

# EDITORIAL



## The 21st Annual Bistro Awards— And the Winner Is...

Cabaret has its ups and downs, and if you ask 13 different people who work in the industry about the state of the art form and its future, you'll get 13 different responses. That's exactly what Back Stage's Bistro Bits columnists, David Finkle and John Heglund, did for this week's cover story.

Dwindling audiences, closing venues, an unfavorable image (outside of the key cities, that is), a lack of press, an absence of marketing, and continuing discord between the Manhattan Association of Cabarets & Clubs (MAC) and its members don't sound very hopeful. Yet cabaret and its neighboring cousin, Broadway—the Fabulous Invalid—have always managed to stay afloat. And though the industry experts we spoke to mentioned these problems, their passion for this unique art form and their persistence in spreading their feelings to friends and new audiences alike create the feeling that the nitery circuit will long survive.

Ask David Finkle and John Heglund, our enthusiastic cabaret critics, how they feel about the art. They spend the whole year covering the cabaret scene, and they do it with as much passion as their interviewees claim for themselves (see the story beginning on page 28). When deciding on this year's Bistro Award winners, they mixed their passion with the guidelines set up by Bob Harrington when he first began presenting the awards in 1985.

Here's my annual rundown of those guidelines:

The Back Stage Bistro Awards recognize achievement in a wide variety of categories—from outstanding performances to outstanding accomplishments and contributions by members of the cabaret community. New categories may be drawn up each year as they best describe the recipients, and categories may be dropped as well.

The object is not to choose "the best," but to recognize and congratulate those who have done something special during the year.

The Bistros may recognize performers who are newly arrived on the scene. They may also acknowledge those who have returned to the community after many years. They honor performers who have shown enormous growth in their art during the past few years (the Ira Eaker Special Achievement Award), and also those who have spent their entire careers dedicated to the art (the Bob Harrington Lifetime Achievement Award).

What distinguishes the Bistro from other awards is that it is a one-time honor in each of the various categories. If Bistro winners could be reconsidered in the same slot each year, not only would the task of choosing the winners be near impossible, but it would decrease the chances for others in the field. So if you feel that a name has been omitted in a particular category when you're looking over the following list of winners, it's very likely that person was a previous winner. On the other hand, if you see a performer's name and recognize him or her as a former Bistro recipient, it's because that person previously received his or her award in a different category.

So, without further ado, here are the winners of the 2006 Back Stage Bistro Awards for Outstanding Excellence in Cabaret:

**VOCALIST:** Milla Ilieva at the Encore; Kate Loitz at the Duplex; Dane Vannatter at Danny's Skylight Room.

**POPVOCALIST:** Dimitri Manucci at Don't Tell Mama.

**DEBUT:** Kathy Kaefer at the Hideaway Room @ Helen's;

from the  
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BY SHERRY EAKER

Reagan Stone at the Encore.

**MAJOR ENGAGEMENT:** Carol Channing at Feinstein's at the Regency; Brian Stokes Mitchell at Feinstein's at the Regency.

**MAJOR JAZZ ENGAGEMENT:** Carol Sloane at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola at Jazz at Lincoln Center and at the Village Vanguard; Annie Ross at Danny's Skylight Room.

**MUSICAL COMEDY DUO:** The Farley Brothers (Brian and Ted Farley) at Upstairs at Rose's Turn.

**VOCAL GROUP:** The Fabulous Pink Flamingos in "Live From the Lu'au Lounge," performed by Lee Cavellier, Ron DeStefano, David Snyder, and Jaron Vesely, at the Encore.

**PERFORMER IN A REVUE:** Connie Pacht in "Broadway—Our Way" at the Hideaway Room @ Helen's.

**RETURN TO CABARET:** Jimmy James in "Divas Are Forever" at the Hideaway Room @ Helen's.

**PLANO BAR ENTERTAINER:** Jennifer Pace at Don't Tell Mama and the Hideaway Room @ Helen's; Jonathan Tomaselli at Don't Tell Mama and the Hideaway Room @ Helen's.

**COMEDY PERFORMANCE:** Jackie Hoffman in "Jackie Hoffman: Chanukah at Joe's Pub" at Joe's Pub.

**THEME SHOW:** "Moon Song," written and performed by Barbara Rosene, at Danny's Skylight Room.

**SONG OF THE YEAR:** "Cold Enough to Cross," by Paul Rolnick and Henry Cory.

**RECORDING:** Lee Lessack for *In Good Company*.

**DIRECTOR:** Russell Taylor for "Live From the Lu'au Lounge," performed by the Fabulous Pink Flamingos.

**MUSICAL DIRECTOR:** David Lewis for his performances with Kitty Carlisle Hart at Feinstein's at the Regency.

**INSTRUMENTALIST:** Jered Egan.

**TECHNICAL DIRECTOR:** Brandon Voight for his work at Danny's Skylight Room.

**SPECIAL AWARD:** To Charles Cermele and Jon Nakagawa for perpetuating the tradition of American songwriting through Lincoln Center's American Songbook series; to Jan Wallman for her longtime contributions and dedication to cabaret; and to Len Triola for his longtime contributions to cabaret and for promoting the art form.

**IRA EAKER SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:** Now in its fourth year, named for my late dad, the co-founder and co-publisher of Back Stage, the award goes to an outstanding performer on the rise, Michael Holland.

**BOB HARRINGTON LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:** To Steve Ross for his devotion to the highest-quality cabaret performing.

The winners of the 2006 Bistro Awards will be celebrated at a private party hosted by Back Stage. Congratulations to all!

*Sherry Eaker*