Fox. The mall also held a contest asking people to design posters welcoming Hicks home.

On May 12, Hicks returned to Hoover for a day. He arrived at Riverchase at 1:30 p.m., received the key to the city from the mayor and performed a brief concert before departing at 2:15 p.m. Afterward, the winner of the poster contest was announced.

Fox broadcast the event live.

Results

About 12,000 people showed up for the concert, the biggest audience Hicks had performed for. Hundreds of posters were displayed throughout the crowd.

Fox News coverage totaled 2.8 million impressions in the



Welcome Home Taylor Hicks

Riverchase Galleria
Hoover, Ala.

Expenses: \$1,965.60

Owned/Managed by: General Growth Properties, Inc.

Professional Recognition: Lauren Mabry, marketing assistant, Tracy Gatewood, marketing manager

Birmingham/Anniston/Tuscaloosa market. Front-page articles ran in two issues of the *Birmingham News*, for a total of more than 500,000 impressions. *People* magazine ran a photo of the crowds at the mall, making 13.8 million impressions. A Google search for "Taylor Hicks at Riverchase Galleria" yielded 17 pages of Web sites worldwide.

Images of the event were broadcast regionally and later nationally when segments were shown on "American Idol;" the show has millions of viewers.

The event unfolded flawlessly, giving Riverchase Galleria a place on the international stage. ■