

# Wayne Newton

A lot has come and gone since Wayne Newton first set the entertainment world on fire as a precocious, big-voiced six-year-old. When Elvis Presley was still driving a truck, Wayne almost ten years his junior had already sung before a president, toured with a Grand Ole Opry road show and released his first record.

While the Beatles were still scrambling for their early Liverpool gigs, Wayne, who was two years younger than John Lennon, was playing Las Vegas and appearing on the Jackie Gleason and Lucille Ball television shows. In a business that is, at best, volatile, and success sometimes short-lived, Wayne has performed live, at last count, to more than 30 million people and on television and record to many times that number. He has epitomized the talent, glamour and energy that is Las Vegas-the entertainment capital of the world-for so long that he is called "Mr. Las Vegas." And these days, having established himself both on television and in movies as a fine actor, he's getting more attention than ever.

He does it with the incredible talent and showmanship he was born with and the approach he developed as a child entertainer in Virginia. He simply works harder and digs deeper than anyone out there, sizing up audiences as he goes, tailoring shows to fit their moods, until he's given them their money's worth. The songs change and the show gets re-worked, but Wayne's basic approach is the same as it has been since the beginning, and it's something that goes to the core of who he is.

"I'm still doing the kind of shows I've always done." Wayne says, "and I can tell you one thing; People may leave one of my shows disliking Wayne Newton, but they've never walked out saying, 'He didn't work hard for us' or 'He didn't give us our money's worth.' I know what it means to save your money to go see someone perform, and I'll work as hard as I have to, to try and make sure they enjoy it."

Even at a young age, Wayne was already a veteran of show business. He was just four when he settled on a life course. His parents had taken him to see a Grand Ole Opry road show in Roanoke, Virginia, and he watched, wide-eyed, as Hank Williams and Kitty Wells, among others, performed. When it was over he said to his mother, "This is what I want to do." "What?" She asked. "That," he answered, pointing toward the stage.

A natural, he learned piano, guitar and steel guitar by ear with the help of a few lessons, and by the time he was six, he was doing a daily radio show before school. On weekends, he and his older brother, Jerry appeared with the Opry road shows that came through town, and performed before movies at a local theatre. He was in first grade when they performed at a USO show for President Truman and eight when they entered a local contest and won the chance to audition for the nation's biggest amateur show. "There are two people I know," he says with a laugh, "who flunked 'Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour' auditions: Elvis Presley and me."

That disappointment was a minor setback in a childhood that included serious health struggles. Wayne's severe bouts with asthma forced the family to move to Phoenix, where he recovered and began his career again. The stamina that would see him through this and many other difficult periods he credits to his Powhatan Indian/Irish father, who overcame his own poverty stricken background, and his Cherokee Indian/German mother.

Throughout the rest of his school years he performed on a local TV show (while maintaining a B average). Toward the end of his junior year, a Las Vegas booking agent saw the show and took Wayne and Jerry back for an audition. They arrived with \$20 between them, but the tryout led to "a two-week job" that lasted for 46 weeks, and the Newton Brothers had a foothold in Vegas.

They did six shows between 5 and 11 PM, and Wayne had to find creative ways to keep the workload from taking its toll.

"I kept learning to play new instruments simply to give my voice some relief," he explains. A talented multi-instrumentalist, Wayne plays 13 instruments, many of which are worked into his shows.

Wayne went national when Jackie Gleason, for whom he performed at a Phoenix luncheon, took him to New York for an appearance on his network television show. While in New York, Wayne would also appear at the legendary Copacabana nightclub. He would perform on Gleason's show twelve times during the next two years.

"The Great One" was the first of many show business legends to form a real friendship and fall for this young entertainment dynamo and offer a hand. Lucille Ball had him as a guest a dozen times on her show, and offered him his own series, which he turned down so he wouldn't be typecast. Bobby Darin brought him his first record hits, "Heart," "Danke Schoen," "Red Roses For A Blue Lady," "Summer Wind" and "Dreams Of The Everyday Housewife." (He also scored a national #1 on "Daddy, Don't You Walk So Fast": and other single hits have included "Years," "She Believes In Me" and "While The Feelings Good.") Others giving him special affection and support over the years would be Danny Thomas, George Burns and Jack Benny.

The latter helped make sure that in a day when lounge singers didn't move up to Vegas's big rooms, Wayne Newton did. Wayne turned down \$10,000 a week in the lounges to work for "Uncle Jack" as an opening act for \$1,500 a week, a slot he filled for much of the next three years.

There was one more hurdle in Las Vegas, and that was headlining the main showrooms. Wayne managed that with courage - and the help of the fans he's always worked so hard for. After the job with Mr. Benny ended, Wayne was offered the chance to open for another comic at the Flamingo Hilton. He said he wanted to headline instead, and the owner was so taken aback to Wayne's moxie that he said, "Yes." There was a catch, though. He offered Wayne the headlining slot in November. "In those days," said Wayne, "you could shoot a cannon in November and not hit a single soul on the Strip. There just wasn't any business at that time of year. The odds-makers had predicted I was going to flop. The only thing that none of them counted on was the local people. The night we opened, the locals came out in droves and totally saved my career, for which I will always be grateful."

Wayne broke all the hotels' attendance records, and he has been synonymous with Las Vegas ever since. In 1994, Wayne performed his 25,000 show in Las Vegas alone. "Mr. Las Vegas" will be performing a special limited engagement this summer, 2005, at the Las Vegas Hilton, a showroom he has a long history with. The spectacular production of Wayne Live (which has brought him numerous "Entertainer of the Year" honors) has also coaxed reviewers and feature writers to tout it as The Las Vegas Experience. Said Jim Greer in Spin Magazine, "...his show is the standard by which I will henceforth judge each future concert of any genre. I'm not talking about camp, or kitsch...I'm talking about full-blooded American entertainment." In 2002, Nevada Magazine stated, "Maybe we ought to retire this category. For the fifth straight time, Wayne Newton was voted "Best Entertainer."

At the invitation of President Ronald Reagan, Wayne drew 350,000 people to the rain-soaked grounds of the Washington Monument for the July 4th Concert. He also has a penchant for helping others. He is highly visible as a contributor of time, energy and talent to telethons and fundraisers for various causes. He serves on the board of many charitable and philanthropic organizations, including the National Association of Missing and Abused Children.

Wayne sets records every time he steps on a stage, and his profile is higher than ever because of, among other things, a burgeoning acting career. He is one of a very few singers to make the crossover successfully. His charisma and talent have translated well onto the screen.

The acting skills he learned on stage, in the company of Lucy and "The Great One," and in guest spots on

shows like "Bonanza," have been in full blossom in recent years. He has appeared in 8 major motion pictures, so far and shows no signs of slowing down. Some of his film acting credits include hits such as "Vegas Vacation" with Chevy Chase, "Ocean's Eleven," the James Bond thriller "License To Kill," "The Adventures of Ford Fairlane," "The Dark Backward," "The Best of the Best II" and "Night of the Running Man," "Who's Your Daddy?" and "Elvis Has Left the Building."

Some of his television acting credits include, NBC's "Las Vegas," "According to Jim," "Kingdom Hospital," the ABC miniseries, "North and South, Book II," "Roseanne," "Ellen," "My Wife and Kids," "According to Jim," "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air," "Renegade," "Perfect Strangers," "LA Law," and the HBO series "Tales from the Crypt," just to name a few. Wayne received rave reviews portraying "shock jock" Harold Wick on the hit television show "Ally McBeal". In February 1999, he received a "First American in the Arts Award" as "Outstanding Guest Performance by an Actor in a Television Series" for his role on "Ally McBeal."

"I enjoy acting immensely," he says of the second career. "I think it's because I've spent my whole life being Wayne Newton, the singer. "This way, he says with a grin, I can get all my hostilities out and I don't go to jail for it.

In addition, he starred in the highly rated, "Wayne Newton's Las Vegas," on the Travel Channel, has been the focus of the highly acclaimed series "A&E Biography" and the "E! True Hollywood Story." His Las Vegas ranch was also featured in a recent episode of MTV "Cribs" and VH-1's "Celebrity Pets 1 & 2." In January 2005, Wayne debuted his own reality show on E! Television Network. "The Entertainer Starring Wayne Newton." "The Entertainer," is a 10 episode series chronicling Wayne's search for the next Las Vegas Headliner, with the winner, Delisco, being awarded a spot in Wayne's show and then a headlining contract at the Las Vegas Hilton worth over one million dollars. "The Entertainer Starring Wayne Newton's" premiere week boasted viewership of over 3 million households and had the audience hooked from week to week.

He is frequently asked to appear on such popular shows as "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "The Late Show with David Letterman," "Larry King Live," "The Late Late Show with Craig Kilborn," "The Today Show," "CBS This Morning," "E! Entertainment Television," "Entertainment Tonight," "MTV," "VH-1" and many others.

Wayne's heartfelt patriotism has kept him before the public as well. He has entertained troops in Vietnam, in Lebanon after the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks, in the Persian Gulf and Bosnia. (The US Defense Department gave Wayne its highest civilian award for being the only American entertainer to perform in all three spots.)

One of Wayne's biggest honors was announced in October 2001 when Bob Hope passed the torch naming him the "Chairman of the USO Celebrity Circle." This new role prompted President George W. Bush to honor Wayne at a private White House reception. Wayne has always believed, "Entertaining for our men and women of our armed services overseas has been the highlight of my professional career." In less than 3 years, he has taken 14 USO tours overseas, including being the first performer to entertain our troops in Afghanistan, (in December 2001) and Iraq (in June 2003, November 2003 and November 2004).

All of this - the wide appeal, the longevity, the patriotism, and the selfless service - has made Wayne Newton a favorite of his many fans. He is one of the most widely acclaimed and honored entertainers in history. Wayne has been the recipient of many prestigious awards, some of which include, "The Secretary of the Navy Public Service Award," "The Air Force Scroll of Appreciation," "Medal for Distinguished Public Service," the "Jimmie E. Howard Award," "The AMVET's Silver Helmet Award in the Americanism Category," "Founders Award of St. Jude's Hospital," the "VFW Hall of Fame Award," the "Humanitarian Award of the American Cancer Society's Cancer Research Center," "The LA Lupus Loop Award," the "American Legion's Exceptional Citizen Award," and many more. There is also a Wayne Newton star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Wayne's appeal is worldwide. A month long sold out Australian tour was so successful, Sydney's "Sun Herald" writer Peter Holmes stated in his "Year In Review," "As for live highlights, Mr. Las Vegas, Wayne Newton, blitzed the crowd...delivering the people of Sydney a memorable gig." Holmes went on to name Newton as the #1 live music event of the year. In the past few years Wayne was voted "Entertainer of the Year" by both Nevada Magazine and Casino Player Magazine just to name a few. Said Melissa Cook of Casino Player Magazine; "...he consistently offers the best in entertainment value. ... Wayne Newton is in a class and category all his own."

Wayne is very proud of his Native American heritage and had the distinguished honor of hosting the first ever "Native American Music Awards," where he was voted the "Native American Entertainer of the Year." In November, 1998, he was bestowed the honor of being knighted "Sir Wayne Newton," and this past December was given an honorary doctorate from William Woods University. In February 2000, Wayne was awarded the "Lifetime Achievement Award" by the First American's in the Arts and in October 2000, he was inducted into the American Gaming Association's "Gaming Hall of Fame."

Wayne Newton has recorded and released 158 albums to date, including the recent 6 CD or Cassette box set, "The Wayne Newton Dynasty Collection.". In addition, more television and movies starring Wayne are in negotiation. After 5 decades of performing, he shows no signs of slowing down, which is great news to the multitude of fans that pack his sold out shows all over the world.

The people of Las Vegas and Nevada whom he so dearly loves have given him their highest honors as well. He is one of only two people in Las Vegas history to receive the city's Medal of Honor, he has been named Ambassador of Goodwill for the state and he has seen Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport's main thoroughfare renamed "Wayne Newton Boulevard." Wayne is also an "Ellis Island Medal of Honor Recipient." The medal is presented to outstanding American citizens who have distinguished themselves among their specific ethnic group and are recognized for their significant contribution to this country. In 1999 Wayne was also made an "Honorary Green Beret" at an event April of 1999 at Ft. Bragg as well as an honorary member of the Special Forces. On October 5, 1999, at a ceremony in Washington D.C., Wayne received the "AMERICAN LEGEND" award, along with Senator John H. Glenn and Supreme Court Justice William H. Rehnquist. This honor is given to the few individuals who have, "in their endeavors made a mark on the 20th Century, paving the way for the new millennium." Wayne was also named one of the "top 3 entertainers of the century in Nevada and around the world" (along with Frank Sinatra and Elvis) by the Reno Gazette-Journal.

Wayne's extraordinary life is the outgrowth of one thing - his willingness and ability to give his all, whether performing or not.

Hand him a microphone, however, and magic happens. He is the entertainer's entertainer. A born showman who combines a host of God-given talents with an exceptional and disciplined work ethic and boundless stamina.

In his 1989 autobiography, Once Before I Go, Wayne talked about what he was striving to accomplish. He wanted to be, he said, "a man who dares to dream and pursue it, using my head for myself and my heart for others. To leave the world a better place than I found it. I guess that's what I hope to do."

**Tricia McCrone**  
**Publicist**  
**ph. 702-454-8244**  
**fax. 702-435-7880**  
**Revised 7-6-05**