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# venues<sup>NOW</sup>

## Tough Road to Tokyo







# RESIDENCY

BY ROY TRAKIN

**A**RTIST RESIDENCIES HAVE been a part of the Las Vegas landscape since the days of Elvis Presley and the Rat Pack at the Sands, when they were called engagements, but the current proliferation can be traced back to 2003, when Caesars Palace opened The Colosseum for Celine Dion's "A New Day." Stars like Britney Spears, Elton John, Rod Stewart, Mariah Carey, Jennifer Lopez, The Who, Aerosmith, Gwen Stefani and, more recently, Usher and Morrissey have all undertaken major, multirate casino engagements.

Other notable events in Las Vegas' evolution into a hip entertainment destination included George Maloof opening the Palms Casino in 2001 (original Las Vegas home of MTV's "The Real World"), Caesars' Planet Hollywood and the emergence of new arenas such as the Mandalay Bay Events Center and MGM Grand Garden Arena in the '90s, and T-Mobile Arena in 2016 as home for the NHL Golden Knights. Madison Square Garden impresario Jim Dolan's highly touted \$1.83 billion Las Vegas Sphere, now scheduled for completion in 2023, is 500 feet wide and 366 feet tall, with an LED display made up of 580,000 square feet of light panels.

Usher is among the first performers to launch the return of residencies to Sin City, starting July 16 through Aug. 14 at The Colosseum at Caesars

Palace. The venue will also welcome Morrissey's much-anticipated, previously postponed "Viva Moz Vegas," from Aug. 28 through Sept. 5. Other Colosseum residencies include Keith Urban's "Live Las Vegas" (September); Rod Stewart's "The Hits" (October); Sting's "My Songs" (October-November, June); Van Morrison (February) and Reba McEntire with Brooks & Dunn.

The Colosseum's sister venue Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood has Shania Twain's "Let's Go" (December through February), Gwen Stefani's "Just a Girl" (October-November) and The Scorpions: "Sin City" with Queensryche (March-April), while Westgate International Theater presents "Barry Manilow: The Hits Come Home" (September through December).

"We seek out artists who are extraordinary live performers, with a robust catalog and an avid worldwide fan base who would be willing to travel to come see them," says Jason Gastwirth, Caesars president of entertainment.

Classic rockers have found a receptive audience in Las Vegas. ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons has a home in Vegas, which makes it convenient for his band's scheduled residency at the Venetian in October. The Texas band has been playing shows there since 2018 with sets that include Doc Pomus' classic "Viva Las Vegas," made famous by Elvis Presley.

For artists, the production at these

venues, which stays in place during the run of the residency, is always top-notch, ensuring that fans will see the acts perform at their optimum.

"It's the very definition of a working playcation," said Gibbons by email. "The specialness of the party atmosphere in Sin City gets turned up a notch when we get to it and grind. It has become obvious and convincing that the idea of bringing the ZZ roadshow to town is the best of both worlds ... our friends, fans and followers are always up for the show as we are."

Morrissey's coming appearance has seen the pendulum in Vegas start to shift from '60s and '70s classic rockers to '80s and '90s alternative staples like Billy Idol, Duran Duran and Blink-182. Teen-pop stars Debbie Gibson and Backstreet Boys' Joey McIntyre are slated to appear at the Venetian in August and September.

"When all these classic rockers start to pass away, it's time for the boomers to give way to the next generation, whose audience now has disposable income," said newly minted Vegas resident and longtime rock publicist Mitch Schneider, who points to such burgeoning areas as the Arts District, Chinatown and glam electronic dance music club Area 15 as the city's newest attractions. "For rockers of a certain age, the once-dreaded Las Vegas engagement that signaled the downside of your career has become the much sought-after residency."

Longtime regional promoter Danny

# REVIEWAL



## Stars are finding long-term bookings in Vegas even more appealing coming out of the shutdown

Zelisko said the genres of music booked into Las Vegas casinos have evolved over the years, along with the audience. "Vegas used to be typecast as a place for old acts," he said. "But that's not the case anymore. Rock is the new standard."

In addition to the rise of rock, electronic dance music has always been a huge draw for the Strip, with Calvin Harris at Caesars' nightclub property Omnia making a reported \$1 million a show in his \$280 million deal. EDM has been attracting younger audiences since Electric Daisy Carnival moved its flagship event to Vegas permanently in 2011.

Resorts World Las Vegas, the first addition to the Vegas Strip since the Cosmopolitan in 2010, has been particularly adventurous in its residency bookings, with Celine Dion's premiere scheduled for Nov. 25, Katy Perry's "Play" Dec. 29, Carrie Underwood's "Reflection: The Las Vegas Residency"

Dec. 1 and Luke Bryan Feb. 11.

Vegas-based publicist and PR Plus CEO Alissa Kelly said residencies are booked based on an artist's fan base. "You're looking for an audience that has the means to travel, while spending time and money on the casino site. While fans can plan their trip around seeing the band multiple times without having to travel to different cities. Right now, we're all waiting for international travel to open back up, targeting September as the date of a full return."

On the weekend of July 10, Vegas sprang back to life, with Garth Brooks at Allegiant Stadium (home of the NFL Raiders), Bruno Mars at the Park Theater at MGM Park, and the Conor McGregor-Dustin Poirier UFC 264 fight at T-Mobile Arena all taking place simultaneously.

"I see the future for these residencies as a hybrid situation, where the artist will still go out on tour, but then be back in Vegas for a couple of

months at a time, giving fans an option to see them either way, or both," says Kelly, who points to Carlos Santana, who is slated to bring his "Intimate Evening with Carlos Santana" to the House of Blues at Mandalay Bay Aug. 25-Sept. 4 and returning Nov. 3-14, with tour dates on the East Coast and in the South in between. "Residencies will continue to grow. I think we're going to see different genres and age groups targeted. It'll be interesting to see how it develops over the next few years."

In fact, casino entertainment is no longer an afterthought, a money-loser just to drive traffic to the slots like a \$2.50 buffet. Recent research by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority shows entertainment, not gambling, is now the No. 1 reason people come to Sin City.

"We love living here," says Schneider, who moved to Summerlin, just outside Las Vegas, in March 2020,

**KATY WORLD:** An LED screen displays an advertisement for Katy Perry's coming residency "Play" at Resorts World Las Vegas in a photo taken in June a few days before the resort's opening. The Theatre at Resorts World has a capacity of 5,000.



# TOP LAS VEGAS RESIDENCY ARTISTS

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date range: 1/1/2015-12/31/2019.

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$137,598,337	Celine Dion	The Colosseum at Caesars Palace	779,635	Concerts West / AEG Presents, Caesars Entertainment	Aug. 27, 2015-June 8, 2019	189
2	\$99,091,748	Britney Spears	Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood	665,091	Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation	Jan. 28, 2015-Dec. 31, 2017	186
3	\$97,665,797	Jennifer Lopez	Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood	487,303	Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation	Jan. 20, 2016-Sept. 29, 2018	120
4	\$78,693,726	Elton John	The Colosseum at Caesars Palace	453,282	Concerts West / AEG Presents, Caesars Entertainment	Jan. 16, 2015-May 17, 2018	110
5	\$53,871,719	Lady Gaga	Park Theater at Park MGM	184,209	Live Nation, MGM Resorts International	Dec. 28, 2018-Dec. 31, 2019	34
6	\$43,173,931	Backstreet Boys	Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood	314,597	Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation	March 1, 2017-April 27, 2019	80
7	\$41,574,992	Cher	Park Theater at Park MGM	279,400	AEG Presents, MGM Resorts International	Feb. 8, 2017-Sept. 1, 2019	76
8	\$36,056,274	Aerosmith	Park Theater at Park MGM	173,013	Live Nation, MGM Resorts International	April 6-Dec. 4, 2019	34
9	\$32,023,500	Bruno Mars	Park Theater at Park MGM	134,221	Live Nation, MGM Resorts International	Dec. 30, 2016-Sept. 14, 2019	26
10	\$30,776,835	Mariah Carey	The Colosseum at Caesars Palace	221,566	AEG Presents, Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation	May 6, 2015-Nov. 30, 2019	65

# TOP LAS VEGAS RESIDENCY VENUES

Ranked by tickets sold. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date range: 1/1/2015-12/31/2019.

RANK	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	CAPACITY	GROSS	SHOWS
1	Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood	2,107,118	7,028	\$321,296,966	572
2	The Colosseum at Caesars Palace	1,979,575	4,298	\$316,006,632	510
3	Park Theater at Park MGM	999,088	5,300	\$194,462,370	227
4	The Venetian Theatre	164,143	1,815	\$17,621,686	103
5	Encore Theater at Wynn Las Vegas	116,657	1,480	\$16,223,352	64
6	The International Theater at The Westgate Las Vegas	91,545	1,582	\$7,547,644	66
7	The Joint, Hard Rock Hotel (Now The Theater at Virgin Hotels Las Vegas)	83,371	4,450	\$9,092,779	36
8	House of Blues	31,145	1,900	\$4,338,251	36



arriving by car to a blacked-out Strip and a lockdown for his own long-term residency. "Everything is just easier, and cheaper, than Los Angeles. And we really enjoy the culture."

Ironically, the very pandemic which wiped out Las Vegas' planned residencies in 2020 and the first part of 2021 is exactly the reason why they will find themselves flourishing in a post-lockdown world, according to Caesars' Gastwirth.

"Residencies are certainly an even more attractive option for artists these days, given the challenges of the last year," he said. "Since then, we've seen even a greater interest from global superstar artists in committing to these types of bookings."

Chris Baldizan, MGM Resorts executive vice president of entertainment, who recently presented Bruno Mars at the Park Theater, acknowledges the effect the pandemic has had on the live music business but said, "Resi-

dencies play an important role in our business model and we are moving forward with our programming. The future looks bright as our calendar is shaping up to be one of the busiest we've seen in years. We will continue working closely to deliver an experience our guests have come to expect."

**R**oy Trakin is a veteran pop culture journalist who is currently a freelancer for Pollstar, Variety and All Access, among others.





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### Upcoming 2021 Events

8.20	Rise Against	10.22-23	Billy Idol
8.21	Dane Cook	11.5-6	Old Dominion
8.28	Sech	11.12	Evanescence & Halestorm
9.15	Death Cab for Cutie	12.2-3	Cody Jinks
9.18	John Legend	12.5	Cody Jinks
10.3	Quinn XCII, Chelsea Cutler	12.4-11	Boots on the Boulevard with Brantley Gilbert, Cody Johnson and Dierks Bentley
10.16-17	Billy Idol		

**For bookings or to learn more, contact  
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\*as of 7.1.2021