

3/15/2000

David Cassidy and Sheena Easton at the Copa

By Chuck Rounds

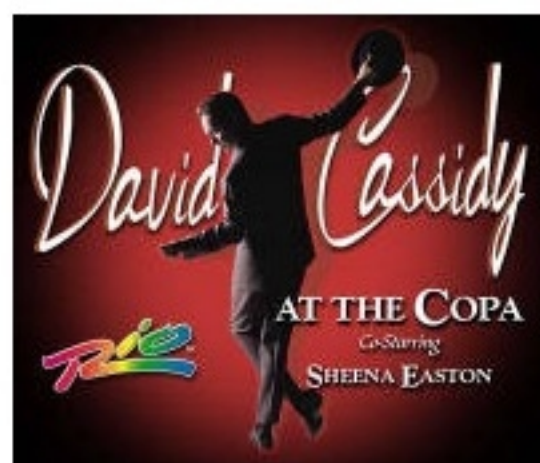
David Cassidy and Sheena Easton at the Copa is a fun show with a lot of wonderful and familiar songs, and set in a 1940's style lounge act. It is presented in the beautiful Copa lounge at the Rio Hotel. The show has a live orchestra and a core of dancers and supporting cast members which are all great.



The songs are built around the semblance of a forties style lounge act and story. David Cassidy plays the role of Johnny Flamingo, a waiter that is thrust into the spotlight due to the death of another entertainer, and immediately becomes a star. Sheena Easton plays the role of Ruby Bombay, the diva of the lounge who has taken an interest in Flamingo, and subsequently falls in love with him. Through a certain amount of intrigue, Flamingo loses Bombay, falls into a deep depression; only to be reunited with her moments before she is killed.

The story is told very cleverly with short little scenes between songs, as well as with songs. The ensemble deftly jumps in and out of different characters to support the story in a style that is very reminiscent of the musical Chicago. Narration helps move the story forward and cover a lot of the transitions.

Initially, the story seems to be set in the forties, but after the first couple of scenes, the adherence to time period seems to be lost. We are still left with the essence of the period, but really, it seems as if it is used only as a convenience--when it isn't convenient; it is ignored. The production really seems to be more of a vehicle and showcase for the two main performers, and with this in mind, it serves them well. After all, it is Cassidy and Easton that we have come to see. We have come to see them sing and perform, and not just act in a role, but we also come to see them with their own personalities. Not only do we get to hear each of them perform some classic oldies, but we also get to hear them sing some of their greatest hits. Cassidy seems to know this and works the room and the crowd wonderfully.



On the one hand, this type of performance seems to hurt the story and the plot. When we get to see the personalities of Cassidy and Easton, it is a time, of course, when they are stepping out of the character and breaking the illusion of the play. At that moment, the story seems to be lost. On the other hand, this is what we want to see of these performers, and so we in the audience really don't mind that much. For us, the story is a secondary element anyway.

One of the best elements of this production is the live orchestra--an element increasingly hard to find in a lot of productions. So many productions on the strip have opted for taped music for the sake of consistency and expense. This is always done, however, at the cost of the spontaneity and the dynamics of live performances. So often performers become static and uninspired with taped music. This will not happen with this production. The orchestra is great, and they follow the singers through all of their play with the songs and with the audience. The musicians also handle a tremendous variety of music and styles.

The rest of the company is comprised of "The Gang," an ensemble of actors, singers, and dancers which support and frame this production. Each person in this chorus could be a star in their own right. They are all extremely talented. The dancing is fabulous. Their singing is right on mark, and their acting is very good. "The Gang" probably has the hardest job in the show. They jump in and out of different characters, dance, sing, provide some of the narration; and all in all, give this production the substance that it does have.

David Cassidy and Sheena Easton at the Copa is a show that is a lot of fun. Go and see all of these performers strut their stuff--they do it very well. The story is a bit weak, but because of the personalities of the cast, you really don't mind.