

IT'S VEGAS, BABY!

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Las Vegas promises splendor, excitement, and provisional VIP status to all who visit. If Washington, D.C., is America's seat of power, then the country's seat of promise is in the land where you dine at Seablue and see Blue Men, where 'Wichcraft conjures snacks and a Carrot serves up laughs. The promise takes many forms, 24/7, whether you go for the volcanic extravagance of the Strip, the more humble (but still neon-bathed) Fremont Street Experience, or the spirited locals' joints.

A beguiling aspect of the Las Vegas megaresorts is that for all their immensity, they do not dwarf the individual. Step inside these grand sensoriums and you begin to feel as expansive as your surroundings. Perhaps it's the slight scent of cocoa butter in the air or the heady aroma of Mario Batali's Italian barbecue. Maybe it's the agreeable chimes and intermittent cheers from the casino floor. These elements combine and delight as you wander the seemingly endless floor plan, and soon you don't feel overwhelmed by the epic expanse, you feel broadened by it. This is the alchemy of the Las Vegas allure. Vegas is an equation where you + more = more of you: More chances to explore aspects of your personality that may be confined by the routine of daily life.

Perhaps the sum of your vacation is measured by nostalgia, with a show that brings you back to simpler times, when LOVE was all you needed. Maybe you want to add a little spice with the near-naked acrobatics of *Zumanity*. Your night on the town may start and end with a cigar and Moët & Chandon at Napoleon's Champagne Bar. Or maybe you want to brave the elements for a cocktail served not in the desert heat, but in the five-below-zero temperatures of the Minus Five ice bar in Mandalay Bay. In Vegas you identify your comfort zone and either push its boundaries or not—it's up to you. Only the frontiers of your imagination limit your choices here. And here, as you probably have heard, is where the outcome of those choices stays.



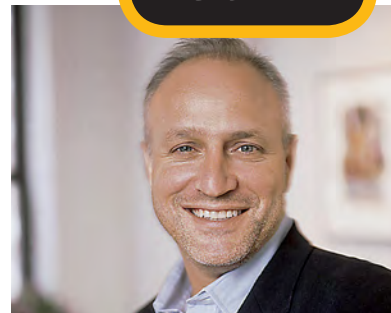
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LAS VEGAS: A NEW CULINARY CAPITAL

THE CELEBS ARE IN THE KITCHEN

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From left to right: Guy Savoy, Daniel Boulud, Mario Batali, Tom Colicchio, Michael Mina.

Showmanship has always been a forte in Las Vegas, so it makes perfect sense that the city has attracted celebrity chefs and become known for elaborate food. (Yes that is edible gold leaf gleaming radiantly atop those risotto-style farro grains.) And yet, Las Vegas's famous buffets still rake folks in. Why? Because who doesn't love eating all you can for one set price? It's all part of what makes Las Vegas one of the nation's culinary capitals.

DANIEL BOULUD

As executive chef of New York's Le Cirque, Boulud attracted a following of dignitaries and celebrities. He then created 4-star establishments such as DANIEL and DB Bistro Moderne. A 2006 James Beard restaurateur of the year and author of six cookbooks, he has restaurants in Beijing, Vancouver, Palm Beach, and Vegas.

Culinary Trademarks: Hearty, supremely balanced French food. Traditional cooking that marries inventiveness and restraint. Gourmet flourishes to informal dishes (e.g., his famous burger with ground sirloin, braised in red wine, stuffed with foie gras and truffles).

Restaurant: The refined, casual Daniel Boulud, at Wynn Las Vegas, is a brasserie offering heady French fare and superb steaks, chops, and fish.

GUY SAVOY

One of the great culinary masters of Paris was born in Bourgoin-Jallieu in 1955 and apprenticed at the famed Maison Troisgros in Roanne in his late teens. By 1980, he had his own acclaimed Parisian restaurant.

Culinary Trademarks: Rarified, masterful cuisine (e.g., silky artichoke and black truffle soup with toasted mushroom bricoche); thematic menus.

Restaurant: Guy Savoy, in the exclusive Augustus Tower at Caesars Palace; the focus is squarely on the ethereal food.

MARIO BATALI

This Washington State native has more than a dozen establishments in his portfolio. He's recognized far and wide after years at the Food Network hosting the cooking show *Molto Mario* and appearing regularly on *Iron Chef America*.

Culinary Trademarks: Local market ingredients; refined home-style Italian cooking; unfussy approach. He and partner Joseph Bastianich also present authentic wine lists that emphasize Italian varieties.

Restaurants: B&B Ristorante (faithfully prepared, head-to-hoof Italian cooking) and Enoteca San Marco (great cheese, charcuterie, and Italian wine), both at The Venetian. CarneVino Italian Steakhouse in the Palazzo.

TOM COLICCHIO

The head judge on TV's *Top Chef* often has aspiring chefs quaking. The New Jersey native taught himself to cook by studying books by French chef Jacques Pepin. He's earned *Food & Wine* accolades at Mondrian, dazzled critic Ruth Reichl at Gramercy Tavern, and taken his Craft Restaurant Group nationwide.

Culinary Trademarks: Serves enticing side dishes with tender porterhouse; lends gravitas to sandwich making (pole-caught tuna with fennel, black olives, aioli, and lemon on a baguette); big on desserts.

Restaurants: The semiformal Craftsteak and more relaxed Wichcraft (the perfect place for a pre-show snack) at the MGM Grand.

MICHAEL MINA

Mina didn't release his first cookbook until 2006, and he's appeared very little on TV. His buzz has come from sheer talent and first-rate restaurants in a partnership with tennis star Andre Agassi.

Culinary Trademarks: Seafood; innovative use of international ingredients (e.g., sashimi of kampachi with sweet coconut gelée and fiery vindaloo curry).

Restaurants: At the MGM Grand, Seablue—with backlit blue walls and high ceilings—and dressier, more refined Nobhill Tavern. At the Bellagio his eponymous Michael Mina, serving contemporary seafood. And Strip Steak in Mandalay Bay, featuring a classic steakhouse menu in a modern setting.

THE WOLF-GANG THEORY

If the Las Vegas dining scene has exploded into a galaxy of star chefs, then the Big Bang started with **Wolfgang Puck**. In 1992 he introduced a branch of his legendary Spago restaurant to Caesars Palace, and Vegas's star-chef movement was born. It's become a crowded universe, but Puck maintains a stellar presence with **Postrio** at the Venetian, **Cut** at the Palazzo, and **Trattoria del Lupa** at Mandalay Bay, among others.

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Restaurants

BELLAGIO LAS VEGAS

Prime Steakhouse. Even among celebrity chefs, Jean-Georges Vongerichten has a “can’t touch this” reputation. In a velvet-draped blue room that recalls a speakeasy, he presents choice cuts of beef with mustards and sauces, and Dungeness crab cakes with celeriac remoulade, ruby grapefruit, and ginger. Jackets are encouraged. 702/693–8484. *Reservations essential. No lunch. Very expensive.*

Sensi. At this casual but dramatic (sandstone and glass walls) spot, the menu is divided into four realms: Asian dishes, Italian fare, raw and seafood dishes, and grilled meat. Try spice-rubbed buttercurry chicken, ahi tuna ceviche, and wood-fired focaccia topped with Vacherin cheese and black truffles. 702/693–7223. *No lunch. Expensive.*

CAESARS PALACE

BOA Steakhouse. In this bold space brightened by massive red lanterns, choose from the long list of meats, such as bone-in Kansas City filet mignon or free-range veal chop, and then match your selection with rubs, sauces, or mustards. Surf-and-turf is taken to new levels with Australian lobster tail, Kobe filet mignon, and Hudson Valley foie gras. 702/733–7373. *Expensive.*

Joe’s Stone Crab. Drop by this bustling branch of the famed South Miami Beach seafood restaurant for a pile of fresh stone crabs and a beer, or something from the raw bar, a salad, or a sandwich. 702/792–9222. *Moderate–Expensive.*

Restaurant Guy Savoy. Here, Michelin three-star chef Guy Savoy masterfully prepares modern French creations like roast veal chop with black-truffle potato puree, and walnut-and-chive-crust John Dory fish with watercress and salsify. 702/731–7731. *Closed Mon. and Tues. No lunch. Very expensive.*

Sushi Roku. It’s an airy sushi dining room lined with bamboo stalks and tall windows facing the Strip. You can’t go wrong with the bluefin tuna or oyster nigiri, or the spicy octopus roll topped with spicy tuna. Also consider the homemade tofu prepared three ways: with white truffles; caviar and lemon oil; and scallions and sesame oil. 702/733–7373. *Moderate.*

ENCORE

Sinatra. Framed Sinatra photos appear throughout the ivory-and-ruby-hued dining room. Chef Theo Schoenegger prepares elegant Italian cuisine, such as pappardelle tossed with beef, veal, and mushroom ragout, and a delectable black cod served with lentils, parsnip puree, and a light pancetta vinaigrette. The hip bar is

perfect for an after-dinner limoncello or grappa. 702/770–5310. *Expensive.*

MANDALAY BAY

Aureole. When celebrity-chef Charlie Palmer and designer Adam Tihany recreated Palmer’s New York restaurant here, they added playful twists like a four-story wine tower that holds 10,000 bottles reached by “wine fairies,” who are hoisted via electronic pulleys. Seasonal specialties on the fixed-price menu might include roasted guinea fowl with sautéed foie gras, ravioli, and natural juices. 702/632–7401. *Reservations essential. No lunch. Very expensive.*

Border Grill. Food Network stars Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger run this cheery yet sophisticated outpost of their Santa Monica restaurant. For lunch, try the turkey tostada or grilled skirt steak; for dinner, the sautéed rock shrimp or beef brisket taquitos with guajillo chile sauce. 702/632–7403. *Moderate.*

Burger Bar. You build your own burger at this jovial joint from esteemed, San Francisco–based chef Hubert Keller. Meat selections include Colorado lamb, buffalo, Black Angus beef, and Kobe beef (there are vegetarian options, too). For toppings, there’s prosciutto, pan-seared foie gras, jalapenos, fried egg, sliced zucchini, smoked salmon, and grilled lobster. 702/632–9364. *Inexpensive.*

RM Seafood and Rbar Café. Sustainable-food proponent Rick Moonen won’t serve Chilean sea bass or other overfished species. In the more formal mahogany-bedecked upper-level restaurant, you might dine on smoked sturgeon with osetra caviar, sauterne-poached pear, and lemon crème fraîche. At the less pricey lower-level Rbar Café, you’ll find a bustling oyster bar and simpler treats like New England clam chowder and lobster rolls. 702/632–9300. *No lunch. Upper level. Very expensive.*

MGM GRAND

Craftsteak. Inside this modern, dark-hued eatery, chef Tom Colicchio insists on the finest ingredients, often from small family farms. The menu offers mainstays like Kobe beef, as well as veal, salmon, and lobster dishes. Try the melt-in-your-mouth braised short ribs, a signature plate. 702/891–7318. *Moderate–Expensive.*

Diego. Authentic regional Mexican cooking served in a space decorated with hammered-tin mirrors, bright red walls, and a well-dressed crowd. Sink into the *arroz a la tumbada*, a brothy paella of white rice studded with shrimp, scallops, mussels, calamari, and roasted tomatoes. Roll-’em-yourself soft tacos of garlic-lime-marinated skirt steak or chicken are also exceptional. 702/891–3200. *No lunch. Moderate.*

BUFFETS

Since the late 1940s buffets have been a tradition at most Las Vegas resorts. Bargain-hunters will find deals (e.g., pay-one-price promotions for all-day dining), but top buffets typically charge up to \$40 per person at dinner. Some spreads have lobster tail, Kobe beef, and unlimited champagne.

For a complete listing on buffets, go to VisitLasVegas.com.

BUFFET AT THE BELLAGIO

Amid chandeliers and elegant art is something for every foodie: venison chops, apple-smoked sturgeon, elaborate pastries. Skip items you can easily get at any buffet, and you’ll do well. The staff does a first-rate job.

Best Dishes: Eggs Benedict, crab omelets, Kobe beef, baby squid, crab legs, sushi, smoked Scottish salmon, tandoori game hen, steamed clams, the salad bar.

CRAWINGS/MIRAGE

It’s a mod cafeteria: futuristic back-lighted glass walls, dramatic geometric patterns, low-slung furniture, flat-screen TVs tuned to cooking shows. Thirteen stations whip up everything from all-American barbecue to sushi. Asian items are praiseworthy.

Best Dishes: Dim sum, red-chile pork tamales, bruschetta, fried chicken, chipotle-mashed potatoes, Asian noodles, wonton duck soup, macaroons, croissant pudding.

LE VILLAGE BUFFET/PARIS

The dining room recalls a quaint French village, and stations are themed to Burgundy, Normandy, Alsace, and Brittany. As buffets go, the food is mouthwatering.

Best Dishes: Chicken chasseur, roasted duck, bouillabaisse, salmon-scrambled eggs, raclette, braised lamb, chocolate mousse, crêpes, Belgian waffles, French bread pudding.

VILLAGE SEAFOOD BUFFET/RIO

The seven seas-themed dinner buffet ventures to Mexico, Italy, China, and beyond. The steep price offers plenty of value—just think what you’d pay à la carte for platters of sushi, lobster, or raw shellfish. There’s also plenty of chicken and beef.

Best Dishes: Oysters Rockefeller, broiled swordfish, lobster tail, seafood gumbo, snow-crab legs, clams and oysters on the half shell, chocolate cheesecake.

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Fiamma Trattoria. A postmodern space with a split-level dining room that's done in rich chocolate, copper, and tan tones, this trattoria sits on the Studio Walkway. Chef Carlos Buscaglia turns out such deftly seasoned Italian fare as citrus-grilled octopus with smoked bacon and cannellini beans. Among the mains, consider braised Colorado lamb shank with gnocchi, wild mushrooms, and lamb jus. 702/891-7600. *No lunch. Expensive.*

Joël Robuchon at the Mansion/L'Atelier. Chef Joël Robuchon came out of retirement to open two side-by-side restaurants here. Less formal L'Atelier offers à la carte entrées plus a long list of "tasting" portions (crispy langoustine fritters with basil pesto or free-range quail stuffed with foie gras). For the ultimate gastronomical rush, try the Maison's \$400 full tasting menu; less expensive versions with fewer courses are also available. The cuisine changes daily and includes rarefied creations, such as panfried sea bass with lemongrass foam and stewed baby leeks. 702/891-7925. *Very expensive.*

Nobhill Tavern. San Francisco cuisine stars at Michael Mina's brasserie. Good options include lobster potpie or organic pheasant with wild-mushroom risotto. Mashed potatoes—in flavors like lobster, curry, or basil—come with dinner, and the sourdough bread's the real deal. 702/891-7337. *No lunch. Very expensive.*

Seablue. A water wall and trancy music welcome you into Michael Mina's über-hip seafood restaurant. Expect wood-grilled, Mediterranean dishes and fish flown in from everywhere—pink dorado from Senegal, striped bass from Nantucket, barramundi from Australia. Moroccan-style tagines are also a specialty. 702/891-3486. *No lunch. Expensive.*

Wichcraft. An alternative to MGM's fast-food court is a bite at this futuristic space with marble-top café tables, vibrant lime-green walls, and blond-wood floors. Creative sandwiches include Sicilian tuna with fennel, black olives, and lemon juice on a baguette, and meat loaf with bacon, cheddar, and tomato relish on a roll. It's a great place for breakfast, too. 702/891-3166. *No dinner. Very inexpensive.*

MIRAGE LAS VEGAS

BLT Burger. BLT Burger serves up traditional burgers, fries, and shakes with a twist (and until 4 AM on weekends). Start with a Twinkie Boy shake made with vanilla ice cream, caramel syrup, and Twinkies—which you can replace with Maker's Mark, if you prefer. Bite into a burger made from Kobe beef, lamb, turkey, or salmon. Sweet-potato fries are the perfect side. 702/792-7888. *Moderate.*

THE SWEET STUFF

Looking for a quick sweet fix that won't break the bank? Check out these three options:

Ethel's Chocolate Lounge. Inside the Fashion Show mall, and at other locations around town (including the Rio), this home-grown purveyor of chocolates serves exquisite hot cocoa, espresso drinks, fine-crafted chocolate bars, and other sweets in a cushy café with comfy sofas. *Fashion Show, 3200 Las Vegas Blvd. S., north Strip. 702/796-6662.*

Jean Philippe Patisserie. You could order a fruit smoothie at this Wonka-esque sweet shop, but why, when this artful homage to chocolate has so many decadent des-

serts? The list includes cakes, cookies, gelato, hand-dipped chocolate candies, and crepes. Café tables are set around a gorgeous circular bar; some face a towering fountain of liquid chocolate. *Bellagio Las Vegas, 3600 Las Vegas Blvd. S., center Strip. 702/693-1111.*

Luv-it Frozen Custard. Pull up to this tiny take-out stand at the north end of the Strip, on the edge of downtown, to sample velvety smooth frozen custard (flavors change daily) or a sundae—try the "Jimmies Scotch Treat," with butterscotch sauce, jimmies, sliced bananas, and a maraschino cherry. It's been goin' strong since 1973. *505 E. Oakey Blvd., north Strip. 702/384-6452.*

THE PALAZZO

CarneVino Italian Steakhouse. Mario Batali's steaks are dry-aged, grilled until slightly charred, and carved table-side. Fine wines are supplemented by an impressive list of other spirits. When the bread arrives, try the lardo, a savory spread made from pork fat, ginger, allspice, and rosemary. The bar and more casual taverna serve lighter fare. 702/789-4141. *No lunch in main dining room. Very expensive.*

Dos Caminos. This place serves not just tantalizing Mexican food but swell margaritas (try blueberry-pomegranate). Guac-and-chips, roast-plantain empanadas with chipotle aioli, and lobster ceviche are all great for snacking. Move on to slow-roasted suckling pig with achiote sauce and habanero-pickled onions. 702/577-9600. *Moderate.*

Lavo. Dining in a bathhouse? It's pretty hip. The creative before-dinner palate cleanser (a "deconstructed" Bloody Mary of spicy tomato sorbet, pureed celery, and vodka gelée) sets the tone. The dishes—bigger than appetizers but smaller than entrees—are meant to be shared and include charred octopus salad, steak frites, and the "ultimate" pizza (toppings include lobster and truffles). 702/791-1800. *No lunch. Expensive.*

Restaurant Charlie. Reserve your table early at this high-ceilinged cavernous space for a chance to sample rarefied Charlie Trotter entrées like slow-poached Arctic char with Savoy cabbage and a trout roe-shiso vinaigrette. In the counter-only Bar Charlie, you can opt for the 8- or 14-course oft-changing sushi-sashimi menu. 702/607-6336. *Very expensive.*

PLANET HOLLYWOOD RESORT

KOI Las Vegas. The enormous 220-seat eatery attracts A- and B-list celebrities. They line up for sublime Asian-fusion fare that includes baked lobster rolls, yellowtail carpaccio, hamachi with soy-citrus and truffle essence, and Kobe-

beef filet mignon with glazed eggplant. 702/454-4555. *Expensive.*

THE VENETIAN

B&B Ristorante. Mario Batali and wine pro Joe Bastianich honor the simple foods of Italy's countryside. The place glows from within its dark-wood and leather confines. Entrées include fennel-dusted sweetbreads with sweet-and-sour onions, and barbecued squab with porcini-mustard sauce. At less-expensive Enoteca San Marco, you can nosh on antipasti, pizza, cured meats, and artisanal cheeses while sipping Italian wine; it's open for lunch. 702/266-9977. *No lunch at B&B Ristorante. Expensive.*

Delmonico Steakhouse. Showbiz chef Emeril Lagasse lends this steak house a New Orleans touch. Pass through 12-foot oak doors to a calm, subdued modern interior. For starters, consider the classic steak tartare with Dijon emulsion or the panfried oysters with shrimp, mushrooms, and spinach pasta; for entrées try the grilled rack of lamb with parsnip potatoes and port wine-cherry reduction or the tender bone-in rib steak. 702/733-5000. *Reservations essential. Very expensive.*

WYNN LAS VEGAS

Bartolotta. Chef Paul Bartolotta has his fish flown in daily from Italy. You might start with charcoal-grilled cuttlefish before graduating to the sautéed Mediterranean turbot in a white wine broth with leeks and clams. Or consider Ligurian-style roasted guinea hen with artichokes, olives, and lemon-herb sauce. 702/248-3463. *No lunch. Very expensive.*

Wing Lei. This restaurant is named for its talented chef, who blends contemporary French cuisine with Cantonese, Shanghai, and Szechuan traditions. The five-course Peking duck dinner for two is a showstopper. But don't overlook stir-fried minced squab; prawns with walnuts and a honey-peach sauce; or orange beef with ginger, scallion, bok choy, and a tangerine-peel sauce. 702/248-3463. *Expensive.*

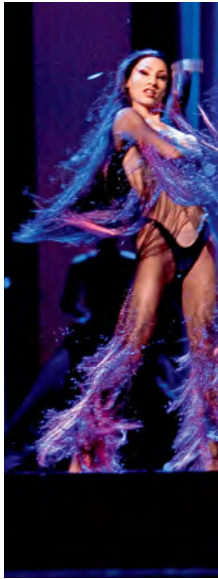
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LAS VEGAS: ON WITH THE SHOW

SHOW SAVES VS. SPLURGES

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The very name “Las Vegas” has been synonymous with a certain style of showbiz ever since Jimmy Durante first headlined at the Flamingo Hotel in 1946. Through the years this entertainment mecca has redefined itself a number of times, but one thing has remained consistent—doing things big. Whether you’re rollin’ in dough or on a tight budget, Vegas has a show for you. Check out the following steals and splurges.

Save (Free–\$100)

COMEDY AND MAGIC

The comedy magic of **Mac King** is worth every penny of the under-\$30 ticket price. He combines low-key, self-deprecating humor with the kind of close-up magic that’s baffling.

Other options: The Amazing Johnathan, Carrot Top, Rita Rudner.

SPECTACULARS—ON THE STRIP OR THE STREET

Think the downtown **Fremont Street Experience** is limited to video shows on the overhead canopy covering Glitter Gulch? Not so. Every weekend, live performers, such as costumed tribute bands, play free gigs on two stages; big weekends even bring in acts with name recognition (past performers include Chubby Checker and classic rockers Kansas). Stages are on First and Third streets.

Other options: The erupting volcano at the Mirage; the over-the-top *Sirens of TI* performance at Treasure Island; the graceful Fountains of Bellagio.

Splurge (More than \$100)

HEADLINERS

Donny and Marie Osmond perform their greatest hits through the years as they sing, dance, and joke in a 90-minute variety show at the Flamingo.

Other options: Cher (three times a year at Caesars Palace), Wayne Newton (Tropicana), Garth Brooks (Wynn).

Save or Splurge

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Some shows have been around for a decade or more; others are more recent. All are dazzling, awe-inspiring, and have a democratic range of ticket prices.

Among the older shows are TI’s *Mystère*, which opened in 1993 and most purely preserve’s the original Cirque concept, and the Bellagio’s stylish water spectacular, *O*, running since 1998.

Other Cirque options: *Criss Angel—Believe*, a magic show at the Luxor; *KÁ*, a story of separated twins at the MGM Grand; *LOVE*, a Beatles homage at the Mirage; *Zumanity*, an erotic extravaganza at New York-New York; *Viva ELVIS*, a soaring tribute to the King at ARIA.

MUSICALS

Though there aren’t as many big Broadway productions as there once were, those that are still around—**Disney’s Lion King** (Mandalay Bay), **Jersey Boys** (The Palazzo), and **Phantom of the Opera** (The Venetian)—have, when you factor in the matinees, tickets to suit all budgets. So does the antic-filled **Blue Man Group** (The Venetian).

Other options: *American Superstars* at the Stratosphere, *Legends in Concert* at Harrah’s.

Left top, Cirque du Soleil’s *Zumanity*; left bottom, Disney’s *The Lion King* National Tour; center top, *The Blue Man Group*; center bottom, *Le Rêve*; right, *Donn Arden’s Jubilee!*

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Shows

Comedy

The Amazing Johnathan. The crackpot comedian and almost-magician offers the most profane and twisted comedy show to be consistently found on the Strip. The bellicose and belligerent Johnathan isn't afraid to draw a little (fake) blood as he tortures both his dingbat stage assistant and a hapless audience volunteer. *Harmon Theater at Planet Hollywood, 702/836-0836. Tues.–Sat. 9 PM.*

Carrot Top. After years on the college circuit, the prop comic moved his trunks full of tricks into the Luxor, where a lot of people realize he's funnier than they thought. The Florida native known off-stage as Scott Thompson still is most unique when wielding his visual gags, and he sells them with an unrelenting manic energy and a running commentary on the act itself. *Luxor Las Vegas, 702/262-4400. Wed.–Mon. 8 PM.*

Defending the Caveman. Rob Becker's anthropological take on the battle of the sexes is a popular touring one-man show that brought something new to Las Vegas: theatrical long-form comedy presented by a likeable schlub. Kevin Burke delivers an extended monologue (with lighting and sound cues) that preaches greater understanding on a set that seems right out of *The Flintstones*. *Excalibur, 702/597-7600. Tues.–Thurs. and Sun. 3 PM; Fri. and Sat. 3 PM and 7 PM.*

Rita Rudner. This female comedian provides an insightful look at domestic life and female obsessions. The genteel, soft-spoken Rudner chooses not to fuel a battle of the sexes so much as poke fun at both sides and help them understand each other. *Harrah's Las Vegas, 702/369-5111. Mon., Tues., and Thurs.–Sat. 8:30 PM.*

Magic

Criss Angel—Believe. With the help of Cirque du Soleil, Criss Angel, star of TV's *Mindfreak*, takes you on a journey in which a near-death experience sends the magician down a rabbit hole and into a surreal dreamscape. *Luxor Las Vegas, 702/262-4400. Tues.–Sat. 7 PM and 10 PM.*

Lance Burton: Master Magician. One of the Strip's reigning kings of magic, Burton is a nice guy from Kentucky who worked his way up from specialty act to star. He's a charmer with the ladies and works youngsters into the show like no other act in town. After a brief hiatus in 2009, he returns to the 1,200-seat Victorian theater he opened at the Monte Carlo. *Monte Carlo Resort and Casino, 702/730-7160. Tues. and Sat. 7 PM and 10 PM, Wed.–Fri. 7 PM.*

RAVES AND FAVES

Splashy opening: The beginning of *O*. A regal curtain reminiscent of one in a European opera house is whooshed away into the backstage recesses as though it were sucked into a giant vacuum cleaner.

Fantastic finale: The climactic scene of *LOVE* just had to be "A Day in the Life." Cirque du Soleil rises to the challenge of the famous orchestral buildup with a symbolic, moving scene featuring an angelic, floating mother figure. (Remember that both John Lennon and Paul McCartney's mothers died young.)

Sensational soundtrack: The blue baldies in the Blue Man Group never talk, so it's even more important that their silent antics be backed by a rocking soundtrack. The seven-piece band keeps it percussive and otherworldly.

Most words per minute: Penn & Teller discuss everything from "ocular hygiene" to "petroleum by-products" (meaning Solo cups), conveniently overlooking the fact that most Vegas shows push spectacle over words. What's even more amazing? Only one of them (Penn) talks.

Mac King. The reigning king of Las Vegas afternoons seems more like a ragtime-era court jester with his plaid suit and folksy "Howdy!" But don't be fooled—this is a fully defined comic persona. King stands apart from other magic shows on the Strip with a one-man hour of magic and humor. *Harrah's Las Vegas, 702/369-5111. Tues.–Sat. 1 PM and 3 PM.*

Nathan Burton Comedy Magic. The likeable magician whom many came to know on *America's Got Talent* puts a fun spin on familiar illusions. Behold the "Microwave of Death!" *Flamingo Las Vegas, 702/733-3333. Fri.–Sun., Tues., and Wed. 4 PM.*

Penn & Teller. Eccentric comic magicians Penn & Teller are part of the Vegas landscape after more than five years in a gorgeous 1,500-seat auditorium. Their magic is unusual and genuinely baffling, and their comedy provocative and thoughtful, albeit blasphemous. *Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino, 702/777-7776. Wed.–Sun. 9 PM.*

Phantom: The Las Vegas Spectacular. *Phantom* is set in a customized "opera house" designed by popular architect David Rockwell. You're engulfed in period atmosphere, including costumed mannequins, a chandelier that dwarfs that in the Broadway original, and some *Phantom* surprises. Original Broadway director Hal Prince returned to supervise a top-notch cast portraying the tale of the deranged "opera ghost" who coaches a young soprano. *The Venetian, 702/414-7469. Mon. and Sat. 7 PM and 9:30 PM, Tues.–Fri. 7 PM.*

PRODUCTION SHOWS

Blue Man Group. Three silent characters, their heads bald and gleaming with cobalt-blue greasepaint, prowl the stage committing twisted "science projects." High-resolution video effects and lighting by Pink Floyd tour collaborator Marc Brickman are dazzling. It's all scored to a live rock band with percussion instruments made from PVC pipe. *The Venetian, 702/414-7469. Call for show times.*

Jubilee! It's the last place to experience the over-the-top vision of showman Donn Arden, who produced shows on the Strip from 1952 to 1994. Gargantuan sets and props, such as the sinking of the *Titanic* and Samson destroying the temple, steal the show. It's the last bastion of showgirls parading about in a spectacle of feathers. *Bally's Las Vegas, 702/967-4567. Sat.–Thurs. 7:30 PM and 10:30 PM.*

KÀ. KÀ is the company's bold step into linear storytelling, with the adventures of two separated twins. The spectacle includes huge puppets and live-time video. A fixed stage is replaced by an 80,000-pound deck that's maneuvered by a giant gantry arm into all sorts of positions, including vertical. *MGM Grand Hotel & Casino, 702/891-7777. Tues.–Sat. 7 PM and 9:30 PM.*

Le Rêve. This show isn't really a revue—it's a combination of Cirque du Soleil and

Shows

BROADWAY MUSICALS

Disney's The Lion King. Julie Taymor's puppet-enhanced adaptation of the animated classic tells the story of Simba, whose path to maturity echoes the woes of Shakespeare's Hamlet. As a resident production, the set has extra bells and whistles touring versions lack. *Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, 702/632-7580. Mon.–Thurs. 8 PM, weekends 4 PM and 8 PM.*

Jersey Boys. Las Vegas is a perfect fit for the biography of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. Audiences have been charmed by the little-known story of the group's rough-and-tumble beginnings, a surprising saga that contrasts dynamically with the diverse range of familiar hits. The Vegas version is slightly trimmed but still runs in two acts, with an eight-minute intermission. *The Palazzo, 702/414-9000. Thurs., Fri., Sun., and Mon. 7 PM; Sat. and Tues. 6:30 PM and 9:30 PM.*

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synchronized swimming. Lighting focuses your attention on the acrobatics in and above the pool. Max Chmerkovskiy from *Dancing With the Stars* adds a ballroom element to the water-based stunts and aerial acrobatics. *Wynn Las Vegas*, 702/770-9966. *Thurs.–Mon. 7 PM and 9:30 PM.*

LOVE. Before he died, George Harrison convinced the surviving Beatles (and Yoko Ono) to license the group's music to Cirque du Soleil for its fifth Las Vegas production. The remixed music by producer George Martin and his son Giles is revelatory on the state-of-the-art sound system. The theatrical environment brings many of the musical characters to life in a fanciful version of Liverpool, telling the story of Beatlemania and the postwar generation without literally depicting the Fab Four. *Mirage Las Vegas*, 702/791-7111. *Thurs.–Mon. 7 PM and 9:30 PM.*

Mystère. *Mystère* keeps the acrobatics in the spotlight. You're intimately involved with a surreal wonderland and comic characters who interact with the audience. The music's rousing and haunting, and the acrobatics are thrilling. *Treasure Island Las Vegas*, 702/894-7722. *Sat.–Wed. 7 PM and 9:30 PM.*

O. The title is taken from the French word for water (*eau*), and water is everywhere—1.5 million gallons of it contained by a “stage” that can change shape and go dry in no time. The non-stop action by acrobats, trapeze artists, synchronized swimmers, divers, and contortionists takes place above, within, and even on the water. *Bellagio Las Vegas*, 702/693-7722. *Wed.–Sun. 7:30 PM and 10:30 PM.*

Zumanity. Cirque has fused acrobatics with European cabaret and English music-hall tradition. Over the years, *Zumanity* hit a stronger balance of comedy, omnisequential titillation, and spectacle. It's tamer now, but still the most divisive of the local Cirques, and (still somewhat proudly) not meant for everyone. *New York–New York*, 702/740-6815. *Fri.–Sun., Tues., and Wed. 7:30 PM and 10:30 PM.*

HEADLINERS

Barry Manilow. The king of '70s piano pop performs rarely in other parts of the country, making Paris Las Vegas a special destination for “fanilows.” Drafting pop choreographer Jeffrey Hornaday, Manilow presents a new production themed around his 2010 album *The Greatest Love Songs of All Time*. He is signed for 78 shows per year for 2010 and 2011. *Paris Las Vegas*, 702/946-7000. *Fri.–Sun. 7:30 PM selected weekends.*

Cher. The eternal pop diva brings her costumes and spectacle to the Strip three times per year, for three weeks at a stretch. The productions are familiar to those who caught those road shows in

FREE RAZZLE DAZZLE

Wherever you turn in this town, you'll find crowd-pleasing wonders.

Festival Fountain and Fall of Atlantis shows at Caesars. The laser-light show at the Festival Fountain features an animatronic discussion between Bacchus, Venus, Apollo, and Pluto. The *Fall of Atlantis* show, near the aquarium, uses lifelike animatronic figures to recount the myth of Atlantis.

Fountains of Bellagio. It's a water ballet with more than 1,000 fountain nozzles, 4,500 lights, and 27 million gallons of water. Water jets 250 feet into the air, tracing undulations in perfect time with the music. The best views are from the Eiffel Tower's observation deck across the street.

Fremont Street Experience. This show takes place several times nightly on the underside of a 1,450-foot arched canopy 90 feet overhead. The 12.5 million synchronized LED modules, 180 strobes, and eight robotic mirrors per block treat your eyes, while the 208 speakers combine for 550,000 watts of fun for your ears.

Rio's Show in the Sky. The Mardi Gras theme of this free show, high above the

floor of Rio's Masquerade Village, has been replaced by Latin flair, Hollywood glamour, and edgy fashion. Performers, suspended from the ceiling in fantasy floats and decked out in Victoria's Secret and DKNY costumes, sing and dance in three different shows featuring hits from Rihanna, Beyoncé, Justin Timberlake, and more.

Sirens of TI. The 20-minute musical naval battle between voluptuous Sirens and a gang of pirates is full of lip-synched double entendres, explosions, and backflips from the crew's nests. The finale mimics closely what happened at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. A Siren deejay scratches out a funky beat during an ensemble song-and-stomp routine.

Volcano at Mirage. A 54-foot fountain is surrounded by a lake of miniature fire spouts. Several times an hour the whole area erupts in flames, smoke, and backlit water that looks like lava. There's also a thundering island percussion sound track designed by Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart. The best vantage point is near the main drive entrance.

REVUES

American Superstars. This upstart impersonator show made *Legends in Concert* pick up its energy level by challenging it with rollicking tributes to pop stars such as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. Both shows were improved by the competition. *Stratosphere Las Vegas Hotel & Casino*, 702/380-7711. *Sun.–Tues. 7 PM, Wed., Fri., and Sat. 6:30 PM and 8:30 PM.*

Chippendales: The Show. By building a theater specifically for the men of Chippendales, the Rio delivers fancier staging than any G-string revue currently on the nightclub circuit. Surrounded by elaborate video panels, the bow-tied hunks gyrate with MTV-style choreography. *Rio All-Suite Hotel*, 702/777-7776. *Thurs., Fri., Mon., and Tues. 8 PM; Sat. 8 and 10 PM.*

Fantasy. There are plenty of slinky dance moves, but there are also live vocals and original tunes sung by the vivacious host Stephanie Sanchez. Costar Sean Cooper provides impressions. *Luxor Las Vegas*, 702/262-4900. *Nightly 10:30 PM.*

Legends in Concert. After 26 years at the Imperial Palace, *Legends* moved to Harrah's with a punch-up of production values. It's still a series of “mini-concerts” by a rotating lineup of impersonators. An Elvis Presley finale is the only invariable rule. There's no lip-synching and always a band. *Harrah's Las Vegas*, 702/369-5111. *Call for show times.*

the early 2000s, though new staging is evident in a few places, particularly the opening: Cher descending 40 feet to the stage in a chariot she dubs her “Flying Wallenda, Evel Knievel death-mobile.” *Caesars Palace*, 702/731-7110. *Tues., Wed., Sat., and Sun. 7:30 PM.*

Donny and Marie Osmond. The siblings still look and sound great, and their training on the Strip in the 1970s allows them to work this old-school showroom setting with ease. The two are quick to split into lengthy solo sets that allow them to act all grown up. Their duets rekindle memories of their toothier, bad hair days on variety TV. *Flamingo Las Vegas*, 702/733-3333. *Tues.–Sat. 7:30 PM.*

Smokey Robinson presents Human Nature. Australia's most popular vocal group sings the “Ultimate Celebration of Motown.” Showcasing the spectacular vocal harmonies of vocalists Toby Allen, Phil Burton, and Andrew and Michael Tierney, the show is a high-energy concert featuring Motown's greatest hits. *Imperial Palace*, 888/777-7664. *Call for show times.*

Terry Fator. Fator is the likable second-season winner of *America's Got Talent* who does singing impressions as well as ventriloquism. He's added new puppets to the act, including Vicki the Cougar (on the prowl for younger men) and a beetle who sings the Beatles. The showcase has been given a slick, sophisticated look by the set designer of, yes, *America's Got Talent*. *Mirage*, 702/791-7111. *Tues.–Sat. 7:30 PM.*

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LAS VEGAS: PARTY!

WHATEVER YOU WANT, IT'S HERE

Fodor's



Left, Blush Boutique Nightclub, Wynn Las Vegas; center top, Tryst at Wynn Las Vegas; right bottom, PURE Nightclub at Caesars Palace

Las Vegas's nightlife is hot. Why bother hanging in a casino when you can lounge beside the pool by day and bellow at the moon by night while dancing at a club until noon the following day (and then head back to the pool)? After-dark impresarios continue to create over-the-top experiences that let the party-mad live out a few dreams—whether that means being a lounge lizard, a club kid, a barfly, a cigar aficionado, or a karaoke star.

For the Clubbers

Of-the-Moment: **Rok Vegas**, at New York-New York, has loud music and music videos. The patio at **XS**, in Encore, opens to a private pool, making it intimate and spacious at the same time.

The Classics: With balcony views overlooking Fremont Street and dance hits from the '70s through today, **Gold Diggers** at the Golden Nugget is Downtown's hottest spot for a cocktail. The Mirage has big, loud, dark **Jet**. Top points go to **PURE**, at Caesars Palace, for its patio. At **TAO**, in The Venetian, you dine, drink, dance, and drool amid Chinoiserie. **Tryst**, at the Wynn, has its own waterfall—enough said.

For the Lounge-Lover

Victor Drai Creations: The man behind megaclubs XS and Tryst also brings you **Blush**, at the Wynn, where the drop-dead gorgeous lounge on glass-legged divans amid diaphanous curtains. The eponymous **Drai's** is an insider after-hours place at Bill's Gamblin' Hall & Saloon.

Hookah Havens: The Middle Eastern vibe at **LAVO** is solidified by ceramics, cisterns, and hookahs—water pipes used to smoke exotic tobaccos. Downtown, **Paymon's Mediterranean Café and Hookah Lounge** also taps in to Vegas's hookah craze.

For the Discerning

Cigars & Champagne: Channeling El Floridita, Hemingway's Havana watering hole, is **Casa Fuentes** (*Caesars Palace Forum Shops, 702/731-5051*). The **Napoleon Champagne Bar** (*Paris, 702/946-7000*) lends stogie smoking a classy French twist.

Wine & Spirits: For straight-down-the-barrel views of the Fremont light show, great sangrias, and a large selection of tapas, head to **Firefly** (*Plaza Hotel, 702/386-2110*). At **The Grape** (*Town Square Mall, 702/220-4727*) there are tapas, celebrity bartenders, and 200 selections to delight oenophiles. Latin music and 50-plus brands of tequila are at the **Tequila Bar** (*Bally's, 702/739-4111*).

For the Playful

Sporty: Bowling, anyone? **Red Rock VIP Lanes** is the largest luxury bowling complex in Las Vegas (*Red Rock Resort & Casino 702/797-7777*). **The Sports Book** (*Caesars Palace, 702/731-7110*) has jumbo video screens on the walls and a smaller one at every table. Or, add some "Bam!" to your sportsbook at **Lagasse's Stadium** (*Palazzo, 702/607-7777*), featuring Emeril's cuisine, billiards tables, and more than 100 HDTVs. How about some old-fashioned



apple bobbing, while wearing a bikini? Or a game of Twister, while wearing a bikini? If this sounds good, head to **Diablo's Cantina** (*Monte Carlo Resort and Casino, 702/730-7979*).

Musical: The guitar-shaped bar at **Toby Keith's I Love This Bar and Grill** (*Harrah's Las Vegas, 702/369-5000*) is just one attraction. There's also the possibility that Mr. Keith will appear and sign autographs for you. Oh, and if you go for breakfast, try the "boatmeal."

The karaoke bar at **Ellis Island Casino & Brewery** (*4178 Koval La., 702/733-8901*) has attracted would-be crooners for decades. There are plenty of dueling-piano shows in town, but **The Piano Bar** (*Harrah's Las Vegas, 702/369-5000*) features the Pinegars, sexy identical-twin sisters bent on out-Jerry Lee Lewis'ing each other.

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Night Spots

Casino Bars & Lounges

The Beatles Revolution Lounge. The Rev wows with its alcoves, hippie-outfitted servers, beanbag chairs, and psychedelic fractal wall projections. The low lighting and high volume deemphasize the “lounge” aspect of “ultralounge” here, but late at night, when the inevitable Fab Four tunes give way to pumping dance music, it’s rightly all about “ultrafun.” *The Mirage*, 702/692-8383.

Blush. The rajah of Vegas nightlife, Victor Drai, is behind this ultralounge. The interior’s as beautiful as the clientele. White lanterns sway over an onyx dance floor, and sequined servers approach with come-hither smiles. It also has a garden and is close to Tryst. *Wynn Las Vegas*, 702/770-3633.

Drai’s. Once the tables of nightlife sultan Victor Drai’s tony restaurant are cleared, the scene at this insider after-hours titan is closer to a rave than a lounge, even though its three modest rooms are as stunning as any lounge in town. The decadence can reach an extraordinary pitch—exactly how an after-hours club should be. *Bill’s Gambler’s Hall & Saloon*, 3595 Las Vegas Blvd. S, Center Strip, 702/737-0555.

eyecandy. There are video feeds of various bar locales, “touch tables” on which you can draw, and “sound stations” that let you send music of your choice to the deejay. More important, though, is that this joint absolutely bangs. It’s also a short walk to the icy climes of Minus Five. *Mandalay Bay*, 702/632-7985.

LAVO. It’s all about the hookahs (Middle Eastern water pipes used to smoke exotic tobaccos), at least until you finish dinner and ascend past cisterns and ceramics to the dome-roofed dance floor, with go-go dancers, chandeliers, boa-clad servers, eccentrically shaped bars, and a bendy-trendy crowd. *The Palazzo*, 702/791-1800.

Minus Five. Don that parka, buy those drink tickets, and step into Minus Five’s bar, where the temperature is always five below zero. This frosty clime keeps the walls, bar, cocktail glasses, ashtrays, chairs, couches, and sculpture in a frozen-solid state. (Thankfully, the toilet seats, sound system, lighting, floor, and bartenders aren’t made of ice.) *Mandalay Bay*, 702/632-7714.

Parasol Up-Parasol Down. Outsize colorful parasols that “float” over two separate lounges on two levels provide fanciful cover for conversation and

cocktails. The bars serve top-shelf liquor, there’s live music (upper level), and the lower seating area is framed by towering windows with a view of Wynn’s enchanting Lake of Dreams. *Wynn Las Vegas*, 702/770-7000.

Paymon’s Mediterranean Café and Hookah Lounge. It’s the centerpiece of the decadent hookah craze. Thanks to a helpful “Hookah Man” and some samples, no experience is required. This red velvet-laden, exquisitely carpeted, incense-filled environment attracts a young, somewhat bohemian crowd. *511 Main St., Downtown*, 702/437-2787.

The Playboy Club. This phoenix-rising-from-the-ashes legend rocks the 52nd floor of the Palms’ Fantasy Tower. It isn’t a topless joint, mind you—it’s as upscale as ultralounges get. Still, all the servers and croupiers wear the classic Bunny outfits, and it has that grand-bachelor-pad feel, complete with fireplace and couches. When you’re ready to dance, take the escalator up to Moon. It’s included in your cover charge. *The Palms*, 702/942-7777.

Rok Vegas. For some Vegas partyers, a 20-foot-high, 360-degree screen that blasts lasers, live feeds, animation, and music videos into their eyeballs while crazy-loud music blares is exciting. For others, it’s nauseating. Regardless, this club has a visceral appeal, especially when the deejay plays cool mashups. *New York-New York*, 702/740-6765.

Seahorse Lounge. Step off the casino floor and into a realm of seahorses and mermaids at this serene, inviting lounge. The cylindrical, 1,700-gallon aquarium with Australian Pot Belly Seahorses is a mesmerizing centerpiece here. With unobstructed views of the towering tank from any seat, you can relax and enjoy selections from the full cocktail menu, including specialty martinis, more than 20 champagnes, and fresh seafood appetizers. *Caesars Palace*, 702/967-4000.

Tabú. Here you’ll find the touches of a big dance club, with square tables that double as “canvases” for projected images and “murals” of light that change depending on your perspective. But the peach-color banquettes and mirrored columns lend it the coziness of a lounge. The deejays actually understand the music they play. *MGM Grand*, 702/891-7183.

Wasted Space. The vibe here is at the fun end of rock’n’roll trashy, and the crowd is boisterous. It also has delicious signature cocktails—Sunday Bloody Sunday (a bloodier Bloody Mary), for example, and the Hart Attack (named after biker/tattoo artist/club co-owner Carey Hart). *The Hard Rock*, 702/693-4040.

Local Hangouts

Beauty Bar. This little downtown joint is laid out like an old-fashioned hair salon, with hair-dryer chairs acquired from a defunct New Jersey establishment, so you can pretend to be your mother (ironically or not) while you listen to local bands (primarily rock), sip cocktails with names like Shampoo and Conditioner, and ogle hipsters. *517 Fremont St., Downtown*, 702/598-1965.

Blue Martini Lounge. It’s in a shopping mall eight minutes from the Strip (by taxi), and it’s an institution for Vegas locals. Why? Oh, the cream of local bands plays here nightly, there’s a truly impressive cocktail menu (the signature martinis get served to you in the shaker), and there’s a legendary happy hour. If martinis seem too déclassé, step downstairs to the wine bar **Grape**, which features live music, another solid happy hour, and an elite selection of wines. *Town Square Mall*, 6593 Las Vegas Blvd. S., 702/949-2583.

Downtown Cocktail Room. Step carefully into the gorgeous gloom, the shameless shadows, the delicious darkness of this hipster hangout around the corner from the Griffin and Beauty Bar. It’s so dark that it’s hard to describe the modest-sized, minimalist lounge. It does, however, have a mysterious, romantic vibe—and a trick door round the side! *111 Las Vegas Blvd., Downtown*, 702/880-3696.

The Griffin Lounge. Some have likened this spot—close to Beauty Bar and Downtown Cocktail Room—to a Peppermill for the younger set, but that doesn’t do justice to the beauty of its hipster crowd and its decor, from the lovely sign outside to the fire grills, barrel-vaulted brick ceiling, semicircular banquettes, and griffin insignias on the bathroom walls. *511 Fremont St., Downtown*, 702/382-0577.

Hostile Grape. This hip, elegant wine bar makes it easy to sample from its vast collection. Using Enomatic wine servers—a system that preserves open wine bottles allowing customers to self-serve—you can prepay a wine card and try bottles throughout the bar, starting at \$2 a pour. Dark-wood shelves and deep brown couches in an uncluttered space make the Hostile Grape an appealing place to enjoy boutique wine and conversation. *The M Resort & Casino*, 12300 Las Vegas Blvd S, Henderson, 702/797-1000.

Peppermill’s Fireside Lounge. Benign neglect has preserved this evergreen nightspot near the old Stardust Hotel. Come for the must-see-to-believe fire pit, the crazy waitress outfits, and the lethally alcoholic Scorpion cocktails. *2985 Las Vegas Blvd. S.*, 702/735-7635.



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Stoney's Rockin' Country. What do you get when you fill the dance floor (Nevada's largest) of a mammoth Texas saloon with slick clubbers? Madness—2,000-capacity, 10-gallon-hat madness. At Stoney's (named after its owner, not the bouncers' facial expressions) the music is as eclectic as you'd imagine—think Merle Haggard segueing into Jay Z. You can't beat the beer prices, either. *9151 Las Vegas Blvd. S., 702/435-2855.*

Dance Clubs

The Bank. "Status is everything!" is the motto of this megaclub, one of the town's biggest celeb hangs. It's all here: etched-glass walls pulsing with rainbow lights, tilted avant-garde chandeliers, entrance foyer lined with illuminated Cristal bottles, and sunken dance floor. Weekends absolutely sizzle. *Bellagio, 702/693-8300.*

Jet. It's bigger, darker, and louder than just about any other Vegas club. And on a good night—Monday, say, when three types of music are played in three different rooms—the revelers are packed in and pumping. Gawk at the cryogenic-effects system from either the long dance floor or the equally long bar. *Mirage Las Vegas, 702/792-7900.*

LAX. This behemoth dance club—an L.A. import—has all the accoutrements: flashing lights, deafening music, and shaking sweaty bodies (most in prime physical shape, packed close together, and relatively free of clothing). Preferred dance spots are the crowded stage or the less frenetic wraparound balcony, with a delightful bird's-eye view of all that heaving flesh. LAX is also home to **Noir Bar**, a swanky lounge within a club. *Luxor Las Vegas, 702/262-4529; Noir 702/262-5257.*

Moon. Writhing ladies in two-piece space suits atop noise-blaring monoliths surround you. Suddenly, the roof opens and starlight pours in. Packing more futuristic technology than a space station, this club has multiple dance floors, two balconies,

AFTER-HOURS SPOTS

When the party starts to wind down in some places, the doors to others are just opening. Remember, even after 4 am, expect lines to get in. And bring your sunglasses to protect those bleary eyes from the morning rays when you finally stumble out.

At sin-sational **Drai's**, deejays spin house and hip-hop until well after the sun rises.

The exquisite **Parasol Up**, at the Wynn, is a place to indulge in that most endangered of

all pleasures: a good conversation. Best of all, it stays open all night.

For a chill atmosphere, check out the Hard Rock's **Circle Bar** for nonstop action, or grab a late (or early) bite at the casino's coffee shop, **Mr. Lucky's 24/7.**

At the Luxor's swanky, intimate, **Noir Bar**, in the LAX club, mixologist Ken Hall makes cocktails to order.

huge banquettes, and great views. Justin Timberlake and Lindsay Lohan are among those who've gone hedonistic here. If you'd like to swap space suits for Bunny outfits, take the escalator to the Playboy Club. (It's included in your ticket price.) *The Palms, 702/942-7777.*

PURE. It takes the cake for best all-around shake appeal. In addition to its supercool Tuesday-night party and alluring crowd, it's got a secret weapon in its outdoor terrace—one with waterfalls, private cabanas, dance floor, and a great view of the Strip. Indoor types party in a cream-color main room. *Caesars Palace, 702/731-7873.*

Rain. This vast round nightclub and concert house has dancing waters (they really do dance), video projections on a 40-foot-high water curtain (it really does look like a curtain), and blasts of fire. Try to come on Live Music Friday. *The Palms, 702/942-6832.*

TAO. Nowhere else in Vegas furnishes you with the four D's—dining, drinking, dancing, and drooling—in quite as alluring a mix. The ground floor and mezzanine are exquisite—you almost tumble into rose-water baths before you're in the door. On the top level, dramatically lighted stone deities, Chinese antiques, and crimson chandeliers set the mood. The Thursday Worship night theme party is very popular. *The Venetian, 702/388-8588.*

Tryst. Nothing matches the beauty of the interior design, the quality of the music, or the friendliness of the staff at this Victor Drai creation. What other club has its own waterfall? And dig that eerie red lighting, gorgeous entrance stairway, and ample outdoor space. If you're in for the weekend, check out the Sunday-night extravaganza. *The Wynn, 702/770-3375.*

XS. "Red goes well with leopard print," states the überlord of Vegas nightlife, Victor Drai. Here he's supplied multiple indoor bars; a chandelier that turns into a psychedelic disco ball; light fixtures that turn into stripper poles; tireless go-go dancers; golden drapes; walls with equally golden body casts (the waitresses modeled for them); and a dance floor that opens out onto a large swimming pool. *Encore, 702/770-5350.*

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CityCenter's appeal extends well into the wee hours, with 10 chic new bars within the ARIA Resort & Casino, which also plays home to a new Cirque du Soleil-produced Elvis tribute show, *Viva ELVIS.*

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For more details, visit www.citycenter.com.

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