

Rippingtons' show induces soul-stirring awe

By Dianna Saffold
Sentinel-Voice

Las Vegas has been like a hot poker game with every venue holding a winning hand. It has become the battle of the best, giving new meaning to the tag, "the entertainment capital of the world."

Green has always been mean in the city of lights, so it's no surprise that someone realized how well Black and green go together.

Any hand you played recently was a winner, Sade and India, N'Sync, Rebbie Jackson, the Coasters, Jeffrey Osbourne, Little Richard, the Shane Mosley fight, and too many others to mention. My hand: a full house, with contemporary jazz icons, The Rippingtons, in the Sam's Town Live Show-room.

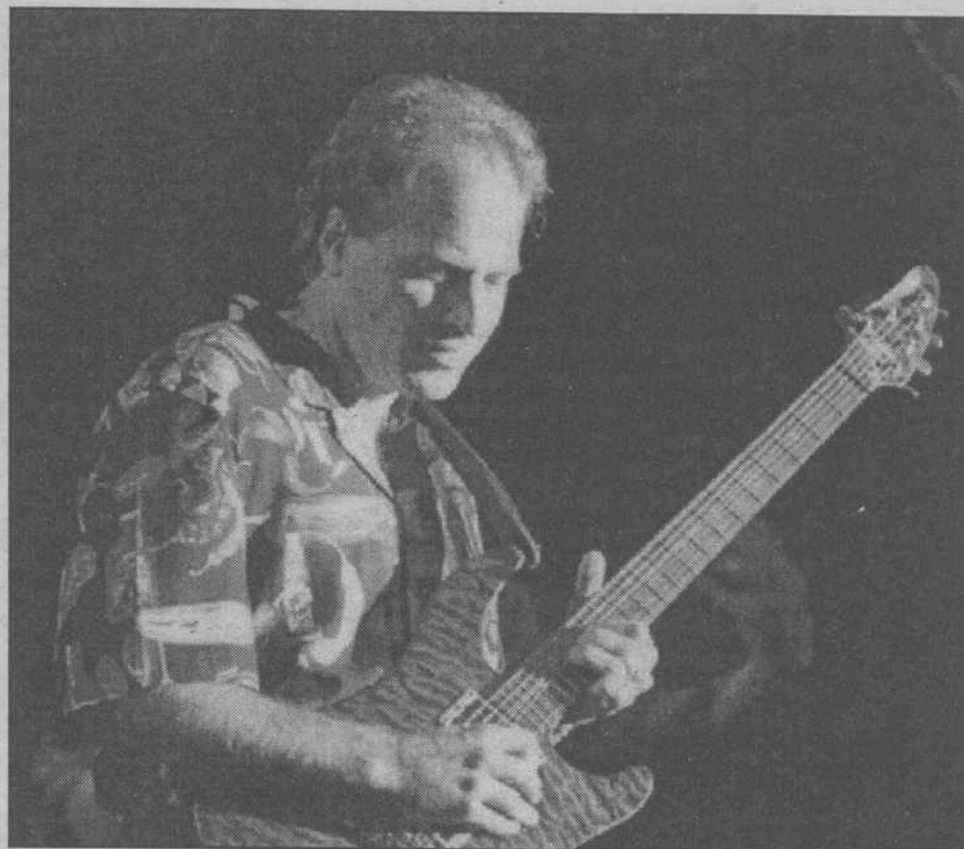
The Rippingtons featuring Russ Freeman shared the spotlight with saxophone sensation Eric Marienthal.

Their groove is an improvisational jazz blend with a dash of lightweight rock. An upbeat mixture of many of today's contemporary jazz flavors.

I could taste a little Earl Klugh, some Lee Ritenour, Jimi Hendrix and the incomparable Kenny G, who is a former member of the Rippingtons- and, by the by, so is David Benoit.

Many greats have passed through that Rippington door, not only to stay awhile, but also to enhance another Russ Freeman creation.

This evening was no different, there was Kim Stone on bass- once part of Spyro Gyro and a list of others too long to mention- Bill Heller,



Sentinel-Voice photos by Raman Savoy

The Rippingtons Sam's Town show featured Russ Freeman, above, and Eric Marienthal.

who performed on the recently released Marienthal CD "Turn Up The Heat", featured Marienthal, drummer Dave Karasony and percussionist Scott Breadman

A Rippington concert is one of musical evolution. Freeman acquaints his new fans with who he is right away, a chef of improvisational jazz who enjoys cooking with modern rock.

His lineup began with "Morocco," from his 1989 Kilimanjaro album. He eased us into his mode with "Morocco," which is one of his smoother pieces also featured on his 1992 "Live in L.A." album, from which he also did the cut entitled, "Aspen."

If you could lose yourself in his music, then you could



hear the rhythmic explanation of each selection. "Aspen," also featured in an earlier album, Curves Ahead 1991, was the perfect music score for a ski lodge romance. The music, while exciting,

gave you the peace you needed to enjoy the ski lift ride to the top.

Then the blend of sound let you know you had reached the summit.

Featuring Marienthal, the

group performed "First time I Saw Her," from his CD, "Brave New World."

The piano intro was intimate, the melodic sensuality was moving. As Freeman and Marienthal moved closer, the story became clearer for those who listened...really listened.

Though the crowd was pleased with it all, the love really poured forth when they began to give us that tropical sound, straight from his latest CD, "Life In The Tropics."

This kind of mastery is what earned the group "Smooth Jazz Group of the Year" award and Freeman the "Producer of the Year."

When they grooved into the first single of his new CD, "Caribbean Breeze," you could hear the breeze traveling throughout the village, the sounds of laughter, the sounds of vendors, then Marienthal took us by horn to the beach, which is where I

could hear that Lee Ritenour sound coming from Freeman. It was amazing how many times he changed his guitar, even more amazing the sounds that he pulled out of them.

The stage became flooded with sound as they gave us a personal preview, including "Club Paradiso," "Avenida Del Mar" and "Island Aphrodisiac."

By now, the audience was in a jazz-induced hypnotic state, screaming for more, demanding just one more. And when they returned, they brought back Jimi Hendrix himself- the blend so powerful that the room was practically standing- and when they shouted, "Excuse Me While I Kiss The Sky"...that told it all.

That took them off the stage with the kind of musical genius that can only be presented when everyone on the stage is a master in his own right.

Townsend served divorce documents

LOS ANGELES (AP) - The wife of actor-director Robert Townsend wants out of the couple's 11-year marriage.

Cheri Townsend filed a Superior Court divorce petition Tuesday, saying irreconcilable differences was the reason for the split. They married on Sept. 15, 1990.

Mrs. Townsend is seeking custody of the couple's 1-year-old son and 7- and 9-year-old daughters.

Property rights will be determined later, according to divorce documents attorney Gary Fishbein filed.

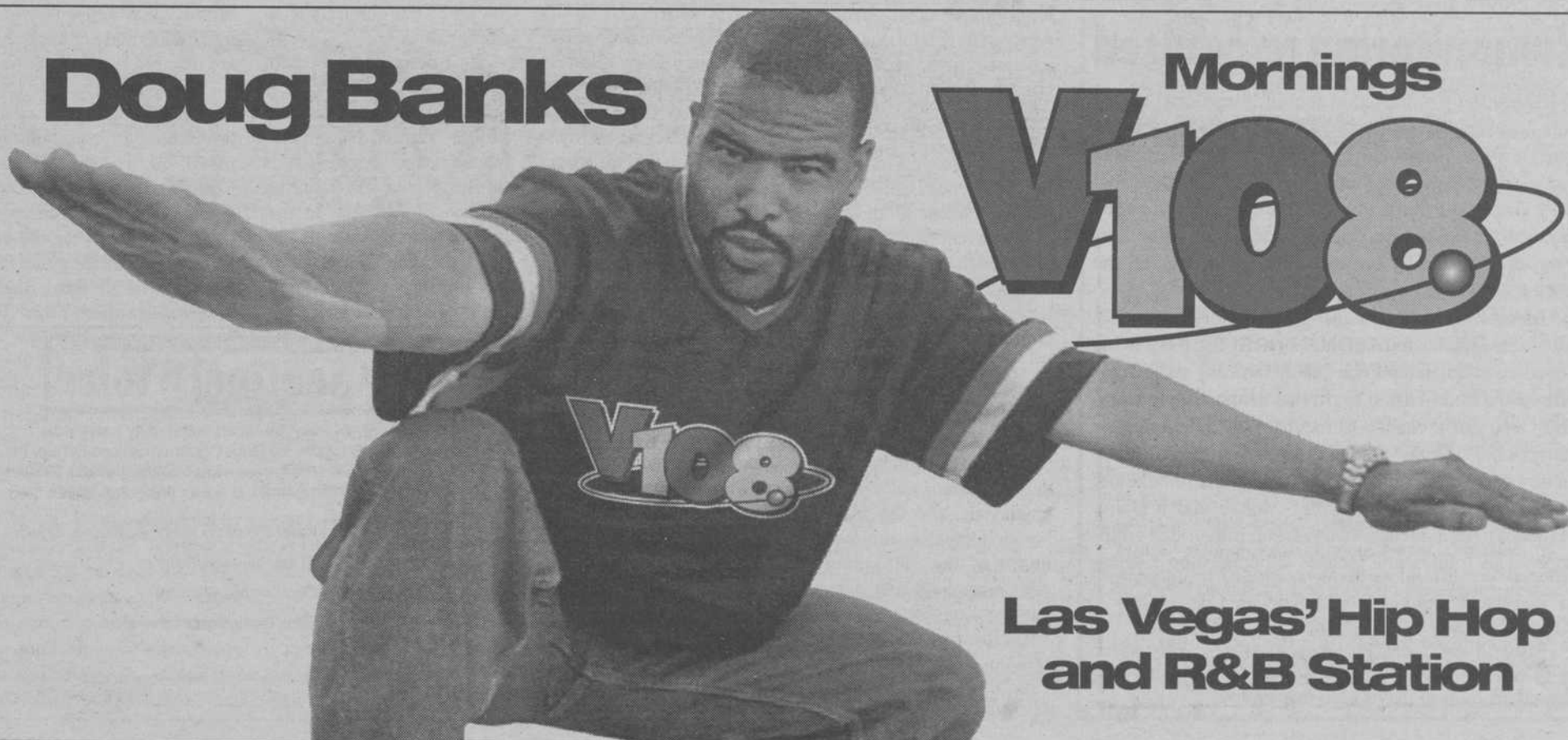
Townsend, who began his career as a standup comic, made his film debut in "Cooley High" in 1974 and his directorial debut with the 1987 movie "Hollywood Shuffle."

The 44-year-old Townsend directed and starred in the 1991 movie "The Five Heartbeats."

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