

Odd Jobs



ERIC HENDRIX



Synthetic Diamond

The colorful stage lights in the Casino Arizona showroom reflect off Tom Sadge's blue sequined shirt and rhinestone belt buckle.

His black, feathered hair remains perfectly in place as he smoothly breaks into a rendition of "Sweet Caroline," his voice closely resembling that of the song's originator, Neil Diamond.

Sadge is a Neil Diamond impersonator, and since 1997 has been dressing and performing as his musical idol, entertaining audiences all over the world, even opening for legendary acts such as Engelbert

Humperdinck. For a few weeks each year Sadge also performs at Casino Arizona in Scottsdale, in the celebrity tribute Showstoppers Live.

With a natural Neil Diamond-like appearance and voice, Sadge is widely regarded as one of the best Neil Diamond impersonators in the industry. And although he admits standing backstage among a crowd of celebrity look-a-likes can be surreal, he says it's a great career.

"It's like Halloween every night," he jokes. "I love what I do. I'm very lucky to have picked the right guy (to impersonate)." ■

Tom Sadge, Neil Diamond Impersonator

Name: Tom Sadge

Title: Neil Diamond Impersonator

Job description: Performs Neil Diamond songs at concerts, nightclubs and private parties, dressed as the legendary entertainer.

Age: 52

Years on the job: 10

Training: Sadge worked for 20 years as a full-time performer playing in garage bands and performing as a singing disc jockey before becoming a full-time Neil Diamond impersonator. "Back then people used to tell me I sounded like him."

Have you met Diamond?

A few times. Once during a 2002 Neil Diamond concert in Pennsylvania, Diamond leaned over to the crowd and pointed the microphone at Sadge to let him sing part of the lyrics. "He told the crowd, 'This guy sounds just like me.'"

The look: Naturally Sadge has a resemblance to Diamond; how-

ever, he wears brown contacts, draws in his eyebrows and fluffs out his sideburns to get more in character. "In the beginning I had a hard time with the make-up, but now I'm used to it. I used to have long, blonde hair about shoulder length, but I cut it off and dyed it black."

Do people ever think you're really Neil Diamond? "On stage, people have told me they thought I was really him for a moment. Sometimes younger people have mistaken me for an Elvis impersonator. It must be the hair."

Hours: Sadge performs 11 shows a week while at Casino Arizona. Some months he'll be booked for weeks at a time. January is usually slow, with just a few gigs.

Delights: "Every night being in front of the crowd. I just love what I do."

Most difficult part: "The biggest challenge is leaving home." Sadge lives in Pennsylvania and has been married to his wife, Marion, for more than 25 years. They have two children.

Cost: Average fee is \$2,500 per show.