

GEORGE BURNS AT SAHARA

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following review, written by ISRAELITE columnist Bill Willard, appeared in "Variety" nationwide.)

By BILL WILLARD

Now on one of the hottest rolls of his long career, George Burns returned to a few days of in-person kidding of himself and circumstances that brought upon his elevation. He wore his halo graciously, revealing many down-to-earth quips in a monolog interrupted by tunes parodic, wistful and serious. He received a standing ovation when he entered and a longer one when he ambled his familiar slow gait to the wings.

The event at the Sahara covered internationally, celebrates Burns' 80th year in showbiz. Fortunately he has an act that rightfully consumes an hour. During his mid-70s appearances at the Sands, long before he became "G-d" he was killing time at the Sands and audience counts weren't too respectable. But putting it all together for this important date, Burns emerged as a human being with wit, perhaps the highest compliment for a comedian.

Many of his one-liners are already famous. The opening, for instance, "They must have liked me. Here it is 20 years later..." Burns first appeared at the Sahara with BOBBY DARIN and the DeCASTRO SISTERS in 1959, again in 1960, this time with ANN-MARGRET. For years he was put in the shade on Las Vegas stages because of the rise of those stars.

Burns' line "I'm a singer, always have been" was illustrated nobly not only by his famous doggerel snippets, but songs from his country album and new "Young At Heart" disk. Describing "Old Bones" from the country cuts, Burns remonstrated, "Why shouldn't I be a country singer? I'm older than most countries." And quipping before he tenderly delved into the "Young At Heart" song, he ribbed another warbler who recorded it:

"The song 'Young At Heart' was recorded by Sinatra about 30 years ago. I thought it was about time somebody did it right. Don't tell him I said that. I'm old, but I want to get older."

When his accomper Morty Jacobs rode "Leftie Louie" on the keys, Burns incited cheers with a bit of soft shoe and finished off the tune with a neat bum.



Burns is as update as tonight's headlines. He doesn't want to be relegated anymore to song museums, so with the Marvin Hamlisch and Tim Rice piece more or less biographical, "The Only Way to Go," Burns hit another peak at the climax and when the audience rose and cheered as he took his slgw shuffle off, he waited until just the precise moment to return and grab another S.O. for his hit, "I Wish I Was 18 Again."

Despite his 87 years, Burns hit two shows for three nights and a single show final night Feb. 21.

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