



> **ON THE RISE** Drai's is catching The Weeknd on his way up.

GIVE 'EM A SHOW

Drai's Live puts on concerts smack in the middle of the party BY MIKE PREVATT

→ You know the drill: Club announces non-DJ act. Fans come, endure DJ Captain Obvious for hours. Live act finally appears, performs current album's second single, old favorite and first single, says thank you and bails. Fans leave confused or miffed.

This has been the routine since the now-deceased Pure popularized vocalists and bands as headliners. But it wasn't going to cut the mustard for Drai's Nightclub, which wanted to improve upon the programming practice to elevate it for everyone involved, including the guests.

"One of the things we believe is that our clientele deserves better—better than some quote-unquote host who may or may not sing or perform," Drai's partner Michael Gruber says.

It hasn't been officially announced with a residency lineup—though a few exclusives like Chris Brown (who performs on May 2) and The Weeknd (next date: May 23) have been individually revealed, with more to come—but Drai's Live has been a part of the Cromwell rooftop venue's schedule for nearly all of 2015. It actually has been booking performers since September 20, when the 4-month-old club featured a 30-minute live set by Iggy Azalea. She returned on New Year's Day for another performance, and Drai's went on a talent-signing spree.

Since then, acts as diverse as singer/actress/dancer Tinashe and hip-hop vocalist/producer J. Cole (both one-off/non-exclusives) and electro-funk duo Chromeo (a new resident act that also

DJs) have performed on the Drai's Nightclub stage. The latest unveiled resident is rhythmic indie duo Capital Cities (debuting May 8), and Ciara was just announced for June 5. They all fit into the club's strategy of executing social media-ready elements upon its guests, be it the pool's Strip-side view, the LED disco ball above the dancefloor or your favorite singer playing a mini-concert 50 feet away from you.

"I grew up in a world where the wow factor was a performer coming onstage at some point in the night and wowing you," Gruber says.

It has worked so well that Drai's has featured more live performances—and signed more resident performers—than it originally planned. It seems a 45-minute to an hour-and-some-change set has hit the sweet spot for both clubbers and performers wanting more than a quickie but less than a 90-minute to two-hour concert. And Drai's—and, by extension, its casino partner, Caesars—gets added value for its talent investment, not to mention bragging rights.

"I think when you're part of a career that is just breaking forward, like The Weeknd, and they're on the cusp of superstardom—to have that as it's unwinding both for venue and consumer is incredible," Gruber says. "Just as importantly, taking a superstar artist like Chris Brown and being a part of his comeback is also exciting for us and for the customers. That's what we want to always be a part of."

CHOOSE YOUR BREWS

A few of our picks among the 250 beers available at new PKWY Tavern

→ Watch your back, Yard House. You've got some local competition. Early this month Fine Entertainment, owner of Strip-side nightspots PBR Rock Bar and Rockhouse, branched into the suburbs with the brew-centric PKWY Tavern Taphouse and Grille. And with 250 beers on the menu, the new west-side hangout has one of the largest selections of suds in town, including the most on tap, with a whopping 120 varieties ready to be pulled into a pint. And while PKWY is encouraging patrons to try all 250 beers through its T.E.A.M. (Taphouse Exclusive Active Member) loyalty program, we scoured the list specifically to steer you in the right direction. Looking for something ...

Boozy? Victory Golden Monkey. The Pennsylvania brewery's tripel clocks in at 9.5 ABV—and with a subtle sweetness and a light hint of banana, it's scary how fast this Belgian-style beer goes down. Imbibe with caution.

For day drinking? Illusive Traveler Shandy. Don't like fruity beers? You're missing out. A wheat beer brewed with real grapefruit, the classic suds/juice combo has just the right amount of citrus zing and a clean, crisp finish. Perfect for summertime. Or whenever the sun is shining ...

PKWY TAVERN
9820 W. Flamingo Road, 702-243-5329, 24/7.

Weird? Wells Banana Bread Beer. One of the few imports on tap, the oddly flavored English brew really tastes like its name. With a bready malt, nuttiness in the background and banana from beginning to end, you might want to order this one last. You need something for dessert, right?

Barrel-aged? Uinta Cockeyed Cooper. Rich and velvety, the bourbon-barrel-aged barleywine is tart and intense with powerful notes of cherry and vanilla. I'm not a fan of barrel-aged beers, but I'd order this again.

Light? Ommegang Witte. General manager Josh Hume says this is the staff favorite, and after a few sips it was easy to see why. A take on the Belgian witbier, the New York brewery's version is crisp and refreshing with subtle notes of orange and coriander. —Mark Adams

