

Billboard

BUSINESS

IT'S A NEW DAY FOR THE REFRESHED COLOSSEUM AT CAESARS PALACE

4/10/2019 by [Melinda Sheckells](#)



Courtesy of Caesars Entertainment
A rendering of the VIP area at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace.

[Lady Gaga](#), [Aerosmith](#), [Gwen Stefani](#) and [Robbie Williams](#) all have them. [Janet Jackson](#) and [Christina Aguilera](#) will soon get theirs. And who's next in line for a Las Vegas residency is anyone's guess.

The biggest and best theaters in Las Vegas are now built to accommodate multi-date concert experiences from top music and comedy talent. This boom began in 2003 with one singer on one stage: [Celine Dion](#) and "It's a New Day" at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace.

Over the past 17 years, seven out of the city's 10 highest-grossing residencies have called this place home, hosting 400,000 guests each year. In fall 2019, The Colosseum will begin its next chapter with enhanced viewing, refreshed technology and a new operational and promotional partner.

When Dion ends her run in June, the theater will shift control from AEG as its exclusive management partner to Caesars Entertainment, with Live Nation taking the reins exclusively on promotion. The final show of the original iteration of The Colosseum will be [Reba](#), [Brooks & Dunn](#) on July 6.

"The Colosseum is undergoing a significant renovation with new sound, new lights and new video -- a screen that's five feet higher and double the resolution. This is the first major project since The Colosseum opened," says Jason Gastwirth, president of entertainment for Caesars Entertainment, which operates more than 50 venues across 13 states and five countries. "We can configure the theater for general admission thanks to an automated lift system in the flooring. We'll be able to bring the floor down

to create standing room but also return it to a fully seated. It will create great versatility [for] residencies -- now the venue will be available to artists of all different genres that want a different set-up."

For artists, this variation is extremely important, as concerts aren't just about what's on stage, but the entire fan experience.

These new possibilities will also increase capacity by hundreds when set up for G.A. The seats themselves, none of which are more than 145 feet from the stage, will be redressed in custom fabrics. "The seats right behind [G.A.] are going to have a perfect sight line," Gastwirth says. "That's [one of the reasons why] this venue [is a great] place to play."

Taking a cue from the VIP seats across the street at Zappos Theater at Planet Hollywood, The Colosseum will get banquettes to accommodate groups from two to 10 with bottle/cocktail service. These VIP pods appear in "natural places" within the venue, Gastwirth says, such as near the sound board. "When The Colosseum opened 15 years ago, this wasn't part of the offering and it has become very important in the market."

Scéno Plus of Montreal, who designed The Colosseum, returns to make the renovations while not compromising the integrity of the highly regarded space, which won Billboard Touring Awards' "Top Venue Under 5,000" 13 times.

"Las Vegas is becoming a place known for having the best theaters in the world. That has a lot to do with technology. And it's why more and more artists are choosing to come here," says Kurt Melien, president of Live Nation Las Vegas.

Productions by icons like Dion, [Bette Midler](#), [Cher](#) and [Elton John](#) at The Colosseum sparked the residency boom, which is now the presiding entertainment business model on the Las Vegas Strip. Caesars

Entertainment along with Live Nation hope to reimagine this and include more limited engagements and tour stops as well as a broader, younger demographic of talent and patron.

"There's a shift in The Colosseum from where it used to be, programming-wise. And that's consistent with how the Caesars Palace brand has shifted, and how the city has shifted over the last 10 years," Melien says. "Artists are very opinionated people who do a lot of research and think

about what right venue is for them. Artists who come to us at this level are some of the most significant brand-managers in the history of business -- look at how they've cultivated their image. They study the market and understand why The Colosseum is important to them and how iconic this room is. I think the right artist is the artist that recognizes the value of the Caesars brand."



Courtesy of Caesars Entertainment

A rendering of the general admission area at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace.

He adds, "We're now in a position in partnering with Live Nation to look across these two venues -- The Colosseum and Zappos Theater -- and really think artist first, about what's going to be the best representation of what they're looking to do," Gastwirth says, noting that both theaters have capacities of around 4,500 people.

Expect new residency announcements coming soon as well as some epic one-night-only opportunities.

"[We've learned to] go big or go home. We build big shows. We sell big shows with lots of dates and lots of choices for that person traveling to get to Vegas to see their favorite per-

former," Melien says. "If you look at it from a business standpoint, it's easier if you take the other path, which is less shows, less production, less money. That's the path we don't do. I think the shows that are the most successful are the big, beautiful shows that people want to come back to."

According to Melien, the residency business is not only growing but exploding, with two million tickets to residency shows sold to the 41 million visitors that Las Vegas welcomes every year.

"The sky's the limit," he says. "We are not even close to hitting the saturation point."

Boosting those numbers even further is the guarantee of an unforgettable night for both artists and fans, one they can't wait to revisit again and again.

"We're are getting a lot of calls from artists who are interested. There's so much attention on them when they're in residence. If you think of what an extraordinary platform it is to promote not only the [appearance] but other things that they're doing," Gastwirth says. "[And for the audience] it is an experience of a lifetime when they come see a show at The Colosseum -- and these improvements [enhance] that."