

Bette Midler to Replace Celine Dion As Caesars Headliner in Las Vegas

Las Vegas (AP) – Bette Midler will replace Celine Dion as the headliner at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, officials announced Thursday, answering the lingering question of who would be chosen to step into some big shoes and the 4,100-seat Colosseum, which Dion virtually sold out for what will be a nearly five-year run by December.

Dion's show, „A New Day,“ has grossed more than USD 500 million since it began in March 2003, producers said. The Grammy award-winning singer announced in January that she would end her run at the end of the year in the USD 95 million theater.

Midler said the venue was intimidating but exciting.

„I'm looking forward to it, but also I'm terrified because it's huge,“ she told The Associated Press by telephone. „That's giving me the vapors.“

„At the same time, they also give you a lot of toys to play with. They give you the lifts and you can fly people in, you can fly them out. There's all this wing space and hydraulics and stuff, and the dressing rooms are staggering. It should be an opera house somewhere in the Black Forest.“

Midler, 61, said she agreed to a two-year contract to work 100 shows a year, performing five nights a week for 20 weeks beginning Feb. 20.

The schedule is less grueling than Dion's, who performed 160 shows per year.

„That's really what made me decide it was going to be fun,“

Midler said. „I have a child in school and I have a lot of commitments here in New York City. I like the idea of being able to come and go.“

With Elton John continuing his 50 shows a year through 2008, there will be room for a third Colosseum performer, said John Meglen, the president of Concerts West, an AEG Live company that books talent for Caesars, a unit of Harrah's Entertainment Inc.

„We will probably have one additional artist, which we'll announce later,“ Meglen said. He would not comment on widespread speculation that Cher also will be signed to perform.

Meglen said the Colosseum will go dark after Dion's last show Dec. 15 until Midler begins.

Midler said she hasn't decided what her 90-minute show will look and sound like.

„I think it'll be my usual outrageous, flamboyant, over-the-top show,“ she said.

„I have tremendous background singers and I always have a great band,“ she added. „If I get lucky, I'll have semi-nudes. I love showgirls and I love feathers and sequins, so I'm hoping there'll be plenty of that.“