

2006 MAGMA Convention Again a Success

By Janice Crow

Southern Gospel Music fans again flocked to Farmington, Missouri October 13 and 14 for this year's long-awaited MAGMA Convention. MAGMA (Mid-America Gospel Music Association) is an association dedicated to the preservation of Southern, Country, and Bluegrass Gospel Music, and once again the fans were not disappointed.

Friday evening's concert was kicked off in style as Heartfelt took the stage to open this year's convention. The crowd's enthusiasm was evident as Kathy Atkins performed and then as the MAGMA Board presented her with a plaque and beautiful bouquet of roses for her six years of faithful service as Recording Secretary for MAGMA. Kathy stepped down this year from her board position, but remains an active member of MAGMA. The silky smooth harmonies of The Heritage Boys was followed by Heartbeat, led by Daywind songwriter, Mark Mathes.

This was the sophomore performance for Vichy, Missouri's own Singing Disciples, and they have proven to be a crowd favorite. They were followed by the sweet sounds of Crown of Joy and their light bluegrass style. Janice Crow, MAGMA's newest board member, was followed by The Southern Brothers making their debut appearance on the MAGMA stage. Talk about tight harmony!

Friday night's Lifetime Achievement Award winner was gospel songwriter Jack Campbell. Jack has penned such Southern Gospel gems as "I Know a Man Who Can", "I've Got More to Go to Heaven For", "Jesus Use Me", and many, many more. MAGMA paid tribute to this Missouri gentleman with a medley of some of his best-known songs, after which he was awarded a beautiful commemorative plaque and certificate. Jack was in rare form and his wit as sharp as ever.

Following the award ceremony was the always-exciting Crimson Gold. Nashville has nothing on this fine quartet. Kevin Kappler and his cool country stylings followed. The evening was rounded out by mixed trio Master's Edition, Wendell Johnson, who just gets better every year, and family group The Berry Brothers.

After a good night's sleep and some much needed foot soaking, Saturday night found us back at the Centene Center. Saturday's festivities began with a surprise baby shower in the green room for MAGMA President, Randy Barron and his lovely wife, Debbie, as they plan to welcome their first child. The Barron's are expecting a little girl they plan to name Hannah. Congratulations Randy and Debbie!

Master's Touch quartet opened Saturday night's concert, followed by Karen Carr and her new song "Back to the Old Thing", which sounds like a good idea for all of us. We were pleased to have the Rivermen Quartet back with us again this year and they always do a fine job.

Gene Warren and the Glorylanders are always crowd pleasers, and just like the crowd, I can't wait until Martha Warren gets all wound up. Congratulations to Gene and Martha Warren who were surprised with a presentation honoring their 40 years in gospel music ministry! The Glorylanders were followed by soloist, Andy Russell, and Dave Davis and his group, N'Praise. Dave was last seen wearing a big "grandpa smile" that can probably be attributed to sharing the stage with his oh-so-cute grandchildren.

Carol Sanguinette-How brought the crowd to its feet with her stirring rendition of "God Bless the USA", and we were thrilled to have with us again this year Deon Unthank and Sunday Edition. Sunday Edition hails from Nashville, Tennessee and as well as being tremendously talented are the owners of one of the gospel websites that is setting the standard for gospel music reporting, www.southerngospelnews.com.

Saturday night's Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Ginger Pitchers of The Lesters for her contributions to the field of Southern Gospel Music. A native St. Louisan, Ginger is a great singer, musician and arranger. She was honored with a touching video which chronicled her early years as the "Christian Cowgirl" up through current day. P.D. Murdick, a cousin and former member of The Lesters, had the privilege of introducing Ginger who was greeted with a well-deserved standing ovation. Ginger was awarded a certificate and beautiful plaque from the MAGMA board, and P.D. teased Ginger by presenting his own award, a stick horse.

Moving the evening right along, The Redemptions took the stage and did a great job as usual. They also had a little help from bass singer, Mike Simons, on Joel Lindsey's "I Wish I Could've Been There." (Robyn Mackey of the Redemptions did double duty this year, singing and heading up the artist's green room. Special thanks also goes to Ron and Barb Kennon for their tireless dedication to feeding hungry MAGMA artists.)

Golden Street followed The Redemptions, doing a great job as always. Family group, The Wallens, topped off the evening as only they can and then it was time to pack up and head on down the road.

Dee Ann Schnautz and Crimson River, who were scheduled to sing Saturday night, could not be present this year due to illness and prior commitments, but were greatly missed.

It seems the Convention attendees were not quite ready to close the book on this year's convention as evidenced by the local late night restaurants which were packed afterwards, giving the fans and artists alike one last chance to relive the weekend's events, get acquainted, and have a great time.

We hope you'll make plans to attend next year's 2007 MAGMA Convention.