

WAY DOWN YONDER ON THE LOXAHATCHEE



About 1,100 people caught country king Alan Jackson's act in Jupiter on Friday night. Jackson, who owns a home on Jupiter Island, and his 10-piece band, the Strayhorns, performed for almost four hours in the shadow of the Jupiter lighthouse.

Country superstar wows Castaways crowd

Country superstar wows Castaways crowd

Story and photo by Bill DeYoung
staff writer

JUPITER — What would you pay to see and hear the biggest name in country music up close and personal?

About 1,100 people caught country king Alan Jackson's act in Jupiter on Friday night, and nobody paid a cent.

Jackson, who owns a home on Jupiter Island, played a surprise concert at Castaways Marina on the Intracoastal Waterway. Clearly enjoying themselves, he and his 10-piece band, the Strayhorns, performed for almost four hours in the shadow of the Jupiter lighthouse.

The multi-platinum superstar and his backup musicians were resting up before their spring tour — which starts in two weeks — and they got itchy to try out some new songs, explore some old ones and to just "have a little fun," Jackson said.

Besides, he told the crowd, the fishing's been lousy.

The impromptu performance was also a birthday gift to Castaways owner Jim Burg, who turned

"We had a really good time, so we thought, 'Why not do something even more fun?'"

Castaways owner Jim Burg,

on the decision to give \$8,000 generated from the concert to the Jupiter Children's Foundation

38 last week. Jackson, 45, is a frequent patron at the Square Grouper, the marina's beach-themed bar.

It was there, in 2003, that Jackson made the video for his chart-topping "It's Five O'Clock Somewhere." Fittingly, he opened Friday's outdoor concert with that song.

Audience members — tipped off to the show when Jackson himself called a radio station in the afternoon — had been packing into Castaways' sandy back yard for hours. The fire marshal ordered the grounds closed to additional people at 7 p.m., an hour before Jackson appeared.

By 7:15, people dozens deep were pressing against a makeshift picket fence about four feet

from the edge of a tiny plywood stage.

"How do you get your drinks out here?" Jackson joked when he appeared at 8. "Y'all can't even turn around, can you? What kind of place is this?"

Fans were lined up along the seawalls, on the marina docks and along the back fences, and the expansive sand parking lot was standing room only.

Fans who had been standing on mud flats in the river at low tide were waist-deep in water four hours later.

During the concert, Burg and Jackson decided that \$1 from every beer sold that evening would be donated to the Jupiter Children's Foundation. Burg said he sold approximately 8,000 beers, and he plans to deliver a check for \$8,000 to the organization this week.

"I always like doing those types of things for the community," Burg said. "This was not a charity event, but Alan (Jackson) and I discussed it, and he thought it was a good idea, so we did it."

"We had a really good time, so we thought, 'Why not do something even more fun?'"

Jackson, relaxed and in good spirits, played

See COUNTRY, A8

COUNTRY

FROM A1

many of his hits, from the up-tempo "Chattahoochee" and "Don't Rock the Jukebox" to the mellow "Remember When" and "The Blues Man."

He also played the hits "Little Bitty" and "Gone Country."

The gems, however, were the cover versions of other artists' songs. Frequently consulting a little notebook at the back of the stage, Jackson would ask one of his guitar players what key a certain song was in, the

drummer would count it off, and they'd go for it.

They played Hank Williams ("Mind Your Own Business"), Hank Williams Jr. ("Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound") and Conway Twitty ("Linda on My Mind").

Jackson laughingly changed George Strait's "Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind?" to "Does Fort Pierce Ever Cross Your Mind?"

They played rock'n'roll ("Summertime Blues"), country-rock ("Long Haired Country Boy") and three Merle Haggard classics ("The Way I Am," "Big City" and "I

Think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink").

"We don't get to cut loose like this and sing anything we want to," Jackson said. "I don't know about y'all, but we're having a good time."

He told the audience he was going to play "til the sun comes up," but the show ended just before midnight.

"Once I heard him talking on the radio, I realized it was real and they were actually going to play," said Stuart resident Kenny Blackwell,

owner of Aqua Pool Maintenance, who was pressed up against a chain link fence before scoring a prime spot on the sand just behind the musicians.

Blackwell drove to Jupiter with his wife, Cathy, and their daughter Michelle.

"Even though the place was packed, we parked in the back and just walked right in," he said.

- bill.deyoung@scripps.com

Staff writer Jennifer Brannock contributed to this report.