

Legendary Burgett returns to Tahoe for reunion tour



Jim Burgett returns to Lake Tahoe for a night of good old, roof poppin' rock in the South Shore Room at Harrah's Lake Tahoe on Aug. 14.

"Jim Burgett's Legendary Rock 'n' Roll Reunion" brings together a host of musicians and singers, many of whom were mainstays in the lounges and showrooms of Reno and Lake Tahoe during the past five decades.

On the bill with musical pioneer Burgett will be special guest star Marlene Ricci, a pop singer who was a protégé of and opener for Frank Sinatra. There will be special appearances from original Burgett band member J.B. Estes, on bass and vocals, and others including Mike Coulter, on tenor sax and vocals, and Fred Gallant on drums.

The "Rock 'n' Roll Reunion" features another legendary Nevada act – Sidro's Armada – who will be backing up Burgett, with Sidro on guitar, Ward Wallace on bass, Mark Adams on drums, Rick Bisbee on keyboards, Steve Sand on keyboards and horns, and Mary Ball on vocals and keyboards. Burgett and the band will be performing some of the great rock 'n' roll hits from the '50s, '60s and '70's, some of which were penned by Burgett. Ms. Ricci and Sidro's Armada will also perform solo segments.

It has been 50 years since Burgett and his band first played the hotel, turning the lounge into a party for those who loved the rock music of the day. When Burgett initially visited Tahoe in 1958, there was no rock 'n roll being played live anywhere in the city. He took it upon himself to rent the South Shore American Legion Hall three miles down the road from Harrah's and transform it into a venue in which his band

could play and locals could dance. Thus began the legendary Tahoe local teen dances that built a new community around which youth could rally.

Buoyed by the hall's success, in 1960, Burgett approached Harrah's about a gig in the lounge. Accepting the only shift available – 6am-noon – he offered not to be paid if he couldn't fill the room during those hours. But the band's infectious music and Harrah's employees who got off their shift and wanted to party turned the gig into a standing-room-only success. By 1962, Burgett and his band were popular headliners at Harrah's both in Lake Tahoe and Reno, playing various shifts, 26-30 weeks a year.

He began promoting artists while he was working at Harrah's, booking acts into a space formerly occupied by a Safeway market in South Lake Tahoe. First called the Sanctuary and then The Fun House, Burgett booked nascent headliners including Steppenwolf, whose record "Born to Be Wild" hit No. 1 just as the group came to town. Other acts Burgett brought in included The Grateful Dead, Santana, Tower of Power, the Guess Who, Chuck Berry, John Lee Hooker, Wayne Cochran and the CC Riders, none of whom had yet experienced their major recording successes.

In the '70s, he started managing Marlene Ricci and was responsible for introducing her to Sinatra, helping establish her success.

Last year on Burgett's 74th birthday, a surprise party for him was held on the beach at Tahoe, at which his former band member, J.B. Estes and his wife entertained. Burgett was asked to get up and sing and when he did, a large crowd gathered. That got such a buzz going about Burgett, both on the Internet and elsewhere, that he decided to call Harrah's Lake Tahoe and see about a reunion gig at the hotel.

Back in the Legion Hall days, a Tahoe newspaper reporter wrote

about Burgett: "The singer is Jim Burgett, high priest of the new music, Spanish-booted velvet-lapel'd, velveteen-cuffed Big Daddy of the new cult whose psychoanalysis has been breaking down inhibitions since somebody named Elvis first discovered the Hallelujah Trail."

Find out what that last sentence means on Aug. 14 at "Jim Burgett's Legendary Rock 'n' Roll Reunion." Tickets are \$25, plus fees, and are available by calling 800.786.8208 or online at www.SouthShoreRoom.com.