

Earl Turner Live is a must see show at Harrah's

By John Perkins

NEW ORLEANS - "I went to see Earl Turner, Live and I had a good time!" is the exhortation issued by the entertainer to take away with them and to pass on to their friends and relations as his high energy show comes to a close in the new Earl Turner Theatre at Harrah's Casino in New Orleans. Turner, who is the first entertainer to occupy the space puts on a show that is truly entertaining from start to finish and one in which the audience becomes an integral part of the evening.

With his 10-piece band and two back-up singers behind him, Turner displays a talent for entertaining that has had him a member of the Harrah's family for six years. Singing a range of genres from silky smooth jazz to Motown rock, from country to pop classics, Turner has fun on stage and this is passed on to his audience in large measure to make the evening one of the most enjoyable you will have in the theatre.

He opens with a pair of tunes that are designed to put the audience in his pocket right from the start. "Burning In the Night" and "What You Came In Here For" set the stage for the remainder of the hour and forty-five minutes plus that you will spend with him.

When he gets into some more familiar tunes such as "Birth of the Blues" and "When I Need You" the audience is encouraged to join in which they did on the night we visited without hesitation and in robust voice. Turner often feigns displeasure at their interrupting his rendition but there is no doubt he is encouraging it.

Turner is generous when it comes to letting his band members take the spotlight. Throughout the evening his own traveling musicians -Chris Coleman, Turner's bandleader, Al Robinson on saxophone, Steve Meyer on trombone, Curtis Wilson on drums, Walter Cunningham on keyboards and Brandon Collins on vocals - are spotlighted as well as the four musicians that have been added from the local pool of talent, Cranston Clement -guitar, Chuck Arnold on trumpet, Michael Skinkus on percussion and Danielle Heim on vocals. Additionally, Turner introduces his 16-year-old son Aaron who puts on a tap dancing display that draws cheers from the audience. Said Turner "We had to get special permission for Aaron to be here because he is still a minor." It's a permission that was well worth the effort because the lanky teen has a talent that certainly adds to the evening's entertainment quotient.

Turner puts together a medley of sorts that begins with "Dock of the Bay" is followed by "Knock On Wood" on to "For the Good Times" and ending with "How The Time Slips Away" during which saxophonist Robinson steps into the spotlight while Turner makes his way through the room to sing and be sung to by his audience.

While Turner exits for a change of costume, son Aaron takes to the stage to entertain with his terpsichore skills.

While the show we saw was most entertaining. Turner says that he tries to keep each performance fresh by continually changing the songs that make up his set. He definitely thrives on audience interaction, which will guarantee that each show is individual and original. The result is often spontaneous humor, and an ever evolving

show. “My show is about the entire entertainment experience. I want the audience to feel the excitement and I play off their enthusiasm. That’s why no two shows are exactly alike,” says Turner.

Over the years, Turner has been honored with several awards including being named Las Vegas’ “Best Male Vocal Performer” by the Las Vegas Review-Journal, and he was continuously recognized as one of the “must see” performers on the Las Vegas entertainment circuit.

As his show continued, Turner did a little Smokey Robinson and even delved briefly into the rap idiom.

As the evening drew to a close, Turner turned up the heat with “Rock This Town, Turn It Inside Out” and following the sustained applause of the audience returned to sing “What A Wonderful World” even injecting a little Satchmo into his rendition.

As John Payne, General manager of Harrahs is quoted as saying, “Energy! Entertainment! Excitement! From the City of Lights to the Crescent City, Earl Turner brings it all to Harrah’s New Orleans Casino and its new world-class theatre.”

Earl Turner Live is an evening that you should not miss if you are really in the mood to be entertained. He will be appearing in the theatre for an extended period and has moved to New Orleans with his wife and two children. In his own words, Turner says “New Orleans is a great city that has so much to offer. We are very excited about working with Harrah’s New Orleans but also very excited about becoming a member of this community. This city is known for great music and I think it is a privilege to be part of the music scene here.”

In addition to Earl Turner Live, there is also something else that’s new in the downtown casino and this has a definite Slidell and northshore tie-in. The Besh Steakhouse at Harrahs has Slidell’s own John Besh bringing his highly acclaimed culinary talents to New Orleans and Harrah’s. This traditional steakhouse with a New Orleans influence, accented by the artwork of George Rodrigue Blue dog paintings hanging on the walls, is complemented by an array of wines from around the world and a tantalizing assortment of house-made desserts.

Make it a complete evening. Begin with a visit to The Besh Steakhouse and then move down the hall to the Earl Turner Theatre to enjoy Earl Turner, Live. Truly as you leave you will be ready to say “I went to see Earl Turner, Live and I had a good time!”