

Start spreading the news — Geordie Brown sings The Songs of The Rat Pack

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The Songs of the Rat Pack starring Geordie Brown features 25 songs from Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and Dean Martin. It runs at Neptune's Scotiabank Studio Theatre till Sunday. (TED PRITCHARD / Local Xpress)

Sammy Davis Jr. was the most well rounded musician of the Rat Pack, says Geordie Brown.

Frank Sinatra was a complete pro.

But Dean Martin is Brown's favourite member of the famed '60s group.

"Dean is the funny guy. He has an incredible voice, but that almost doesn't matter; his presence, charisma, and persona is what attracts people to him," says Brown, who sing hits from all three singers in [The Songs of the Rat Pack](#) at Neptune's Scotiabank Studio Theatre.

The show, which runs till Sunday, packs 25 tunes into an hour-and-a-half, and it's more than a musical performance, says the singer, who is backed by band leader Lisa MacDougall on piano, Jamie Gatti on bass, Chris Mitchell on saxophone and Tom Roach on drums.

"All the technical aspects are spot on. There is complete lighting and projections," says a tuxedo-clad Brown on a break during rehearsal. "At its core, it is not only music, it's the three men who made everyone love the music."

The performer will give a bit of a history lesson with each section, like a show within a show, he explains.

"It will be little tidbits, like a mini Trivial Pursuit.

"For Sammy, I'll tell people that The Candy Man single stole the No. 1 spot from Cat Stevens' Morning Has Broken."

And the show will end with Martin's 1964 hit You're Nobody Till Somebody Loves You — Brown's grandmother's favourite song.

"Dean Martin was her favourite member of the Rat Pack and my grandfather even looked like Martin," muses Brown, who is dedicating the performance to his grandmother, who died when he was 13.

"She died before I started to sing, but she was a huge fan of my piano playing. She encouraged me to play jazz standards, the Great American Songbook. Her favourite member of the Rat Pack was Dean Martin so he became my favourite too."

Dean Martin is Geordie Brown's favourite member of the Rat Pack. Brown's show, The Songs of the Rat Pack, is at Neptune's Scotiabank Studio Theatre till Sunday. (TED PRITCHARD / Local Xpress)

Brown started playing piano at five and it was his first passion.

Then came acting. He started taking classes at Neptune at nine and doing film and TV.

"I was on Made In Canada twice before I was 11 years old. I met Don McKellar and Scott Thompson," he recalls, noting he landed a spot on the show at his first audition.

"I always thought I'd be a piano player and comedian. That was what my elementary school teachers told me."

He auditioned for Neptune Theatre's Youth Performance Company when he was 13 and didn't get in because he couldn't sing well enough. So he started taking lessons and discovered a talent for song.



Now, though piano continues to be his first passion, it's singing that he's known for.

"I musical direct and direct and produce," he says. Every year he produces The Advent Show with Judy Savoy, a benefit for a homeless shelter. He does original

music arrangements, plays piano for the show and directs a company of 40.

"It's a real treat for me to step away from piano for this show, to get to just focus on singing."

Brown gives credit for the idea for the show to Neptune Theatre School education director Chuck Homewood.

Brown had been doing concerts of jazz standards and including a couple of Rat Pack tunes and Homewood, who played piano for Brown at many of his concerts, noticed the singer's great rapport with the audience.

"It was a very natural fit," says Brown. "I've been thinking about it for a year, and began putting it together in the New Year. Doing an entire show of this music is different than one or two numbers, so I felt a responsibility to hone my stylistic choices.

"There are no impersonations but I pay attention to style. It has been a fun learning curve, to go a step further, set aside what I've been taught is correct, to listen to Sammy, Dean, and Frank and make sure I'm doing them some justice."

Even before the show opened on Thursday, Brown had to add an extra show as the run was nearly sold out. And he has bookings for other theatres in the province.

"I have been overwhelmed by support I've received from my followers on social media, my friends and family. I have 40 or 50 people coming to each performance. I've never seen this kind of support," he says noting, people want to support him and are very interested in the Rat Pack.

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