

Over the span of only a couple decades Southern California's casinos have grown [from small-scale gaming operations to full-fledged resorts boasting hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues and more.](#)

As the properties continue to evolve, one of the places casino operators go to not only to get a pulse on the industry, but also learn about what's new, is the Western Indian Gaming Conference.

This year's conference, held earlier this month at Sycuan Casino Resort in San Diego County, included a trade show where more than a dozen exhibitors set up shop to show off their products and services. We picked out four that may soon arrive at a casino near you.

### 1. More Class II slot machines

Traditional casino slot machines, which are considered Class III machines, utilize a random number generator. Class II machines use an internal formula based on a bingo game and its patterns, said Ryan Johnson, director of Class II sales for Video Game Technologies, Inc., [an arm of larger slot machine manufacturer Aristocrat which specializes in Class II slot machines](#)

At the conference, VGT showed off a couple of the Class II machines, including Wonder 4 Jackpots and The Hunt for Neptune's Gold.

In California and other parts of the country, casinos can only have a certain number of traditional Class III machines as dictated by compacts, but that's not the case with Class II machines which they can regulate themselves, according to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). That's good news for any casinos looking to add to their stock of machines on the gaming floor.

"They can add these and not be penalized by the state," Johnson said.

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Despite being based on a bingo game, both the Wonder 4 Jackpots and The Hunt for Neptune's Gold, with their detailed graphics and large screens, were mostly indistinguishable from a standard slot machine, save for a small bingo game on the screen showing certain patterns at the same time that the reels spun.

### 2. High-tech surveillance software

Las Vegas-based company eConnect Global, which specializes in analytics and facial recognition software, was among the exhibitors at the trade show and was promoting two different services — a program that pairs transaction data with video to identify possible employee theft or other problems and also facial recognition software for patrons on the the gaming floor.

Matthew Carrier, business development manager for eConnect, said the surveillance software can be used to not only recognize guests that have been banned from the property as soon as they walk in, but can also be used to spot casino compliance issues such as money laundering.

### 3. An app to ease busing and casino arrivals

Casino buses are a big part of getting people to the properties and Robert Valero and Mark Fretz have an app for that — or they plan to. The CasinoShuttle.App founders started a mobile friendly website they hope to transition into an app that helps streamline the busing process for casino guests, bus drivers, operators and the casinos themselves.

“Right now it doesn't matter if you're a small casino or a large casino the problems are universal,” Valero said, explaining that problems include guests not know when the pickup location has changed, guests not being able to reserve their seats in advance and fighting over seating, buses not knowing when players are banned and casinos not knowing which guests are coming.

Using the website, or later the app, guests will get scanned onto the bus, which is GPS tracked in the same way that rideshare services like Uber are so casino management can both see

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guests on the bus and know when it will arrive, Valero said. He said they can also use the analytics of seeing who is getting on busing and from where to better target their marketing.

Valero said that the app will also be able to send push notifications to customers to let them know when a bus stop location has changed.

Currently, the company is only working with Sycuan Casino Resort near El Cajon but is hoping to expand as it continues to develop its product.

### 4. Native American-owned breweries

If you're not so much into the tech and more into the sudsy stuff, there were two Native American-owned breweries on the floor exhibiting their products: [The recently rebranded Rincon Reservation Road Brewery located at Harrah's Resort Southern California in Valley Center](#) and Feather Falls Brewing Company at Feather Falls Casino in Oroville. Both of the breweries want to expand their reach.

Michael Cisneros, sales manager for Feather Falls Brewing, showed off the brewery's beers, including its new pilsner and its new hazy double IPA. He said Feather Falls Brewing, which has its brick and mortar location at the Oroville casino, has since expanded its product to other casinos in the state, including Colusa Casino in Colusa and the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Wheatland.

"We're trying to put together some sort of distribution where we do business with some other casinos in California," Cisneros said. "We do have some that are interested; it's just figuring out the logistics."

Rincon Reservation Road also showed off its slate of beers at the trade show. When the brewery was in the early phases of [rebranding late last year](#), officials there were keeping distribution limited to just the brewery, Harrah's Resort Southern California and some on-reservation stores as they gauged demand for the beers. At the conference the brewery had

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gotten its beers into a couple more spots, including a convenience store at Pechanga Resort Casino and a Rincon reservation 7Eleven, according to Rik Mazzetti of the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians.

Mazzetti said the brewery has partnered with Karl Strauss Brewing Company to be its distributor and is planning tribe-to-tribe communications to get its beers into other Southern California casinos.

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