

Good Times



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Our Night on the Town

Gee, you look familiar

'Legends' performers pay tribute to musical icons

By MIKE CHAIKEN
EDITIONS EDITOR

Sometimes, all it takes is a, "You know, you kind of look like..." to launch a career.

Just ask the performers who make up the cast of the July leg of "Legends in Concert" at Foxwoods Casino this month through August.

The "Legends" show, which was launched 25 years ago, has set up residency at the Fox Theater in Mashantucket for the summer. The show is presenting three different casts to audiences before it leaves Connecticut in September. The first leg featured performers tackling Michael Jackson, Diana Ross and

the Supremes, Frank Sinatra, and others.

The latest installment gives audiences The King—Elvis Presley, Prince, Tim McGraw, Shakira, and Bobby Darin.

The Elvis of "Legends," Kevin Mills, already had a head start when Elvis came into his life as his career. In the late 1980s, he was in a

1950s-style rockabilly band playing gigs along the New Jersey shore. During that musical stint, Mills said people said he looked and sounded like Elvis. At first that was the extent of his Elvis leanings, said Mills.

Then in 1990, Mills entered a contest, impersonating the 1950s era Elvis. That was the beginning of his new career. In 1992, "Legends" hired him as the very first 1950s Elvis with the company. "After that it sort of took off," said Mills. "I've been with the company since."

These days, Mills, who now pays tribute as the comeback Elvis of the early 1970s, said he is considered one of the top Elvis impersonators in the world. He entered the Ultimate Elvis contest three years ago, competing against Elvis impersonators from around the world, 850 in all. He took third place, just a point and a half from being crowned the King of The Kings. This year, he is heading back again and he's confident, he will win it all. The deal will bring him a \$20,000 and a lot of prestige in the Elvis community. "It gets you a lot of work."

Tony Torres was an actor living in Los Angeles before "Legends" entered his life. One Halloween, he had the idea of dressing up as Prince. As he walked around, he would hear people say, "There's Prince! There's Prince." Tony said he thought to himself, "I really must look like Prince."

In time, Tony said he was approached by the people behind "Legends" and they asked him to put together an act as Prince. The timing was right. His previous acting job was wrapping up. So, he went into the studio to polish up his performance as Prince. And in 1998, he took the stage in Berlin for his first time as the Purple One.

Art Vargas grew up in Detroit, immersed in the sounds of music and Motown. He said that as soon as he graduated high school, he wasted no time and went straight into a



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Tony Torres performs as Prince in 'Legends in Concert' now playing at Foxwoods.

career in music. As he hit the clubs, Vargas explained, people would come up to him and say, "Gee, you sound like Bobby Darin." In 1987, he said "Legends" found him and picked him up as the show's Bobby Darin. Although he had a stint away from the show for a couple of years, he said he eventually returned to breathe life into the man who turned, "Mack the Knife," from Kurt Weill's "Threepenny Opera," into the biggest hit of his career.

Around 1994, people started telling Tom Sullivan he looked familiar. He explained people said he looked like country star Tim McGraw. Realizing this could be a good thing, Sullivan said he started doing some research on how to become Tim McGraw on stage. He then approached "Legends" about joining the cast as their Tim McGraw. But he explained he wasn't ready yet in the show's eyes. But the producers gave him some pointers on how to improve. He said he went home and practiced. And in 2000, he was welcomed aboard to the show.

The performers noted that performing "Legends" requires them to do more than just look like their character. They have to perform like their character.

For Ines, who plays Shakira, becoming her character sometimes means going against her performance instincts. Like most Latina women, she said she shakes her hips like Shakira. But Shakira does more than shake her

hips, she explained. Shakira throws in a lot of Middle Eastern belly dance movements, which require lots of control.

Additional, Ines said Shakira moves in the exact opposite direction she would move. For instance, while she might move left in a dance move, Shakira would move right. It might not mean much, said Ines, but these are the little nuances that help preserve the fantasy that you are watching Shakira each night.

"Legends in Concert" continues at Foxwoods through September. Tickets are \$25. For more information, go to Foxwoods.com or call 1-800-200-2882.

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Ines performs as Shakira in 'Legends in Concert' at Foxwoods.



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Kevin Mills plays Elvis Presley in 'Legends in Concert' at Foxwoods until August.