

# COUNTRY WEEKLY

## Rascal Flatts Kicks Off Residency in Las Vegas



“Some rednecks are coming to town and taking over,” joked Rascal Flatts’ Jay DeMarcus midway through the opening-night show of the trio’s nine-concert residency, dubbed Rascal Flatts Vegas Riot!, at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas. It’s the first extended stint by a country act at the casino’s 4,000-seat theater, The Joint, which has hosted past residencies by acts like Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe.

Unlike Garth Brooks, who totally upended his musical presentation with his acoustic one-man show during his three-year residency down the Las Vegas Strip at the Wynn, Rascal Flatts seldom strays outside its comfort zone at The Joint. But that’s not to say the efficient 90-minute show isn’t without pleasing twists.

The trio has added three female backup singers for the run, which brings a nice vocal dimension to the already impressive harmonies of bassist Jay, guitarist Joe Don Rooney and lead singer Gary LeVox, especially on tunes like “Here Comes Goodbye” and “Take Me There.” Also working well are stripped-down presentations of “Mayberry,” “I’m Movin’ On” and Flatts’ first hit, “Praying for Daylight,” which has been delightfully recast as a bluegrass romp.

With 20 solid hits presented in the tight time frame, there is little leeway for talking between songs, but the pacing never feels rushed in a set designed to offer maximum crowd pleasing and minimum chatter.

*The Voice* Season 7 winner Craig Wayne Boyd opens the show with a competent, energetic 30-minute set that includes his recent *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart-topper, “My Baby’s Got a Smile on Her Face.”

Rascal Flatts’ residency runs through March 14.