

Wayne Newton

Total package was definitely upbeat, accented by much good-natured fun



Wayne Newton appeared in concert last night at the Bayfront Center arena with a slick, well-paced show.

chestra.

He jokes about a time about 100 pounds ago when people thought he was some kind of a fat cookie. Today he is tall (6-foot-3) and slim, an impressive figure in black tux with a touch of gold embroidery down the sleeve and trouser leg. The flamboyance doesn't interfere with the singing, which displays a rich baritone voice of wide range and character.

Newton doesn't have a special style, but he can fit into rock and roll, country or romantic ballad with no noticeable shift of gears, and sounds convincing in all of them. Did I say not flamboyant? Who else has a banjo and a guitar with his name inlaid in mother-of-pearl on the fingerboard?

Musical honors during the evening were shared with pianist Glen Smith, who sang *That Oldtime Rock and Roll*; banjoist Mike Martsoff, who contributed a solo with Newton playing guitar, and vocalist Avis Harrell, who joined Newton for a duet of *My Endless Love* and a really affecting rendition of *Love'll Lift Us Up Where We Belong*.

The show's impact and effectiveness comes not only from the genial personality and musical talent of the star, but the superb musical arrangements and performance of the band, all the work of conductor Don Vincent.

Newton sang from 8:50 to 10:50 p.m. The warm-up act was Freddie Roman, a comedian who was exceptional for a warm-up comedy act. He was a really, genuinely funny man. He told ethnic jokes, diet jokes, political jokes and a good many jokes about Florida and St. Petersburg (what does he do in the Poconos, one wonders), and kept the audience in stitches for almost 40 minutes.

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between him and the members of the 22-piece band that supports him and the trio of females that backs him up.

Newton jokes with them, and they harrass him with extempore remarks and sound effects. At one point, he even starting joking with the light crew and was rewarded with total darkness. But it's all in good fun and gives a nice improvised feeling to what is obviously a slickly rehearsed and well-coordinated cabaret show.

That unrehearsed feeling came out strongly when Newton was first announced to the strains of Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* (how many night club shows start with that kind of touch?), interrupted by the lead trumpet with a bit of *Way Down Upon the Suwannee River*, to the considerable surprise of the rest of the or-

The Wayne Newton Show, Bayfront Center arena, Tuesday, May 10, 8 p.m. Starring singer Wayne Newton, with the Don Vincent Orchestra. Program of songs of the 1960s, 70s and '80s. One performance only; admission charged. ST. PETE.