

The Beverly Hills Outlook online newspaper
Live review of Eric Vincent and the Diamond Cutters at
Shoreline Village in Long Beach, May 9th, 2004

In a covered yet open gazebo area next to the yacht marina at Shoreline Village in Long Beach, Eric Vincent and the Diamond Cutters gave a soft rock tribute concert on a recent Sunday. Like a cross between filmmaker John Cassavetes, looks-wise, and that favorite TV neighbor Mr. Rogers, personality-wise, Eric Vincent held court, singing cover tunes from some great artists of the 60's and 70's, like Neil Diamond (hence the name "Diamond Cutters"), Frank Sinatra and Bobby Darin. It was Mother's Day, and over 100 locals and tourists alike turned out to hear Eric's heartfelt renditions of these classics.

There was a nice ocean breeze in this halcyon, seaside setting, and Eric started off the set I caught with a Sinatra tune, "The Summer Wind". With a full band behind him, complete with bass guitar, lead guitar, stand-up bass, drums and keyboards, Eric showed us his vocal talents from the very outset, sounding so much like Sinatra it was startling, yet with a little Jack Jones and Steve Lawrence thrown in. Not bad company! On "That's Life", Eric revealed his experience with a lyric, enunciating much like Frank Sinatra, holding out his vowels, and lingering on his consonants. Friendly, fun and engaging, Eric Vincent was a worthy interpreter of this iconic material, and showed a genuine affection for it and his audience.

Next he moved into his Neil Diamond songbook, giving us hit after hit of this master's vast accomplishments. Every one of these memorable tunes the crowd knew the words to, and sometimes they even sang along! Eric really sounded like Neil Diamond on these numbers, in how he phrased them and used his vocal instrument. Never pushing, and always in the moment, Eric acted like these were his songs, sung especially for those in attendance. The band was tight and gave a nice build on "Longfellow Serenade", which was quite danceable. "Sweet Caroline" was a bit low in his range, to my ear, but Eric made it real and fresh, and held a nice rapport with his fans. He sounded a lot like Neil Diamond on "Song Sung Blue", without the ego or pyrotechnics, of course! "You can sing it with a cry in your voice", Eric crooned, and it was exciting, hearing it sound so eerily like the real thing. Putting the mike in its stand, Eric gave us the wonderful ballad, "September Morn", and even sang the verse. You could easily see his very caring response to his audience, as he readily sang "Happy Birthday" to a member of the audience, Margie, who was turning 80, and he relished the opportunity, even. That's Show Business at its best, folks.

Among the many standouts in this set, I loved "Solitary Man". Eric really sang his heart out on this one, and I wondered how his voice could last through 4 rigorous sets like this. It was an especially satisfying arrangement, with back-up vocals helmed by his keyboard player Ronald Wittenberg, and his stand up bass player, Howie Rich. Each song was a gem, but "I Am I Said" was great, and well-executed by Eric and his band, never hackneyed or phoned in. "I never cared for the sound of being alone", Eric sang, and it was like you never heard those words before, it was so immediate-feeling. Crisp and direct, "The Boat That I Row" is less well-known, but rocked like a Buddy Holly tune, and was a nice change-up. Eric Vincent loves singing these terrific songs, and obviously loves his audience, who clearly loves him back! He is living his dream, as expressed in "Coming To America", which he sings so convincingly. A pair of little girls danced throughout his version of "Holly Holy", and stole the show! The whole time Eric sang to them, and afterwards commented, "You're the best dancers we've ever had!" The crowd ate it up. To find out where Eric Vincent and the Diamond Cutters will be next, just call Eric at (310) 391-8288 to get on their mailing list. They're frequently performing around the Southland. You'll be happy you shared an afternoon or evening with Eric Vincent and his talented band members, the Diamond Cutters, and their nostalgic, magical trip through a great time in America's musical history.