

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Cabaret show a celebrity sighting

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Aug. 25, 2011



Want to hang with the show people? They are easy to find on the right dates, provided you can stay up late on a weeknight.

Players tend to gravitate to any casino venue where Lon Bronson has his big band, while singers mark their calendars for Keith Thompson's monthly Composer's Showcase.

The datebook will be a little more crowded if "Jim Caruso's Cast Party" catches on. The cabaret show at Alexis Park today is more akin to the songwriters' gathering, but comes to flyover country after stints in New York and Los Angeles.

"It all started in Liza Minnelli's apartment," producer Dennis Ritz says. Singer Jim Caruso and singer-pianist Billy Stritch have both worked with Minnelli -- Stritch has been her musical director for 20 years, Caruso sang and danced in

Liza's At The Palace on Broadway -- and decided it would be fun to go public with the sing-around-the-piano gatherings. (Minnelli's last album "Confessions," with Stritch on piano, also stems from this tradition.)

After weekly engagements at Birdland in New York, Caruso and Stritch hope the Vegas show community will support Cast Party every month. The two serve up their own banter, but also call up guests such as Mimi Hines, Clint Holmes and Frankie Moreno, all invited for the first stint.

"It's really aimed at the show community more than the tourists," Ritz says. But savvy tourists can show up at the Athena Room with \$25 starting at 10 p.m. If today is too short notice, they plan a return Sept. 21 and 22, and every month thereafter if it takes off.

Billy Stritch and Jim Caruso *Photo: Bill Westmoreland*