evil Morgana. A spectacular battle of fire-breathing dragons follows and Cassidy must summon the strength to extract the sword Excalibur from the stone and slay one of the beasts.

Next, the Master of Laughter, played by Stewart Daylida, turns Cassidy into famed circus showman P.T. Barnum, who a century ago created "The Greatest Show On Earth." Cassidy's incarnation, with his imagination continuously growing, decides to go beyond that and stage the greatest show in the universe, "The Intergalactic Circus of Wonders." He succeeds by returning to the stage aboard an awesome spacecraft that would meet the approval of the most fervent "Star Trek" and "Star Wars" fans.

During the circus performance, the mechanical wonders are put on hold for a few minutes as the trapeze artistry of The Flying Kaganovich troupe is displayed. If one of the Masters could return Ed Sullivan to us for one more Sunday night variety show, he would definitely want this troupe on the bill.

When the Master of Spirits, played by Kevin Koelbl, gets his turn with Cassidy, he turns him into legendary escape artist Harry Houdini and allows him to return to serenade his beloved wife, Bess, via a seance. The sequence also offers a brief but well-executed retrospective of some of Houdini's most famous escapes.

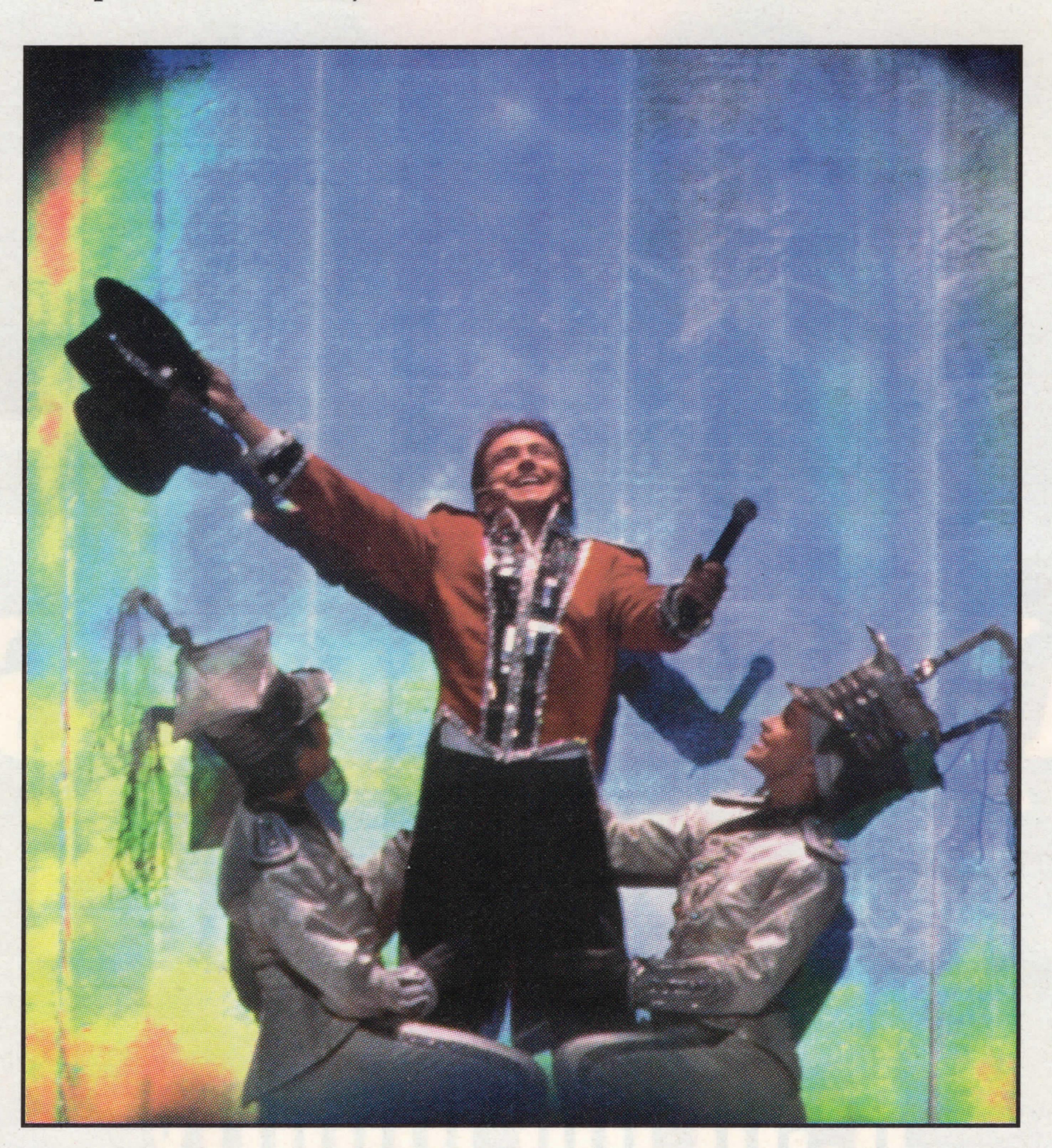
When Cassidy's character gets word that his true love has been taken by the futuristic but barbaric tribe of Morlocks and is being held captive in a huge, underground cave, he is turned into time traveler H.G. Wells, courtesy of the Master of Time, played by Paul May.

Cassidy gets to fly around in a perfect replica of the time machine from the classic Rod Taylor film of the same name. The flight becomes a great 3-D viewing experience with a variety of imaginative effects coming off the stage right at the audience.

The underground cave scene and the battle with the Morlocks while Cassidy rescues his true love is another triumph of special effects, as it should be.

Much of the music in "EFX" was written by composer Don Grady, who is

Credit for direction and choreography goes to Arlene Phillips, who also directed and choreographed the national tour and the current Las Vegas Hilton production of "Starlight Express," as well as several other stage productions in London. She has also choreographed 10 films, including "Annie" and "Monty Python's The Meaning of Life." Her music video credits include work for Elton John, Tina Turner, Whitney Houston and Aretha Franklin.



Americans as the actor who played son Robbie on the old "My Three Sons" TV series.

Musician, writer and producer Bill Wray is also responsible for several compositions in the show. He has crafted hits for Little Feat, Loverboy, Trixter, The Motels, Diana Ross, Emerson, Lake and Palmer and Zachary Richard. He is currently writing for Don Henley, Bonnie Raitt, Heart and Sass Jordan.

The Grand Theatre, where "EFX" is staged, is a technological wonder in itself. Designed to look like an underground cavern, showgoers are greeted by some strange, silent creatures as they begin filling the 1,700 seats. On stage, a filmed special cameo appearance by James Earl Jones as the EFX Master opens the production.

The stage measures 196 by 115 feet, plenty of room to slay a dragon or land a

spaceship. The sound system is 85,000 watts of state-of-the-art Crest stereo amplifiers that drive 300 loudspeakers throughout the theatre. They are placed just about everywhere, including under the seats. Don't try to count the lights. There are 18 different varieties, lit by enough electricity to power 1,440 average-sized homes.

Cassidy, the son of stage actors Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward, made his Broadway debut in "The Fig Leaves Are Falling." Soon after, at age 19, he gained national fame as the eldest brother, Keith, on "The Partridge Family," a popular TV series. During that time, he also scored big as a recording artist selling more than 25 million records with hits including "I Think I Love You."

He returned to the stage during the 1980s in several productions, including "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" and "Tribute." His film credits include "Spirit of '76" and "Instant Karma."

In 1993, Cassidy joined half-brother Shaun in the musical drama "Blood Brothers." The presence of the popular siblings brought the previously failing production record ticket sales and critical acclaim. Cassidy has continued to hone his craft as a singer and songwriter. He even cowrote one of the tunes in "EFX." His memoirs, "C'mon, Get Happy: Fear and Loathing on the Partridge Family Bus," were published in 1994.

"EFX" is presented
Tuesdays through Saturdays
at 7:30 and 10:30 p.m.
Tickets are \$45 and \$63.45
plus tax. For tickets or
more information, call the
MGM Grand Hotel &
Casino at 702-891-7777.