

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Veteran performers can still move audiences

By Dianna Saffold  
Sentinel-Voice

What was once considered old is now chic. The classic car in the new P.T. Cruiser body, fade haircuts, sling-back shoes and mature women...music of every genre has injected sounds of the past to enrich its flavor. All receiving a new appreciation from a nostalgia-struck society, fashionably yearning for what was once considered old.

Satisfying the often changing and insatiable entertainment thirst of Las Vegas is the New York, New York Hotel & Casino. Succeeding in bringing the best of our musical past to the exciting Las Vegas Strip, New York, New York brings to its 425-seat Cabaret Theatre three supergroups of the past, The Cornell Gunter Coasters, the Buck Ram Platters, and Martha Reeves and the Vandellas.

The "Coasters" can be likened to a huge oak tree planted firmly in fertile ground, yielding leaves of music from many branches. Their roots date back to the late 40s with a group out of Los Angeles originally called the Robins.

In the mid 50s, after signing with Spark Records, a subsidiary of Atlantic Records, a necessary move to New York City split up the group. From this split came a union, "The Coasters," a name referring to their coast-to-coast relocation.

Cornell Gunter was one of the original Coasters. After the band broke up, Gunter's musical perseverance kept the spirit of the 50s music style alive by starting his own group, Cornell Gunter's Coasters, complete with the humor and harmony of the former group. Gunter's success prompted all of the original Coasters to form their own individual groups of



MARTHA REEVES

"Coasters." That should explain, to those of you who wonder, how the "Coasters" could be at two places on the strip at the same time.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the formation of the Cornell Gunter's Coasters. Though Gunter has passed on, the stylized delivery of the original music remains intact through Early Clover, Donald Pinkney, Cliff Dawson and Steve Smith.

The Cornell Gunter Coasters are consummate performers. Handsome and stylishly dressed, the tuxedo-clad gents seized the stage with energy unmatched. Ladies, look out if you are on that front row, or you might end up onstage as Lucy Brown, singing "why they always picking on me" from their classic, "Charlie Brown."

Their theatrical approach, enhanced by choreography, constant connection with the audience and their harmonic blend, keep you on the edge of your seat. They delivered one classic hit after the other: "Yakety Yak"; "Love Potion Number Nine"; the new and improved potion, "Love Potion Number Ten," and that 1957 hit, "Searchin," which takes the charismatic Early Clover out into the audience, giving lots of love in the form of sweet kisses. Masters of the stage, their comedic antics and their desire to please left me feeling thoroughly

satisfied.

Like a cherry on top, the pleasure continued with the Buck Ram Platters. They are among the many popular Los Angeles groups formed in the 50s. Another classic group that has one or more of them on the circuit, The Buck Ram Platters were managed by Buck Ram—producer, vocal coach and songwriter. That explains their name, Buck Ram's Platters.

Personality Management, the Platters original publicist and business manager, kept the continuity of the group intact throughout the decades. They made sure that through the years, when a Platter was replaced, the replacement would be hand-picked in or-



The Platters, above, croon some of their legendary ditties. Below, The Coasters bless the crowd with their brand of mellow, old-style soul.

Sentinel-Voice photos by Ramon Savoy



der to maintain the style, sound and integrity of the original group.

The Buck Ram Platters are recognized for their soulful, harmonic blend of rich melodies. The group has always been made up of three men and a woman. Today, they are Tyrone Sweet, Joel Gaines, Paul B. Allen and Julie Harris.

Their white tuxedos, complimented by grey and the beautiful silver-grey evening gown worn by Julie B. Harris, singing professionally since age twelve, had great stage presence as well as a Diana Ross smile, and both seemed to compensate for her lack of vocal range.

Opening was Tyrone Sweet, also known as "Mr. Personality," leading "The Magic Touch" and crowd favorite, "Twilight Time." But, after hearing Paul B. Allen

sing "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," I wanted to hear him deliver "Twilight Time." Julie B. Harris, singing professionally since age twelve, had great stage presence as well as a Diana Ross smile, and both seemed to compensate for her lack of vocal range.

With a youthful twist, the Buck Ram Platters gave us a fresh piece of the "Platter Polish."

There is only one Martha Reeves, though there may

have been many Vandellas. She hit the stage with her 60s hit, "(Love Is Like A) Heat Wave." Beautifully dressed, Martha and the Vandellas gave us one upbeat Motown hit after another. Just turning 60 years old on July 18th, she was as shapely and energetic as the youthful Vandellas, Kaye and Althea. Her body may not have aged much, but her voice has definitely changed.

Song recognition soon had the audience responding when Martha called out for Jimmy, from her hit single, "Jimmy Mack." We went from calling to dancing, everything from the swim to the jerk to the tune of her motown hit, "Dancing In The Street."

The show was quite entertaining. You can even see the show on a Saturday afternoon, the perfect time to take the entire family.

Showtimes are Monday through Wednesday, and Friday, at 9:45 p.m.; two shows on Saturday at 4 p.m. and 9:45 p.m., and one on Sunday at 8 p.m. The showroom is dark Thursday.

Tickets are available at the New York-New York box office, (702) 740-NYNY (6969).

This is a "feel good" show. If you want to feel good...then go!

## Lauryn Hill shows emotional side

NEW YORK (AP)—A spiritual, emotional Lauryn Hill took the stage to tape an episode of MTV's "Unplugged," singing of God and freedom with tears streaming down her face during several songs.

Dressed in blue jeans, a denim jacket and a New York Yankees cap, Hill sat on a stool and strummed an acoustic guitar Saturday night.

"I used to get dressed for y'all but I don't do that no more," Hill joked as she began her set. "It's a new day."

The 26-year-old Grammy winner sang

all new songs, some of which don't even have titles yet.

Later, she spoke seriously about her faith and shunning the trappings of fame, and several fans in the audience shed tears with her.

"I'm a mess but God is dealing with me every day," she said. "That's what all these songs are about: problem, cause and solution."

Hill's "Unplugged" appearance is scheduled to air on MTV2 in the late fall, and will rerun on MTV afterward.

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