

Tres Jazz mixes restaurant style with the musing of a jazz nightclub. (Below) Robert Johnson, chairman and CEO of BET Holdings, Inc., schmoozes with guests during the grand opening of Paris and his Tres Jazz restaurant-nightclub inside.

Sentinel-Voice photos by John Broussard



Johnson BETs Tres Jazz will sing

Lee Brown

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Fresh from announcing what's likely the largest investment in an African-American Internet venture—the creation of BET.com, to go online in November — Robert L. Johnson, chairman and CEO of BET Holdings, Inc., last week opened Tres Jazz, a restaurant-jazz nightclub inside the newly-opened \$785 million Paris hotel-casino.

Located on "Le Boulevard" — the crossover between Paris Las Vegas and Bally's — Tres Jazz offers a menu featuring "new world Caribbean" cuisine and continental dishes and plays host to live jazz performances.

Tres Jazz marks the fourth restaurant-entertainment venue in two years for

Washington D.C.-based BET Holdings, Inc., which runs Black Entertainment Television.

"Jazz has always been associated with Paris," said Johnson, whose company operates restaurants in Washington D.C. and Orlando. "Some of the great jazz artists have performed to audiences in Paris and throughout France. So to marry jazz with Paris is a natural."

Created by renowned Miami chef and restaurateur Cindy Hutson, the cuisine she refers to as "edible art" is a diverse combination of Caribbean and American foods. Signature dishes include marinated bahamian grouper, filet mignon au poivre and jerk chicken penne pasta. Hutson also tailored the menu at the BET on Jazz



Restaurant in downtown Washington, D.C.

"We have brought to Las Vegas a fine dining experience that combines a Caribbean cuisine with a delightful jazz setting where we will have performances five nights a week

highlighting tremendous local as well as national jazz performers. I think it will be an experience that everyone will enjoy," said Johnson, who is a board member of Hilton Hotels Corp. "It's a pleasure for us, and I think it (See Tres Jazz, Page 8)

Census director promises better count

WASHINGTON (AP) — The printing presses are running and a better plan for counting America is in place, Census Director Kenneth Prewitt said last week.

"If the budget process does unfold on schedule, we will have a very good census," he said at a briefing on the progress of Census 2000.

"We do have a better census plan," he said. "It is a much more sophisticated operational effort than we were able to mount in 1990. However, demography and the attitudes of the American people are running against us."

If all goes well, he said, his agency hopes to do as well as 10 years ago, when 1.6 percent of the population was missed.

"We will be pleased if our overall count reaches 98 or 98.5 percent," Prewitt said.

But, he added, the time is over for debate about how the count must be done.

"If we're going to have

this thing in the field next March, we've got to be doing it and we can no longer be arguing about how we will do it," Prewitt said.

Already 227 million census forms have been printed and the presses will continue to run, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until the end of January to complete the 426 million that are needed, he said.

The potential threat to the count lies in Congress, where decisions on funding must be made in the coming weeks.

A dispute over the use of statistical estimation methods was ended by the Supreme Court in January, with a ruling that estimation cannot be used for the basic set of numbers used to redistribute seats in the House of Representatives. But the court left open the opportunity to use statistical methods to correct that count for other uses, such as distributing funds for various programs.

Because the ruling will

require a more extensive and costly effort to contact every household, the bureau asked for an extra \$1.7 billion, in addition to the \$2.9 billion already requested for fiscal 2000, which begins Oct. 1.

But Congress and the White House have been at odds over spending programs, and Prewitt remains concerned that this could jeopardize money for the bureau.

Even with the funds and the current planning effort, Prewitt said, the agency still faces a daunting task in finding and counting

everyone.

"There are more people who are recent immigrants and therefore don't speak English, ... more people living in irregular housing conditions," he said. "There are a lot of housing conditions and demographic conditions that make it difficult to reach 100 percent."

"And then we have attitudinal issues. We have people who are skeptical, indifferent, apathetic, don't want to cooperate. And we have people who are outright hostile and will refuse to be (See Census, Page 4)



Sentinel-Voice photo by John Broussard

European figure skater Suya Bonaly enjoys opening festivities for the Paris hotel.

Paris

(Continued from Page 1)

last week.

Goldberg pitched the idea of a Paris re-creation five years ago when discussing with company executives a new resort on a valuable piece of land next to their Bally's hotel-casino.

Goldberg said the resort came in on time and on budget. The price — Bellagio cost \$1.6 billion, The Venetian \$1.5 billion and Mandalay Bay nearly \$1 billion — has been a hit with casino analysts.

Jason Ader, senior managing director for Bear Stearns, said Paris should generate the highest annual return on capital invested among the four new resorts — 14 percent to 16 percent versus 10 percent to 13 percent for the other three.

"Paris is an exciting and amenity-rich property that was a bargain to develop; by Vegas standards," Ader said. "In recent years, Vegas hotel-casino building costs have soared as owners created lavish themes to lure visitors."

The opening comes at a time when numbers are bullish for Las Vegas, despite concerns a year ago about overbuilding. The new resorts added 13,000 new rooms since October 1998, bringing the total to 120,000 — nearly double from a decade ago.

Ader said the daily hotel room rates have increased an average of 15 percent to 20 percent in 1999, with casino revenues and visitor volume on the rise. The visitor count is expected to be up 10 percent to 12 percent this year, surpassing 33 million.

The French-themed resort is just the latest replication of famous places. In the past decade, the town has seen the emergence of the Caribbean-like Mirage, the medieval Excalibur, the pyramid-shaped Luxor, Hollywood's MGM Grand, pirate-themed Treasure Island, Mediterranean-styled Monte Carlo, Gotham knockoff New York-New York, Brazilian-cloned Rio, Italian-themed Bellagio, South Seas-styled Mandalay Bay, the Resort at Summerlin and a touch of Venice in The Venetian.

The Eiffel Tower is not the only French icon copied at Paris Las Vegas. Guests arrive on a circular drive featuring a two-thirds replica of the Arc de Triomphe. There are also copies of the Paris Opera House and The Louvre. The 34-story hotel replicates the 800-year-old Hotel de Ville, which is now Paris City Hall.

Room rates will run \$125 to \$230.

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