

Hard Rock wants to turn up the sound on fun



Lake Tahoe Hard Rock owners are spending \$60 million to renovate the property.

By Kathryn Reed

A song, like poetry, can capture a mood, leave an edible mark and forever resonate throughout time. It can be head-banging, soul-searching, spine-tingling.

“Music is different to every single person. So is how you interpret it,” Don Marrandino, general manager of Lake Tahoe Hard Rock, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Marrandino knows his music, knows Lake Tahoe and is gambling on the two being perfect together.

It's the music that lures people into Hard Rock establishments. Then the unique memorabilia – from tickets to playbills to outfits to instruments – keeps them in the zone.

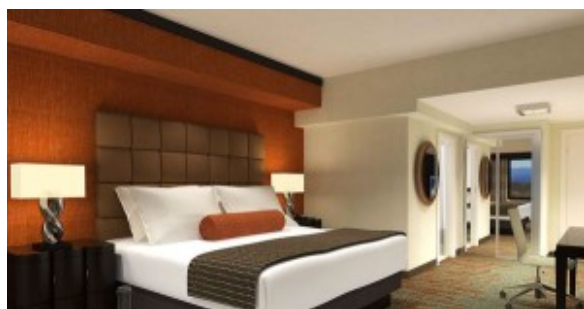
It's more like a museum than casino in many ways. One doesn't need to gamble to get the full flavor of a Hard Rock.

What the Hard Rock tries to do is put a little of its spell into all corners of the property so people will want to come back, stay longer and spend the night. It would be near impossible to see everything on one or even a handful of visits. And, of course, the music is always changing.

The 539-rooms of what was the Horizon hotel-casino at Stateline have been gutted to their studs. Contractors are scurrying to finish the \$60 million remodel as soon as possible. Reservations are being taken starting the night of Jan. 9.

An earlier opening date is possible – maybe even New Year's Eve.

“One thing we're adamant about is we don't want to open when we are not ready. We hope in the next several weeks to have a better idea of when we are ready to do so,” Marrandino said.



This rendering shows how the rooms are being revamped.

He said there have been challenges to dealing with an old building – it opened in 1965 as Del Webb's Sahara-Tahoe – but nothing that has cut into the time or could not be overcome.

Marrandino would like to recapture some of the glory days of the old property by having people who once played there take to the stage again. He wouldn't mention any names in particular.

While the great and even obscure sounds from the 1960s to today will boom from the speakers for all to hear, the new casino will also have a separate venue for music.

Specifics about most of the property are being kept underwraps – including if the concert hall will be anything like The Joint in Las Vegas, how big it will be or if anyone has been booked.

First, more than 500 employees need to be hired and trained, which started last month.

Tats, piercings, unnaturally colored hair – they have a place in front of the house. Yes, Lake Tahoe Hard Rock wants authentic people to work at the Stateline hotel-casino, not people who look like everyone else.

“The employees are allowed to be themselves. The only thing we demand is they treat customers like they are their best friend,” Marrandino said.

The preview center that opened this summer in the Heavenly Village will close Oct. 15. There are no plans to have a Hard Rock retail outlet outside of the casino property. But do expect different merchandise than what has been sold elsewhere. This is because the creative geniuses are working on winter specific logowear.

“We are putting stuff together that has never been done before at a Hard Rock. It should make for fun holiday presents,” Marrandino said. (This suggests a pre-Christmas opening.)

Whenever opening day is, it will begin a phased approach. Marrandino said it could take two years for the entire

property to be fully operational.

No word yet on specifics about the dining establishments. But Executive Chef Jonathan Snyder won't be the only local with a position of authority. The human resources director and marketing director also grew up here.

As for what will happen to the Hard Rock Café next door at Harveys, their public relations firm says they are staying open. The café and hotel-casino are owned by different entities.