



Danny Gans

in an Encore performance

BY CAROLINE FONTEIN

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Who says you can't win in Las Vegas? Just ask Danny Gans, a highly talented impressionist, singer and comedian who has continued to win over audiences since his debut on the Las Vegas Strip in 1996.

His outstanding ability as a performer has won him various awards including being voted Las Vegas' Best All Around Entertainer 11 times by a local newspaper. Apart from being an endearing headliner, Gans is proving that first impressions really do last.

Gans started performing at the Stratosphere. From there he moved to the Rio and later to his own self-titled theater at the Mirage where he performed for eight years. When his contract came to an end in 2008, Steve Wynn, chairman and CEO of Wynn Resorts, offered Gans the opportunity to headline at Encore, the newest resort property on the Strip. Gans will open his show there on February 10.

Working with Wynn again is "very exciting with an exclamation point," said Gans. He first paired up with Wynn when he moved from Rio to Mirage.

"I built the Danny Gans Theater at the Mirage in 2000 as a result of being convinced that he would bring to our family a standard of performing artistry unequalled by any other single star in Las Vegas. The result has been obvious, and he has occupied that singular position ever since," said Wynn.

Gans' new show features a seven-piece band and his extensive repertoire of more than 200 impressions enhanced by Broadway-caliber lighting and special

Danny Gans

Where: Encore Theater, 3131 S. Las Vegas Blvd. Las Vegas, NV 89109

When: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday - Wednesday, Friday - Saturday

effects. The new theater at Encore gives him access to high-tech lighting and other production elements that were not available at the Mirage.

Various screens create the backdrop for Gans and his band, which performs from a multi-level platform. As Gans sings, dances and tells jokes, all in the personalities of different iconic performers, colorful images are displayed on the screens, which add a stimulating visual to every impression.

Aside from the enhanced production elements, Gans is also bringing in new characters including Jason Mraz, John Mayer, Michael Buble and a tribute to Jon Bon Jovi. Audience members can also expect to see all of their favorites like The Temptations, Tom Jones and James Brown.

"Danny is back with just about every star in history! We are excited about his new show and are going to have a great time together - just like the audience," said Wynn.

Gans' impressions are a mix of uncanny portrayals and some song parodies. For his impression of Garth Brooks he sings, "I got fat in low places," to the tune of the country music hit "Friends in Low Places." The lyrics result in laughter from the audience.

Later in the show he does an impression of Jeff Foxworthy and his signature redneck jokes. His uncanny ability to emulate Foxworthy's voice and the hilarious jokes will have you laughing as though you were watching the real comedian.

Although Gans has had tremendous success as an entertainer, it was not his first career choice. His boyhood dream was to play third base for the L.A. Dodgers and after entering college he signed with the team. Switching from a minor league baseball player to an all-around performer may sound like a surprising career move, but not according to Gans.

"I was doing impressions while I was playing baseball. It was something that kept me loose," said Gans.

After injuring his Achilles tendon during the first season, Gans decided to pursue a career that would encompass his other talent, entertaining. He started doing stand-up at The Comedy Store in Los Angeles, while also singing in a band and studying acting.

During that time Gans' father took him to see Sammy Davis Jr. Watching the legendary performer proved to

be a pivotal turning point in his life.

"I was so impressed," said Gans "He was a true entertainer and that became my goal."

He started performing for corporate conventions, where he became one of the most sought after entertainers. With 120 show dates booked a year, Gans had the opportunity to really groom his show and perfect his craft as an impressionist.

The toughest impressions are ones that don't really have mannerisms to go along with them that the audience can identify with, said Gans who averages about 75 different impressions per show.

"With someone like President Obama now I have to do my homework because he is so visible I really have to get that down. Sometimes an impression can take a couple hours and other times it might take a couple months," said Gans.

He explained that characters like Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley or George Burns are easy to do because they have notable mannerisms or characteristics such as white gloves, signature pelvic thrust or round glasses and cigar that act as supplements apart from just relying on his voice.

During the three-month break between moving his show from Mirage to Encore, Gans used his time off to work on a new CD that is set to be released soon. The CD features remakes of popular '70s songs. They are all songs that you don't really associate with an artist, but that make you want to move, said Gans.

These songs are performed in his voice, but he did select one slower song, "What a Wonderful World," where he could do impressions as a tribute to various legendary performers.

"It's a song that I thought, well if they didn't record it, they should have," said Gans.

The song features 10 impressions of entertainers that include Nate King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Willie Nelson and Ray Charles among others. Each personality has their own line and together their voices create a very heartwarming tune, said Gans.

Night after night of performances for 13 years on the Strip might sound redundant and tiresome to some, but Gans explained that the fans and audience response are what keep him going.

"It is very inspiring to go write something, learn a new voice and put a new song in the show. I see it in my head in one way and then for it to actually happen on stage in front of the audience and for them to appreciate it — I am very aware of that relationship," said Gans.

He explained that another part of the show's success is that people think of him as an everyday, hard-working guy who just happens to have a show at a casino and his name on a marquee.

"I think people just view me as being just like them. Beyond the fact that I work really hard to put together a great show, I think they are rooting for me," said Gans.



Photos courtesy of Cheryl O'Gara