

CELEBRITY PLAYGROUND

BY MICHAEL SHULMAN

QUEEN SUPREME

*Diana Ross Proves That
Fierce Has No Age*

"I'm coming out!" With this phrase, which has become the theme of LGBT pride the world over, one of the music industry's true icons—the Queen Supreme, the disco diva, the silver-screen siren and the woman who asked us all to touch her in the morning—Diana "Call Her Miss" Ross took the stage of the Venetian Ballroom, headlining the concert that served as the culmination of the grand-opening celebration for The Venetian's new Palazzo sister property. It's hard to grasp that this lady (singing everything but the blues) is well into her fifth decade in a business that is consistently on the lookout for the next best thing, discarding those it has used up by the wayside. Yet there she was, looking fantastic and feeling fierce, daring any of us to question, even for a moment, why in 1976 *Billboard* magazine named her the Female Entertainer of the Century (the remaining quarter of a century be damned).

Among the songs that drew the loudest cheers from the crowd were "Stop! In the Name of Love" and "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," and fans sang along as she performed "Theme from Mahogany." We were literally dancing in the aisles. Okay, so she skipped over the disco era (I was hoping for "The Boss" or "No One Gets the Prize," or a little dose of "Love Hangover"), but there's only so much music a gal can squeeze into a single set with an encore. And trust me: We all got the prize, as it were.

As the song says, she is the boss, and Miss Ross had us all in the palm of her little hand and didn't let us go from the minute the emcee announced, simply, "Ladies and Gentlemen... Diana Ross!" until she grabbed that eight-foot-long black ostrich-feather boa and made her exit. In classic Las Vegas fashion, she took to the stage in a way befitting the grand diva that she is: She was dressed to the proverbial nines, teetering on strappy gold heels, blinding in a gown so heavily beaded, spangled and bedazzled that it weighed 50 pounds even if it just weighed an ounce. She gave it her all from the first bar to the last refrain. When I did have a fleeting second alone with her, I proclaimed, "You are what Vegas is all about: the sparkle, the sizzle, the pizzazz—you were on fire out there!" Her response? That 10,000-mega-watt smile we've all come to know so well and a sultry "Thank you. That's so sweet of you to say." For on that wonderful evening at the Venetian, I say to thee, respectfully, that Diana Ross turned us all upside down, inside out, and 'round and 'round—and it was one glorious ride. ♠

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Diana Ross had fans singing along when she performed at the grand-opening celebration of the Palazzo Las Vegas.