

Maxwell dexterous showman

By Tanya Flanagan
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Maxwell's eclectic and uninhibited style transformed the Aladdin Theatre for the Performing Arts Sunday night into a cozy atmosphere that felt more like a small concert venue.

The 28-year-old New Yorker took the stage at 9:15 p.m. singing "Sumthin' Sumthin'" from his debut album, "Maxwell's Urban Hang Suite." The hypnotic beats immediately raised the crowd of more than 4,000 to its feet.

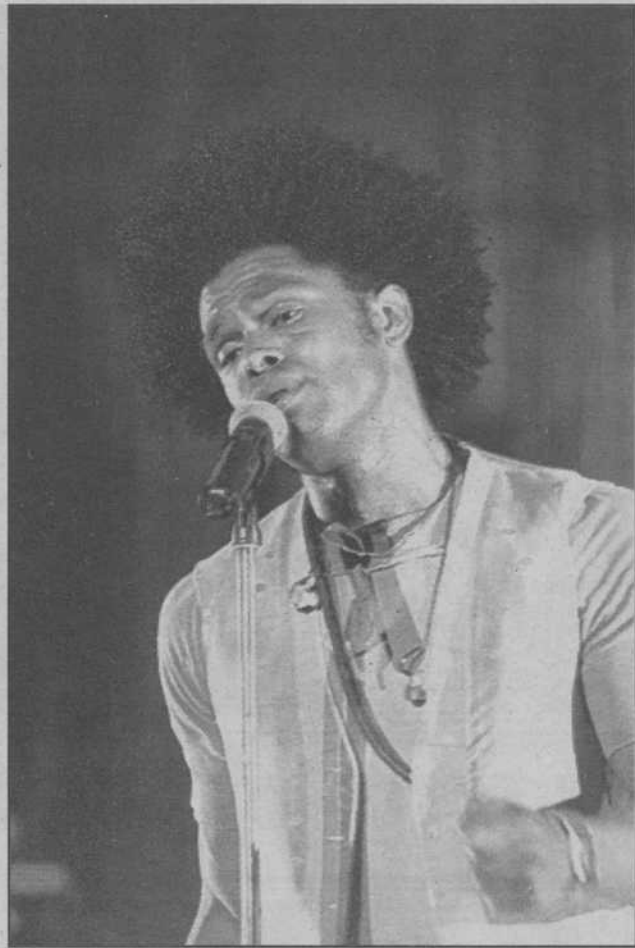
"He's better than even the record," said fan Sabrina Baldwin, 34. "When you sound even better in person than you do on the record, you are really the ultimate."

Maxwell went beyond "the record" many times, performing a medley of songs including "Get To Know Ya," "Lifetime," "Changed," "For Lovers Only," "Til The Cops Come Knocking" and "Whenever Wherever Whatever."

The young star surfaced on the music scene as a Columbia Records artist in 1996 with Maxwell's Urban Hang Suite, featuring the single, "Ascension (Never Wonder)." The album initially experienced little success until the latter part of that year when "Ascension" hit the Top 40, bolstering the album into gold territory and putting Maxwell on the minds of music lovers throughout the country.

After the release of his debut album he signed with Sony Music Entertainment, and in 1998 released "Embrya," which included the track "Fortunate," featured in the motion picture, Life. His latest album, "Now," also is a Sony project. Critics compare Maxwell to Prince and Marvin Gaye, saying his music is a romantic, sexy twist of both of the legendary artists' styles.

The clarity of his lyrics was perhaps the best thing about the concert, said Mark



Sentinel-Voice photos by John Broussard

Crooner Maxwell impressed the crowd with a dexterous command of vocal range and bevy of soulful hits.

McGuire, who toured with Barry White's Love Unlimited Orchestra many years ago and traveled from southern California just to see the show.

"He is an amazing tenor with a very impressive falsetto," McGuire said. "You can tell he has really worked to train his voice and as a result, he has chops. He's got a good show and an awesome band that plays very well together. They are tight, and that's hard to find."

Maxwell, whose heritage is West Indian and Puerto Rican, began playing music at 17 when a friend gave him a battered Casio keyboard. He started to compose music, and soon became a staple on the New York club circuit. Looking relaxed in a tan leather jacket with a loose-fitting short sleeve T-shirt, baggy, drawstring-waist pants and gym shoes, Maxwell stroked the audience Sunday night, sharing intimate details of the history

behind his songs. "Changed," a track on his latest album, is the story of a woman he liked but didn't like him, he said. When she finally came around, he had "Changed" his mind.

He also talked openly about love, stressing its meaning and the joy of loving one another as husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend, best friends, and just because we are all human beings. "Love is passion, patience and tolerance- the only thing worth fighting for," he said as he eased into the popular track, "Lifetime."

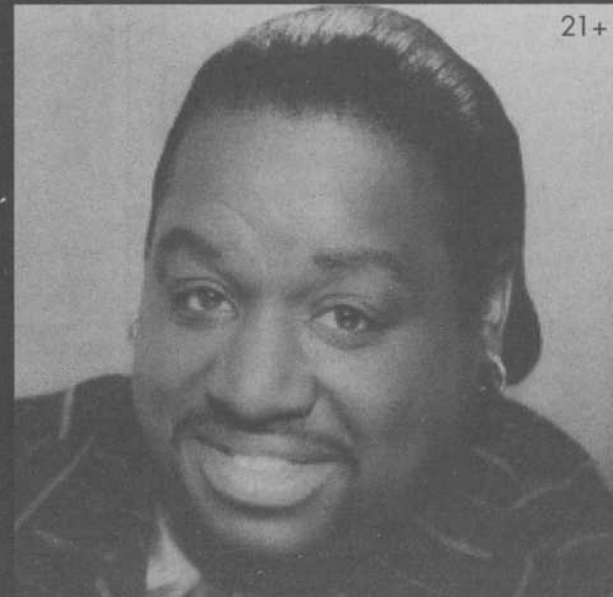
Songstress Angie Stone opened for Maxwell.

On stage for 40 minutes, Stone showcased her pure talent, singing hits, "No More Rain (In This Cloud)" and "Everyday," from her "Black Diamond" LP (1999). She also treated fans to "Mad Issues" and "Brotha" from her latest release, "Mahogany Soul."

Although her time on stage was short, she was impressive. Her style is unique, from her vocals to her fashion sense. Wearing a pure white wrap skirt and blouse, she radiated an unmatched glow as the house lights shined upon her chocolate skin. Band members and background vocalists also wore white. The group, one that fans will definitely look forward to hearing more from in the future, closed with an awesome but brief tribute to Earth Wind & Fire, singing, "Reasons."



HOUSE OF BLUES At Mandalay Bay



21+

Bruce Bruce

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 30



21+

Etta James

SATURDAY DECEMBER 1

ALL SEATED SHOW

PRODUCED BY: HOUSE OF BLUES & GOLDENVOICE

3950 Las Vegas Blvd South
Las Vegas, NV 89119
FOR INFO 702 632 7600
www.hob.com

ticketmaster

SMITH'S/TOWER RECORDS/ROBINSONS•MAY/ODYSSEY/WHEREHOUSE
MUSIC/RITMO LATINO • (702) 474-4000 • www.ticketmaster.com