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By SCOTT CRONICK

Staff Writer

After a summer that boasted big time headliners including Carrie Underwood, Lady Gaga, the Black Eyed Peas, Aerosmith, Rihanna, Sting, the Kings of Leon and many others, the fall and winter could only be a letdown when it comes to Atlantic City

entertainment, right?

Think again. With increased competition from casinos in bordering states, Atlantic City casino operators are betting more on headliners than ever, and that includes the rest of this year and 2011.

"I think entertainment is a big differentiator from the Philadelphia, New York and other markets," said Joe Lupo, senior vice president of operations for Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa. "We have a heavy fall lineup, and we continue to ensure entertainment is a primary focus at Borgata. We have new entertainers with Kevin James and Vince Vaughn, Aziz Ansari (from "Parks and Recreation"), as well as some stalwarts like Jay Leno and Bob Dylan over Thanksgiving weekend."

Don Marrandino, eastern division president for Harrah's Entertainment, agreed, noting Caesars Atlantic City-sponsored concerts this year, such as Nickelback and the upcoming Toby Keith tour at Boardwalk Hall, raised the ante.

"We took a big jump into Boardwalk Hall this year, and we will continue to do that," said Marrandino, adding boxing, tennis, hockey, skating and other sports bookings create an exciting mix. "I think all of the casinos are playing to their niche really well when it comes to entertainment. My favorite thing is to drive on the Atlantic City Expressway and see all of those headliners and events on the billboards. It's good for the city. Our goal was to increase cash-paying customers in Atlantic City via hotel rooms, restaurants and entertainment. And if you look around at local businesses, they are feeling it. People are coming to town who are booking rooms and spending money. And they aren't just gamers anymore. It's a city-wide approach."

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Thanks to more involvement from Harrah's and Live Nation, as well as independent bookings, Boardwalk hall is having a historic year.

"This will probably end up being our biggest concert year yet," said General Manager Greg Tesone. "Three Phish shows certainly makes a big difference, but shows like that are proving that we are starting to do more stuff that we didn't do before. The market is evolving as everyone in the industry is looking for business wherever they can find it. The old habit of certain shows going to certain markets isn't there anymore. I think there's a better overall appreciation for everything that drives people to Atlantic City, whether it's entertainment or opening a new restaurant or adding more shopping. There's value to all of it."

Even the Tropicana Casino and Resort, which had to cut back bookings while the casino was in bankruptcy, is getting in on the action with more big-name bookings including Cyndi Lauper, Bret Michaels, Lifehouse and Smokey Robinson.

"Since we emerged from being under a conservatorship, we are being more aggressive booking acts to give clients another reason to come to the Tropicana," said Trop President and CEO Mark Giannantonio. "I am certainly not the only one saying it, but when you compare Atlantic City to places like Pennsylvania, they will never have the amenities we can offer with restaurants, retail and entertainment. We may be taking a hit now, but Atlantic City will bounce back, and entertainment will be a big part of it."

October

The biggest act to hit Atlantic City this month - and one of the biggest this year - is Phish. The Vermont-based jam band makes its Atlantic City debut with three shows at Boardwalk Hall from Oct. 29 to 31, including its famous Halloween show, in which the band's final set is basically a note-for-note reproduction of a classic rock album. Expect lots of music, lots of stoners and lots of much-needed business in Atlantic City.

Host Jerry Springer brings summer's No. 1 TV show, "America's Got Talent" to Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort (Oct. 30) for a glorified variety show that should be interesting. Look for

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Cape May magician Michael Grasso, who was one of the show's 10 finalists.

Looking for the Halloween tie-in. Ray Parker Jr., basically a one-hit wonder with the "Ghostbusters" theme song, performs at Resorts Atlantic City (Oct. 30). Who ya gonna call? Hopefully, for Resorts' case, Ticketmaster.

Tony Clifton, the fictional warped lounge singer created by the late Andy Kauffman is resurrected by Kauffman friend and writer Bob Zmuda (Atlantic City Hilton Casino Resort , Oct. 23). Expect to be insulted.

Also this month: 311 (House of Blues, Oct. 21), Disturbed (HOB, Oct. 22), Bad Religion (HOB, Oct. 23), Sinbad (Resorts, Oct. 23), Lifehouse (Tropicana Casino and Resort, Oct. 23), Merchants of Bollywood (Caesars, Oct. 23 and 24), Daniel Tosh (Borgata, Oct. 29), Harry Connick Jr. (Borgata, Oct. 29), Black Crowes (Borgata, Oct. 30), Social Distortion (HOB, Oct. 30) Margaret Cho (Caesars, Oct. 30).

November

Entertainment sways musically for November, with five major tours landing inside Atlantic City entertainment venues.

The two biggest shows are at Boardwalk Hall as Toby Keith's "American Ride" tour with Rodney Adkins and Walker Hayes (Nov. 12) and Justin Bieber's "My World Tour" (Nov. 19) should both sell out the 12,000-plus seat venue. Although in totally different genres, both Keith and Bieber are two of the biggest names in music on the planet. Keith is one of the most recognizable faces in music. The 49-year-old actor, musician and restaurateur has sold millions of albums and has scored 19 No. 1 hits and 16 additional Top 10 hits, including "Beer for My Horses" and "As Good as I Once Was." Bieber, the 16-year-old Canadian R&B phenom, will show off his stellar pipes that made him the first artist to have seven songs from a debut album chart on the Billboard 100. Expect to hear all of those hits, including "One Time" and "Baby."

Those who couldn't get into Phish may take consolation with the booking of The Allman

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Brothers Band (Nov. 13) at Trump Taj Mahal. Headed by Gregg Allman, the band really sounds fantastic these days, especially since guitarists Derek Trucks and Warren Haynes joined. With superb musicianship and that trademark, gritty Southern style, the Allmans never seem to go out of style. Neither does Jimi Hendrix. A group of stellar guitar heroes and other musicians will pay tribute one of the most revered and creative guitarists of all time in "Experience Hendrix" (Nov. 13) at Caesars. Scheduled performers include Billy Cox of The Jimi Hendrix Experience, plus Jonny Lang, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Eric Johnson, Brad Whitford of Aerosmith, Living Colour and more.

Finally, for those looking for a more modern rock night out, Shinedown (Nov. 20) headlines the House of Blues. Touring behind its latest album, "The Sound of Madness," Shinedown recently released the sixth single from that album, which is pretty much unheard of in today's music scene. Expect to hear the alternative metal band's hits such as "45," "Heroes," "Second Chance," "If You Only Knew" and "The Crow & the Butterfly." And you can never go wrong with a living legend as Bob Dylan (Nov. 26) returns to Borgata.

Also this month: Rick Springfield, Aziz Ansari (Borgata, Nov. 5), Penn & Teller (Harrah's Resort, Nov. 5 and 6), Jim Breuer (Borgata, Nov. 6), The Cult (HOB, Nov. 6), Vince Vaughn and Kevin James Comedy Roadshow (Borgata, Nov. 6), Smokey Robinson (Tropicana, Nov. 5 and 6), Kris Kristofferson (Borgata, Nov. 12), Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons (Borgata, Nov. 19 and 20), Boyz II Men (Resorts, Nov. 20), Bill Maher (Caesars, Nov. 20), Patti LaBelle (Harrah's, Nov. 20), Earth, Wind and Fire (Trump Taj Mahal, Nov. 20) Bret Michaels (Tropicana, Nov. 26), Straight No Chaser holiday show (Nov. 26 and 27), Paul Anka (Resorts, Nov. 26 and 27), Jay Leno (Borgata, Nov. 27).

## December

As in years past, aside from a few holiday-themed shows expected to be booked, December looks like it will be one of the weakest entertainment months of the year.

Believe it or not, aside from New Year's weekend - which most casinos have not announced yet - some of the top bookings include pop/rock stars Hall & Oates (Borgata, Dec. 3) and Cyndi Lauper (Tropicana, Dec. 4), crooner Chris Isaak (Harrah's, Dec. 4) and Latin song stylist Julio Iglesias (Caesars, Dec. 4). The Hall & Oates' show may be a little more interesting as the duo plans to perform some holiday ditties.

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Caesars' "Salute to the Golden Age of Skating" (Dec. 11) at Boardwalk Hall with Evan Lysacek, Nancy Kerrigan, Sasha Cohen, Brian Boitano, Sarah Hughes, Peggy Fleming and Scott Hamilton, should be a big draw.

For some Christmas spirit, Kenny Rogers (Dec. 11) brings back his "Christmas and Hits" show to Trump Taj Mahal, offering holiday jingles and The Gambler's smashes, such as "Lucille," "Coward of the County," "Lady," "Islands in the Stream" and more.

The only long-running holiday shows booked so far are "Happy Holidays: A Magical Celebration" (Nov. 8 to Dec 16) at the Tropicana, and the Hilton's "Christmas Spectacular" (Nov. 28 to Dec. 19).

Harrah's is getting aggressive on New Year's Eve, booking B.B. King at Harrah's, Lilith Fair founder Sarah McLachlan at Caesars, and, most impressively, Maroon 5 at the House of Blues. Maroon 5, which basically plays large venues, will be an awesome show in the 2,000-seat HOB, especially since the band is touring behind its new hit album, "Hands All Over."

Also: Lewis Black (Borgata, Dec. 3), DMX and Eve (HOB, Dec. 3), B.B. King (Harrah's, Dec. 31).

Looking ahead

Entertainment directors have not unveiled much for 2011, but there are two shows worth noting. Lady Gaga (Feb. 19) returns to Boardwalk Hall for what is expected to be another sold-out show. The never-ending "Monster Ball Tour" may be the most ambitious entertainment spectacle on the road today as Gaga, who certainly thinks less is more when it comes to her costumes, proves she can bring it musically as well as visually. She's this generation's Madonna, whether you like it or not. And Cirque du Soleil announced on its website it will bring its new, large-scale production, "Alegria," to Atlantic City late winter or early spring. The last time Cirque du Soleil came to Atlantic City, the show was held in Boardwalk Hall. What's playing at Atlantic City's casinos.

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Week of Oct. 28

Phish, Boardwalk Hall, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 29, 30 and 31. \$60. SOLD OUT.

Daniel Tosh, Borgata, The Music Box, 9 and 11 p.m. Oct. 29. \$39.50. SOLD OUT.

Harry Connick, Jr., Borgata, Event Center, 8 p.m. Oct. 29. \$85, \$125, \$150.

Black Crowes, Borgata, The Music Box, 9 p.m. Oct. 30. \$85.

Ray Parker Jr., Resorts Atlantic City, Superstar Theater, 8 p.m. Oct. 30. \$19, \$50.

Margaret Cho with special guest John Roberts, Caesars, Circus Maximus Theater, 9 p.m. Oct. 30. \$35, \$45, \$50.

Social Distortion with Lucero, Showboat, House of Blues, 7 p.m. Oct. 30. \$25.

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America's Got Talent Live! hosted by Jerry Springer, Trump Taj Mahal, Arena, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 30. \$39.50, \$49.50, \$59.50, \$99.50.

Jorge Diaz vs. Emmanuel Lucero, Bally's, Ballroom, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 30. \$50, \$75.

Karl Densons Tiny Universe, Trump Plaza, Theater, 11 p.m. Oct. 29. \$25.

Sunidhi Chauhan, Trump Taj Mahal, Arena, 9 p.m. Oct. 29. \$39, \$59, \$129, \$189.

Marco Benevento & Friends featuring Billy Martin & Marc Friedman, Trump Plaza, Theater, 11 p.m. Oct. 30. \$25.

Week of Nov. 4

Pink Martini, Caesars, Circus Maximus Theater, 9 p.m. Nov. 5. \$35, \$50, \$75.

Rick Springfield, Borgata, The Music Box, 9 p.m. Nov. 5. \$50.

Aziz Ansari, Borgata, Event Center, 8 p.m. Nov. 5. \$35, \$45.

Penn and Teller, Harrah's Resort, The Concert Venue, 9 p.m. Nov. 5 and 6. \$45, \$65, \$75.

Jim Breuer, Borgata, The Music Box, 9 p.m. Nov. 6. \$29.50.

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25th Anniversary of Freestyle, Trump Taj Mahal, Arena, 8 p.m. Nov. 6. \$40, \$55, \$75, \$95.

Smokey Robinson, Tropicana, Showroom, 9 p.m. Nov. 5 and 6. \$25, \$65.

Thanos Petrelis, Resorts Atlantic City, Superstar Theater, 8 p.m. Nov. 6. \$95, \$125, \$150, \$185.

The Cult, Showboat, House of Blues, 8 p.m. Nov. 6. \$25, \$30.

Arabian Nights - Wael Kfoury, Caesars, Circus Maximus Theater, 9 p.m. Nov. 6. \$65, \$95, \$125, \$175.

Vince Vaughn & Kevin James Comedy Roadshow featuring Richie Minervini, Steven Byrne and Owen Benjamin, Borgata, Event Center, 8 p.m. Nov. 6. \$65, \$85, \$125.

Week of Nov. 11

Kris Kristofferson, Borgata, The Music Box, 9 p.m. Nov. 12. \$29.50, \$35.

Little Anthony & The Imperials, Trump Plaza, Theatre, 9 p.m. Nov. 12 and 13. \$40.

Toby Keith's American Ride with Rodney Adkins and Walker Hayes, Boardwalk Hall, 8 p.m. Nov. 12. \$55.60, \$78.70.

The Allman Brothers Band, Trump Taj Mahal, Mark G. Etess Arena, 8 p.m. Nov. 13. \$49.50, \$69.50.



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Assi Hellani & Walid Tawfik, Resorts Atlantic City, Superstar Theater, 8 p.m. Nov. 13. \$95.

Experience Hendrix featuring Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Susan Tedeschi, Robert Randolph, Jonny Lang, Steve Vai, Los Lobos' David Hidalgo and Cesar Rosas, Eric Johnson, Ernie Isley, Living Colour, Chris Layton of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble and the Slide Brothers, Caesars. Circus Maximus Theater, 9 p.m. Nov. 13. \$55, \$75.

La Musica Italiana, Trump Marina, Grand Cayman Ballroom, 8 p.m. Nov. 13. \$85, \$95.

Tom Papa, Borgata, The music Box, 9 p.m. Nov. 13. \$29.50.

Week of Nov. 18

Justin Bieber My World Tour with Jasmine V., Boardwalk Hall, 7 p.m. Nov. 19. \$39.50, \$56, \$66.

Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, Borgata, The Music Box, 9 p.m. Nov. 19 and 20. 8 p.m. Nov. 21. \$65.

Boyz II Men, Resorts Atlantic City, Superstar Theater, 8 p.m. Nov. 20. \$40, \$50.

Bill Maher, Caesars, Circus Maximus Theater, 9 p.m. Nov. 20. \$55, \$65, \$75.

Shinedown, House of Blues, Showboat, 8 p.m. Nov. 20. \$39.50, \$42.25.

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Sergio Martinez vs. Paul Williams II - Middleweight Championship, Boardwalk Hall, 6:30 p.m. Nov. 20. \$50, \$100, \$200, \$400.

Patti Labelle, Harrah's Resort, The Concert Venue, 8 p.m. Nov. 20. \$55, \$65, \$75.

Earth, Wind and Fire, Trump Taj Mahal, Mark Etess Arena, 8 p.m. Nov. 20. \$59.50, \$79.50.

Week of Nov. 25

Legends Classic Championship Doubleheader with Syracuse, Michigan, Georgia Tech and UTEP Basketball Championship Rounds, Boardwalk Hall, 5:30 p.m. Nov. 26 and 27. \$10, \$25, \$50, \$125, \$250.

Chayanne, Trump Taj Mahal, Mark G. Etess Arena, 9 p.m. Nov. 26. Tickets TBA.

Bret Michaels, Tropicana, Showroom, 9 p.m. Nov. 26. \$45, \$55, \$85.

Jukebox Heroes Live, Trump Plaza, Theatre, 9 p.m. Nov. 26 and 27. 4 p.m. Nov. 28. \$25.

Straight No Chaser: Holiday Show, Caesars, Circus Maximus Theater, 8 p.m. Nov. 26 and 27. \$450, \$50, \$65.

Bob Dylan, Borgata, Event Center, 8 p.m. Nov. 26. \$85, \$95, \$125.

Paul Anka, Resorts Atlantic City, Superstar Theater, 8 p.m. Nov. 26 and 27. \$50, \$65, \$85.

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Jay Leno, Borgata, Event Center, 8 p.m. Nov. 27. \$65, \$75, \$85.

Week of Dec. 2

Daryl Hall & John Oates, Borgata, Event Center, 8 p.m. Dec. 3. \$55, \$65, \$85.

DMX & Eve, Showboat, House of Blues, 8 p.m. Dec. 3. \$27.50, \$35.

Lewis Black, Borgata, The Music Box, 9 p.m. Dec. 3 and 4. \$75.

Celtic Thunder, Trump Taj Mahal, Marina, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 4. \$45, \$55, \$65.

Chris Isaak, Harrah's Resort, The Concert Venue, 8 p.m. Dec. 4. \$35, \$45, \$55.

Julio Iglesias, Caesars, Circus Maximus Theater, 9 p.m. Dec. 4. \$65, \$75, \$85.

Week of Dec. 9

Cyndi Lauper, Tropicana, Showroom, 9 p.m. Dec. 10. Tickets TBA.

The Caesars Tribute: a Salute to the Golden Age of Skating with Evan Lysacek, Nancy Kerrigan, Sasha Cohen, Brian Boitano, Sarah Hughes, Peggy Fleming and Scott Hamilton, Boardwalk Hall, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 11. \$29.50, \$42.50, \$62.50, \$92.50, \$149.50.

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Kenny Rogers Christmas and Hits Show, Trump Taj Mahal, Xanadu, 8 p.m. Dec. 11. \$75, \$85, \$125.

Week of Dec. 30

Sarah McLachlan, Caesars, Circus Maximus Theater, 9 p.m. Dec. 31. \$70, \$90, \$115.

Maroon 5, Showboat, House of Blues, 9 p.m. Dec. 31. \$65, \$75.

Week of Jan. 13

Miss'd America Pageant 2011 with host Carson Kressley, Boardwalk Hall, Time TBA. Jan. 16. Tickets TBA.

Week of Jan. 27

Indoor Racing, Boardwalk Hall, 8 p.m. Jan. 28. 7 p.m. Jan. 29. \$5, \$15, \$20.

Week of Feb. 3

Joan Rivers, Atlantic City Hilton, The Grand Theater, 8 p.m. Feb. 5. \$35.

Week of Feb. 17

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Lady Gaga with Scissor Sisters, Boardwalk Hall, 8 p.m. Feb. 19. \$54.50, \$93.50, \$192.50.

Week of March 3

Music of ABBA (ARRIVAL From Sweden), Trump Plaza, Theatre, 9 p.m. March 4 and 5. \$30.

Ongoing shows

Kozak The Magician, Tropicana, The Comedy Stop (The Quarter), 6 p.m. Comedy Show. 5 p.m. Seating for dinner. Thursday to Wednesday. \$23 show only. \$32 Show and dinner.

Happy Holidays: A Magical Celebration, Tropicana, Showroom, 8 p.m. Monday to Thursday. 3:30 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday. 9 p.m. Saturday. 7 p.m. Sunday. Runs Nov. 8 to Dec. 16. \$25, \$35.

Christmas Spectacular, Atlantic City Hilton, The Grand Theater, 7 p.m. Sunday to Thursday. 3 p.m. Wednesday. 9 p.m. Friday. 8 p.m. Saturday. Runs Nov. 28 to Dec. 19. \$25.

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