

McGraw flexes his music muscle in Tahoe



Tim McGraw belts out a hit during his July 16 show at Harveys. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Tim McGraw knows how to get women to scream – and he doesn't even have to sing. Tight jeans, biceps flexing and that smile are all it takes.

He was showing off his muscles at Anytime Fitness in Zephyr Cove before his concert Tuesday night at Harvey's outdoor arena. But he clearly didn't use up all of his energy.

Oh, and there were plenty of hoots and hollers for his music as well.



Tim McGraw walks through an aisle to get to the stage.

McGraw knows this stage well – with July 16 being his third time to the Lake Tahoe venue. He played here in 2002 – the inaugural year of the concert series – and in 2010.

With a nearly nonstop two-hour-plus show, the three-time Grammy winner did not disappoint.

Country music has long been a favorite among fans in and around Lake Tahoe. Merle Haggard, Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn and others used to easily fill Harrah's South Shore Room.

"In the last 15 years country has crossed over to rock. It's the new rock in a way because there is so much production involved and so many electric guitars. It veered away from traditional country," Harveys-Harrah's entertainment guru John Packer told *Lake Tahoe News*.

McGraw's stage set up proved this to be true. The video playing behind him at times was of the audience, other times of him larger than life, sometimes scenery, or special effects to go with the music. The eight-member band, while featured in solos, blended in well in what looked like glass cubicles for the grand piano, keyboard and drums.

Each year the Harveys Outdoor Concert Series tries to have three country acts. Packer said with the right show, the series could handle four, but he doesn't want it to become a

country-only venue.



On a few songs, Tim McGraw plays guitar.

“Over the years the venue has developed a reputation to be a great place to play and really good audiences, which any artist responds to a good crowd,” Packer said.

Tuesday was no exception. Much of the audience was singing right along with McGraw. This is more typical of country fans than those of other genres. They even know the B side.

As one fan put it, most country is pretty easy to memorize.

McGraw held the mic into the audience during several songs because they knew the lyrics as well as he did.

Packer said in the 1960s and '70s country had a more regional following, whereas now it's widespread with American country being an international sensation.

Country fans are loyal and will travel great distances to see someone they like.

McGraw showed his appreciation from the start by walking through the audience to get to the stage. Then he sat down on

the stage, singing to the swooning women. Mostly, though, he was a bundle of energy who rarely paused for a sip of water.

“What is fun about the country acts is they bring up-and-coming bands. If they are really strong, they end up the following year or two as the headliner,” Packer said.

Kip Moore, who opened for McGraw, had plenty of fans in the audience and likely gained some new ones. The Georgia-native said he doesn't get to the West often, so he promised to sign autographs after McGraw was done until the last person left. The line was long as he was starting.



Tim McGraw has no problem connecting with the crowd.

In 2010, Lady Antebellum opened for Tim McGraw – the same year the trio took home several Grammys. Last year Lady Antebellum headlined in Tahoe.

Sugar Land and Miranda Lambert used to be opening acts, too, but have both headlined at Harveys.

The Band Perry opens for Rascal Flatts on Friday and that group is already the lead act at some venues.

But the venue, while popular, isn't going to get the artist who only wants a stadium-size crowd to play to. The Harveys venue seats about 7,000, depending on how it's configured. For a general admission show with no chairs it can hold about

10,000 people.

--

Upcoming country concerts:

- July 19 – Rascal Flatts with The Band Perry
- Aug. 30 – Brad Paisley with Chris Young, Lee Brice
- More information may be found online.