

Stan Irwin – 1920-2015

By Ed Koch, Las Vegas Sun

Stan Irwin may have had his roots in old-time Vaudeville, but after he got to Las Vegas in 1946 he became renowned for being a forward-thinking entertainment innovator, decades ahead of his time.

When Las Vegas was firmly the domain of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, Irwin, working closely with fellow Sahara Hotel executive Herb McDonald, brought The Beatles to town for two historic concerts at the old Las Vegas Convention Center.

In the late 1960s when Elvis Presley's career was on the downswing, Irwin offered Presley's manager Col. Tom Parker \$75,000 a week for the King to perform at the Sahara. Parker refused the offer but several years later Elvis became a Vegas legend with record-setting attendance marks at the Las Vegas Hilton.

Irwin, who booked Johnny Carson into the Sahara in 1964, produced the first two years of the "Tonight Show with Johnny Carson." After leaving Las Vegas in the late 1970s for Hollywood, Irwin served as manager of entertainer Pearl Bailey.

During his long gaming entertainment career, Irwin also held the title of vice president and executive producer for the Sahara Lake Tahoe, the Mint Hotel and the Thunderbird Hotel when they were Del Webb properties.

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