

Columnist Kate Maddox: Busy Bronson adding movie work

Kate Maddox

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Kate Maddox's column appears Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Reach her at kmaddox@lasvegassun.com.

Lon Bronson has a very full plate these days. In addition to his duties as band leader for David Cassidy's "At the Copa" co-starring Sheena Easton, Bronson also has an orchestra at "The Rat Pack Is Back" at the Sahara. Plus, he still heads up the weekly late-night Lon Bronson All-Star Band at Le Bistro Lounge at the Riviera.

In addition to all of his musical duties, Bronson is also the production manager at the Riv and he's been approached by the location scouts for "The Mexican," the Brad Pitt/Julia Roberts picture scheduled to shoot here in a few weeks. The producers are looking for a showroom for a couple of scenes and they think the "Crazy Girls" theater might be just the place. This is, of course, a bonus for the hotel -- the Riviera was also the backdrop for scenes in "3,000 Miles to Graceland."

Bronson said that final papers have yet to be signed for this project, but he's optimistic that they'll use the showroom. The location scouts will buy out an evening of "Crazy Girls" and probably do a little restructuring of the stage in order to accommodate the cameras, crew and actors.

In June Bronson celebrates 10 years leading the house band for the hotel -- making his the longest-running house band in Vegas. The 13-piece All-Stars (who start their gig at 1 a.m. on Friday nights/Saturday mornings) are often referred to as one of the best-kept secrets in town. After their "paying" gigs are through at other hotels the musicians, most of whom play in one of Bronson's other orchestras, get together and play for fun -- and for audiences who can afford the two-drink minimum at Le Bistro.

"Real TV" host John Daly wants to set the record straight about his decision to leave the syndicated show at the end of this season. Daly, who approves of the choice of successor Ahmad Rashad, said that he had always planned to give up the gig after four seasons -- the show first aired in 1996. He alerted producers months ago that he was looking to leave at the end of this season.

Before jumping to "Real TV" Daly was a local newscaster here at KTNV Channel 13 from 1990-1996. Daly, who is still a Las Vegas resident, says that although he has been bombarded with offers to return to the local news market, he's pretty sure that he wants to stay in the syndicated show arena. "Going back to news might close some doors that I really feel should be open right now," Daly says. "I'm actually at a really exciting crossroads in my career these days and I want to keep my options open." Daly's exclusive

contract with Paramount ends in July.

As for the decision to leave "Real TV," Daly admits that the show is just not all that "cutting edge" anymore. The syndicated show, which airs locally on KVBC Channel 3 weeknights at 7:30, did help spark the initial interest in the video TV craze that has been sweeping the nation for the past couple of years. But now Daly says "it just isn't fresh anymore."

While he is weighing his options Daly continues to work in town, donating much of his time to hosting local charity events. Overall, Daly says he's "happy with the way things are working out" and that he now has "some pretty solid opportunities to continue my TV career on a national level."

One of the guests at Monday night's Desert Inn anniversary party is up for one of the juiciest roles Hollywood has to offer. Matthew Farnsworth, who co-stars on the WB's "7th Heaven," was recently a guest at George Lucas' California estate, Skywalker Ranch. Farnsworth was there to audition for the role of Anakin Skywalker for the next "Star Wars" prequel. Some insiders are saying that the coveted role will likely go to a newcomer -- Farnsworth and another low-profile actor are said to be the front-runners.

Word is leaking out that celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse did an impressive job on the celebrity version of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" Lagasse reportedly got well into the \$100,000 range before bowing out. All of the money earned will go to charity. The show will air on ABC during May sweeps.

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