

SHOWBIZ & STYLE

JOURNAL

Sold-out Martin Nievera concert featuring Brian McKnight did not disappoint

by RENE VILLAROMAN
AJPress

CABAZON—Martin Nievera proved that he could still pack them in his *My Christmas List* concert with Brian McKnight held on Sunday, December 21 at the Morongo Casino. Every seat in that contest was sold out and hundreds of fans were lined up at the venue's entrance one hour before the concert began at 6:30 pm.

Martin gave a wonderful concert full of his characteristic self-deprecating humor, and a mosaic of songs from the 60s through today. The concert also showcased the talents of his guest artists RJ de la Fuente and Stephanie Reese.

"It seemed to me that this particular concert was very personal to Martin, and although he was exhausted by the end of the show—it ran nearly three hours—he was very proud and happy to have been given this performance," attests Ted Benito, who was the concert's stage manager. "I do have to say that Jackie Regala and Cliff Villalora did a great job in producing the

show." Martin was joined by his older sons Robin and Ram in a trio of a song that he had written when the boys were still very young, and he cuddled his youngest son, Santino, and sang to him. "Nothing beats having a family," Martin said. "If you don't have a family, you're nothing," Martin added. "I'm so blessed and I want to share that blessing with you."

Although it was a billed as a Christmas concert, Martin sang only a couple of Christmas songs. "Are you in a Christmas mood?" he hollered. "It's my job to put you in a Christmas mood!" A fan hollered back, "Why aren't you wearing red?" Minutes later, Martin emerged wearing a red plaid tie that he borrowed from crewmember backstage. He then opened the concert with *It's a Wonderful Time of the Year*, that was followed by an a cappella rendition of *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* by his back-up singers. "My concert tonight is sold out. That's a good thing," Martin declared. "To perform with my back-up band is a joy. I've never

met a group of musicians so dedicated to music."

"It's such an honor to be a part of the concert here with Tito Martin and Brian McKnight. Being in a concert with these people and their caliber, and what they've done to music is very exciting," said guest performer RJ de la Fuente. "Humbly, I thank God for this opportunity. This is pretty big for me," he added.

Guest singer Stephanie Reese, who had performed with Martin in the past, was thrilled. "I couldn't believe it," she gushed. "It's a nice way to have a little gift right before Christmas." Reese sang a medley of Shirley Bassey songs, and *Prayer* in a duet with Martin. "I love performing with Martin always," Reese told Asian Journal after the concert. "I was

nervous at first," she said. "We did not have a proper rehearsal for all the songs. But you know, we're all professionals, so we just winged it. And I'm so proud and grateful to be a part of it," Reese said.

Brian McKnight, of course, was the most anticipated performer of the show, and when he sauntered on the stage, the audience went wild. "I met him on his evening show (in Manila),"

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Martin Nievera



Brian McKnight



Stephanie Reese with Brian McKnight
AJ Press Photos by Rene Villaroman



RJ de la Fuente with Martin Nievera

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