

# 'VIVA,' EVER VIBRANT

'Viva Las Vegas,' called best Elvis movie, turns 50

By JOHN PRZYBYS

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

It's the story of a guy, a girl and the coolest city in the world. And, hard as it is to believe, it was released 50 years ago this month.

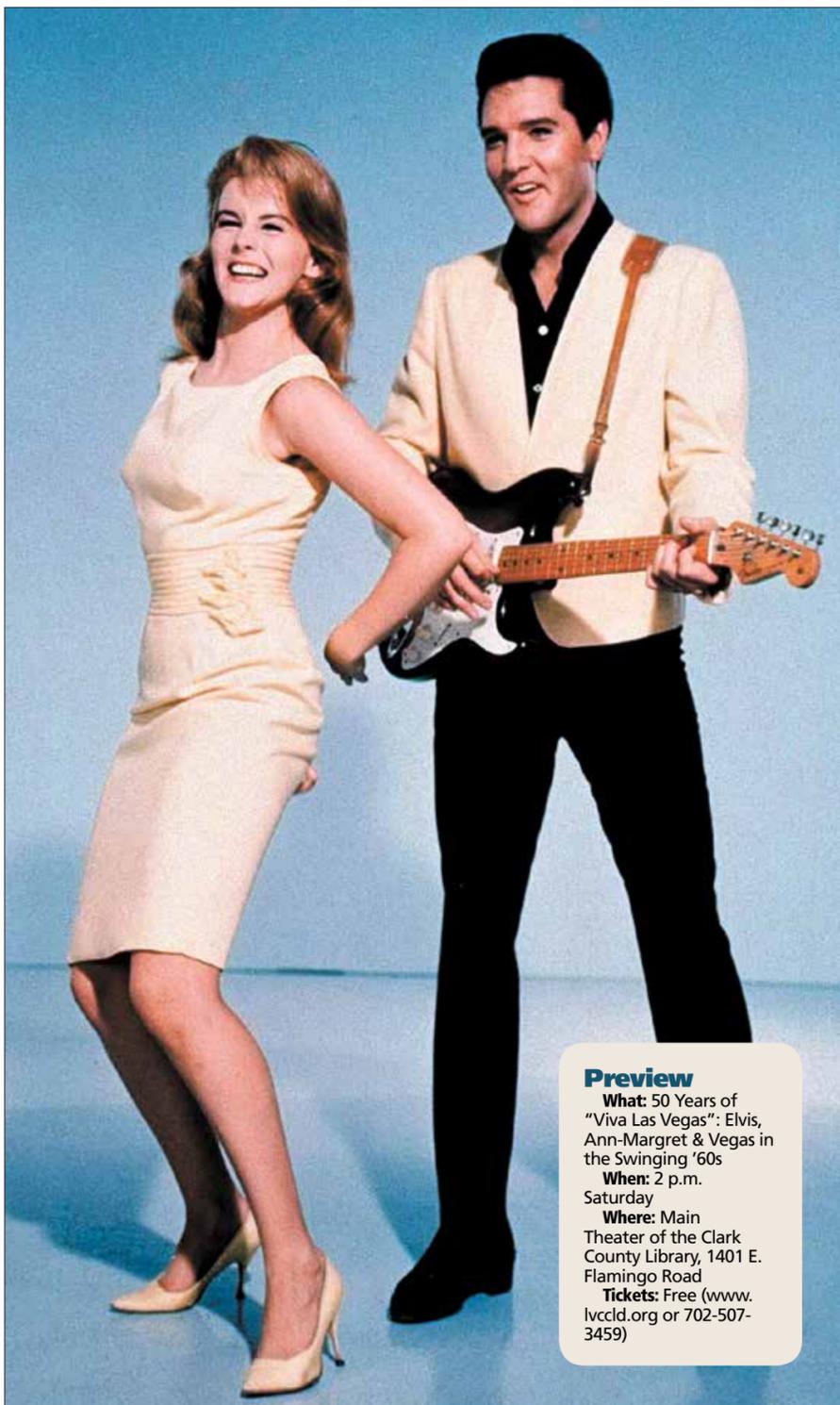
"Viva Las Vegas," the 1964 musical directed by George Sidney and starring Ann-Margret and Elvis Presley, is considered by aficionados of Elvis' cinematic oeuvre to be one of the best, if not the best, film he ever made.

"Viva Las Vegas" has it all. A kinetic, frenetic look at Las Vegas at its hippest. Ann-Margret, the only leading lady who ever could match Elvis' charisma and smoldering sensuality on screen. A score that spawned a song that everybody knows, every band covers and nobody can get out of their heads once he hears it.

"Viva Las Vegas" is a great movie, and the story behind it is pretty good, too. On Saturday, Sean Clark, a screenwriter, producer and an associate film professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, will talk about the quintessential Las Vegas film during a program at the Clark County Library, 1401 E. Flamingo Road.

The program, which begins at 2 p.m., will include a screening of "Viva Las Vegas." It's co-sponsored by UNLV's film department and is free. For more information, call 702-507-3459 or visit [www.lvccld.org](http://www.lvccld.org).

Like most of Elvis Presley's cinematic output, the plot of "Viva Las Vegas" is as flimsy as a showgirl's feather: Race car driver Lucky Jackson hits town to compete in the Las Vegas Grand Prix. His engine goes bad. Needing bucks, he gets a job and meets part-time lifeguard/singer/dancer Rusty Martin. The adjectivally named couple flirt,



Ann-Margret and Elvis Presley in a publicity photo for the 1964 film "Viva Las Vegas."

ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

Some of movie's locations remain nearly unchanged

By F. ANDREW TAYLOR

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Betty Gripenag wasn't even aware a movie was being made in the area. So when she zoomed past Elvis, or perhaps a stunt driver doubling as Elvis, she barely noticed. She knew something was up when an angry highway patrol trooper pulled her over, though.

"At the time there weren't speed limits here; the rule was to drive safe and sane," Gripenag recalled. "He told me I should know better than to drive like that with my kids in the car, but my husband and I both had a lead foot and we knew the roads."

It turned out she hadn't broken any laws. But she figures the trooper was supposed to keep traffic off what is now Lake Mead Parkway so the crew of "Viva Las Vegas" could film the climactic car-race scene.

Having Elvis Presley's expert-road-racer character passed like he was standing still by a mother of four with a couple of kids standing on the bench seat of a late '50s Cadillac probably wasn't the footage they were looking to get that day.

"Viva Las Vegas" was released on May 20, 1964, 50 years ago, but the filming took place primarily in the second half of July 1963. Surprisingly, in a town that implodes and rebuilds itself periodically like the world's biggest Lego set, several of the filming sites remain and some are relatively unchanged.

The film is similar in plot, mood and implausibility to Presley's other movies, but it's widely regarded as one of his best. Presley portrays Lucky Jackson, who comes to Las Vegas to compete in the Las Vegas Grand Prix. He meets and becomes smitten with Rusty Martin, portrayed by Ann-Margret. He assumes

## Preview

**What:** 50 Years of "Viva Las Vegas": Elvis, Ann-Margret & Vegas in the Swinging '60s

**When:** 2 p.m.

**Where:** Main

Theater of the Clark County Library, 1401 E. Flamingo Road

**Tickets:** Free ([www.lvccld.org](http://www.lvccld.org) or 702-507-3459)

▶ SEE 'VIVA' PAGE 2E

Sidney, Ann-Margret help elevate film

▶ SEE LOCATIONS PAGE 5E

Little Church of the West plans concert

## In death, Michael Jackson King of Popping Back Up

Michael Jackson is having an amazing week for a dead guy.

Jackson not only released a new album, "Xscape," on Tuesday but will "perform" in two Las Vegas venues Sunday. Quite a feat for someone who never did a solo concert in Las Vegas while he was alive.

A video illusion of the superstar will make its usual appearance in two Sunday shows of "Michael Jackson One" at Mandalay Bay. Across the street at the MGM Grand Garden, Sunday's Billboard Music Awards cryptically promise "a Michael Jackson world premiere experience," one that will make "television history" and show the star "like you've never seen him before."

Unless that turns out to be "alive," we'll find out Sunday if this surprise lives up to the hype or to Cirque's technology. The visual in "One" is said to be a variation of a projection illusion dating back to 1862 known as a Pepper's Ghost. Disney's Haunted Mansion ride is probably the most familiar use of it, though Celine Dion also uses a version at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace.

Cirque's "One" illusion is the subject of a California lawsuit filed in March, claiming Cirque infringed on patents by Musion Eyeliner, which

Mike Weatherford  
ENTERTAINMENT



brought Tupac Shakur back to the Coachella music festival in 2012.

It seems the race against dead Las Vegas superstars isn't just to see whether Elvis or Michael Jackson gets to be the "Legends in Concert" closer. The real bragging rights are for which is the biggest earner.

A lengthy Billboard magazine piece explains how producer L.A. Reid created the new Jackson album by commissioning new music to match vocal tracks from unfinished songs. But writer Joe Levy also gives Cirque du Soleil (along with the concert film "This Is It") credit for erasing the Jackson estate's \$500 million debt at the time of his death in 2009.

The first Cirque tribute, "The Immortal," is said to be the ninth-most-grossing tour of all time, with \$355 million and counting and no sign of coming off the road.

The acrobats sure can hold up to the rigors of travel longer than U2 or the Rolling Stones. The arena show that played Mandalay Bay Events Center in December 2011

swings back as close as Salt Lake City in July.

As "One" inches up to the May 23 anniversary of its debut (the "official" opening was in late June), Cirque officials say it's too early to talk about putting any "Xscape" songs into the show. But showgoers will hear the album playing in the lobby. ...

Comedian Whitney Cummings is the focus of a "special announcement" Thursday at The Venetian. She already lists two Venetian engagements on her website — Aug. 15-16 and Nov. 28-29 — after a Comedy Central special in June. Stay tuned to see if the news conference reveals a bigger project or commitment. ...

Britney Spears' "Piece of Me" is proving naysayers (and live-singing advocates) wrong by adding shows through February on top of the ones previously announced at Planet Hollywood. Tickets for the new dates go on sale Friday.

Spears still has a two-year commitment to Planet Hollywood but is adding dates to the minimum number of shows for those two years. So much for questions about her work ethic (especially since "Vegas throat" isn't much of an issue) or the ability to sell

▶ SEE WEATHERFORD PAGE 5E  
Manilow finally releases Vegas DVD

## LOCALS ONLY

### Hair, there everywhere

We don't know if anyone's ever run a 5k in leather pants.

Just the thought of all that chafing makes us wince.

But if you were ever going to try it, now's the time as Vince Neil and Habitat for Humanity present the Big Hair 5k.

Check-in begins at 6:30 a.m. Saturday at The District, 2225 Village Walk Drive in Henderson.

Participants are invited to dress as their favorite hair-metal icon, and each race packet contains a shirt, a green or blue mullet wig and a spiked bracelet.

If walking in those leather pants is more your speed, there's a 1-mile fun walk as well.

Registration for both events is \$25, with proceeds benefiting Habitat for Humanity. For more information, see [habitatrot.org](http://habitatrot.org).

### Stones, guitar alone

Sure, everybody associates the Rolling Stones with rock 'n' roll. But "Satisfaction" has a softer side, as guitarists John Batdorf and James Lee Stanley demonstrate at noon Friday with unplugged, acoustic versions of Stones favorites during their free "All Wood and Stones" concert in the jury assembly room at the Lloyd George U.S. Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. South. For more information, call 702-229-3515 or visit [artslasvegas.org](http://artslasvegas.org).

### Tastes to try

The restaurants at the South Point, 9777 Las Vegas Blvd. South, have introduced new menu items. Additionally, Big Sur Oyster Bar and Baja Migue's now offer \$7.95 lunch specials. At Big Sur, where they're available from noon to 4 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays,



COURTESY PHOTO

Vince Neil will host a 5k run and 1-mile fun walk Saturday to benefit Habitat for Humanity.

they're the Big Sur Shrimp Salad and fish tacos. At Baja Migue's, where they're available from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays, they're Carne a la Plancha, Chicken Cilantro, Chile Relleno Norteno, Fish Tacos Puerto Nuevo or Flauta Punta Sur; they come with chips and salsa, guacamole and bean dip and rice and beans.

### Dancin' in the street

The Dillinger in Boulder City has become a home for original and eclectic bands, even though the place is so small they usually play out on the sidewalk. For the third year, the music spills all the way into the street for Saturday's free, all-ages Dillinger Block Party. Nine acts play from noon to 11 p.m., including Same Sex Mary, Rusty Maples, Jack Evan Johnson and Thee Swank Bastards.

### Devildriver you know

A sampling of song titles from "Winter Kills," the latest record from convulsive groove metallers Devildriver: "Ruthless," "Desperate Times," "Gutted," "Oath of the Abyss." Ain't no party like a Devildriver party, 'cause a Devildriver party don't stop ... until you're dead. See them at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Hard Rock Live, 3771 Las Vegas Blvd. South. Tickets are \$18 in advance, \$22 day of show call 702-733-7625.

## ► 'VIVA': Sidney direction, Ann-Margret's counterpoint seen to elevate Elvis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1E

fight, dance and sing before, of course, (spoiler alert) marrying.

But, as with every other movie musical Elvis acted in over the 14 years that he cranked these things out, the important thing isn't the plot but, rather, how it all comes together. And, in "Viva Las Vegas," it's director George Sidney who so adroitly creates an iconic whole.

Sidney was an award-winning Hollywood veteran whose major-musical credits are so impressive — "Bye Bye Birdie," "Pal Joey," "Show Boat" "Annie Get Your Gun" and "Anchors Aweigh!" among them — you'd think the only reason he'd agree to direct a Presley movie is that he lost a bet.

For Elvis, Sidney was the perfect director at the perfect time. Before "Viva Las Vegas," Elvis had acted in a mostly forgettable string of movies, most of them formulaic musicals, and by the time "Viva Las Vegas" started filming in Las Vegas in 1963, Presley's cinematic star had fallen.

"We don't realize it, but this is at a lull in his career, because (his) movies have not been successful and the bloom is off the rose," Clark explains.

That, he continues, is why MGM "came to George, because he's one of the most accomplished musical directors of the time."

Sidney "was one of the big dogs," Clark says. "So they came to him and said, 'We want you to do this, George.'"

Sidney liked Las Vegas and visited here often, says Clark, who became friends with Sidney after the director's retirement, when he moved here and began working regularly with UNLV film students (the college's Nevada entertainer/artist hall of fame award is named the "Sidney" after the director, who also was its first recipient).

Sidney "knew the days of the, quote, MGM musicals were gone," Clark says, and he already had begun filming movies outside of Hollywood. And, Clark says, "George always loved a challenge."

Corinne Sidney, George Sidney's widow, recalls, too, that the director was very close friends with her first husband, Jack Entratter, and the Sands executive encouraged Sidney to make a movie that would show off Las Vegas.

"George loved Las Vegas," she says, "and he said, 'Why not?'"

Studio executives had told Sidney that the way to put Elvis' cinematic career back on track would be to "pump up the production values," Clark says. "He said: 'No, you need to give him a leading woman.'"

Giving Elvis a strong leading lady would go against the template that had been established in the singer's films up until then.

"His handlers were always, 'You cast somebody sweet and forgettable who wouldn't overshadow Elvis,'" Clark explains. "It was George who said, 'Get Ann-Margret.'"

Ann-Margret recently had worked with Sidney in "Bye Bye Birdie" and the director knew she could give the film a dynamic, hip energy. Elvis' camp had qualms, but Sidney stood behind his choice. When the falling fortunes of Elvis' movies went head to head against Sidney's talent and reputation, there



Elvis Presley performs with actress Ann-Margret in "Viva Las Vegas."

**"His handlers were always, 'You cast somebody sweet and forgettable who wouldn't overshadow Elvis.' It was George Sidney who said, 'Get Ann-Margret.'"**

SEAN CLARK

SCREENWRITER, PRODUCER AND ASSOCIATE FILM PROFESSOR AT UNLV, ON THE CASTING OF 'VIVA LAS VEGAS'

was no contest.

"It was simple: They had gone to this formula, and it was just barely a notch above bad TV," Clark says. "They were just serving his personality, and it was George who said, 'Ann-Margret changes everything.'"

Paul Casey, a former Elvis impersonator and now Las Vegas show producer, agrees. Seeing a strong leading lady in an Elvis movie "was a rarity, because most female co-stars with Elvis were just pretty," he says.

"Some of them in the beginning were serious actors — Carolyn Jones in 'King Creole' or Debra Paget in his first movie ('Love Me Tender,' 1956). The problem is that, after a while, they got to be cookie-cutter."

Ann-Margret was different, Casey says. "When the two of them are on screen, there's an energy there. I think it was because they had a mutual admiration and fondness for each other."

Sidney's acumen for sharp casting also extended to the rest of the movie's cast. For example, William Demarest — boomers know him best as Uncle Charley from "My Three Sons" — was cast as Ann-Margret's father.

Demarest "was always a great comic foil," Clark says. "The interplay with Ann-Margret and her dad is very well-crafted."

"Viva Las Vegas" takes full advantage of the lights and color of the Strip and the city's resorts, but also shows off Hoover Dam, Lake Mead, Mount Charleston and other parts of the city. Clark says Sidney also tweaked the structure of the traditional movie musical for the film.

In a traditional musical, "the songs take over when there's an overflow of powerful emotions," Clark says. "So we can give to a song that which we will not (express) in dialogue."

That's not uniformly true in "Viva Las Vegas." While a few songs do allow characters to express emotion, "in an odd way, in 'Viva Las Vegas,' some songs are there because they seem like a good place for a song," Clark says.

Sidney, who liked to operate his own camera, also devised some creative ways to get what he needed. For instance, the studio balked at paying extras for the race scenes, Clark says, "so they basically said, 'Want to be in a movie? Come and stand on the sidewalk,' and then they drove the cars right through."

And that song? Written by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, "Viva Las Vegas," released as the B-side of "What'd I Say" from the film's soundtrack, became a classic, covered by everybody from Bruce Springsteen to the Dead Kennedys.

"To this day, wherever you go, if you're from Las Vegas, they start singing that to you," Casey says.

The "Viva Las Vegas" movie was released on May 20, 1964, and was, depending on whose figures one uses, around the 14th top money-earner of 1964 worldwide. The buzz on its release was international, Clark says.

Elvis made 16 more musicals after "Viva Las Vegas," but almost all of them reverted to forgettable pre-"Viva Las Vegas" form. None was directed by someone of Sidney's talent or stature. None featured a leading lady as sexy or as talented as Ann-Margret. And none would become as fondly remembered as "Viva Las Vegas."

"The great thing is, it showed the diversity of Elvis," Casey says. "Not only did he have, I believe, star presence that was always there, but he could be on screen with somebody with equal charisma but a female (actress), and it wasn't threatening to him or to the audience."

Presley confidante Joe Esposito considers "Viva Las Vegas" to be one of the best films Elvis made, and says Presley agreed.

"It was definitely one of his favorite films," Esposito says in a recent phone interview. Elvis and Ann-Margret "got along so good together. They just clicked, and they were great, and became very, very good friends after the movie was over."

"(The movie) only works if it really clicks with the two of them together," he adds. "If somebody else did 'Viva Las Vegas,' would it have made a difference? Well, we'll never know that. But they clicked together. They were really good together."

Why didn't Elvis and his camp continue the winning formula Sidney had devised? "Because George was a sweet man who had a way of getting what he wanted, and the Elvis people liked the way they liked things done," Clark says. "So we go back to 'Clambake.'"

What did Sidney think of the film? Corinne Sidney recalls visiting the Department of Motor Vehicles to get license plates not long after she and her husband moved here.

While waiting, "I asked, 'What are you going to put on yours?'" she says. "He said, 'I don't know.' I said, 'Why don't you get, 'Viva Las Vegas'? He said, 'Oh, God, Corinne. It's the worst movie I ever made.'"

"So we get in, and I said I'll just have a plain plate. He said to the woman, 'I want V LAS V' — he said 'to let everyone know I did that horrible movie.'"

Clark recalls that Sidney's phone messages often would include some variation of the phrase "Viva Las Vegas" because "he knew he had something popular with that alone. That phrase just falls off the lips. It's the perfect title."

George Sidney died May 5, 2002, but Corinne Sidney is reminded regularly how enduringly popular "Viva Las Vegas" is.

"I get a residual every month," she says with a laugh. "I must get five dollars every month. And, I get fan letters to George."

Contact reporter John Przybys at jprzybys@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0280.

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## Coming Friday in Neon

- ▶ Expect the unexpected during Guns N' Roses run
- ▶ Katy Perry, right, to sing at Billboard Music Awards
- ▶ 'Godzilla' misses many opportunities to breathe fire
- ▶ Cure fears of kimchi at Mother's Korean Grill



★ ★ ★ a



**Jason Bracelin**  
SOUNDING OFF

## Catchy tunes snag fans, Leather Lungs finds

**B**eer in hand, Lafe Kartchner's breaking down the psychology of the Wolf Man.

"When you watch those movies," he says, referring to the classic Universal Pictures horror flicks starring Lon Cheney as the man-beast in question, "he's just so unhappy about being alive forever. He doesn't want to be this monster."

It's inching toward 8 on a Tuesday night, and Kartchner and his bandmates in garage rock power trio Leather Lungs are discussing lyrical inspiration at Moon Doggies, a Buffalo Bills-themed bar with faded pennants on the wall and DMX barking over the jukebox.

"My lyrics are about things I know," Kartchner says, "which is drinking, horror movies, books I read and just random experiences when I'm a scumbag, sometimes."

Hence, songs such as "Lon Cheney" and "Who Would You Rather Do? (I Choose Shelly Duvall)," a doo-wop-underscored rocker written from the perspective of an ax-wielding Jack Torrance from "The Shining."

"Oh Wendy, darling, light of my life," Kartchner howls on the tune, "that bat won't do you no good, no good tonight."

Soon, his voice becomes pitched into an anguished scream, Jose Torres' guitar wails in response and Steve Cooper's drumming quickens, suggestive of the pounding heart of Torrance's imperiled wife.

The song is taken from "Do the Wobby H," the excellent latest EP, and second in the past year from the newish band formed from the ashes of psych rockers Restless Suns. Among its three songs is a surf rock instrumental with blast beats and a Cramps-y rager with Kartchner's wild-eyed, paranoid vocals summoning the spirit of Lux Interior.

Leather Lungs are plenty raucous and noisy, abetted by guitar and bass tones that buzz like a downed power line — "Jose's guitar and my bass settings, those are like our babies," Kartchner says — but the band's songs are also tightly honed and improbably catchy.

"As long as it's fun and dirty, I'm cool with it," says Cooper, who also records the band.

"It somehow works," Torres adds, noting that the group has gone over with everyone from the downtown indie rock cabal to a biker club that recruited the band to play shows for them.

"We were on the verge of doing that," Torres says.

Kartchner continues the thought: "But then we were like, 'None of us ride motorcycles,' so we kind of felt like we'd just be standing around, looking dirty."

So, what is it about this bunch that unites hipsters and Harley rats?

"A lot of people say, 'Your music wants to make us drink more,'" Torres notes.

And with that, it's time for another round.

Contact reporter Jason Bracelin at jbracelin@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0476. Follow on Twitter @JasonBracelin.

# HOW THE WEST WAS FUN

## Long-running Helldorado Days make move to Symphony Park

By MIKE HENLE  
SPECIAL TO THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

**L**as Vegas has long been known for its visionaries. Long before Howard Hughes invaded the valley in November 1966, Arizona huckster Clyde Zerby was looking for a way to capitalize on the creation of Hoover Dam.

### Preview

**What:** Las Vegas Elks Helldorado Days  
**When:** Grounds open at 5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday. PRCA rodeo starts at 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday  
**Where:** Symphony Park, 100 S. Grand Central Parkway  
**Tickets:** Entrance fee is \$3 unless rodeo tickets are purchased; rodeo tickets are \$15 to \$25; individual tickets for the carnival are \$1.25, with an all-day pass available for \$25 (www.elkshelldorado.com; 702-870-1221)

Eighty years ago, Zerby launched the first Helldorado Days celebration in Las Vegas in an attempt to draw workers from the dam. An eager community reacted positively and, with the exception of six years ending in 2005, Zerby's creation, modified for families by the Elks Lodge, is one of Southern Nevada's longest-running special events.

The old-timers of the valley still remember the good old days of Helldorado, which even included the legendary Roy Rogers filming a movie in Las Vegas in 1946. During a time when nearly everyone knew one another in Las Vegas, the city's history was highlighted by hotel-casinos



Siblings Stephanie and Steven Davis wave to a passing float during last year's Helldorado Days Parade.

that participated in Helldorado Parades with brightly colored floats.

Billy Parker, 85, has been in Las Vegas for the most part since 1939 and was chairman of Helldorado for five years in the 1990s. He has vivid memories of the early days, and you can bet that his fellow Helldorado fans will check out this year's new location for the event: Symphony Park.

Parker said his father, J.B., was involved in horse racing in Las Vegas, Ely, Elko and Winnemucca. He said members of Helldorado wanted to add a rodeo to the

celebration.

"My dad owned the land behind the old post office on Third Street," Parker said. "That's where they had the first rodeo before moving it to behind the area behind the Old Frontier (on the Strip)."

Parker also recalled that Floyd Lamb's wife, Eleanor, was Helldorado Rodeo Queen in 1946.

"Helldorado was a lot of fun in those days," Parker recalled. "All of the hotels had floats and the parades were really good. They would close down Fremont Street where there were all kinds of

promotions like beard-growing contests. It was the wild, wild West."

This year's Helldorado, which opened Wednesday, is an official event of the Nevada Sesquicentennial Celebration. Activities will continue through Sunday, with several new additions to the program.

The move to Symphony Park at 100 S. Grand Central Parkway offers more room near the highly regarded Smith Center. There is a new rodeo arena along with extra

▶ SEE HELLDORADO PAGE 5E  
*'Bigger and better than ever'*

# Super Summer Theatre honors Tony winners

By CAROL CLING  
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

The show must go on. But not too long.

After all, this weekend's "A Tribute to the Tony Awards," which kicks off Super Summer Theatre's 39th season at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, only has 90 minutes to cover more than 60 years of Broadway history.

Starting with Cole Porter's "Kiss Me Kate," which won the very first Tony for best

musical back in 1949, the musical revue charts a course through decades of memories on Broadway — and at Super Summer Theatre.

That's because this musical salute takes "some creative liberties with some of the songs people know," explains director Kelly Burrows.

"The Sound of Music's" lilting "My Favorite Things," for example, includes references to Spring Mountain Ranch and various composers, while "It's a Hard-Knock Life"

(from "Annie") now focuses on the hard knocks of an actor's life, Burrows notes.

And the oh-so-appropriate opening number, "Hello," from "The Book of Mormon," now includes "shout-outs to the ranch" in some revamped lyrics, she adds, partly because "we're not Mormon missionaries."

But Burrows and her on- and off-stage colleagues

▶ SEE TONY PAGE 5E  
*Educational as well as entertaining*

### Preview

**What:** Super Summer Theatre's "Tribute to the Tony Awards"  
**When:** 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday  
**Where:** Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, about 10 miles west of Charleston Boulevard and I-215  
**Tickets:** \$8 in advance, \$10 at the gate (866-967-8167, www.supersummertheatre.org)

### At the Movies



## First Look

### Godzilla roars back into movie theaters

**What:** "Godzilla"  
**Cast:** Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Ken Watanabe, Elizabeth Olsen, Juliette Binoche, Sally Hawkins, David Strathairn and Bryan Cranston  
**Writer:** Max Borenstein  
**Director:** Gareth Edwards  
**The story:** Godzilla battles giant monsters to protect Earth in this 60th anniversary celebration of the beloved creature.  
**The buzz:** Japanese fans already are complaining that this Godzilla is too fat. But it would take a lot more than an extra chin or two to keep this one from at least being better than that 1998 monstrosity starring Matthew Broderick.

— CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE

### On TV



## 99 Words About ...

### The schlocky joys of the El Rey Network

You could argue the world didn't need "From Dusk Till Dawn: The Series." And you would win that argument. But the pulpy drama with a B-movie aesthetic has been surprisingly entertaining.

See for yourself as the first nine episodes are marathoned at 9 a.m. Sunday ahead of the finale at 6 p.m. Tuesday on Robert Rodriguez's El Rey Network.

It's a fun little channel, specializing in grindhouse, kung fu movies and "Starsky & Hutch" reruns.

Even its promos have a drive-in vibe. Here's hoping it gets schlockier still and drops the five-hour "X-Files" blocks for even more cheesy goodness.

— CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE



JOHN LOCHER/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

Helldorado Days run through Sunday with a carnival, vendors and entertainment.

## ► HELLDORADO: 'Bigger and better'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3E

space for livestock, staging, parking, spectator stands, vendors and bands.

The Elks Helldorado is expected to attract more attention considering its visibility from Interstate 15.

"We're having a larger carnival this year because we have 25 acres instead of the 10 acres we had before," said Bobbi LaDuke, a Helldorado coordinator who handles tickets, vendors and exhibitors along with setting up kickoff and wind-up parties. "This is bigger and better than ever before. We have also worked with Discovery Museum to give out discounts to the kids."

Other new elements to this year's event include moving the popular Whiskerino — a beard contest that was one of the early highlights — to the Pullman Room of Main Street Station at 6 p.m. Friday.

"We're also going to have several specialty acts as part of the rodeo," LaDuke said. "Our new thing that we're excited about is the Fiesta del Charro, which is a Mexican rodeo presenting Tomas Garcilazo. We're expecting this to be a huge success."

A Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association event begins at 8 p.m. Thursday and runs through Saturday. The Fiesta del Charro will be at 4 p.m. Sunday.

Kids who want a taste of rodeo action can find it at the "mutton busting" contests at 7 p.m. Thursday through

Saturday in the arena.

The popular parade will be at 5 p.m. Saturday, traveling northbound on Fourth Street from Gass to Ogden avenues.

The carnival, exhibits, vendors and entertainment will be offered each day of the event.

For some, Helldorado Days are also a time to reflect on the old days.

"It was a lot of fun," said K.J. Howe, who was director of advertising and promotions for the Mint Hotel along with serving as the head of the Mint 400 off-road race from 1970 to '86.

"They would come and get me right out of my office," Howe recalled. "They'd put me in a cell and keep me at First and Fremont until someone would bail me out. I had to raise a particular amount of money that was given to charity. We didn't have cellphones in those days, so I would tell my secretary to call people and bail me out. I was always bailed out within about an hour."

"I will never forget the carnival. It was like a county fair."

Howe praised the move to Symphony Park.

"With all of the activity that is going on in Symphony Park, this is a no-brainer," he said. "It's very exciting and I will definitely go this year."

Further information regarding schedules, events and other activities can be found at [www.elkshelldorado.com](http://www.elkshelldorado.com) or by calling 702-870-1221.



PHOTOS BY F. ANDREW TAYLOR/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

UNLV's Barrick Museum was once the school's gymnasium. During the filming of "Viva Las Vegas," Ann-Margret and Elvis danced on the parquet floor.

## ► LOCATIONS: Little Church of the West plans concert by Elvis tribute artist

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Rusty is a showgirl but soon discovers she's a local woman who works as a swimming instructor. High jinks, misunderstandings and songs ensue, and then there's the race.

The movie is unusual in that it's one of the first films to show Las Vegas as a family destination and highlight the idea of Las Vegas locals.

It opens, as many Las Vegas movies do, with a helicopter shot cruising along the lights and wild illuminated signs of the city. But since it was filmed when the casinos on the Strip still had some space between them, the shot is of Fremont Street. You can still see a few of the signs on Fremont Street, but a lot of them have been changed for new technology or to reflect new names. Many of the signs now reside down the street at the Neon Museum, 770 Las Vegas Blvd. North.

Filming took place at several casinos, most of which have since been drastically changed or replaced, but an early pivotal scene occurs at the Flamingo pool. Lucky tries to woo Rusty with a song. Rusty mocks him and pushes him into the pool. Both the casino and the pool have been completely renovated since the filming, but some of the pools in the current pool complex are in about the same place. The pool near the concession stand is the closest in feel to the pool in the film.

Other casinos have not fared so well. Nothing remains of the Sands but the name on the Expo and Convention center. The Frontier property is home to Trump Tower and a series of attempts to build something on the rubble. A scene shot at the Tropicana featured a skeet range, a concept that today seems unbelievable on the Strip and so close to McCarran International Airport.

Both the airport and the convention center make appearances in the movie, and although both are in the same location, they are all but unrecognizable from their appearance in 1963.

What is now UNLV didn't have its first commencement until 1964, but you can still walk the same floor that Elvis and Ann-Margret danced on. In the movie, Ann-Margret dances at the stage/gymnasium and a sign identifying the young school is prominent behind her. When Elvis arrives, there are shots from the stage of Ann-Margret and a bunch of young dancers dancing at half court. UNLV has a new gym, but the old building found new life as the Barrick Museum. You can stroll through the art across the old parquet basketball court. Center court is still there and features a depiction of the school's original mascot, Beauregard, who looks like the Big Bad Wolf in a Confederate uniform.



UNLV Libraries Special Collections has a thick folder of material related to the filming of "Viva Las Vegas," including photos, telegrams and a copy of the script.

The film ends (spoiler alert) with the wedding of Lucky and Rusty at The Little Church of the West, which looks much as it did in the film, despite having been moved twice since then, including a long, slow crawl down Las Vegas Boulevard on Oct. 6, 1978, to what is now Mandalay Bay. The church was moved once more, across the street to 4617 Las Vegas Blvd. South.

"The chapel is 70 years old. We bought the property so we shouldn't have to move it again," said Daniel Vallance, spokesman for the chapel. "The history of the chapel and Elvis' part in that history is one of the keys to our success."

Like many Las Vegas wedding chapels, The Little Church of the West offers a few Elvis packages. The difference is it can pitch those packages while pointing at pictures of the real Elvis in the chapel.

In honor of the movie's anniversary, the chapel has scheduled a free Elvis tribute artist concert at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

"We're still putting together the details, but we'll have Frankie Castro performing, and he looks like Elvis did in the movie," Vallance said. "We'll also have peanut butter-and-banana sandwiches."

There's only one other place that looks pretty much as it did in the film and is still, more or less, in the same place. In the movie, Ann-Margret's Rusty lives with her father in a building on the docks of a Lake Mead marina. Because of shrinking water levels, the docks have shifted a few times. But if you're out at Las Vegas Boat Harbor & Lake Mead Marina, 490 Horsepower Cove Road, you can see the home.

It was always the second floor of the marina offices, and has remained so the past 50 years, although the ownership has changed hands a few times. The current owner is a longtime valley resident. She and her family used to own another marina on the lake. About 50 years ago, she was driving her kids from there to town in a late '50s Cadillac, when she accidentally blew past a king.

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## ► TONY: Educational and entertaining

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3E

definitely do have a mission: sharing a bit of showbiz history along with the performances.

Storybook Theater marks its Super Summer debut with this weekend's Tony tribute.

The production company teams Burrows, who teaches theater at Henderson's Coronado High School, with two former Coronado colleagues, vocal director Nancy West (now a counselor at Canyon Springs High in North Las Vegas) and business manager Kevin Cotton (who teaches English and theater at Las Vegas' West Career and Technical Academy).

Their academic perspective means "we approach it more from an educational side," Burrows explains. As a result, after seeing "A Tribute to the Tony Awards," audiences should also "learn a little something about musical history" in addition to hearing some knockout numbers.

The song "Children Will Listen" (from "Into the Woods"), for example, definitely ranks as "a meaningful song from an educator's standpoint," she notes.

The show's eight-member ensemble — Coree Davis, Kayla Hamblen, Stephanie Killian, Michael Kimm, Ken Minster, Kathy Ortiz (who also choreographs the show), Caitlin Shea and Derick Swinson — "rarely leaves the stage," according to the director.

During the production, they'll perform "a good mix" of "solos, ballads, big group dance numbers," Burrows says, with



JASON BEAN/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Stephanie Killian and Coree Davis sing during a rehearsal for Super Summer Theatre's "Tribute to the Tony Awards."

stops everywhere from "South Pacific" to "Memphis," from "Fiddler on the Roof" to "Les Miserables," from "The Music Man" to "A Chorus Line" and "Rent."

There's also a number from "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," Super Summer Theatre's July 9-26 attraction, which is preceded by another frantic farce — the Monty Python romp "Spamalot" — June 11-28. "Shrek the Musical" (Aug. 6-23) and the nonmusical comedy "Arsenic and Old Lace" (Sept. 4-20) round out the season.

For all the memories this weekend's Tony salute conjures, however, there are even more missing, Burrows admits.

"What do you choose, your left hand or your right hand?" she says of the winners ("My Fair Lady" and "Chicago" among them) that didn't make the cut. "We originally made a list of all the shows that won best musical, best revival, best book or best score — and we realized the show would be a week long."

## ► WEATHERFORD: Manilow DVD out

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about 4,200 seats for each date.

A news release claims every show so far has sold out. Back in September, I called the original agreement for 48 shows per year "modest" compared with 60 for Shania Twain and 70 for Celine Dion in a similar-sized venue. ...

This weekend in North Hollywood, Calif., Debbie Reynolds auctions more of her movie memorabilia collection, which used to be on display in the Las Vegas boutique hotel now called The Clarion.

But producer Ray Wolf continues to operate two show venues in the tiny property. He tells me that after Monday's show, the vocal tribute "Shades of Sinatra" takes a break from three years there to spend the summer on the road.

The "Shades" berth in the larger 350-seat theater will be taken over by magician Reynold Alexander from May 23 through July 20, a season that tends

to be good for magicians and slower for singers of standards. ...

Hot off the press: Entertainer and TV host Tony Sacca's autobiography, which he will sign for you at 4 p.m. Saturday after taping his "Las Vegas Rocks Variety Show" at 2 p.m. at the Plaza. We can find out then how they fit the subtitle on the cover: "A 50 Year Journey from the City of Brotherly Love to the Entertainment Capital of the World." ...

Finally, this column already had one call back to December 2011 and "The Immortal" tour. But that month also was the last time Barry Manilow performed on the Strip.

From the Better Late Than Never department, a "Live from Paris Las Vegas" DVD was released Tuesday. The running time of the DVD is listed at only 66 minutes though, and even Las Vegas shows aren't that short.

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