

# All Night Lon

**Spencer Patterson**

Fri, Jul 23, 2004 (4:33 a.m.)

WEEKEND EDITION

July 24 - 25, 2004

Who: Lon Bronson All-Star Band.

When: 10 p.m. Mondays, midnight Saturdays.

Where: Golden Nugget's Theatre Ballroom.

Tickets: Free, with two-drink minimum.

Information: 385-7111.

Web site: [www.lonbronson.com](http://www.lonbronson.com).

The Lon Bronson All-Star Band relocated to the Golden Nugget in May, after 14 years at the Riviera.

Celebrities don't seem to be having any trouble finding the popular late-night big band.

Penn Jillette, Tower of Power and the cast of "The Sopranos" are just a few of the big names to join Bronson and his group onstage since the move downtown.

Bronson says there's no telling who might show up next.

"It's a rock-and-roll circus I've got going up there, so I'll take chances," Bronson, 45, said in an interview with the Sun this week. "I'll pull people out of the audience that I've never even met if I think they might be interested in being onstage."

Bronson, a trumpet player from New Hampshire, has been leading his 12-piece band since founding the ensemble in 1990. He describes the core sound as "frenzied funk, boogie music," and designs set lists that blend everything from Led Zeppelin to Frank Zappa to Alanis Morissette.

The group, which includes members of local production shows such as "Mamma Mia!" and "Legends in Concert," plays Mondays at 10 p.m. and Saturdays at midnight in the Golden Nugget's Theatre Ballroom. Admission is free, with a two-drink minimum.

Las Vegas Sun: What's been the biggest difference going from the Strip to downtown?

Lon Bronson: It's not the geographic change as much as the change of atmosphere and climate of a lounge versus a showroom.

We're no longer battling drunks at a bar; we're no longer battling ambient slot machine noise. Now we've

got a really controlled environment, where we can really show people what we're capable of doing in a concert atmosphere.

Sun: You've said the Riviera's pay (rent) to play lounge policy was a key factor in your decision to leave. How disappointed were you to see that after 14 years there?

LB: I really felt sorry for them that they were going to pursue that policy to its logical conclusion, which inevitably will mean that everything will be pay to play. That's where they're going. And that just makes me sad.

That's just the antithesis of what the Nugget is pursuing, which is the old-school Vegas, retro, Rat Pack, '60s kind of attitude towards entertainment. Which is: Let's give people the best possible entertainment we can and we're going to get our money out of drinks and gambling afterwards. We're not going to expect every single aspect of entertainment to pay for itself.

I just can't say enough about (new owners) Tim (Poster) and Tom (Breitling) at the Nugget. People are really noticing the Nugget again, and I think a lot of that is due to their entertainment policies.

Sun: Before you lined up the Nugget gig, did you give any thought to touring more and playing Vegas less frequently?

LB: I've got a family, two daughters (ages) 6 and 3. So the thought of going out of town for any extended amount of time doesn't really appeal to me.

(During the break) I went on tour with David Cassidy to England for a month. That worked out perfectly, but that's about as long as I'll go away.

Sun: You're working on the first CD in the band's 15-year history. Tell me about that.

LB: People have been clamoring for a CD for years, but I've never been into the solicitation thing.

Then Tower of Power were over at the Orleans and they came into the Nugget, and about half the band sat in with us, basically took over, which was great.

Afterwards one of (Tower of Power's) founders, Steve "Doc" Kupka, was so impressed that he offered me an unreleased Tower of Power song. I was just floored. He said, "The catch is that you've got to record it," so I agreed to do it.

Since then that one Tower of Power song has grown to 10. Doc's been on the phone with me from the road, and he's dug up 10 tunes that he and the band never recorded or released. I can't tell you how excited I am about that.

Sun: When do you plan to record, and then release, the disc?

LB: We're going to do a live CD from the Nugget, with a lot of guest vocalists coming in. At this point I'm not exactly sure who, but I'm pretty sure Penn Jillette will be one of them.

I'm getting the production together now and it looks like we'll be recording in September/October. Hopefully it will be released in November.

Sun: You've had a long list of touring headliners join you onstage, from comedian Drew Carey to the

Barenaked Ladies. Which one stands out in your mind?

LB: I would have to say my favorite of all time would probably be (the Eagles') Joe Walsh, because I've got rock 'n' roll roots even though I'm a trumpet player. He was always an idol of mine. And to see him up onstage with us -- and then we subsequently opened for him in L.A. -- was just wild.

The way things are going right now, if you want to go and see Elton, what's it going to cost you, \$150 for a cheap ticket? So once in a while there's a little glimmer of hope, and we can bring people somewhere where they can look up and see Joe Walsh jamming with a Las Vegas band for the price of two drinks. When you look out and see the look on their faces, that's the payoff for us.

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