

Don Henley could have taken it to the limit

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – In some respects, diehard Eagles fans might have wanted to quickly get to the end of Sunday night's Don Henley concert at Harveys.

As one of the lead singers and songwriters for the iconic band from the 1970s and '80s, Henley's musical history was rocked last January when his counterpart, Glenn Frey, died.

It took getting to the end of the show during the highly-anticipated encore to hear an appreciation of his fellow artist and bandmate.

"For Glenn," Henley said quietly before busting into "Desperado," a touching ballad Frey and Henley wrote together about an outlaw surrendering to love.

Flannel shirt-clad Henley was an artist of fewer words and less flash than most performers who have graced the stage for the casino's summer outdoor concert series. Big "no" signs were on both sides of the stage announcing the prohibition of photos and video, and fans were threatened with being tossed out of the venue if their cameras/phones came out again.



Don Henley is almost a regular on the Harveys stage.
Photo/LTN

Henley was always known more for his behind-the-scenes songwriting and environmental activism than a crowd-pleasing, Hollywood style anyway – unlike Frey, who also became an actor (hint: “Miami Vice.”)

The duo, with the help of guitarists Joe Walsh, Timothy B. Schmidt and Don Felder, wrote some of the biggest chart toppers of our time including “Hotel California” and “Life in the Fast Lane” – which the Eagles performed on the same stage two years ago. This time, Henley delivered the blockbusters with the help of a vastly talented 15-person ensemble that almost drowned out his obviously aging, weakened voice once known for beautiful harmonies.

Albeit a bit awkward in lovelorn duets with him, his three young, female backup singers stole the show at times – especially Lara Johnston’s torchy rendition of “I Don’t Want to Hear It Anymore.”

During the major hits of the Eagles, Henley could have held

the microphone out the whole time, as many fans knew the words.

The singer-guitarist, who usually plays the drums, but not this evening, took to the stage a half-hour late with the Eagles' harmonic "Seven Bridges Road." Then he launched into his solo career with "Dirty Laundry" about the nasty side of the news business.

Many in the crowd yelled the lyrics – "Get the widow on the set," as if live with a broadcast news editor.

Then, Henley continued with the edgy atmosphere.

"Look, all the rich people are late," he said, pointing down to the empty seats up front. Stretches of vacant rows could be seen throughout the concert.

But to the enthusiastic, seemingly older fans there, the idea of Henley promising a two-hour performance to go through four decades of music brought out a cheer.

"It's hard to cram the history of civilization in six minutes," Henley admitted to the audience after the stirring rendition of a song about the Native Americans' plight.

In between an assortment of old Eagles tunes such as that heavy synthesized "The Last Resort," "One of these Nights" and "Witchy Woman," Henley dusted off a few from his solo career.

Hits like "Sunset Grill," "Boys of Summer" and the appropriate-to-the-election-season "End of the Innocence," accompanied a "Tears For Fears" rock hit "Everybody Wants to Rule the World". To that, the crowd erupted into cheers and danced.

Henley also sprinkled a few songs from his latest release called – "Cass County." His first solo album in 15 years was inspired by experiences in the small Texas town that he grew up in. The collection bears a strong resemblance to old

country crooner tunes, complete with some high-powered duets.

He teamed up with Rolling Stones leading man Mick Jagger and country star Miranda Lambert on "Bramble Rose" and performed it that night. He also sang "That Old Flame," a tune he performed with more a peer, country singer Martina McBride on the album.

Henley even provided a hint of his existence growing up in a small town with "Train In the Distance," a coming of age tune any young lad wanting to escape to a better life could relate to. Henley performed that duet with country singer Lucinda Williams on the album.

The Harveys Outdoor Summer Concert Series continues with electrifying country artist Keith Urban on Wednesday and Friday nights; former lead man for the Commodores Lionel Ritchie on Aug. 13; pop group Steve Miller Band on Aug. 18; red rocker Sammy Hagar on Aug. 26; and soul artist Stevie Wonder on Sept. 2.