



Top Hat Club opens

STORY & PHOTOS BY
BRIAN H. TEMPLE

The Mannheim community celebrated the \$2.9 million renovation to Benjamin Franklin Village's Top Hat Club at a soft opening celebration held Oct. 2.

Members of the 293rd Base Support Battalion, the 26th Area Support Group, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, contractors and others gathered for an advanced peek at the state of the art nightclub.

With the latest in lighting and sound systems, a dance floor, bar, video and slot machine room, the nightclub is ready for the public. And, according to one employee, the public is ready for the nightclub.

"The community has been waiting for this for 18 months," said Alex Cole, manager of the nightclub. "It's not a standard Army club. It's beautiful. We've achieved our goal of getting a real nightclub."

Cole said the Top Hat Club moved into a temporary facility in the middle of 2001 while the new facility was being constructed, but business slowed down. The Top Hat Club formerly generated the most revenue for a USAREUR club he said, and he hopes that with the club now open for business it will help them get the title back.

With approximately \$2.4 million going into construction, and a half million going toward furnishings and decorating, one could expect a first rate facility to put Mannheim back on top. A new dining area is also scheduled to open in early 2003. Some originally wanted the nightclub to open sooner, however, said Lt. Col. Christopher L. Miller, commander, 293rd Base Support Battalion.

"Tonight the commanders, command sergeant majors and other leaders in the community got a chance to see first hand what has been going on over here. They've seen all the construction for the last year and now they've finally been able to come in and say, 'Hey, this club was worth the wait!'"

From the architectural construction teams to the interior decorator, Miller handed out plaques and mementos thanking those involved for their teamwork.

18 Engineering in Europe



MARY FORBES AND THE FUNKY CATS ARE THE FIRST TO PERFORM LIVE AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW TOP HAT CLUB ON MANNHEIM'S BENJAMIN FRANKLIN VILLAGE,

"The contractors did a great job. ... Everyone worked together through it (building process) and the results are right behind us here - a high-energy nightclub that you would probably only find in the bigger cities."

One project engineer involved in the final oversight of the construction phase thanked Miller and the Mannheim community in return.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, appreciates every opportunity to support the community and your efforts to improve the quality of life for soldiers and family," said David Muellerleile of the Heidelberg office. "This renovation ... demonstrates the synergy obtained from working together."

Muellerleile said his office enjoys working with MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation) projects because there is more architectural artistry involved versus standard barracks construction or renovations to Army family housing. No

matter which project they are involved with however, Muellerleile said it is a team focussing on making the community better.

"For any project we do ... whether the customer knows that it's the Corps of Engineers, or they categorize everybody together such as our organization along with the DPW (Department of Public Works) - that's immaterial to me. The public knows that it's an engineer who did the work."

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- Lt. Col. Christopher L. Miller, commander, 293rd Base Support Battalion.



ABOVE: DWAYNE "DIRTY REB" CELESTINE MIXES IT UP FOR THE DANCE FLOOR.



ABOVE: DIANE WILLIAMSON AND DON ROBINSON CHECK OUT THE NEW CLUB AT THE GRAND OPENING.

RIGHT: COZY TABLES BECKON FRIENDS TO JOIN THE FUN.

