

Sam Kinison:

"A little family entertainment"

By Steve Medcroft

New Years Eve 1990 - Sam Kinison's holiday season performances at Bally's left many people feeling cheated and angry. During the pivotal show of the weekend, the midnight, New Years Eve show, Kinison came out right at midnight to bring in the new year.

The countdown came - the people went crazy. Kinison says it took 15 frustrating minutes to bring the audience's roar down. "It was like doing my show in traffic," he complains. It seems the spirited audience, tanked on good cheer had gotten hold of noise-makers.

Kinison, angry at the noise-makers and admittedly a little tanked himself lost control of the audience, actually becoming involved in an argument with several members which led to the "Refund" cheer that every performer dreads.

The rumors then spread; that Kinison had passed out on stage, back stage and was too messed-up to complete sentences.

"That's all bull%&\$\$," he defended. "They (the audience) were completely out of control. It was a complete mistake to come out on New Years Eve. We should have ended the show then, not started it," he said.

When I talked to Kinison's publicist at Bally's, Florence Troutman, two weeks before Kinison was scheduled to return to Bally's on Memorial Day weekend, she had good news for Kinison fans.

She said that Sam had cleaned up his act, gone clean and sober, gotten rid of his drug-buddy entourage and was looking for-

ward to playing Vegas again. She said that Kinison feels Las Vegas is important to his career and he wished to make up for the fiasco that was New Years Eve.

His excuse for abuse, she said, was the recent loss of his brother to suicide. It devastated him, she told me.

Sceptical, I went to Bally's Memorial Day weekend

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to meet with Sam Kinison. The Sam Kinison I met that day was not a tormented soul, hidden in the depths of drug and alcohol abuse, it was a friendly, open man who asked what he could do for me - a college newspaper writer.

He was alive and enthusiastic about the Bally's booking. He was a pleasure to meet.

In an effort to save Kinison time, I was allowed to sit in on an interview between Kinison and Channel 13 anchorman, Brad Johannson.

Sam Kinison, known for his raucous, boozy, rock'n'roll, party-till-you-drop lifestyle, now 85 days clean and sober had many things to share with his Las Vegas fans that day.

ON LAS VEGAS:
S.K. - "I'm very excited about Vegas. I'm one of the entertainers from my generation who has optimism for Vegas in the 90's. They're building more casi-

nos here... and unfortunately, a lot of the old entertainers are not going to be able to keep playing... they're not as young as they used to be and I think that leaves a lot of opportunity for people like myself in the 90's."

ON NEW YEARS:

B.J. - "Many people weren't too pleased with you although they say that 4 out of 5 shows were fan-

tastic."

S.K. - "4 out of 5 were. I was billed for a New Years Eve show and the mistake was that I came on right at New Years Eve... I come out; 10, 9, 8, Happy New Year. Suddenly there's 2,500 people with hats and noise-makers who are drunk... I completely lost control of the crowd..."

B.J. - "You weren't in good shape anyway?"

S.K. - "Well, let's just say I wasn't ready for a breathalyzer test if I'd been on the highway - but it was New Years Eve... We have a video tape of my show and at no time did I pass out on stage, or back stage (as the rumors stated). I had a terrible fight with the guy that runs Bally's because there was no security trying to stop the people from yelling. I even went on to do shows at 2 (a.m.) and 5 (a.m.)..."

ON 'DICE CLAY':

S.K. - "I'm surprised by the acceptance of him..."

There's an old joke, between divorced guys; one says to the other, 'Hey, how's your wife and my kids?' I feel like going to Andrew Dice Clay and going 'Hey, how's your act and my jokes'... We're not real close..."

"I suggested a duel with Clay on a tour basis... he's thinking about it..."

ON CLEANING UP:

S.K. - "It all started shortly into the month of February... It's 85 days for me now... It's tough because first it was day 1, then day 4. Then it was day 1 again, then day 5, then day 1 again... but since March 2nd, I've been totally clean and sober."

B.J. - "How tough is that?"

S.K. - "Hasn't been at all actually, it feels great. It was something I wanted to do."

B.J. - "Why?"

S.K. - "Well, I'm 36 now and at this time in my life I felt like it was time to give my body a rest... Las Vegas is tough because it's such a party town... I was travelling with the Outlaws of Comedy then and we'd all make this vow; nobody's going to have a drink, nobody's going to do nothing... and we'd do the first night straight... but then we would party after the shows and the next thing we know, it's the next night and sometimes the party is still going on..."

B.J. - "At your worst times, how bad did it get?"

S.K. - "If I'd have saw other people doing the amounts that I was doing,

I probably would have been worried for them. But because it was me, it didn't seem to bother me as much..."

"My brother committed suicide two-years ago and it escalated a lot of my alcoholism and drug use - to basically deaden all of those feelings and all of those questions that I wasn't ready to deal with... like why would a kid who's 28 and had everything going for him and has a great personality and was a wonderful person, would take a gun and shoot himself..."

B.J. - "Did you lose your appeal, now you're sober?"

S.K. - "I don't think so but, of course, I'm sure some people are disappointed that I haven't been found in a hotel somewhere, passed out and OD'd, surrounded by 16 year old girls going 'we tried to stop him but he just wouldn't quit.'"

"A lot of people had me slated for that type of end... maybe I was headed in that direction, but I know that I've changed my life and I've detoured it... if anybody's upset that I'm not partying and I'm not putting drugs into my system, then I don't really have an answer for them..."

"With Cocaine (one of Sam's biggest enemies) there's only two alternatives: You're either gonna die, or you'll go to jail... There's a lot about life I don't know about yet and I want to stick around and find out." ■



- KINISON AND FRIENDS pose for the "Leader of the Banned" album cover.