

Gans Opens to Rave
Reviews at the Mirage

Gaming Today
By Don Usherson (excerpt)

If there were ever a hint of doubt as to our selection of Danny Gans as “Showman of the year,” his performance on opening night at The Mirage last week removed even that hint.

With a luxurious new theater, marvelous sound system and seven musicians behind him, Gans drew awe, guffaws and several well-deserved standing ovations.

The last time I saw a performer so enthrall an audience was Sammy Davis Jr. at Bally’s.

He is simply the best in the world at what he does and one of the best entertainers ever to work in Las Vegas. And though folks seem to like to refer to him as a singing impressionist, he does dozens of “non-singing” impressions better than anyone else.

I have never seen a better serious impression than his theatrical take on Al Pacino in “Scent of a Woman.”

He not only captures Pacino’s smallest vocal nuances as the blind officer but he’s so convincing he even creates the physical illusion, looking just like Pacino. A masterpiece.

His George Burns rapping a la M.C. Hammer is one of the funniest ever.

The “uncanny” list includes send-ups of Joe Cocker, Ray Charles, Casey Kasem, Garth Brooks, Al Jarreau, Anita Baker, Aaron Neville, Stevie Wonder, Michael Bolton, Tom Jones, Rod Stewart, Eric Clapton, Neil Diamond, David Bowie, Boz Skaggs, Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett, Sarah Vaughan, Johnny Mathis, Katherine Hepburn, Henry Fonda, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis Jr., Louis Armstrong, John Travolta, Rodney Dangerfield, Wayne Newton, Christopher Lloyd, Woody Allen, Pee Wee Herman and Robin Leach.

In all he nailed almost 70 voices. Only two, those of Paul Lynde and Frank Sinatra, fell short of their mark.

If not for a career ending injury, Gans would easily have been one of major league baseball’s best power-hitters. (I know, I watched the 38-year old athlete/entertainer prove he could still hit 90 mph fastballs over 400 feet last spring.) So, it is apropos that the magnitude of talent this slugger-turned-entertainer displays is “Ruthian.”