

BransonFest Out West concludes three-day event;

Dates already set for next year

MESQUITE, Nev. – A touch of Branson, Mo., completed a three-day run Feb. 8-11 with a popular first-time Country Western festival BransonFest Out West here at three hotel-casinos.

The event sponsored by the Mesquite Resort Association featured a long list of activities including three nights of entertainment featuring The Duttons, Clay Cooper and the Branson Brothers all at the CasaBlanca Event Center. In addition, the event included a slot tournament, fitness classes, a fashion show, talent show and wine tasting, to name a few.

In speaking with those who attended the event, it was evident that BransonFest Out West not only filled a void in the Mesquite calendar while bringing hundreds of visitors to this city situated about 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas. In addition, organizer Sue Arko announced on the second day that BransonFest Out West would return Feb. 7-10 next year.

“The Mesquite community has been awesome,” said Arko, a resident of Phoenix. “The people here were very supportive and the volunteers were very helpful.”

Sheila Dutton, whose family opened the three concerts, said the Dutton family enjoyed coming to Mesquite for BransonFest Out West. A native of Hurricane, Utah, she is now a fine bassist and also the CEO of the organization. Husband, Dean, also from Hurricane, plays the rhythm guitar and the two joined their children and grandchildren to present a high-energy evening.

“We really enjoyed being there,” said Mrs. Dutton. “We’d love to come back.”

Mrs. Dutton said the group was approached by a travel group to see about playing in Mesquite. Judith Dutton, who also plays the piano for the Duttons, lined up the agreement with Arko.

The Duttons played in Mesquite for the Mesquite Concert Association in 1995 and 2000.

“I was amazed how many people came up to us and commented that they had seen us in Mesquite before,” she said. “People also saw us play at the Clark County Fair in the mid-1990s.

Cooper was among the enthusiasts who lauded the event.

“I called my wife in Branson and she said we got six inches of snow there,” laughed Cooper, a popular Country Western singer who delighted the audience in the CasaBlanca Event Center on the second night. “Branson is very patriotic, and it’s the Bible Belt. I like it in Mesquite. We just created a new Branson Out West.”

The event experienced a mixture of weather conditions ranging from sunshine to uncharacteristic rain storms which have pelted Southern Nevada this year. For the most part, the event featured good weather with high temperatures in the 60s.

Perhaps one of the biggest keys to BransonFest Out West was the fact that the city of Branson also advertised in Mesquite in what would seem like an ideal marketing opportunity.

Viva Mitchell of Casa Grande, Ariz., was among the many who praised BransonFest Out West.

“I had a great time,” said Mitchell. “It was the fourth time that I had seen the Duttons.”

George and Jean Thomas traveled to Mesquite after first visiting Palm Springs, Calif. They found the venue while driving home and stayed to enjoy themselves.

“We just walked in,” said Mrs. Thomas, a registered nurse. “It was a delightful event.”

Mr. Thomas added “There is lots of everything here. I can’t get over how much fun everyone is having. I think it’s a great idea, and there have been all kinds of music.”

Van Nuys, Calif. resident Pat O’Reilly said she came to the event as part of a travel group.

“I have been to Branson before, and this also was good healthy fun,” said O’Reilly.

Black Gaming Sales Manager Petra Jones said the event was received very well.

“Sue and I have been speaking about ideas for the past couple of years,” said Jones, a native of Stuttgart, Germany who has been with Black Gaming for 15 years. “At that time a couple of years ago, Mesquite wasn’t really ready for this sort of thing. However, judging by the success of this year’s event, the timing was perfect.

“It was a year’s worth of work, but it was worth every bit of the labor involved. We are really looking forward to next year.”

Jones said the Branson Brothers delighted a good crowd in the event finale Wednesday night.

“I talked to some people who were getting ready to leave Thursday morning and they were excited about BransonFest Out West,” added Jones. “When everything was done after the final show, we felt that it was a huge success.”

For further information regarding future events in Mesquite, visit www.mesquitebransonfest.com. For Branson events, go to www.explorebranson.com.

CAPTIONS:

5665: The popular Dutton family kicked off BransonFest Out West in the CasaBlanca Event Center.

CLAY: Singer Clay Cooper poses for a photo taken by a fan during a meet and greet in the CasaBlanca.

Branson Fest 3: Mesquite Mayor Susan Holecheck is escorted by singer Clay Cooper in the fashion show presented in the CasaBlanca showroom.

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