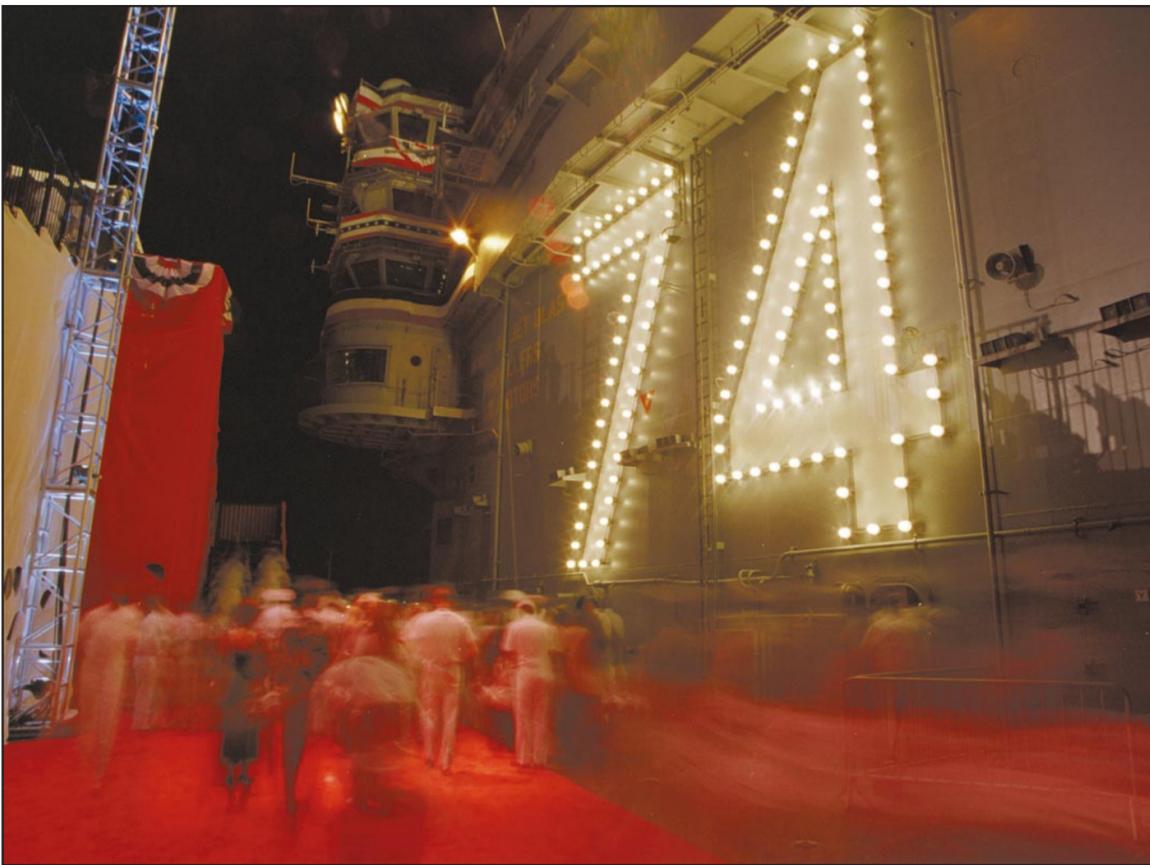


Pearl



PH3 William K. Fletcher photo

The hull number of USS John C. Stennis proudly lights the way for participants to make their way to the grandstand and their seats before the beginning of the movie. More than 2,000 VIPs were invited to watch the premiere with another 2,000 local and Stennis Sailors and their families invited to watch the movie during a second showing on



Photo by Kathryn Indiek/ImageDirect ct.

(Above) Cuba Gooding Jr. with Sailors and fans in front of USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) for the world premiere of "Pearl Harbor."

Disney premieres 'Pearl Harbor,' wows 2,000 guests

By JOC Gerard Sekerak
EDITOR

In fine fashion, Disney did what it intended to do and then some. With the premiere of the epic movie Pearl Harbor Monday night aboard the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis, Disney's cast and crew honored those who died during the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor, paid tribute to the attack's survivors and wowed 2,000 distinguished visitors.

Disney hosted top VIPs from former Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, Hawaii Governor Ben Cayetano and Commander, U.S. Pacific Command Adm. Dennis Blair right on down to, well, yours truly. Then throw in rocker Courtney Love, former Steelers running back Franco Harris and newsman Sam Donaldson, to mention just a few, for a well-rounded and star-studded event.

All of the guests had the opportunity to participate in the first of its kind movie premiere event. Everyone who showed the proper credentials (two-types of Disney-issued badges and a photo ID) strolled down the 850-foot red carpet, which lined Hotel pier up to Stennis' brow.

Once on board, guests were treated like royalty. They toured vintage aircraft, a B-25 bomber and a P-40 Warhawk, both of which were used in the filming of the movie, and drew contrast from the Navy's most

modern warbird - the F-18A/E Super Hornet.

For two hours prior to the premiere of the movie, guests clamped down on a buffet of finger foods and beverages while enjoying the sight and sounds of some of the military's finest bands. On hand at the event were the Army's 25th Infantry Division (light) Tropical Lightening Band, the Marine Forces Pacific Band, and the Navy's Pacific Fleet Band.

Also included in the pre-premiere events were aerial displays of vintage aircraft used in the movie, Army Blackhawk helicopters as well as parachute jumps from a helicopter, a helo cast demonstration and static displays by the Navy SEALs.

At about 6:45 p.m., an announcement was heard throughout the ship, requesting that all guests take their seats for the movie. Less than 20 minutes later, the crowd watched from their seats as four F-16 fighter jets from the Hawaii Air National Guard flew over Stennis - stern to bow - in the missing man formation.

Minutes later, country star Faith Hill provided her personal touch to evening colors with her rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," accompanied by the Honolulu Symphony, led by pops conductor Matt Catingub. At the moment Hill sang "and the rockets red glare," fireworks launched from a boat in the harbor lighting up the darkening sky.

After a welcoming of guests and an introduction of the movie's cast, Dick Cook, chairman of the Walt Disney Motion Picture Group and the night's emcee kindly asked the guests to remain seated after the movie for a surprise, then triggered

the lowering of a four story movie screen with the words, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, Pearl Harbor."

Just over three hours later, Disney honored the real stars of the premiere, veterans of the attack on Pearl Harbor - including the Navy nurses, and the surviving members of Doolittle's Raiders. The veterans and guests were then treated to the largest display of fireworks west of the Mississippi. Again the Honolulu Symphony provided synchronous accompaniment, this time to the fireworks. The symphony's heartfelt sounds were also simulcast on local radio stations for those close enough to see the dynamic display.

A lavish reception followed in the carrier's hangar bay where guests mingled with VIPs and again listened to sounds of the military's finest bands. It didn't take the Air Force Band of the Pacific long to warm up before being commended by two of the movie's comical co-stars, Dan Ackroyd and Tom Sizemore.

The two offered a 15-minute musical redirection including a raucous and racy performance of "Mustang Sally."

By the time it was over, sometime in the early a.m., Disney had accomplished what it set out to do: premiere its new movie, pay homage to Pearl Harbor survivors and veterans of World War II and wow a crowd of thousands. And the Navy staked claims to the possible residual benefits - an increase in recruiting as well as the turnaround of the fading memory of the events surrounding the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The movie opens today at theaters nationwide.



"Pearl Harbor" stars Ben Affleck and Kate Beckinsale are m



PH2 Chad McNeely photo

(Above) Medal of Honor recipient John Finn makes his way through the cheering crowd along the red carpet before boarding the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) for the world premiere of "Pearl Harbor". Finn is the last surviving recipient from the day of infamy. During the first attack by Japanese airplanes on the Naval Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, on Dec. 7 1941, Lt. Finn promptly secured and manned a 50-caliber machine gun and returned fire to the Japanese attackers. After being ordered to leave his post and seek medical attention, Finn returned later in the battle to supervise the rearming and relaunching of naval aircraft.

Harbor



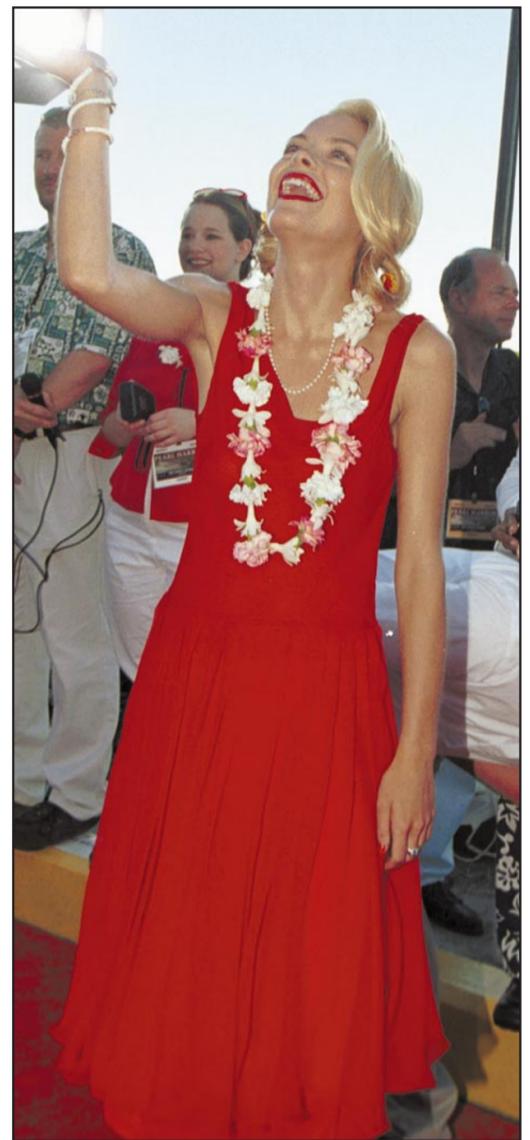
PH2 Chad McNealey photo

Robbed by Sailors, fans and the media as they make their way up the red carpet at the world premiere of the movie on John C. Stennis (CVN 74) on May 21.



PH1 Craig D. McClure photo

(Above) Fireworks explode at the conclusion of the premiere showing of the movie "Pearl Harbor" aboard the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74).



PH2 Chad McNealey photo

(Right) Actress James King waves to fans on the flightdeck of the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) as she makes her way down the red carpet.