

Rita Wilson joins the fall lineup at Cafe Carlyle

Songstress. Rita Wilson brings a mix of old and new to her upcoming gig.

As a ticket-taker at the Universal Amphitheater in Hollywood in the '70s, actress, producer and singer Rita Wilson found musical inspiration in one memorable night with Joni Mitchell. Her career ambition was further stoked when she was cast as Roxie Hart in the musical "Chicago" in 2006. "When I did that," she recalls, "I literally made a vow to myself that I was going to have music in my life for the rest of my life."

Starting next week, you can catch Wilson onstage at the famed Cafe Carlyle inside the Carlyle Hotel. For two weeks, she performs hour-plus shows five days a week with material from her first album "AM/FM," a collection of covers and some original material written with Richard Marx, Kara DioGuardi and Jason Reeves. Backing her is a four-piece band led by guitarist Andrew Doolittle.

As with any show at Cafe Carlyle, the room itself becomes an additional member of the band. Famed for its musical wall murals by Academy Award-winning costume designer



Rita Wilson
KRISTEN LARA CRITCHELL

If you go

Rita Wilson at Cafe Carlyle

Sept. 24-Oct. 4
Carlyle Hotel
35 E. 76th St.
Tickets start at \$50
www.rosewoodhotels.com

The lineup

Coming up at Cafe Carlyle:

- Through Sept. 20: Jeff Goldblum and Mildred Snitzer Orchestra
- Oct. 7-18: Molly Ringwald
- Oct. 21-25: David Johansen
- Oct. 28-Nov. 22: John Pizzarelli, Jessica Molaskey
- Nov. 25-Dec. 31: Steve Tyrell

Marcel Vertes, the space is quite intimate. Its character is also drawn from the Carlyle's decades-long résumé of legendary performers like Bobby Short, Eartha Kitt and Rita Moreno.

For Wilson, the unique room also cultivates a special relationship with the audience that's both thrilling and terrifying. She explains: "When you are performing on your own, you have a much more direct connection." A large part of the thrill comes from performing new songs. "One I look forward to singing is called 'Along for the Ride,' and that's just a really fun, up-tempo 'let's go out and party' song," she says.

Also joining the party this season are Jeff Goldblum, Molly Ringwald, David "Buster Poindexter" Johansen, Steve Tyrell and husband-and-wife duo John Pizzarelli and Jessica Molaskey. Woody Allen continues to perform Monday nights with the Eddy Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.

Whether any of Wilson's famous friends (or husband Tom Hanks) plan to join her onstage remains to be seen. "It's possible," she laughs. "You never know with my crazy friends!"

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Jeff Goldblum performs this month at Cafe Carlyle. / PHOTOS