

# Phoenix Suburb Popping Up As Pop Citadel

By AL SENIA

MESA, Ariz.—Although this suburb of Phoenix is known primarily for its bedrock conservatism and its large Mormon population, if three area concert promoters have their way, they'll be a new attraction here: popular music.

The Mesa Community Amphitheatre is emerging as the east Phoenix area's crown jewel for outdoor music shows.

Three promoters—Dan Zelisko of Evening Star Productions in Tempe, Doug Clark, working under the banner of his newly-created Doug Clark Productions; and Dirk Witter, a Mesa native who is new to the music business—all say they want to book shows into the outdoor venue.

The facility, which features sloped, grassy seating for 3,500 is being described as one of the most attractive in the Phoenix area. It is located about 15 miles from the center of Phoenix.

Zelisko, Clark and Witter are scrapping for dates and for available artists, a sure sign that the highly competitive music business has at last made it to Mesa.

The promoters say they will shy away from presenting hard rock shows because of noise complaints from surrounding residential areas. They promise to stick to jazz, soft rock and more adult sounds.

"I like the place. It's attractive. It's outdoors and you can put folding chairs in there," says Clark, who for the last 10 years brought nearly 1,000 shows into the Celebrity Theatre in downtown Phoenix.

Clark plans to bring 10 to 15 "softer rock" shows into the facility in the next year. He has an Aug. 22 date booked for Emmylou Harris, whom Clark originally planned to book into Phoenix Symphony Hall. Reserved seats are \$9.75 with gen-

eral admission priced at \$8.75.

Singers like Al Stewart and Gordon Lightfoot are the kind of performers he has in mind for his series

of concerts, Clark says.

He adds the outdoor Mesa amphitheatre will serve as "an interim step" until he can build a new Valley

concert facility.

It was Dan Zelisko and his Evening Star Productions who discovered the usefulness of the facility.

Zelisko booked two shows—Todd Rundgren's Utopia and Ian Hunter—into the amphitheatre earlier this spring.



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LOS ANGELES—Long described as "the last holdout" in Las Vegas circles, Lawrence Welk has capitulated. He and his troupe of entertainers—more than 30 in all—will appear at the MGM Grand Hotel starting July 31 on an engagement which could run as long as four weeks.

Welk, now 77 years old, refused offers from the major casino hotels dating back to the early 1940s when the Last Frontier and El Rancho Vegas constituted the only attractions at the dusty Nevada resort town.

"I don't understand why we've always been in demand there," Welk said last week after agreeing to the lucrative MGM Grand offer. "Our music does not attract the swinging, 'big roller' crowd. We are strictly family in appeal. But if they want us, we'll be pleased to perform."

Welk's weekly syndicated television program is beamed over more than 250 stations in the U.S. and Canada and unfailingly attracts immense, loyal audiences.

He has led a band for 56 years, the longest of anyone still active. Welk was a farmer boy in North Dakota when he started his first orchestra, fronting it with his accordion. Come July, the MGM Grand marquee will light up with his name and "Champagne Music" billing for the first time on the Vegas strip.

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