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TV News

by Frank Barron

A Trip Down Memory Lane at the Magic Castle

Gathering at the famed Magic Castle in Hollywood, a crowd of industry movers and shakers helped launch entertainer **Lee Newman's** new CD *Happy Together: The '60s Songbook*. The big event would have made a great music video because of the exciting and nostalgic atmosphere created in Magic Castle's **W.C. Fields** party room, with the '60s music giving everyone flash-backs to those "groovy" days, as Go-Go dancers were doing the Frug, Swim, Monkey, and other dances of the era. The entertainment news magazine *Extra!* was seen interviewing all the celebrities, and many came in vintage outfits.

It's a CD that can be appreciated by today's audience which embraces the retro sounds they discover on *American Idol*, and **Lee Newman** has high hopes for the disc. "Songs such as "Traces" and "Never My Love" are evergreens for every generation," said Newman, whose own entertainment roots come from a family that includes the great Tin Pan Alley songwriter **Jimmy McHugh** and showbiz giant **Eddie Cantor**. Talk about Abie's Irish Rose! Newman has performed at local L.A. clubs, including *The Roxy* and *Whiskey A Go-Go*, and he has had regular acting gigs on TV shows such as *Diagnosis Murder* with **Dick Van Dyke**.

At one point during the party, the music stopped and Newman picked up his guitar and encouraged everyone to join in a "Happy Together" sing-along. It was like one big Partridge Family get-together for the SLK Records release.

Mama Partridge **Shirley Jones** was there too, with her zany husband comic-businessman **Marty Ingels**. She loved hearing the wonderful songs from the era, as *The '60s Songbook* tunes played all

night—"Up Up And Away," "There's A Kind of Hush," and many more. Shirley just got back from her own singing engagements, with concerts across the country. She was also back on TV recently in *Hidden Places*, giving an outstanding performance (there's Emmy talk already!) in the Hallmark Channel original movie with **Sydney Penny** and **Jason Gedrick**. It was described as a "heartfelt, save the farm and the family story." Although Shirley has a lot going on in her life, she spent more time bragging about her talented sons. **Shaun Cassidy** is the executive producer, and brilliant writer, on ABC's sci-fi series *Invasion* (starring **Eddie Cibrian** and **William Fichtner**). Set in a small town in the Everglades, with an *X-Files*-type conspiracy threaded through the suspenseful drama, it actually films at Warner Bros. That gave Shirley another reason to beam with pride, because her youngest son **Ryan** is the set designer on the show, and turns the Burbank back lot into the Florida location with great artistry. By the way, her Broadway star son **Patrick** will be coming to town

in *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, playing the Pantages Theatre June 20 through July 2.

There was more theater news from composer **Richard Sherman**, who announced that he is bringing *Mary Poppins* to Broadway, just like he did with *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, another memorable musical he did with his brother Robert. The brothers have added new songs to the much-loved perfect-nanny story, which debuted in London's West End earlier this year.

Putting their heads together in a corner of the Magic Castle were *Laugh-In's* lovable **Jo Anne Worley** and **Earl Holliman**, of *The Thorn Birds* and *Police Woman* fame. Both work tirelessly to support Actors and Others for Animals, and Earl said they are getting ready for their fundraising gala, which will be held at the Universal Hilton this summer.

Enjoying the "blast from the past," **Spencer Davis** of rock 'n' roll's great **Spencer Davis Group** came in from his home on Catalina Island for his pal **Lee Newman**. Also on hand were radio personalities **Gregg Hunter**, **Chick**

Watkins, **Brad Chambers** and **Tom Williams**, plus record producer **Loren Wild**, jazz singer **Gene Harbin** and veteran bass player "**Chicago Tommy**" **Palmer**. And game show icon **Wink Martindale** noted Newman's tunes were perfect for his "Music of Your Life" radio show. Pretty young actress **Ami Dolenz** said the '60s songs have always been part of her life, since Ami's dad is **Mickey Dolenz**, and Newman covered **The Monkees'** "Day Dream Believer" on the new CD.

Long-time member of the Magic Castle **Carl Ballantine** (*McHale's Navy*) and **Jason Alexander** of *Seinfeld* fame were there, along with Castle founder **Milt Larsen**, who was talking about presenting the It's Magic 50th anniversary show at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood this fall. There are whispers that it may be filmed as a TV special, since the recently anointed "Magician of the Year" **Criss Angel** and his top-rated A&E magic series *Mindfreak* have created a lot of interest in magic shows. Let's hope it appears on the airwaves.