

# The Boston Globe

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 1997

## WHEN HE SINGS, PEOPLE LISTEN

**Dane Vannatter** listens to groups like Smashing Pumpkins, The Psychedelic Furs and Bjork. But when he does his own thing, an intimate cabaret performance in the tradition of Tony Bennett and Johnny Mathis, he creates a new world, where his distinctive style leaves his own imprint on whatever music he sings.

"It's true that my most appreciative audience is well over the age of 46," says Vannatter, who, at 35, is from a different generation than many of the audiences that come to hear him sing at the Regattabar, Scullers, Ryles, and the Blacksmith House.



His repertoire is usually bluesy tunes by artists such as Billie Holiday and Chet Baker, bossa nova-style jazz and torch songs from the '40s, and the occasional surprise, like "Suddenly Last Summer" by The Motels or "The Ghost In You" by The Psychedelic Furs. Through it all, Vannatter, hopelessly unhip to the kids and probably a bit of an upstart to the older generation, is a powerful and strangely commanding presence.

"I'm lucky," he says, "because I have always found that when I start singing, people always listen." Recently, at the Blacksmith House in Harvard Square, Vannatter took on the challenge of a tribute to the late Jerry Livingston (1909-87), a

songwriter whose pop hits, Disney movie songs and television themes written in the 1930s through the 1950s were recorded by everyone from Frank Sinatra to Bette Midler. Planning the show with Livingston's son, Dennis, who lives in Brookline, Vannatter was able to uncover songs that hadn't been heard before, and to bring the audience through the highlights and lowlights of the songwriter's career with an accent on some of the zanier material.

"I was worried about losing myself in the story of somebody else's life," says Vannatter. "So I really tried to be me, and not this conduit singing the songs."

Vannatter started late in life. Winning a singing contest at the Lenox Hotel in Boston when he was 30, he decided to be a cabaret singer and took lessons from a teacher he met locally.

"It wasn't vocal training, it was more like acting," he says. "Teaching you to make the songs mean something via your life experience." Through that class he started getting shows at clubs such as Scullers, and eventually put together his own band, which has become popular on the Boston and New York cabaret circuit.

Dane Vannatter will debut his first CD, "Here's To Life," at the Regattabar in the Charles Hotel, Harvard Square, I Bennett St., Cambridge, Tuesday at 8:30 p.m.

-DAVID WILDMAN



**Avitus Productions**

300 Lynn Shore Drive #807, Lynn, MA 01902

tel: 781-598-9156 • fax: 781-595-8445 • e-mail: danevannatter@aol.com

www.danevannatter.com