



A full-house was on hand Tuesday night for the grand opening concert at the civic center (Staff photos)



Elvis in action in Rapid City

# There's no doubt about it — Elvis is still 'king'

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For the last 20 years he's been called the king of rock 'n roll and there's no doubt he still wears that crown.

Elvis Presley sang, swiveled his hips, played the guitar, threw scarves, cracked a few jokes and gave the capacity audience at the grand opening of the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center their money's worth Tuesday night.

From "Jailhouse Rock" and "Are You Lonesome Tonight" to "If You Love Me Let Me Know," Elvis gave old favorites and newer songs a real crooning treatment.

Although the gyrations that helped boost Elvis to popularity with teenage girls in the '50s are fewer and farther apart, the voice that continued to sell gold record after gold record sounded even better in person.

Clad in a white suit decorated in gold, the king performed for the audience and CBS-TV cameras for almost an hour and a half. Footage from the

Rapid City performance and an earlier one in Omaha will be used for a special television program this fall.

The well-run show started almost exactly at the appointed hour, but that didn't mean the crowd didn't have to wait.

Small groups trying to enter the arena were gathering around the civic center as early as 4 p.m., although the gate didn't open until 7 p.m.

The parking lots of the civic center were quickly filled and late-comers parked as far away as St. Joseph Street, leaving a long walk to their seats.

The lights, sound system and instruments had all been carefully checked during the afternoon. The CBS crews took almost an hour of candid shots of the crowd assembling, cameras being checked and concessions being sold. Hawkers were selling souvenir programs, Elvis necklaces and giant posters.

Finally the lights dimmed — and in a

rarity for concerts — the show started shortly after 8:30 p.m. The band played the opening number, then a male gospel group sang several numbers.

A comedian joked about Hermosa, Springbrook Acres and the reaction of women to Elvis. Three female singers with a decided Motown flavor really warmed up the crowd.

Intermission.

The crew wearing red jackets with "Elvis in concert" started to change the arrangement on stage while many of the more than 10,000 crowd moved quickly to the concession stand. While popcorn sold well, soft drinks were definitely the most popular item in the warm arena. Souvenir programs were used as fans in the balconies.

The stage was set. The band returned clad in white. The crowd started clapping and stamping for Elvis.

Backstage Rapid City Mayor Art LaCroix presented Elvis a plaque with an engraving of Mount Rushmore and the inscription "In appreciation to Mr.

Elvis Presley for the grand opening concert." Presley also was given a hand-beaded medallion of life by young Monique Brave. Not included in the formal presentation, but also given to Elvis was a T-shirt promoting the Boys Club Rent-A-Kid program.

The lights were dimmed, purple spotlights were focused on the band and the theme song from "2001: A Space Odyssey" was played. As the purple lights got brighter and brighter, the audience was on the edge of their seats.

Then the king was on stage. And while he was there was no question that he was in command of the audience.

The young, the middle-aged and the old all listened, all applauded, all watched a super performer in action.

While a few of the oldies were missing from the program, others like "It's Now Or Never" and "Don't Be Cruel" never sounded any better.

His detractors may call Elvis aging and fat, but his fans who pack into every show he does know better. He's the king.