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MIKE WEATHERFORD: Lon Bronson happy to be taking show to Golden Nugget

Today's column, as many do, updates the musical chairs game among entertainment venues. But seldom have we discovered a happier loser.

"I cannot thank the Riviera enough for firing us," says bandleader Lon Bronson. His Tower Of Power-styled big band is headed to more welcoming arms at the Golden Nugget.

"It really is the next level for us," Bronson says of a May opening for the band, which will play at midnight Saturdays and 10 p.m. Mondays in the third-floor showroom.

"What Tim (Poster) and Tom (Breitling, the hotel's new owners) are trying to do there seems to fit hand in glove with everything we've been doing for 14 years," Bronson says of the offer from the enviable situation of being courted by multiple suitors.

In 1990, Bronson's 13-piece band became a connecting point between fading late-night scene of the "old Vegas" and the new one that would be reborn via dance clubs and "ultra lounges."

Musicians from the bands of visiting showroom headliners -- and sometimes the headliners themselves -- would use Bronson's band as a rallying place. But the wave of dance clubs siphoned off some of the energy, and the Riviera converted its lounge to a ticketed cabaret where acts pay rent to perform.

"The philosophy of the Nugget is the antithesis of that," says Bronson, who also tours as musical director for David Cassidy. The admission policy will be "at most a two-drink minimum."

Bronson says the new plan calls for "lounge-ifying" the Nugget's showroom to create a more informal atmosphere with cash bars and the like.

"We're going to put some advertising behind him," says Joe Leone, the Nugget's entertainment director. "He did an incredible job at the Riviera given that he didn't necessarily have all the tools he needed to work with there." ...

If you were holding your breath for the reopening of "X" at the Sahara, feel free to exhale. After first

being delayed until April 15, ostensibly for stage and lighting improvements, the latest unofficial word is that the show is off the table completely. Stay tuned. ...

While "X" was the most topless of topless shows during last year's run at the Aladdin, "Tease" was merely a musical *about* a topless club during its tenure at the adjacent Desert Passage mall.

Producer-director David Tumaroff is relaunching "Tease" April 23 at the Century Club in Century City, Calif. The show has been rewritten and uses none of the Las Vegas cast.

However, the key part of a club bachelor, played by Stewart Daylida, is now played by Las Vegas Stephen Sorrentino, who staged a credible one-man show at the Riviera in 2002. "It's a totally different show," Sorrentino reports, with music that's "way more edgy and rock-oriented."

Sorrentino also says he turns up in the just-released promotional video for "She Bangs," the offbeat cover of the Ricky Martin tune by "American Idol" novelty act William Hung. Sorrentino plays the unlikely pop star's shifty manager, and expands the role in a "mockumentary" that's soon to follow. ...

"Hail, Hail, Rock 'n' Roll," an impersonator show that recently departed the Riviera with as little fanfare as it arrived with in November, will resurface at Whiskey Pete's in Primm.

The revue will open April 23 and run Wednesdays through Sundays in the 600-seat showroom that reopened for headline acts in February. ...

Steve Dacri has pulled his "Xtreme Close-Up Magic" afternoon show from O'Shea's. ...

"Legends In Concert" founder John Stuart, who worked with Dacri at O'Shea's and also oversees "Ovation" in the Desert Passage mall, may be overseeing a new venue soon. He and producer Tom Biscardi are negotiating a year's lease on the domed entertainment venue downtown at the Lady Luck.


Biscardi came to fame as a Bigfoot hunter in the '70s and is still tracking the elusive creature. He also produced "Motown & Oldies Forever" last fall at the Castaways. The two hope to be staging more than one show in the downtown room by mid-May. The "sprung structure" -- considered a temporary building by code -- benefitted from a clean-up job early last year, but hasn't hosted ticketed entertainment in more than a year.

Veteran entertainer Steve Rossi, who performed in Biscardi's Motown revue, won't be far away. Rossi has a three-month contract to perform and oversee talent showcases in the main-casino's lounge.

Mike Weatherford's entertainment column appears Thursdays and Sundays.

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