

GALLERY: Look Back at how Resorts entertained A.C.'s early casino crowds

Feb 10, 2020

The opening of Resorts International Casino Hotel on May 26, 1978, marked the dawn of a new era in Atlantic City entertainment.

Two years before the casino's opening, impresario Tibor Rudas was commissioned to build and run Resorts' 1,500-seat Superstar Theater, which featured familiar Las Vegas marquee names such as Frank Sinatra, Jackie Gleason, Bill Cosby, Phyllis Diller, Shecky Greene, Natalie Cole, Steve Martin, Dolly Parton and Johnny Carson. In October 1983, Rudas brought in opera star Luciano Pavarotti to sing for 6,000 guests in a circus tent set up near the casino.

Resorts also attracted some big-name Hollywood directors, who used the casino as a location for films including "Atlantic City," "The Color of Money" and "The Pick-up Artist."

Many of the early entertainers who appeared at the casino left their handprints, footprints and signatures in its Walk of Fame at the Boardwalk entrance. The concrete squares have since been removed.



When Resorts opened for 24-hour gambling July 4, 1991, and added a new table game, Red Dog, then-Mayor Jim Whelan, right, and Fred Scerni were there to play the first hand.

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A 1978 photo shows an Army paratrooper coming in for a landing outside Resorts, which opened May 26, 1978.

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Tibor Rudas, the man responsible for bringing Luciano Pavarotti and other big-name acts to Resorts, instructs dancers at the casino in May 1978. Rudas died in 2014. [Click here to read his obituary.](#)

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Dancers in bikinis perform at Resorts about the time of its opening in May 1978.
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Angelo Connors and Arlene Lenahan rehearse with the High Steppers at Resorts in May 1978.
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James Crosby, right of center, founder and chairman of Resorts, takes a break at a hearing Jan. 12, 1979.
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In the early years of Resorts, you dressed up and stood up for a night of playing slots. You also pulled a handle and collected coins. Shoulder pains and dirty fingers were the norm.



A patriotic Resorts float is featured in the pageant parade in September 1980.



Animal trainer Dave McMillan, far right, waves from a Resorts float on the Boardwalk May 24, 1981.
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A lion is featured on animal trainer Dave McMillan's float for Resorts during a Memorial Day parade May 24, 1981.



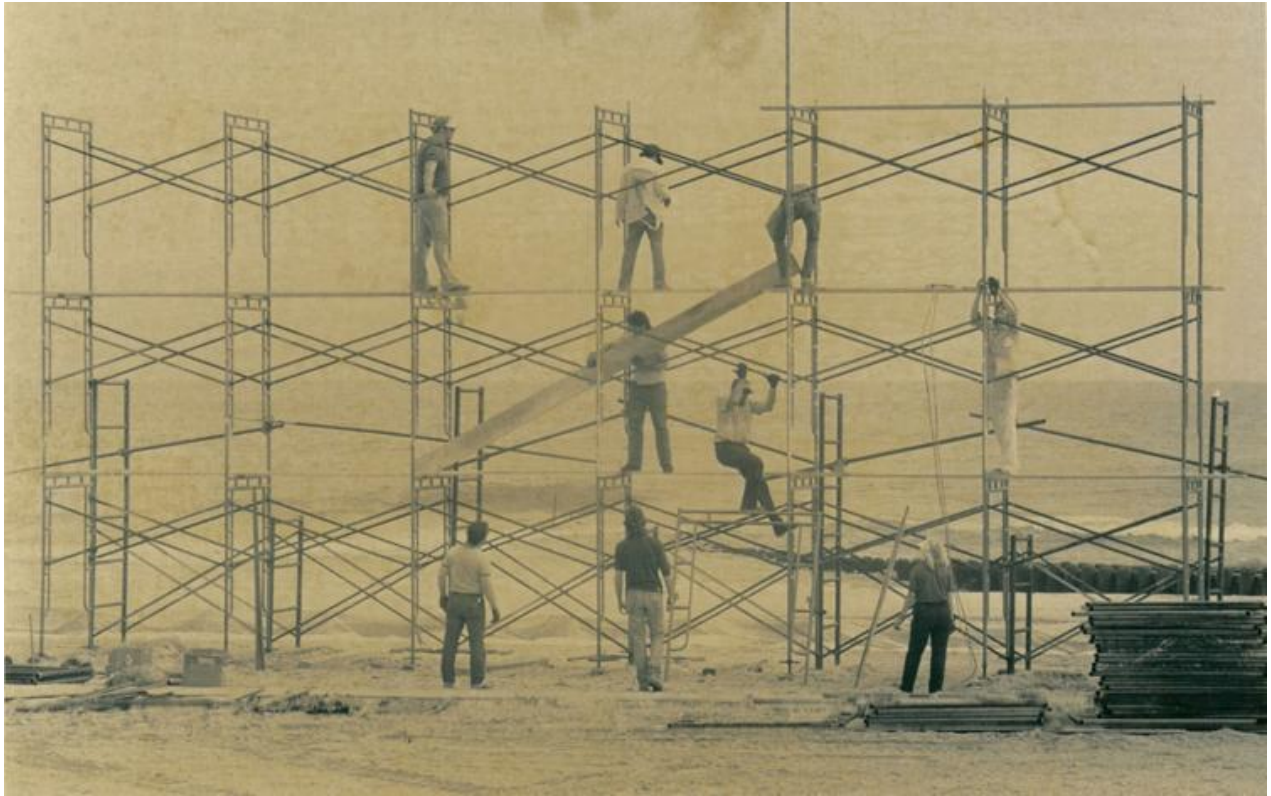
As Resorts was raking in the dough in the early years, it spared no expense on this Sept. 9, 1981 float, which featured dancers, a bodybuilder and a full orchestra.



A banner for Resorts International Hotel Casino features its star logo in this undated photo.
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Emelina Stotts performs "Heatwave" at Resorts International in this undated photo.
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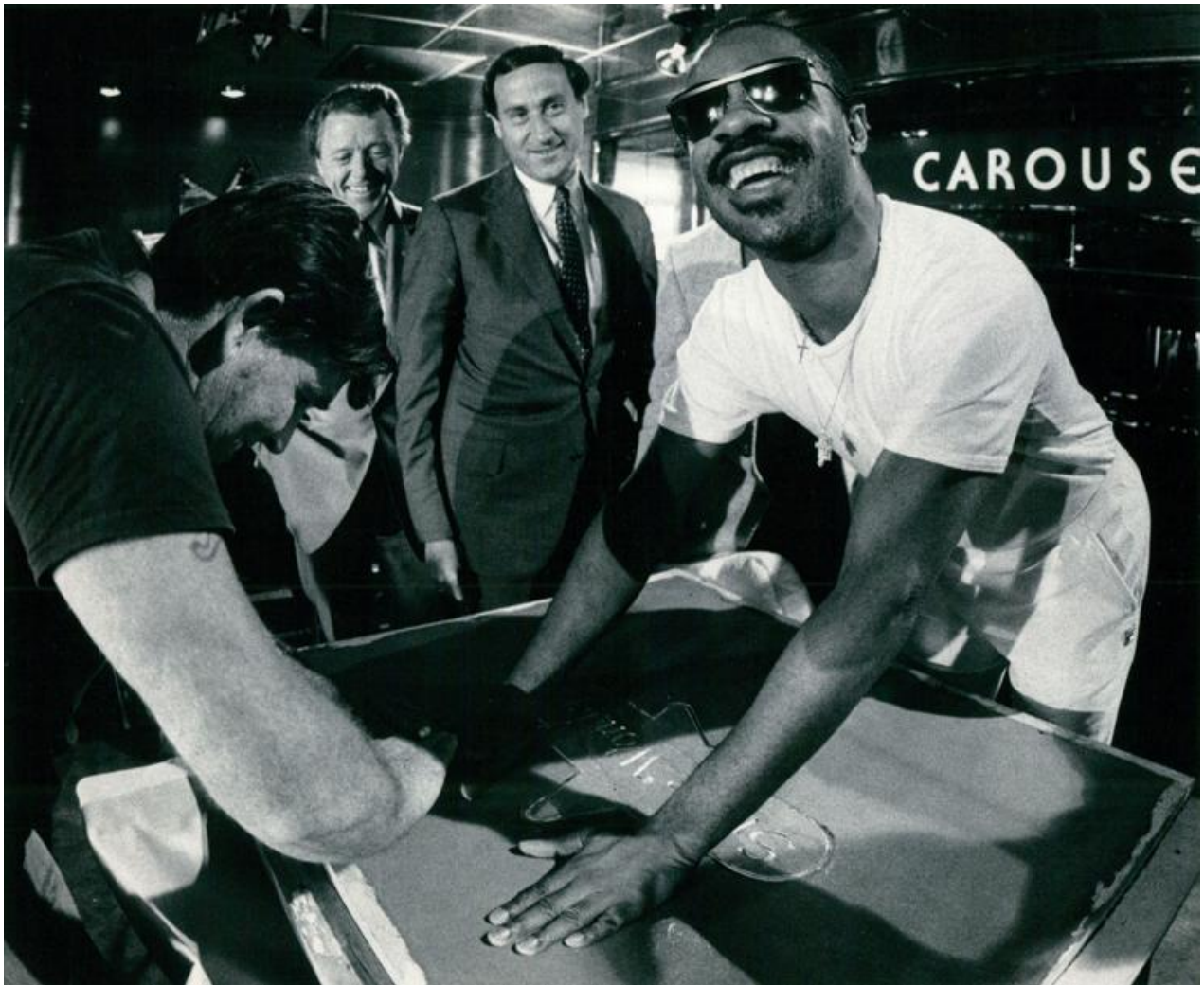


Resorts' stage crew installs scaffolding on the beach at North Carolina Avenue on May 26, 1983, for a fireworks presentation.
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Before setting a record for the most hours on television, talk show host Regis Philbin clocked some time before the cameras at Resorts, interviewing singer Bobby Vinton in July 1983.

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Singer Stevie Wonder places his hands in cement on Sept. 26, 1983, for Resorts' Walk of Fame, a series of celebrity handprints and signatures that lined the Boardwalk entrance to the casino for more than 30 years. Ashner, center, was president and chief operating officer of Resorts International Casino & Hotel in Atlantic City from 1979 until his retirement in 1987.

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Tibor Rudas, center, supervises preparations under the big top before Luciano Pavarotti's performance in October 1983.
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More than 6,000 people eagerly await tenor Luciano Pavarotti's performance under a circus tent, set up next to Resorts in the location currently occupied by the shuttered Taj Mahal's parking garage, in October 1983.

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Luciano Pavarotti's performances in Atlantic City were huge in the 1980s and '90s. The tenor, center, poses for a photo in October 1983.
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Resorts offered many enticements as other casinos came onto the Atlantic City scene, including free concerts, the first of which is pictured in July 1984.

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You could get 12 hours of free parking, with casino validation, at Resorts, in October 1984.

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Costumed dancers brought the glitz to Resorts' stage.

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Resorts boasts more than \$5 billion in jackpots paid on a billboard seen in this beach view from the former Ocean One Mall in July 1986.
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Resorts was a backdrop for several films in the 1970s and '80s, including "Atlantic City," "The Color of Money" and, on July 16, 1986, "The Pick-Up Artist," a Warren Beatty-produced film featuring Molly Ringwald and Robert Downey Jr. (long before he was Iron Man).
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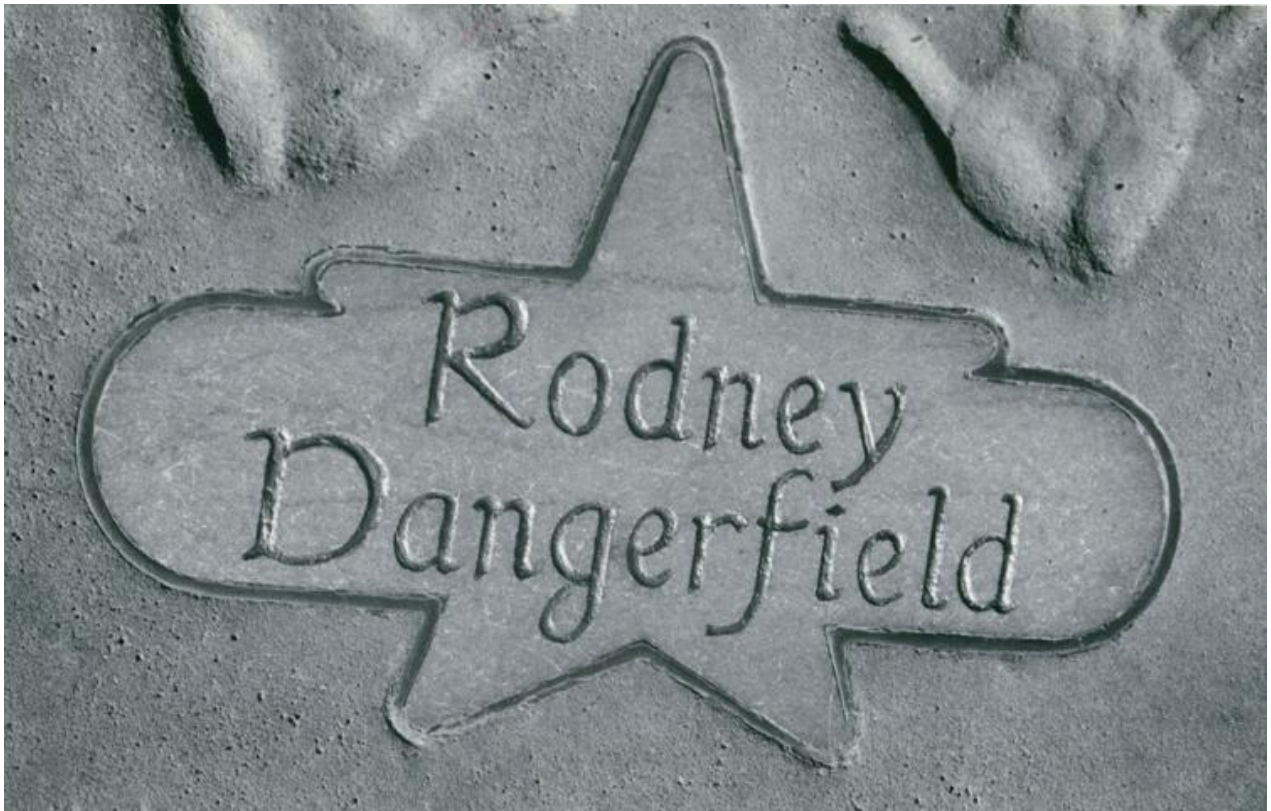
George Whittington, of Atlantic City, puts the sparkle in the stars at Resorts' Boardwalk entrance on Nov. 14, 1986.

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George Whittington paints the letters on Rodney Dangerfield's star outside Resorts on Nov. 14, 1986.

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Rodney Dangerfield's star awaits installation in Resorts' Walk of Fame on Nov. 14, 1986.

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Magician Dorothy Dietrich, of Scranton, Pennsylvania, holds a bullet she allegedly caught in her mouth in May 1988 at Resorts.





Resorts' Boardwalk tram is parked outside the casino in April 1989.

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'Mr. Warmth' Don Rickles, pictured at Resorts May 26, 1989, was a regular performer in the casino's Superstar Theater.
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Before the Boardwalk trams of today, Resorts had its own tram operation, for which Barbara Long collects fares in August 1989.
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Resorts' then-owner Merv Griffin and companion Eva Gabor ride on the Boardwalk outside the casino in September 1989. Griffin encouraged Atlantic City visitors to "Bet on Merv" in advertisements for Resorts.

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Merv Griffin, center, and Eva Gabor admire the work of Resorts artist Leroy Neiman in May 1990.

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When Merv Griffin owned Resorts, he would sometimes perform at the casino, as he does here, joined on stage by Eva Gabor, on June 27, 1990.
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Frisbees with dollar amounts are organized at Resorts in preparation for a new Merv Griffin-produced game show in February 1991.
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A billboard for Resorts entices Boardwalk crowds to try the \$4.99 Beverly Hills Buffet in October 1991.
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Merv Griffin strikes up the band during his annual New Year's show at Resorts on Jan. 1, 1992.

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