

Mac King: Catch of the Strip

Las Vegas is hooked on comedy magician

It isn't a grand-style illusionist with high-tech props, a designer tuxedo and a ferocious animal who astounds audiences each afternoon at Harrah's.

It's Mac King...with a suitcase of everyday stuff, an old-fashioned plaid suit and a goldfish.

And he sure is funny.

The Kentucky-born comedy magician, who opens each performance with a heartfelt "Howdy" in his endearing Southern drawl, has been a staple of the Las Vegas entertainment scene since moving here in 1997. King currently headlines a self-titled show at the resort. Harrah's has been his home for the past 11 years, and a contract extension guarantees he'll stay through 2015.

This 15-year spell is a remarkable achievement in a city where the odds are never in your favor. So what makes King so winning? Surely it's not his bowl-like haircut or his abiding love of Fig Newtons. Could it be his self-deprecating humor, accompanied by the endless parade of onstage mishaps? No wonder he's been described as a "halfwit human."

"That's an exaggeration," refutes King. "I'm only a quarter of a wit."

At times he seems more like a fish out of water than a suave spellbinder. Yet, when each trick reaches its zenith, King delivers first-rate sleight-of-hand. The magic never takes a backseat to the laughs.

When asked if he considers himself a children's magician, King says "no" without hesitation. And this is clear when you see him pull cards from the zipper of his pants or encourage an attractive female volunteer to tie him up – albeit with a twisty-tie. Oddly, much of King's



Comedy magician Mac King, who performs at Harrah's, is known for his astounding tricks involving goldfish. Photo courtesy Caesars Entertainment Corp.

"The Mac King Comedy Magic Show" is presented at Harrah's every Tue.-Sat. at 1 and 3 p.m. Tickets cost \$32.95 plus tax and fees. Mac King also publishes a series of magic books and sets for children. His latest offerings are "Mac King's Campfire Magic" and the Lunchbox-O-Magic. They can be purchased online or at his shows.

act, which was developed in nightclubs and is now showcased in "Sin City," does appeal to little ones.

"Anything that's a bit risqué goes over kids' heads, and adults get a laugh out of that," explains King. "Family-friendly" is how I'd best describe my show, but you don't have to have a family to come."

Children not only fancy his peculiar props, but they also like being able to participate. Most of the time there's a volunteer onstage, providing a firsthand googly-eyed reaction to the tricks. This is how the fire for magic was first fueled in King.

before he showed me how to do the trick, and when he did, it was like I'd entered a secret world."

And he's never left. King gave his first performance at a neighborhood birthday party for one of the six Herbert kids when he was 11 years old. He wore overalls. Whereas many of his fellow magicians look back on their early shows as debacles, King says his was "halting" but he walked away with \$5 – and he's pretty sure he scored a piece of cake.

Several thousand shows later, King retains a childlike joy for magic. But instead of a trick pan and a guinea pig, he's become known for his antics with goldfish. In 2010, he even performed his signature trick for a national audience on the "Late Show with David Letterman."

"It's really magical, it's really funny, and it's really disgusting," describes King, outlining the holy

trifecta of a great hoax.

Boiled down, a volunteer holds a glass filled with water, while King baits a line – with a Fig Newton, of course – to go fishing. Somehow he catches a live goldfish from thin air. The truly inspired part, however, comes when he teaches the audience how to freak out their friends. After slicing a carrot and chewing up a piece in the shape of a goldfish, King pops it in his mouth – but that's not what he spits out.

"When I got the idea, I thought, 'Well, it's a fish and I eat fish,'" says King, about conquering his initial squeamishness. "Really it's just sushi – Kentucky-style sushi."

Lance Burton, a boyhood chum as well as a legendary Las Vegas magician in his own right, ranks the goldfish trick as his personal all-time favorite. Burton was responsible for getting King to come to the Entertainment Capital of

Gone Fishing...

For Five Fun Facts About Mac King

- His full name is Paxson McCormick King – a combination of the middle names of both his grandfathers.
- King met his wife of more than 25 years when she stepped out of the audience to volunteer at one of his shows.
- If he weren't a magician, King would probably be working in a restaurant. Cooking is his hobby.
- His daughter has an aquarium where all the goldfish that have grown too big to "perform" in the show retire.
- King has been promoting childhood literacy in Las Vegas for many years. When he reads books at local schools, he selects passages from his early favorites: "Sideways Stories" from Wayside School, "Somebody and the Three Blairs" and the "My Bookhouse" series.

the World all those years ago. Although the move certainly paid off and King now has what he considers "the greatest schedule in show business," for it allows him to be home with his family for both breakfast and dinner, it took a lot of convincing.

"I told him I didn't have the right kind of show for Vegas. I didn't have tigers and dancing girls and, well, anything sexy," reminisces King, with a laugh that turns his face a bit red. "But Lance was like, 'No, you'll be good. You'll be different.'" That he is.

This advertising supplement was written by Renée LiButti and prepared by the VEGAS.com staff and did not involve the reporting or editing staff of the Los Angeles Times. To reach VEGAS.com e-mail story@vegas.com.

VEGAS WEEKENDER



Shows

Sizzling summer shows

What pairs more perfectly with summer than a sizzling love story? See the love triangle unfold and enjoy all the musical numbers of "Phantom - The Las Vegas Spectacular" at the Venetian. Show times are Monday through Saturday at 7 p.m., with an additional 9:30 p.m. show on Monday and Saturday.

"Saturday Night Live" alum **David Spade** brings his signature dry humor to the Venetian on Friday, July 8 and Saturday, July 9. The show begins at 9 p.m. **Norm McDonald** (another "SNL" alum) also performs on Friday, July 8 and Saturday, July 9 at 8 p.m.

See **Wheels Parise** on Thursday, July 7 at Crown's Exxtrême Comedy Show inside the Rio. Parise appeared on HBO and VH1 alongside Geechy Guy and as an opener for Andrew Dice Clay. Doors open at 9 p.m.

The comedy continues with **Orny Adams** from "Teenworld" at Playboy Comedy at the Palms from July 7-9.

Alternative rock band **Puddle of Mudd** performs during Revolution: Party for the People at Red Rock pool. The first 1,000 guests (21 years and older) get in for free. Right after the concert, join in on the after-party festivities at the Red Rock Cabana Club, the private pool area located next door to the Sandbar pool. Cabana Club offers cocktail specials and live DJ music.

Spas

For a quick escape from the heat, rejuvenate your body, soul and spirit with a soothing spa service. Spa Bellagio offers its custom tropical fusion massage, designed to make you feel like you're on a faraway island. Choose from a deep tissue, Swedish or even a full-body relaxation massage that can be enjoyed in one of the hotel's private poolside cabanas. The 55-minute service is \$175 (or \$250 for 80 minutes). Add cool marble stones or a cooling eye treatment for an additional \$25.

Spa Mandalay features its Soothing Facial, a calming remedy for skin sensitivity, redness or irritation caused by too much sun. This facial includes a gentle cleansing, soothing mist and calming mask with cooling botanical ingredients. This 50-minute service is \$135.

Have the best of both worlds and enjoy an outdoor massage with Spa & Salon Vdara's pool & lounge signature massage. This full-body massage uses a variety of techniques ranging from light to medium pressure. The aromatherapy leaves you feeling calm and relaxed. Each treatment includes a chilled neck roll and a finishing mist. Enjoy this service in a unique spa cabana located on the Vdara pool deck.

Dining

Happy Hour specials

Simon Restaurant & Lounge offers a \$6 Happy Hour menu Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. - 7 p.m. Simon features appetizers, sushi, wine by the glass, beer and premium well drinks. Appetizers include personal margarita pizza, endive salad, pigs in a blanket, fried cocktail artichokes, calamari, grilled Shisito peppers, wok-charred edamame and endive salad. Sushi includes spicy albacore roll, baked California roll, Philly roll, veggie roll, spicy tuna and yellowtail and scallion.

In addition to its regular happy hour specials, Koi inside Planet Hollywood offers its new Sunset Flights tasting menu. Available for \$18, guests can enjoy this menu from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. daily. Sunset Flights features small bites and specialty sake pairings. These small bites include yellowtail tartare paired with Yuzu sake; crispy rice with spicy tuna paired with Yoshinogawa Echigo; and creamy rock shrimp tempura with Rock Sake Nigori.

For more sushi experiences, Dragon Noodle Co. & Sushi Bar at Monte Carlo offers classic and specialty rolls for half the original price on Saturday and Saturday from 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

At the Hard Rock Beach Club, enjoy specially-priced drinks during happy hour Monday through Friday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Drink specials include buckets and pitchers of beer for \$25, sport cups filled with well drinks and Budweiser products for \$14, sake specialty drinks for \$5 and half bottles of sake for \$50. Happy hour food includes grilled pita and hummus for \$6, Red and Rock sushi combo (California roll and spicy tuna roll) for \$14 and Beach Club salad (featuring smoked bacon, toasted pecans, grilled chicken, Dijon vinaigrette and a drizzle of honey mesquite barbecue sauce) for \$8. Happy hour is available Monday through Friday from 6 to 8 p.m. at the West Pool Bar and the Palapa. Happy hour is from 6 to 10 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday at the RELAX Pool Bar.

If you plan on bringing your pup to Vegas, Fido can be spoiled at Rumor hotel's Yappy Hour. Held every other Thursday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., Yappy Hour features drink specials, Yappatizers and pet-friendly products like designer dog collars, couture dog clothing, chic dog beds and even a dog massage therapist. The next Yappy Hour is Thursday, July 7.

Nightlife

Crown Nightclub hosts Thirst Thursdays with Top 40, hip-hop and dance music. Cover is \$20 (\$30 for guys). Doors open at 10:30 p.m.

Fans of R&B sensation **Lloyd** will want to head to Haze nightclub at Aria where he hosts his album release party July 9.

If you're all about free shows, pop group **Kahsino** performs a midnight show on Thursday at The Lounge inside the Palms. Kahsino adds a different twist to old-school and new-school club music.

On Friday, July 8, soul/rock artist **Mateo** performs at The Lounge. Mateo's musical influences include India Arie, Stevie Wonder, Robin Thicke and Radiohead.

Swim

Every week, Palms Place Pool kicks off its weekly pool party, The Sunday Scene, from noon to 5 p.m. Pool patrons can order items from Simon Restaurant & Lounge's Sunday Brunch menu. DJ Scene scratches and spins classic party anthems.

Baby G spins this Friday, July 8 for Encore Beach Club's Recess Fridays.

Gamble in style at Mandalay Bay's Beachside Casino. The three-story, climate-controlled, glass-fronted casino offers villas ranging from 250 to 500 square feet. Each villa accommodates up to 16 people and comes with cabana service and access to the private third-level pool. In addition, each villa comes with a restroom, wet bar and a private deck overlooking The Beach.



With new deals every week, now is the time to visit Las Vegas. Below is a sample of this week's hottest deals.

Treasure Island-TI

Up To 40% Off Your Stay

Book a room at Treasure Island - TI between now and July 21, 2011 for stay dates between now and Dec. 29, 2011 and get up to 40% off.

Imperial Palace

20% Off Your Stay

Book and stay in a room at Imperial Palace for 2 nights or more between now and Dec. 29, 2011 and get 20% off your stay! As an added bonus, you'll receive a voucher booklet at check in containing over 100 pages of offers at 9 Strip properties.

Blue Man Group

Dinner + Ticket Special

For a limited time only, get dinner plus a ticket to see Blue Man Group! This deal includes show ticket plus dinner at I ♥ Burgers located at The Shoppes in the Palazzo.

Visit www.vegas.com/deals

Terms and conditions apply. For complete terms and conditions of these deals plus many more offers, visit www.vegas.com/deals/.

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