



## Is San Francisco the Talent Capital of the World?

by Buzzin' Lee Hartgrave, 2006-05-05

**CHECK OUT RUSS LORENSON,  
KRISTOPHER MC DOWELL AND DAVID  
DOBRUSKY**

Quips were flying at the blowout CD Party for the release of Russ Lorenson's new CD. On the album are some of the greatest Standards in musical history – "Come Fly With Me", "Let's Get Away From it All", "Moon Light In Vermont" and "I Love Paris." There are many more wonderful songs in this great feel-good package, some with duets with Shawn Ryan and Klea Blackhurst. Not only does Lorenson have the soul of the greats – Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett and other dream crooners of the 50's, 60's and 70's – he has the Kelly Park band with him to really bring those decades to life. With Kelly Park on piano is Reid Whatley on Bass, Adam Goodhue on Drums and the absolutely fantastic Tony Malfatti who plays Sax, Clarinet and flute. Not only does he play them – he twists and turns each note as if he were entwining us with come hither sounds. No wonder the audience was jumping up and down – their seats were on fire.

Lorenson calls this CD "A Little Travelin' Music" – for good reason. Since he is singing songs so identified with such famous voices – he has to show that he still can bring something fresh to them. Lorenson has done that and more. He has worked amazing, sometimes quirky arrangements of these almost lost gems. Rarely do we hear any of them sung anymore – so, this makes the CD and hearing him in person a really delightful treat.

Other surprises went on at the party. His guests were absolutely the best in the business. Take Shawn Ryan – who is witty and carefree with his hilarious patter between songs – but make no mistake about it. When it comes to professional stage presence and vocal toning –you can't get much better than Ryan. I've seen him many, many times – and he has improved so much this time – that I said to myself "THERE'S A STAR." Ryan's rendition of "Heartbreak Hotel" should be #1 on the Billboard charts. And maybe soon...it will be!

Also another surprise was Kristopher McDowell who is working on a one person show about Anthony Newley. He sang several songs of Newley's from "Roar of the Grease Paint, Smell of the Crowd" and "Stop The World" – and McDowell's Broadway talent is good enough to carry any Broadway show. FANTASSSTIC! His new show will be

called “The Joker” and he will have the terrific talent of David Dobrusky, (who accompanied him) as his musical arranger. I’m already excited and can’t wait to see it. Another added bonus is that World Celeb Sharon McKnight will direct the show. It’ll be a Joke on us – if we don’t see it.

Out of all of this we learned that Lorensen is also working on a show about Tony Bennett. He sang many of Bennett’s songs at the Plush Room – and you know what? He was just tremendous. He really has the phrasing down pat. The show is set to premiere at the Empire Plush Room on Aug. 8-9th. And, of course I will see you there.

This was not on the stage – but was bathroom talk. I was in a booth. Alone I might add... (I never pee in front of others) when Richard Connema (Talkin’ Broadway’) was regaling everyone at the urinals with stories about Anthony Newley and Joan Collins (who was once married to Newley). Maybe we will hear a few of those little tidbits in the Kristopher McDowell show. You think?

**ALL IN ALL...THIS WAS A FULL NON-STOP EVENING OF GREAT ENTERTAINMENT. LORENSON PULLED IT ALL TOGETHER AND GAVE US AN EVENING OF GREAT VOCALS AND PURE EXHILARATION IN A SHOW FILLED WITH ENERGY AND SKILLFULLY PERFORMED SONGS FOR THE SPIRIT.**

**RATING: FOUR GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE!!!! And a recipient of The Lee Hartgrave FAME AWARD FOR BEST CABARET PERFORMANCE.**