

# LAS VEGAS

# SHOWCASE

## Bill Willard's VEGASTARS

The late ORSON WELLES became a seldom seen Clark County resident years and years after his heralded Riviera Hotel debut in late February 1956, I covered the event for Variety. Other than a couple of DEAN MARTIN NBC roasts at MGM Grand, he never appeared again on any Strip stage. WELLES' act was a melange of things he had been engaged in during that period when film moguls were giving him the cold shoulder. "With a 'shocker,'" I wrote for both the New York and Hollywood editions, "ORSON WELLES capped his opening with a prediction -- written,

sealed in an envelope and placed within a strong box -- of the status of the '64,000 Question' (a hot TV program) and what the answer would be on the telecast in three weeks. The dramatic period to his nitery debut at the Riviera came after he ran a 75-minute gamut of magico, mental telepathy, hypnosis and the expounding of Shakespeare..." For his spectacularly hyped Vegas adventure WELLES drew enough of the Hollywood glitter set to cause an eruption of column items, but quickly his overly-extended opening show was cut, grafted and rerouted into a 25-minute act. I wrote that business, excepting on weekends, was only fair, "knocking into a cocked hat the predictions that his Vegas debut would be of enough offbeat value to load the Clover Room every show." In my Las Vegas Sun column of 3/7/56, there was a swipe at WELLES by New York Variety's editor ROBERT LANDRY about the actor's Broadway "King Lear" fiasco when WELLES opened playing on a fractured left

ankle and immediately following the premiere, fell and sprained his right ankle. LANDRY observed acutely that "symbolism should not be lost on so acute an intelligence as his. ORSON WELLES seemingly is confused, even at 40, as to what he is, wanting to be everything, but hardly the reincarnation of Leonardo da Vinci. Actor or showman?" I retaliated, "It has given me a real boot to observe WELLES become more than just a showbiz whatsit." Incidentally, WELLES' long appearance here was not a one-man show. He was preceded by the AMIN BROTHERS, risley gymnastics to open and the not quite adequate, but extended, song programming of thrush TONI ARDEN, plus the DOROTHY DORBEN DANCERS prancing a brightly patterned "South Rampart Street Parade" to space MISS ARDEN and WELLES.

★★★★★

LIBERACE's Tivoli Gardens made Simon & Schuster's "best restaurants in America" guide, the list compiled from questionnaires filled out by 100,000 airline passengers...ANTHONY BENEDETTO, a.k.a. TONY BENNETT is exhibiting his paintings in Carmel's Simic Gallery, first time TONY's works have been shown in that art colony...Ballroom dancers probably are aware that UNIVERSAL DANCE STUDIO took top studio award at the recent Imperial Star Ball competition held at Caesars Palace. At Universal, they're teaching ballroom including waltz, foxtrot, tango, swing, cha-cha, rumba, country/western and disco. For further in-

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