

THE MUSIC BIZ

Heart Songs

IT WAS BUSINESS AS usual for a Friday night at the Bucket O' Suds, way west on Cicero Avenue: The piano was out of tune and the din of barflies rendered the music almost pointless. After a couple of drowned-out songs, the Girl Singer thought, This has not been particularly wonderful. I was nothing to get excited about. She climbed off her stool and disappeared into the crowd.

As it turns out, she was wrong. One of the guys around the piano, the one with the big bushy beard who'd asked her for her demo tape a few weeks before, the one whose card—the card that said Elektra Records—she'd shoved into her pocket without a glance, was back—and listening intently. “I was, like, whoa...,” says Kirsten Gustafson, 38, who moved to Chicago from Michigan's Upper Peninsula about a year ago. “I made some quick moves and got that

tape in the mail.” And it worked. After the record executive shopped around her demo tape, it was picked up by Elektra's sister company, Atlantic Records—the first time he could ever remember signing someone off the street. This month the label introduces Gustafson's first CD, called *You Taught My Heart to Sing*, a blend of jazz standards and new tunes.

Though she's been singing her whole life—professionally since 1978—Gustafson never has been able to survive from music alone. The CD may change that, though until it does, she'll continue to spend her days working odd jobs, such as cooking at the Bucket, and singing around town at night. “Singing makes me feel fabulous. When it's really good it's a communion with the musicians,” says Gustafson, “and God's in there, too.”

—SALLY RUTH BOURRIE

Singing in the main: Kirsten Gustafson, at the Bucket O' Suds



Scoops du Jour

Savories from the dining editor

by Carla Kelson

PARROT REDUX. In its heyday *Le Perroquet* (70 East Walton Street) was a pearl, arguably one of the best restaurants in the hemisphere. It was sanctuary to the urbane diner and the local restaurant of choice for *James Beard*, *Craig Claiborne*, and other apostles of innovative, gimmick-free, refined cooking. The creative fires of the restaurant, fiefdom of reclusive perfectionist *Jovan Trbojevic*, sputtered when its owner's attention wandered to his quirky private club, *Les Nomades*. When Trbojevic sold the restaurant in 1985, it was locked in a rut from which it would never emerge. The pilot lights were finally shut off last year, but the flames had died long before.

Now, with people dining out less and many expensive restaurants faltering, peripatetic *Printer's Row* owner-chef *Michael Foley* is taking on the daunting task of bringing back a *Le Perroquet* resonating with the spirit and look of the original. “I am committed to provide the service, effort, and all of the tiny details that made *Le Perroquet* what it was,” he says. But why now, Michael?

“The demand for value has never been greater. More than ever there is a market for *Le Perroquet*. It's not my goal to have lots of bodies—that's not what *Le Perroquet* is about. Its appeal always was to a small market.”

Foley knows this firsthand; he worked in its kitchen for years. But how close can he come?

Le Perroquet's ambiance was distinctive, comfortable, muted; even when the room was full, whispered conversations were easy.

Foley promises absolute civility, no music, and restoration of the clean look created by Trbojevic and his Art Institute-trained wife, *Meg Abbott*. Linens will carry the familiar orange and green stripes with the glass-toting, parrot-waiter logo. The lovely



Déjà new: Michael Foley at Le Perroquet

millefiore lamps are being refurbished. The hunt is on for heavy crystal dachshunds to hold the sugar cubes.

Overseeing the front of the house is another welcome fixture from the past: tuxedoed *Gérard Nespoux*, the original's captain, back from a hiatus at *La Bohème*.

Le Perroquet's menu was prix fixe and, except for specials, unchanging. Foley promises mostly the same, with full meals priced in the upper thirties, plus a four-course menu and an even lower priced prettheatre option. As before, the fare will be contemporary.

Trbojevic was always secretive about who worked in his kitchen. *Gabino Sotelino (Ambria)* is a veteran (continued on page 16)