

Buffett in Bossier: Short and sweet - Paradise Theater offers intimate, up close experience with artist

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, NEWS-TELEGRAM ARTS EDITOR
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I got lucky during a walking tour of Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville Resort and Casino's grand opening July 3. Our guide stopped in the Paradise Theater, an intimate 900-seat venue where the Big Kahuna himself was playing a sold-out, VIP show that evening. The first person we saw was Buffett's long-time security chief, Charleston Miles. Among his many duties, Miles is the one who directs photographers during the show. Usually, he lets us shoot the first three songs – without a flash – and then sends us to our seats.

Since my media kit didn't include a promised photo pass, I asked Charleston where I was supposed to be at the beginning of the show. He said I could shoot as much as I wanted from my chair, which was way more than I expected. I was really glad I had packed the long lens.



Maybe I could finally get that "up close and personal" shot I've been wanting since Jimmy became a household word 40 years ago.

Most of the tickets allotted for the show went to the hotel/casino for "high rollers," but a few were sold through Ticketmaster at a range from \$199-\$599 on the Internet.

To make sure everyone felt welcomed during the event, the hotel hosted a pre-show at the 5 O'Clock Somewhere bar just outside the theater doors. Booze in the Blender Margaritas and Buffett's Land Shark beer flowed freely for those with VIP tags. Once the theater doors opened, the bar at the back offered free 'ritas all night. Booze and food were also plentiful at the after-party by the pool. The whole evening gave new meaning to "party with a purpose."

Right before the show began, some of the cast members of "Duck Dynasty," a reality television show, were escorted to their seats to the left of the stage. They sat in front of curtain that separated them from the rest of the crowd. Buffett referenced them several times during the performance and called them on stage to sign backup during "Margaritaville" finale. The locals seemed excited to see their neighbors from West Monroe in the spotlight.



Jimmy and an abbreviated Coral Reefer Band played to the loyal crowd for just over an hour. He bounded onto the stage with "Changes in Latitudes," getting the crowd to sing the "good time and riches" part of the lyrics.

Then, he talked about mudbugs (crawfish) and his first job as a reporter for Billboard magazine's Nashville office.

He said he liked covering the Louisiana Hayride because "They didn't have crawfish in Nashville and I have a propensity for those creatures."

"Pencil Thin Moustache," "Five O'Clock Somewhere," and "Son of a Son of a Sailor" came in

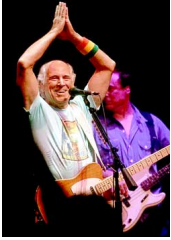
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quick succession.

Between numbers, Buffett chatted with the crowd, sometimes going off script, saying the concert was “free - sort of” and that it was Thursday night (it was Wednesday).



He also pre-announced Bossier City concerts by five-time Country Music Association Musician of the Year award winner Mac McAnally and his buddy Zac Brown, with whom he recorded the 2011 hit “Knee Deep.”

Buffett led the faithful in “Volcano,” “Come Monday” and “Cheeseburger in Paradise.” These tunes were expected, since the Margaritaville restaurant in the hotel comes with a volcano, complete with a girl who slides down a zip line into a blender once every hour on nights and weekends and the restaurant offers six versions of cheeseburgers.

Then Buffett said he was calling an audible and added “Brown Eyed Girl” to the set. During the intro, he rambled on about an urban myth involving Van Morrison (who wrote the song) and an event at Louisiana State University Tiger Stadium that was the inspiration for the tune. The bit didn’t work so well, so it was on to old chestnuts, “A Pirate Looks at Forty” and “Fins.”

At a stadium show, some 20K fans get on their feet and perform the “Fins” ritual (see photo at left). Not everyone in the small hall was willing to participate. In fact, the people in front of us sat down most of the night. Oh, well.

Then, as quickly as it began, it was over.



The Duck Dynasty guys came onstage, sang with the Coral Reefer Boys on “Margaritaville.” They should keep their day jobs.

The group took a bow and Buffett was gone. It was, after all, a holiday and the big boss was ready to head home for a weekend with his family.

The boys in the band band that night, including Peter Mayer, Erick Darken, McAnally, Roger Guth, Buffett and Jim Mayer, are all outstanding musicians, and they did a great job, but I missed Nadirah Shakoor and Tina Gullickson on backups, Michael Utley on keyboards, Doyle Grisham on steel guitar, Robert Greenidge on steel drums and John Lovell on trumpet.

I hope to get back to Bossier to see Mac, Zac Brown and the Temptations (coming Saturday, Nov. 16).

Margaritaville Resort and Casino is a delightful state of mind.

Paradise Theater is a great hall, especially when you have a long lens and a license to shoot all night.

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For an expanded view of the show, check out our Facebook page later this week.

For a complete listing of upcoming shows in the Paradise Theater, click [here](#) .