

Conductor puts 'different groove' on age-old music

'Vintage Vegas' production won't merely mimic the classics

By [Sarah Feldberg](#) ([contact](#))

Friday, Sept. 18, 2009 | 2 a.m.

David Perrico's office is the Strip, his workplace onstage, just outside the spotlight. A musician who has spent the past five years working in Las Vegas, he says the key to success in the diverse local entertainment scene is flexibility.

"You never know who you're going to be playing for. It could be Frankie Avalon or it could be Beyonce," Perrico says with a laugh.

When he graduated from Youngstown University in Ohio in 1994, Perrico didn't take a year off or find a desk job. He took a job where flexibility is of the utmost importance. He joined a band — the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra.

"It was 45 weeks a year on the bus — mainly one-nighters," the trumpet player, composer and conductor recalls. "There were never any rehearsals and the book was about 10 inches thick and most of the charts you couldn't read. That was the audition — whether you could get through the first gig or not."

Perrico got through his first gig and ended up touring with the band as road manager and soloist for six years, but he still thinks back on that trial-by-fire audition. "I remember the first note that the band played on the tune — it was 'Opus One' — it was like a bomb went off."

This Sunday will be another first for Perrico, who will conduct the 17-piece big band backing [Zowie Bowie's](#) new "Vintage Vegas" show in its grand opening at the Lance Burton Theatre at the Monte Carlo. The show is packed with familiar songs such as "Luck Be a Lady," "Fly Me to the Moon" and "Something," but Perrico says that the show isn't about imitation.

"We're not trying to do Frank. We're not trying to do impersonating. We're really trying to pay tribute to what made Vegas ... You want to preserve the classic vintage sound that's recognizable, but what we're doing here is just a new take on a classic, a different groove."

That groove is delivered not just by Perrico, who conducts, arranges and performs an occasional trumpet solo in the show, but also by the musicians he conducts. For "Vintage Vegas," he assembled a band full of Vegas veterans who have played for headliners such as [Donny & Marie](#) and [Terry Fator](#). Lon Bronson, who also plays with his own band at Green Valley Ranch Station Casino, is helping with production, and saxophonist Joe Escriba has split the arranging duties.

"It really takes a team," Perrico stresses. "Everybody in this band is really at the top of their game."

Perrico is no exception. After moving to Las Vegas in 2004 to do a master's in jazz studies at UNLV, Perrico spent a few years "subbing" as a freelance musician, working shows on an as-needed basis.

Recently, he spent a year with "Donny & Marie" at the Flamingo and played with Zowie Bowie's former show at Red Rock Resort. Perrico just returned from six weeks in Montreal, where he was rehearsing as the lead trumpet and second piano player in Cirque du Soleil's new Elvis-themed show, which is scheduled to open at

CityCenter in December.

When it comes to the future of entertainment in Las Vegas, he sees music as its constant anchor.

“I think live music is the key,” Perrico says. “When you go and you see a band it’s like, ‘What is that?’ People are like, ‘Wow!’ That’s the aesthetic of a 17-piece orchestra. That’s where I’d like to see entertainment go.”