

Artist captures the look and sound of Martin

Summerlin singer devotes daily practice to mastery of more than 100 impressions

By JAN HOGAN

VIEW STAFF WRITER

Residents don't have to go to the Strip to catch a one-man show that brings out the best of Las Vegas. The likes of Tom Jones, Neil Diamond, Elvis Presley, Ray Charles, Sammy Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra appear at the Suncoast showroom twice a month in the form of Tom Stevens.

The local performer has been flying under the radar even though he has an uncanny knack for sounding — and looking — like Dean Martin. His show, titled "An Evening with Dean and Friends," is deeply rooted in the late crooner's signature style. In fact, the first 20 minutes of his 90-minute show pays tribute to Martin, whom Stevens calls the "king of cool."

"I don't just look like him, don't just sound like him, I am him," Stevens said. "I become Dean when I'm on stage."

His characterizations are so precise, he said some people accuse him of lip-synching. He takes such comments as compliments.

Julie Paradise, a resident of The Lakes, said she traveled all over the world as a flight attendant for TWA and has seen a lot of entertainers, but

Stevens is the best. She and her parents go to see every performance.

"Not only is his voice so perfect, it's like he can change the physical features of his face, too. He becomes them," she said. "The first time I saw him, I said, 'Tom, you're going to be a headliner on the Strip one day.'"

Perhaps he can transform into celebrities so easily because he devotes every day to the music room inside his Summerlin home.

There, he has recording equipment as well as a TV set. The latter is for watching and re-watching clips of performers so he can study their mannerisms. It's an important tool when you do more than 100 impressions.

Stevens has been doing voices since he was a child growing up on Long Island. Back then, he picked up lines from television to try out on family and friends.

At 14, he got his first tape recorder. That's when he got serious about doing celebrity voices, adding more personalities to his roster and doing them better.

"It allowed me to play it back so I could hear how I sounded," he said. "It allowed me to cultivate better voices.

A lot of people, when they hear themselves on tape, say, 'Gee, that doesn't sound like me.' But when they're speaking, they're just paying attention to what they're trying to convey. They don't think of how the sound is coming out."

He said he learned to control how the sound came out.

He began appearing at clubs but kept his day job as a hairdresser, something he did for 25 years.

After moving to Florida, he hooked up with two men who already had an act as Sinatra and Perry Como. He joined them as Dean Martin and they appeared at country clubs, small theaters

and clubs.

"They were 20 years my senior — I was 35 or 36 back then — so I adapted my Dean to be older, to fit in," he said. "I sprayed my hair gray and put on glasses."

After a number of years, the man playing Sinatra died.

Not long after



ter, Stevens realized he was ready for a change and came to Las Vegas. That was four years ago.

He began performing at convention events and private parties, as well as spending eight months at the Barbary Coast lounge.

He travels to perform from time to time. Each June, he flies to Dean Martin's hometown of Steubenville, Ohio, to headline at its annual tribute festival. There, he met and sang with Dean Martin's daughter Deana Martin Griffeth, who gave him high marks for the portrayal of her father, saying she's "never seen anyone look and sound more like my daddy."

Stevens performs at the Suncoast on select Mondays.

His next appearance is slated for Monday at 7 p.m. and tickets are \$15.

For more information, call the box office at 636-70754.

Tom Stevens
Tribute artist is best known for performing as Dean Martin.



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