

**Urban Entertainment on Demand**



## **Jazz: Great American Songbook** by Jennifer Herrera

**Russ Lorensen** is a performer that is reminiscent of the old greats — classic performers that not only sang, but also added a touch of stellar acting to their show. With his debut album *A Little Travelin' Music* which features songs from his cabaret show, **Lorensen** will remind people how jazz music is about the expression of the words sung. His voice transcends mainstream artists and is placed in a category in itself, one where the world of acting and jazz are interchangeable in the music spectrum.

**Lorensen** broke through the jazz club scene in San Francisco in 2005 with a series of cabaret performances that quickly established him as an accomplished cabaret performer, even though he was fairly new to the art of cabaret.

“I really started to explore the art form of cabaret about a year ago,” **Lorensen** said. He stated that he really loves the form of cabaret. It could be due to cabaret allowing a person to be a true performer, something that **Lorensen** is familiar with. He has performed various theater productions in San Francisco such as *Red, Hot and Blue!*, *1776* and *The Golden Apple*. With **Lorensen**'s acting abilities it was only a matter of time before he would blend the two things he loved the most together, however, before he could do that he needed material that he could talk about to the audience to fit a 90-minute performance in which 30 to 40 percent is dialogue.

This is where **Lorensen** searches back to where his life led him to the dot com buzz. Taking a job in the high-tech world meant that he would be traveling more than he had ever before this experience, and has since set the stage for **Lorensen**'s art *A Little Travelin' Music*, which has also led to the debut of his album.

“My life has always been made up of the Great American Songbook,” **Lorensen** said.

Having traveled the world during his stint as a dot comer allowed him to see the world and experience new things. But after getting that out of his system **Lorensen** came back full force to his two loves — singing and acting.

**Lorensen** stated that he believes that acting and singing jazz music has a strong connection. The two are interchangeable and complement each other, because “You gotta be able to get across the lyric,” **Lorensen** said. It's a mini play. It's a love story. Whatever the song is about there's a certain element of getting it across.”

It is undeniable to know that **Lorensen** is a true performer. He has paid his dues singing for years and is now gaining the success that has been due to him for years by now. **Lorensen** has gained enough esteem to be able to honor one of the greats, **Tony Bennett**, in an upcoming tribute cabaret performance *Benedetto/Blessed: A Tribute to the Life and Music of Tony Bennett*.

“I wanted to pull some obscure songs [from] his recordings,” **Lorensen** said.

He is doing just that and making the tribute all his own and so far the show has received a great response and is being booked at various venues in California. Following the [August] **Bennett** cabaret performances **Lorensen** will delve into an art of cabaret workshop with the Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts Camp. The intensive week-long workshop will strengthen as well as teach those who are accepted into the workshop the art of the time-honored form that is cabaret. “I'll be learning how to expose myself as Russ instead of putting myself up as a character,” **Lorensen** said.

After things settle down a bit for **Lorensen** he'll have time to devote to the goals he has established early on in his career. “I'm not looking for fame and fortune; it's not who I am in terms of the kind of music I do,” **Lorensen** said. “I'd like to be recognized as a good custodian of the Great American Songbook. I want to be true to the music I'm doing. I want to be considered one of the good guys.”

Upcoming **Lorensen** performances include a visit to Austin to perform at the Austin Cabaret Theatre 2006 Gala Fundraiser where **Lorensen** will be opening for **Eartha Kitt**. The performance is on Friday, July 28 from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. at The Mansion at Judges' Hill. Tickets are from \$175 to \$300, call 512-453-ACTS for more information.