

Liberty Call

Mardi Gras Follies 2001 gives isle residents a taste of Las Vegas

"Turn the spotlights on! Turn up the music! It's show-time!" booms veteran showman Jack Cione as he orchestrates the Mardi Gras Follies 2001 at The Banyans.

It's Cione's 15th year directing the glitzy Las Vegas-style show, this year featuring about 50 volunteer performers.

The master showman, who brings more than a half century of experience and know how to the Follies, writes, directs and choreographs the entire production. It takes long, dedicated hours over a period of months for the cabaret revue to come together - and when it does, the result is a stupendous extravaganza of song, dance and sequin-studded costumes.

A high-energy cast of performers, as well as those working behind the scenes, are all volunteers who contribute their time to participate in the Follies production. They include active duty and retired military, members of the base wives club, military dependents, and Department of Defense employees - who range in age from nine to 70. For some, such as the husband and wife team of Cmdr. Stephen and Cindy Serkies or Cmdr. John Chrzanowski (USN Ret.) and wife Patti, it's a family event.

The show, sponsored by the Pearl Harbor Performing Arts Association, opens Feb. 24. The Association raises thousands of dollars each year for local military and civilian charities.

This year's Follies, which continue a tradition that has endured at Pearl Harbor for 45 years, features a variety of musical numbers and something for everyone. The finale is a rousing salute to the military, a patriotic rendition in red, white and blue.

In addition to the dance numbers, the show offers stylings by several vocalists. Randy Smith, sounding remarkably like "Old Blue Eyes", croons Frank Sinatra selections and Dawe Glover takes the audience on a trip back to the "Hound Dog" days of Elvis.

With smooth styling and an incredible voice, Monnette Forte performs ballads and love songs throughout the show. Also featured in vocal numbers are Denise Bee, Alison Maldonado and Jade Glover.

The fast-moving, boot stomping performance of gaucho team Claudio and Mariko offers a change of pace from the intricate Chinese specialty dance of Sing Sing Bliss.

Whether it's the strains of a 1940s waltz, the Latin rhythm of the tango and the salsa or the drum-pounding beat of Africa, the audience is treated to a variety of music, smoothly choreographed moves and fancy footwork.

Much of the magic of the presentation is brought about by the creative genius of Bill Doherty, the Follies costume designer. Armed with bushels of feathers, yards of dazzling fabrics, thousands of sequins and a sewing machine, Doherty designs and fashions the costumes and elaborate headpieces worn in the show. More than 300 costumes are used during the production with performers averaging several costume changes during the two-hour extravaganza.

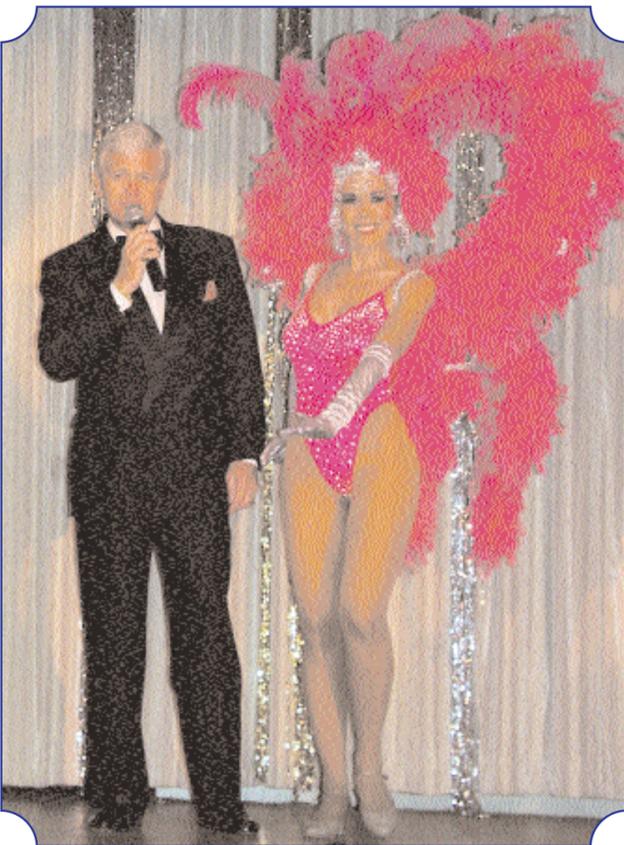
If you're looking for an evening of high-quality, affordable entertainment - for a good cause - catch the Mardi Gras Follies 2001. It's an opportunity to see a lavish Las Vegas-style show, the only one of its kind in Hawaii.

The \$35 per person ticket price includes a buffet dinner, the show, tax, tip and free parking. Dinner shows with buffet starting at 6:30 p.m. are: Feb. 24, March 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29 and 31. There are also two early Sunday shows on March 18 and 25 with the buffet starting at 5:30 p.m.

For more information or tickets, call The Banyans box office at 473-1703.



The Mardi Gras Carnival Parade heralds the beginning of Mardi Gras Follies 2001 at The Banyans. The Las-Vegas style show features more than 50 performers who volunteer their time to participate in the event. Now in its 45th year, the Follies is sponsored by the Pearl Harbor Performing Arts Association.



Above: Benny and Faith Agbayani (foreground) and John and Karen Kotaki (background) have some fun with the GI Jive number.

Far left: Randy Smith croons a Sinatra tune to showgirl Joni Albao.

Left: Marika Lyons and Sing Sing Bliss do some steppin' out in a jazz tune.



Above: Barry Zlatoper (left) and Wally White (right), along with other members of the salsa troupe, dance with South American rhythm. Left: Makanani (left) and Pat Hatoun clown around. Right: Rae Ann Smith, resplendent in red, white and blue, is Miss Pearl Harbor.



Photos and story by Karen S. Spangler