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FREE MUSIC SCENE

5 Towers a new CityWalk star

By Bob Strauss, Staff Writer
Posted: 06/30/2011 05:07:32 PM PDT
Updated: 06/30/2011 10:06:26 PM PDT



CityWalk's new "5 Towers" concert venue

Universal CityWalk debuts its 5 Towers outdoor concert arena Friday night, with the hopes of making it the center of free music in Southern California - and maybe the free world.

Five 42-foot high, steel tower sculptures define the concert space in CityWalk's main plaza, between the movie multiplex and the Hard Rock Cafe. The 31-by-24-foot stage is permanent, and there's an upgraded, 26-by-14-foot LED monitor mounted above it.

"We've had live music at CityWalk, probably, for a good 10 years," said Pat Donahue, director of CityWalk Entertainment. "But the 5 Towers is a game-changer for us. There's nothing like it in Southern California, and I think it's going to redefine the way people experience free live music.

"You're immersed in the energy and the whole vibe, and you kind of feel like you're part of the show," he said. "The barriers between the artists and the fans are completely removed."

Motion capture devices will project some concertgoers' silhouettes on the wall behind the stage. Thousands of light fixtures around the stage and on the towers can be programmed to complement the music and - when nobody's playing - the music videos that have long been a ubiquitous presence on the CityWalk Jumbotron.

Underground weight sensors will enable guests to control the volume of lights on

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the towers. And for those who've had the happy experience of

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Hacker group posts personal information of top LAPD staffers



WANT TO GO?

5 Towers schedule

The new high-tech concert arena, 5 Towers, opens at 7 Friday night at CityWalk, with performances by Later Days and Elvis Monroe.

Singer Cee Lo Green will perform at 8 p.m. on Thursday.

Up-and-coming Southern California bands will be featured at 7 p.m. Fridays, from July 8 through Aug. 12. Family-friendly performances featuring Latin entertainers will be showcased from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Sundays, July 10-Aug. 28.



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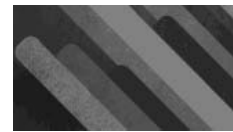


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 panels were
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 arena and

More established bands are
 scheduled to perform on
 Saturdays, with concerts
 starting at 8 p.m.:

- **Saturday:** The Spazmatics
- **July 9:** Chasing Avalanche and Alien Ant Farm
- **July 16:** Carolina Liar
- **July 23:** Jessie Payo and Shytown
- **July 30:** Stealing Heather
- **Aug. 6:** Evolve and Dilana
- **Aug. 13:** Vybration and The Backbeats
- **Aug. 20:** Thomas Nicholas Band



minimize echo elsewhere.

The purpose of all this razzmatazz, they say, is to focus attention on the music. And, in the case of "Close to Home" - the Friday night performance series starting July 8 - on the music of up-and-coming Southern California bands.

For a complete calendar of events, go to www.citywalkhollywood.com.

Tonight's stage christening comes courtesy of Later Days and Elvis Monroe. The latter outfit, which will be performing for the first time in public, is an acoustic rock side project for Bryan Hopkins (singer of Paperback Hero), Ben Carey (guitarist, Lifehouse), Ryan MacMillan (drummer, Matchbox 20) and bassist Matt Nelson (Ricky's son).

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Opening 5 Towers is a special honor for Hopkins, who's been performing on roll-out CityWalk stages for six years and consulted on the new arena's design.

"It'll be the biggest, most breathtaking outdoor venue around," Hopkins said. "It will provide an opportunity for big bands and bands on the way up to be seen and heard by so many."

Singer Cee Lo Green will be next to help launch the venue, with a free performance on July 7.

Of course, the free concerts hope to attract many who will be paying for parking and, more than likely, patronizing CityWalk establishments - an increasing imperative as the recession continues to weigh down on tourism.

Like Infusion Lounge, the Hollywood-style nightclub scheduled to open there in August, 5 Towers is part of an effort to convince more Valley residents and other locals to spend more time at Universal City.

"We're definitely a place that tourists come to visit," CityWalk's Donahue said. "But the 5 Towers now will totally set the tone, and send the message to the locals that this is the place to be when you want to experience free live music every single weekend."

Hopkins - who lived in North Hollywood for 13 years before moving recently to Sherman Oaks - said 5 Towers is an attraction that should be experienced by tourists and locals alike.

"I've played in front of 30,000 people, I've played all over the country," he said. "But I am so excited about (tonight). At the end of the day, this will be the largest free stage anywhere. I mean, this makes the Valley the coolest place to be."

bob.strauss@dailynews.com



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