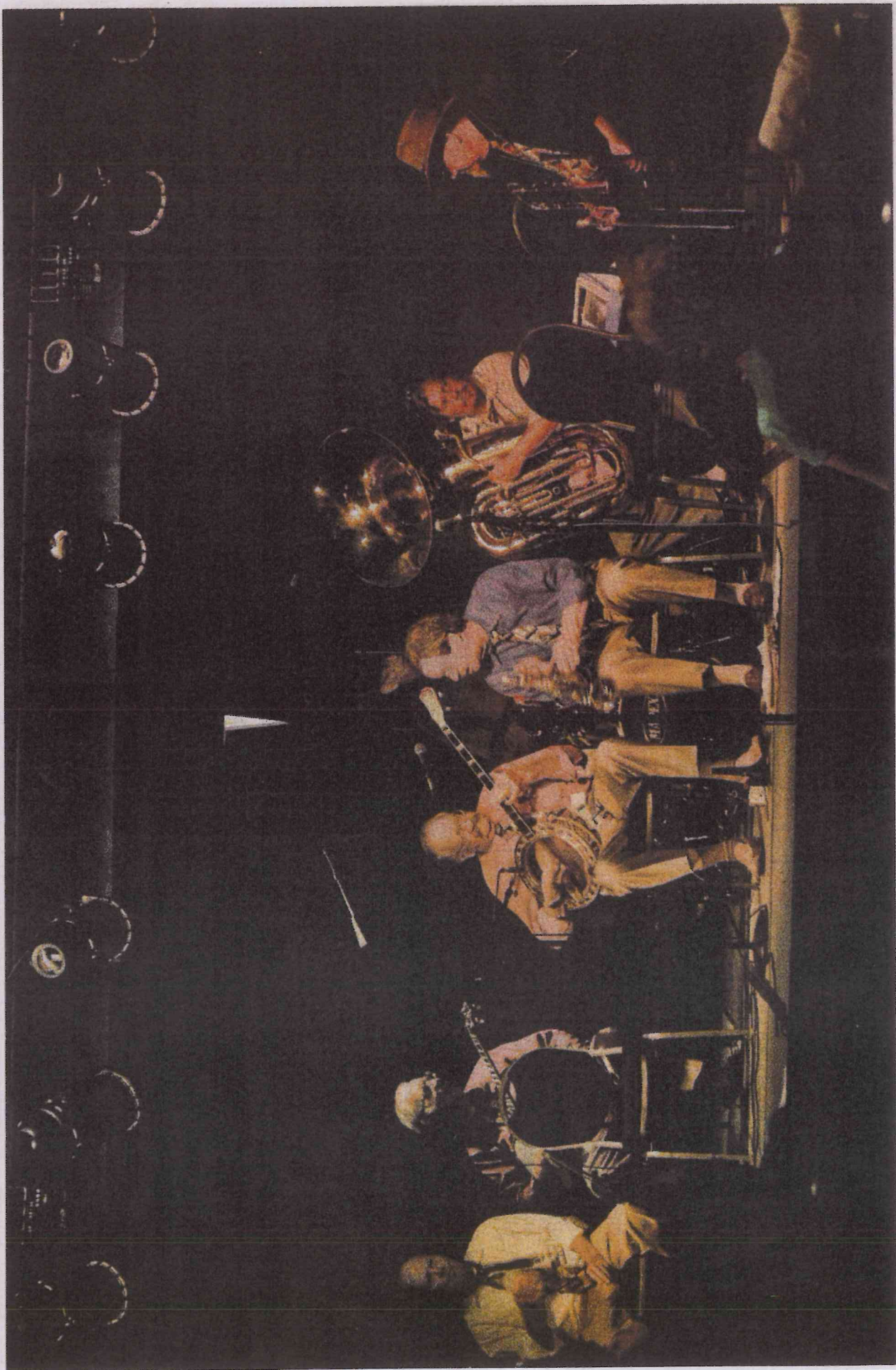


ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



“Jazz washes away the dust of everyday life.”

— Art Blakey

The language of jazz

Theresa Worthington

Desert Valley Times

In any other place, a man standing on stage with a washboard strapped around his neck would seem a bit odd, but Ralf Reynolds of the Reynolds Brothers Rhythm Rascals was right at home during the Mesquite Jazz Festival, which took place this weekend.

Ralf and brother John were members of one of nine bands to entertain at the CasaBlanca Casino.

The festival was the first of its kind in Mesquite, and the hope is that this test run will lead to this being a yearly event.

“As the show progresses I have been getting a lot of input,” said Petra Jones, CasaBlanca sales manager. “A lot of positive comments, and good ideas if we do it again.”

“I could see this being as popular as Elvis Rocks Mesquite.”

The nostalgia and excitement were infectious and attendees got into the groove of the atmosphere in more ways than just tapping their feet to the beat.

Anthony Brady, a singer and impersonator from Las Vegas, was found in the hallway singing Louis Armstrong’s What a Wonderful World, then improvising his own song in the famous musician’s tones.

“Now that’s some music right there,” he said.

Couples danced to the sounds of Dixie and swing from the 1930s and ’40s performed by Uptown



Sally McKay, who helped coordinate and plan the event. “We had 75 days to advertise. We need eight months for planning and everything.”

Despite the short notice, Jones was pleased with the turnout.

“I expected less attendance with this being the first time ever. I have hopes for next year, if we are able to do it again. I would like to bring in more types of jazz in a larger venue, but we have to wait and see.”

Keith Elliot, trombone player for the Titanic Jazz Band, was able to bring his 18-year-old son with him.

“We were able to go out in the desert and shoot tin cans,” said Elliot. “The first time ever at shooting things up with dear old dad.” His son also partook of the desert sun. “His hide is the tan-dest it has ever been.”

To end the event on Sunday morning, Marilyn Keller accompanied by the Jazznuts Jazz Band took a collection during the Gospel hour with the proceeds going to the Virgin Valley High School Jazz Band.

“When we promote a jazz festival, we always leave the area a little richer than when we came with music and by donation,” said McKay. “We consider that to be a part of how we give back to a community that has welcomed us with open arms.”

McKay collected a total of \$118 Saturday night and then added another \$169 for more than \$300 that was given to VVHS.

Lowdown Jazz Band.

The death of a piano in the meeting room did not faze members of the Titanic Jazz Band. They sat down and began playing requests and invited fellow jammers to join the show. Jeanne Brei, of Las Vegas, was brought on board as impromptu singer, and belted out I Can’t Give You Anything but Love. The set only highlighted the spirit of improvisation that is jazz.

Jokes about the demise of the much-needed piano lightened the mood further.

When Titanic packed up until their next gig, the meeting room was closed and the festival continued on in the showroom with shorter sets.

“The turnout was good for the short lead time we had,” said

