

Cirque Polynesia debuts ‘Wheel of Death’

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The “Wheel of Death” is a 35-foot-high steel device that looks like a pendulum with a giant wheel.

KAANAPALI — A gigantic steel apparatus, the “Wheel of Death,” is Cirque Polynesia’s newest show-stopper.

The wheel spins menacingly in the center of the Maui Moon Theatre in a classic act from the 1950s.

The “Wheel of Death” is a 35-foot-high structure that resembles a giant pendulum with a wheel on one end. The wheel rotates around a central axle without any gears or pistons — it’s powered by the performer’s own leg strength.

Stefan Terni, a world-renowned cirque artist who performed in more than a dozen circuses around the globe, runs at a feverish pace to get the wheel whirling.

Terni runs inside the wheel when it reaches its lowest and highest peaks and at times experiences zero-gravity.

There are no safety nets or harnesses, as it would impede Terni’s ability to move freely in and out of the wheel. For added drama, he jumps rope... blindfolded.

“The name says it all. The ‘Wheel of Death’ is definitely one of the most risky performances for any cirque artist, which also makes it one of the most intriguing for audiences,” said Cornell “Tuffy” Nicholas, producer of Cirque Polynesia.

“This is cirque performance at its finest in Hawaii on the beautiful Maui shores of Kaanapali.”

Cirque Polynesia continues to feature high-wire acts, contortion, aerial illusionists and acrobats and daredevil balancing.

The show is complimented with the standup comedy of Hawaii’s infamous warrior, “Vili.”

Cirque artists hail from around the globe, including Hawaii, Russia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Moldova (Eastern Europe) and Mongolia.

In June 2009, Cirque Polynesia opened at the Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa. Within the first year of operation, the show reached revenue of more than \$5 million, designed a custom-built outdoor theatre (Maui Moon), added private group seating (Kahuna Kabana) and is now offered at 300 travel desks.

Earlier this year, the show was voted as a “Best New Business” finalist by Hawaii Business Magazine readers.

Cirque Polynesia is a 75-minute show that tells the tale of two worlds coming together on a tropical stormy night. The people of Polynesia celebrate a gathering with rhythmic song and dance of the Pacific. The thumping drumbeats mesmerize the magical Cirque tribe to join the people of Polynesia for an enchanted evening.

The show plays nightly (except Sundays) at 7:30 p.m. Pre- and post-dinner and show packages are available for either the ‘Umalu or Son’z Maui at Swan Court restaurants at the Hyatt Regency Maui.

For more information, visit www.cirquepolynesia.com or call the box office at 667-4540.