

Casino circuit heats up in springtime

By **CHUCK DARROW**

CASINO WRITER

After a mostly uninteresting winter, Atlantic City's casinos are pushing the show-business throttle up a couple of notches for the spring. The next three months may not boast any super-duper star engagements or eyebrow-raising newcomers, but there are enough out-of-the-ordinary bookings to make things pretty interesting between now and Memorial Day weekend.

Perhaps the biggest news is confirmation of the Showboat's promised return to headliner presentations after a decade of a small-revues-only entertainment policy. This change in strategy will bring '70s teen idol David Cassidy to the 'Boat on April 27, and former Supremes member Mary Wilson on May 25 and 26.

Other headliners of note include:

■ **The Monkees** (Friday and Saturday, Taj Mahal), who are on what is billed as the unit's final tour.

■ Canadian pop-rocker **Bryan Adams** at Trump Marina April 6 and 7.

■ Popular pianist **Jim Brickman**, who makes his AyCee debut April 7 at Trump Plaza.

■ Husband and wife **Robert Wagner and Jill St. John**, who'll perform the play "Love Letters" at Harrah's April 20.

■ Hip-hop stars **K-Ci & JoJo**, who play the Taj May 18.

■ Impressionist **Danny Gans**, the Las Vegas phenomenon, who returns May 18-20 for his annual weekend at Caesars.

As always, a small army of familiar faces also will hit town. They include Don Rickles, Paul Anka, Johnny Mathis, Pat Cooper and The Temptations.

One trend that is continuing is the de-emphasizing of country acts. In the late 1990s, country artists were regularly showcased by several gaming halls. Now, one of the only gig on the books is Randy Travis at Bally's March 23-25.

The most encouraging news concerns the moribund production-show scene. On March 31, the Claridge will raise the curtain on "Sherman Hemsley & Friends," an old-style variety show headlined by the star of the 1970s sitcom "The Jeffersons." It's the first time in quite a while a revue has a name headliner.

And on April 11, Caesars introduces "Imagine," which is billed by executives at the midtown gambling den as the most spectacular production show ever to play Atlantic City.

The Sands isn't doing anything huge on this front, but it is importing the long-running New York cabaret hit "Forbidden Broadway," which lampoons popular musicals. It opens a four-week run April 2. And on May 7, the Sands begins a two-month run of "The Main Event," a Frank Sinatra-inspired program.

ATLANTIC CITY HILTON

(609) 340-7200

www.hiltonac.com

March 16-18: Daryl Hall & John Oates; March 20-24: Susan Anton; April 16-20: Neil Sedaka; April 27-29: Paul Anka; May 4 and 5: Jackie Mason; May 25-27: The Everly Brothers.

BALLY'S PARK PLACE

(609) 340-2709

www.ballysac.com

March 23-25, Randy Travis; Indefinite run: Legends in Concert.



Johnny Mathis will be at Caesars Atlantic City on April 27 and 28.

CAESARS ATLANTIC CITY

(800) 677-7469

www.caesarsac.com

Through March 29: DanseSing; April 11-July 1: Imagine; April 19-22: Don Rickles; April 27 and 28: Johnny Mathis; May 18-20: Danny Gans.

CLARIDGE

(609) 340-3400

Through March 18: "Forever Motown"; March 23-25: Air Supply; March 31-May 20: Sherman Hemsley & Friends; April 20-22: Taylor Dayne.

HARRAH'S ATLANTIC CITY

(800) 242-7724

www.harrah.com

April 20: Robert Wagner and Jill St. John in "Love Letters"; April 29-May 4: Chubby Checker.

RESORTS ATLANTIC CITY

(609) 340-6830

www.resortsac.com

April 5-8: Tom Jones; May 7: Broadway on the Boardwalk V AIDS Benefit; May 18-20: Regis Philbin.

SANDS

(609) 441-4137

www.acsands.com

April 2-26: "Forbidden Broadway"; April 27: Pat Cooper; May 7-June 8: The Main Event; May 26: Steve March Torme.

SHOWBOAT

(609) 343-4003

March 30-April 1: Glenn Miller Orchestra; April 27 and 28: David Cassidy; May 25 and 26: Mary Wilson.

TROPICANA

(609) 340-4020

www.tropicana.net

Through May 5: "A Spectacular Tribute to Liberace" starring Daryl Wagner; March 17: Comedy Stop 17th Anniversary Celebration starring Jimmie "J.J." Walker; March 30 and 31: The Temptations; May 18-20: Engelbert Humperdinck.

TRUMP MARINA

(800) 777-8477

www.trumpmarina.com

March 31: The Tubes; April 6 and 7: Bryan Adams; April 21: Jackie "The Jokeman" Martling; May 25 and 26: Lynyrd Skynyrd.

TRUMP PLAZA

(800) 759-8786

www.trumpplaza.com

Robert Klein; April 7: Jim Brickman.

TRUMP TAJ MAHAL

(609) 449-5150

www.trumptaj.com

Friday and Saturday: The Monkees; March 30 and 31: Smokey Robinson; May 4 and 5: Rodney Dangerfield; May 18: K-Ci & JoJo.