

# BISTRO BITS

By Bob Harrington

**O**NCE KNOWN FOR HER BOISTEROUS BELTING and shocking blue lyrics while a headliner at *Freddy's*, Nancy Timpanaro has moderated both show and voice over the past year without losing the warmth and sense of fun that make her such a special performer. In a Sunday brunch performance at *Park Ten* prior to a run at *Don't Tell Mama* this week through Saturday night, her transformation from rollicking diva to smooth stylist seemed fully realized. Two six-week engagements in Provincetown over the summer bolstered her confidence in this new persona, and she approaches even the most delicate ballads with authority and conviction. Her assured handling of "Guess Who I Saw Today," a special, slow and moody arrangement of "It Might As Well Be Spring" chock full of potent little emotive tugs, and a lovely rendition of a rarely heard Joanie Summers ballad, "Guiding Star," demonstrated total command of the most subtle lyrical nuances.

Vocally, Timpanaro has made impressive progress as well. She's learned to trust her voice as a musical instrument, and displays a previously unrevealed versatility. She's disciplined and controlled, yet retains a refreshing aura of spontaneity that adds considerable luster to her performance. Nancy Timpanaro has grown as a performer, and that growth is evident throughout her act. Don't miss her at *Mama's* this week



Nancy Timpanaro

**IN AN ERA WHEN A HIT BROADWAY MUSICAL MAY produce only one potential standard "Pageant," Robert Cabell's new revue at *Panache*, can hold its head high. He's**

Bob Harrington regularly reviews cabaret performances for *Back Stage*. If you wish to submit material and information regarding your cabaret appearance, send all materials to Bob Harrington, c/o *Back Stage*, 330 W. 42 St. NYC 10036. Allow at least two weeks lead time for proper consideration. Include a name and contact phone number at the club where you will be appearing. Please, do not call *Back Stage*.



penned three smashing ballads for his talented cast, surrounded them with a dozen charming novelty numbers, and come up with a solid winner.

A backstage look at a beauty pageant for overweight sex symbols, "Pageant" strays into questionable areas with some built-in fat jokes and lyrics with rhymes like "heavy" and "Chevy." The satire isn't sharp enough to offset the occasional offensive line, and the climatic song, "The Woman That I Am," while it makes all the correct points about the merits of personality over mere beauty, comes a tad too late in the show to compensate for the tone set by songs like "Miss Fat of the Land."

That reservation aside, "Pageant" shines on every other level. The songs are effectively integrated to advance the plot and, where that isn't possible, are artfully included as a talent competition entry. And what songs they are! "What's Missing In My Life" will, I predict, become a cabaret standard. Amelia McQueen's big number, "Purple Hearted Soldier," and Amy Ryder's duet with Christopher Jon, "Are You The One," should share the same happy fate. And, in a musically splendid moment, Cabell brings all three together in a poignantly moving trio to herald the coronation of the new queen.

"Pageant" shines with superb performances. Amy Ryder strikes just the right pose as the ingenuous Bobby-Joy, and her novelty tap and twirl number, "Twirling For Jesus," is a comic tour de force. Maggie Anderson, as the reigning "Miss Fat of the Land," is too funny for words in a black wig and a series of spangled and bugle-beaded Tommy De Maio fashions. And Amelia McQueen is a heartbreaker singing "Purple Hearted Soldier."

I heartily recommend "Pageant," which will be playing Fridays at 11 pm and Wednesdays at 8 at *Panache*, for both its beautiful music and high-spirited fun. Beginning this week, Randa McNamara takes over the lead role and the killer song, "What's Missing In My Life," which should make the show even more interesting.

**MARTA HEFLIN, APPEARING LAST WEEK AT THE** Horn of Plenty, sings with an almost edgelessly smooth, well-modulated voice. Whether soft or assertive, her crystal clear enunciation seems to isolate each note and give it full attention, and she's struck an interesting balance between traditional style and contemporary attitude in her selections. At her finest, she can illuminate a song like Gilbert Becaude's Brelish "She's A Star" by singing it from two perspectives, bringing out the innocent admiration and then the jaded jealousy inherent in celebrity worship. And with "Fire Engine," from its haunting hollow start to its perky finish, she shows she can find both the humor and the drama in a song.

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