



le roi est viva

elvis presley returns to vegas
thanks to cirque du soleil
By Martin Palicki



Cirque performers warm up on one of the show's major trampoline-laden set pieces. The unit is controlled by laser guides and glides wirelessly across the stage. Photo by Edward Wills



Up in the control booth, the conductor cues the orchestra, plays the keyboard (covered) and syncs pre-recorded tracks of Elvis' voice. Photo by Edward Wills.

Elvis has returned to Las Vegas. Sure he might have been spotted in various supermarkets and buses, but now you can see him nightly at the new City Center resort on the strip. Elvis has returned to Sin City in the new production Viva ELVIS, presented by Cirque du Soleil.

The show opened in February after years of planning and months of rehearsals. During the 90-minute production guests are taken on a journey through Elvis' life – hitting the highlights and often taking a somewhat artistic take on things. While no one actor portrays Elvis, he is present in much of the vintage films and photos the producers dug up for the show, and are displayed on the giant, 8-paneled moving LED screen that functions as the show's technological centerpiece.

At times the show is poignant, even touching, as when two acrobats portray Elvis and his twin brother, who died at birth. But more times than not, the action focuses on the showy side of Elvis, with little of the Cirque du Soleil mystery or whimsy people have come to expect from the troupe.

That's not to say the cast isn't talented. In a loosely-tied-to-Elvis number, his favorite comic book superheroes are brought to life bouncing and jumping across the stage on cleverly hidden trampolines. While their form is amazing to watch, their function within the narrative of the show is less obvious.

The real treat, and hidden gem of the show, is the integration of a live, roving band, live vocalists, and vintage vocal tracks of the King himself. The band's conductor, who doubles as the keyboardist, controls timecode that allows Elvis to sing along with the band.

As with all Cirque shows, the performance is a continually evolving product, so the show tonight is likely to be slightly different from the show six months from now, and so on. And while Viva ELVIS Might not have the magical elements a Cirque show generally has, it makes for a fun, entertaining evening that, at least for 90 minutes, brings Elvis back to life. **ipm**

City Center, the enormous complex that houses Viva ELVIS is still being finished, but two hotels and a shopping mall are already ready to be enjoyed. Vdara is a luxury hotel situated near the back of the property, away from the strip, and as such, is without a casino. It does, however, play host to the delicious and gourmet breakfast and lunch-only restaurant **Silk Road** – worth getting up early in Vegas for. **Crystals** mall provides upscale shopping opportunities similar to those found elsewhere on the strip.

The **Aria** resort hotel is the centerpiece of the property and contains a modern, airy casino, a deluxe spa, tech-savvy rooms and a bevy of delicious restaurants. Worth checking out are **Julian Serrano's** for a skillet of paella and **American Fish** for some of the freshest fish this far inland.