



Wayne Newton displayed his versatility as a showman, as the opening attraction of the new Omni Star Theatre in the renovated Mai Kai Theatre. Doing six shows from Thursday-Sunday, he

kicked off the first series of big-name entertainers at the Omni. Next up: Patti Page and Jerry Vale, sharing the Bill Thursday-Sunday, March 3-8.

Newton: Something for everyone

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

Las Vegas sensation Wayne Newton performed something for everyone's musical taste when he opened the new Omni Star Theatre in Livonia Thursday.

The versatile entertainer sang rock, pop, country and show tunes, as well as a patriotic medley. He didn't stop with merely belting out the songs. He also showed his skills on a variety of musical instruments — guitars, banjo, electric fiddle and trumpet — in a number near the end of the show.

Everything was high energy from the moment Newton stepped on stage, preceded by a trail of smoke that wafted onto the audience. Tall, black-haired and mustached, Newton was garbed in a show-biz tuxedo, with tight pants and a jacket that has a nipped-in waist.

Throughout the show, he made many references to his American Indian heritage and said if things got tough he could always go back to the reservation and have the taxpayers support him. In a bit with one of the members of the Don Vincent Orchestra, he exchanged gags about his affluent life style.

NEWTON'S APPEARANCE followed a brief stint by Glenn Smith, who plays piano with the band but performed solo, pounding out songs and offering vocals in a good, gutsy style. The star came on after a short intermission and then stayed onstage until around 11 p.m.

The Jive Sisters, two sleek-looking gals, sang backup for Newton but stayed off to the side of the stage. The orchestra, sharp, lively and loud, was backed by members of the first-class Johnny Trudell Orchestra. The new venue's location in Livonia came in for its share of laughs. No doubt all the entertainers appearing at the Omni will have things to say about this just-discovered suburban city on their circuit.

"I didn't know exactly what to do when I woke up and found myself in 'Livonia,'" Newton said. "I woke up today and saw the sign." (Most of his jokes, while engagingly told, were only mildly humorous.)

"I still don't know where we are, but somewhere near Detroit," he continued. Newton then said some kind words for the management. "How nice it is to see people who care about these theaters and what

kind of a job this man (Eddie Morelli, general manager) has done on this one."

THE COMIC in the band made references to Livonia, calling it Begonia, then Ammonia.

The audience was whipped into as much of a frenzy as was possible with its older crowd. Newton early on commented on some people sitting with arms folded, but actually the crowd seemed very up, and responsive.

There were avid fans who laughed and applauded with looks of adoration. Many others in the audience shouted out their approval, in addition to the happy handclapping when Newton finished a favorite song. The genial star was mostly free of overblown gestures or choreography. He did favor a profile view and stance, at the end of some numbers, that seemed kind of Elvis-like. He also began his show with a medley of Elvis rock hits.

At one point, he began singing a Sinatra ballad, then a Barry Manilow love song, and broke them off, saying he'd try something else if that pleased the audience more. It was hard to know if it was part of the act or if he really went by the amount of

applause he got — deciding not to continue if the applause was light after he went into the first few bars of the song.

HE DID DO a Sinatra song later, "All of Me." He also sang an Italian selection, "It's Now or Never." In one number, he sang Lionel Ritchie's "Hello," interspersing the lyrics with a recitation of his own.

A touch of Broadway was "The Impossible Dream" from "Man of La Mancha." He was particularly vigorous singing, country-style, "If You Love Me Let Me Be."

As the show progressed, Newton performed with his bottle hanging untied. Later, he came out without his jacket, revealing a shirt with full sleeves and an elaborately decorated wide belt around his trim waist and flat stomach.

Toward the end of the show, Newton introduced a star in the audience — Detroit's own "Queen of Soul," Aretha Franklin (of Bloomfield Hills). She was looking glamorous in a glittery silver and blue dress.

The audience gave Newton a standing ovation after the show, apparently satisfied that the \$28.75 per ticket was well spent.

Nightclub of future: Expo reveals trends

AP — In the progress of evolution, man has survived in places other animals considered crazy — the polar ice cap, the desert, the moon.

Now, a new challenge — the nightclub. But as a trip to the recent International Nightclub and Bar Expo shows, man may have much more adapting to do before he feels at home in nightclubs of the future.

Held recently at the Convention Center in Atlantic City, N.J., the show offered the public a glimpse of trends and products that may soon make the nightclub an even stranger place than it is now.

This was not the kind of show you walked through among dignified sales reps exchanging cards. This was the kind of show you walked through among grown men in T-shirts trying to fill an entire convention hall with artificial fog.

Sound systems as large as certain historic landmarks boomed bass tones that made Jell-O of the stomach. Laser beams fired and crossed fired through the hall, and exotic male dancers strutted and thrusted in a professional manner before visitors.

And throughout the vast hall, the nightclub diversions of the future roared and flashed in a way to make one wonder how much entertainment a body can stand.

AT ONE booth, a small artificial habitat had been created using enclosing partitions, strobe lights, and air as hazy and thick as any primordial atmosphere.

Gerard Cohen of Martin Foggers believes people really value the fogger as a means of entertainment. It makes things mystical, unclear — just the way most dancers want it. And it gives all the Martin Laser lights a place to play.

"If you had no fog you wouldn't be able to see the lights," Cohen said.

As far as laser lights are concerned, American nightclub patrons can now expect a new and even more bewildering variety than they encountered in the past. Consider the Galaxy, a new portable developed by Laser Play Inc., a firm from San Jose, Calif.

For the longest time, Laser Play made nothing but medical lasers, said vice president of engineering Alan Gleeman, standing near the show's Laser Play booth. Then someone realized

that entertainment lasers would be much more fun. So Gleeman set out to devise an entertainment laser unlike all other entertainment lasers.

Well, he did it. The tube-like contraption Gleeman dreamed up uses two scanners that throw bands of light onto a surface and twirl the light in ways that it can't do by itself. Weird spinning loops danced on the special demonstration curtain as he spoke.

"When you put all the beams together," Gleeman said, picking up the laser and aiming it across the hall, "you get a strong beam."

STRONG IS one way to put it. Some 100 yards away, through clouds of smoke and artificial fog, a beam of light played on the far wall in the shape of a star — a very bright star, as if the beam didn't want to stop with the wall either. This is one high-powered entertainment device.

You can get this light to dance to the music, if you want, or multiply its image, or perhaps blind your friends with it. It represents several hundred hours of work by Gleeman.

"When I go home at night," he said, "I see it when I close my eyes."

Farther on, Mike Turin waited to sprinkle business cards on anyone slowing before his booth and his product, Star Touch Communication Inc. Star Touch is a new entertainment network designed for use exclusively in the food, beverage and hospitality industries.

It is Turin's dream that one day nightclub patrons will go to clubs to see televised entertainment they can't see anywhere else. Turin's dream probably closely resembles the dream of most nightclub owners.

The thing that makes this network so special is it comes on at 5 p.m. and goes off at 3 a.m. The signal travels via satellite and is digitally encoded. The network presents programming carefully selected for its interest to nightclub patrons. It includes comedy bits, special events, videos and sports shorts.

Beamed out of New York, the network premiered in June, and so far, "the reception has been great," said Turin. "There are more than 400,000 potential subscribers."

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