

Music

Long Beach has Vinton Valentine

Big hits from '60s still popular in '90s

By Veronica James
Special to the Daily Bulletin

"Roses are red my love
Violets are blue
Sugar is sweet my love
But not as sweet as you."

It may be hard to believe that it's been 32 years since Bobby Vinton first crooned these words over the airwaves back in 1962 in his hit single, "Roses Are Red (My Love)."

And it's harder still to believe it's taken as long to bring his popular stage show to the Los Angeles area.

In a rare California appearance, Vinton will spotlight a Valentine's Eve concert at the Terrace Theater in Long Beach, along with Reunion, a group which contains two-thirds of the original Lettermen and performs the group's popular romantic ballads of the 1960s.

"I was intimidated by L.A. as a young guy from a small town back east," said Vinton, who was born in Cannonsburg, Pa., a suburb of Pittsburgh. "I felt awkward coming to L.A. when I was younger, with Hollywood and all the stars. I'd say, 'I'll wait for another year when the time is right. I'll have another hit record.'"

The hit records came and went including several No. 1 singles such as "Blue Velvet," "There! I've Said It Again," "Mr. Lonely" and "My Melody of Love." But Vinton still never made his way out west to California. Instead he headlined in New York, Pittsburgh

Bobby Vinton/Reunion

Where: Terrace Theater, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach.

When: Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$18-\$26.

Information: (714) 740-2000 or (213) 480-3232.

achieving international success.

He recently sold out in Japan and regularly performs throughout Asia. Last year Vinton enjoyed a surprise No. 1 hit in England with "Blue Velvet," which first topped the American charts in 1963.

Local concert-goers may be surprised by Vinton's show.

"L.A. doesn't know what I do," he said. "It's more than just '60s love songs. To last all these years you've got to be a performer. It's attitude and personality. That's what's kept me around for 30 years, the total package."

The total package includes a full orchestra, which features Vinton on everything from clarinet to piano and drums, a versatility honed while studying to be a music teacher at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

Vinton, the son of band leader Stan Vinton, first achieved musical success at the age of 15 after forming his own band.

"At that time the top 10 artists performed with one band and I was it," said Vinton, who backed such stars as Fabian, Frankie Avalon, Chubby Checker and Brenda Lee.

Vinton's musical influences include Ray Charles, Patsy Cline, Roy Orbison and Johnny Mathis. "My favorite," he said, is "the sensitive type of ballad



Bobby Vinton and Reunion will perform at the Terrace Theater in Long Beach on Sunday for a Valentine's Eve concert.

found at The Blue Velvet Theater in Branson, Mo., where he performs shows a day from April to December.

"Branson is the entertainment capital of the world," Vinton said. "It's appealing to millions because of its