



Mark Kitanga's

Boba Cabaret Revue



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The Boba Cabaret Revue is a semi-monthly newsletter highlighting the shows and performers participating in Boba Cabaret. For more information, contact Mark Kitanga at mkitanga@gmail.com

The Three Amigos By Mark Kitanga

Aretha Franklin had a bluesy, soulful hit in 1967 about a downtrodden woman at the mercy of her cheating man's whims. It perfectly articulated the powerful but stifling lock that lovers can find themselves bound by. Seems depressing. But then, when the Queen of Soul and her backup singers croon "Chain, chaaaiin, chaaaaaaaiiin" in the hook, you find yourself singing along and smiling.

Around the same time, two guys an ocean apart were cutting their musical chops: one as guitarist of a rock n' roll band in New Orleans, the other a bassist of a jazz-rock-raga fusion outfit in England.



New Mexico with a young guitarist that also loves the music of that era, and form a band that would come to adorn the same name as that Grammy-winning tune. The connection ironically proves that no matter what situation you find yourself tethered to, music can always create something unexpectedly refreshing.

Which is exactly what happened when Chain of Fools graced the Boba Cabaret stage last month as the second act of the Winter Concert Series. The band, with Kerry Alt on lead guitar, Roger Hartley on bass and lead vocals, and Matt Reiter on rhythm guitar and lead vocals, cranked out hit after hit of good time oldies from the '50s, '60s, and '70s.



"We've got a full and complete sound for a trio," Matt said. "Old school style focusing on the basics. Good rhythm, good harmonies, and good fun."

Bouncing effortlessly from rock n' roll to country to rhythm and blues and back again, the trio covered several classics, such as "Folsom Prison Blues" by Johnny Cash, "How Sweet It Is" by James Taylor, "Layla" by Eric Clapton, "Brown Eyed Girl" by Van Morrison, "Sportin' Life" by The Lovin' Spoonfuls, "Drift Away" by Dobie Gray, "Margaritaville" by Jimmy Buffet, "Good Luck Charm" by Elvis Presley and a scorching, seething rendition of "Mustang Sally" by Wilson Pickett.

"We usually hear a song on the radio that strikes a nerve and we bring a copy of that song to band practice and

see what we all think," Matt explained.

Indeed, with a catalog of nearly 200 songs in their repertoire, they've struck a lot of nerves over the years. And they know their history. Prior to playing each song, they took turns sharing interesting factoids and humorous anecdotes, which was perfect for the cabaret's intimate setting and attentive audiences.



"It was a lot of fun," Matt said. "We're usually in a noisy environment where people don't sit and watch us, but rather listen to us as background music. It was nice to get positive comments about actually getting to hear us in a more formal show type setting."

They've come a long way since first getting together more than 10 years ago. At the time, according to Matt, Kerry's wife, who was running the choir at NMSU, was holding auditions for a variety show. Matt got a part and ended up singing some tunes with Kerry and Roger.

They quickly hit it off and Matt was invited to be lead singer in a band they were putting together. Originally known as Flash Back, the band was a 5-piece with a drummer and piano player. Matt recalls one of their first shows.

"[We were] in the mall at a bar called O'Ryan's and we played the entire first set without our main speakers turned on," he admitted. "All we had were the monitors aiming back at us. "No wonder people said they had trouble hearing us!"



Since then, they have improved and taken their act all over town, including stints at Way Out West, Red Mountain Café, St. Claire Winery and Bistro, Brigid's Cross Irish Pub, and the Mayors Ball, as well as at weddings, NMSU events, and city functions in various parks.

About four years ago, they streamlined to their current three person makeup, but couldn't initially decide on what name to go with.

"Someone mentioned the song title 'Chain of Fools' and we felt that described us to the T," Matt joked.

Like the song, they may see themselves as fools, but they sure sound damn good! See for yourself when Chain of Fools plays at St. Claire's on February 20 and March 27.

Cabaret Bio

The Boba Cabaret is the brain child of Boba Café owner Chris Waggoner. Chris had been involved in the local musical theatre scene and came up with the concept for a “theatre in the round.”

The first question was where to put the new theatre, since there was obviously no space inside the café. Chris’s first thought was to convert the existing patio outside the café into a very small theatre. So, in November of 2007, planning began and initial designs were drawn up. Fortunately, in February of 2008 the adjacent retail space became available, allowing the café to keep its very nice patio.

The design team of regionally known Faux design artist Newman Peyton went right to work on the cabaret. It was also at this time that the long-anticipated beer and wine license was granted to the café. Chris conceived the room and Newman did the design work for what you see here.

This room is very whimsical on purpose. From the Roswellian alien space floor design, the Fender Guitar Pick custom concrete tabletops by Tad Davis, to the UFO wine racks, the cabaret is a place brimming with imagination and creativity. Chris’s hope is that patrons feel and see the magic in the room while enjoying the performances.



A Trip Down Memory Lane

The first show performed at the Boba Cabaret was “A Night In The Life of Stephen Sondheim” and opened in June of 2008. The musical review, directed by Carrie Klofach, featured Ian Sidden, Chris Waggoner, Robby Randall, Cindy Pitts, Lauren Fajardo, and Carrie. The show had three consecutive sold-out performances.

Other musical reviews include “The Mystical Worlds of Lerner and Loewe,” “Rodgers and Hammerstein: Making Headlines,” “Dreamcatcher,” “13 Going on 17,” “Razzama-jazz,” “Happy Holidays,” “Love and Marriage,” “Forget Your Troubles,” “The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber,” “Cirque de la Vie,” “Homeward Bound,” “The Musical of Musicals: The Musical,” and “Kick Up Your Heels.”

The Boba Cabaret has also hosted several concert performances, including Flamenco and classical guitarist Jake Mossman, Diffusion Saxophone Quartet, The We Three Trio, Bob Diven, Sean Robinson, Elvis impersonator “Shane,” Megan McQueen, Marco Jimenez, Almitri and Bennett, and Yolanda Martinez & Desert Wind.

Other notable performers include Janet Mazdra, Tom and Karen Warren, Chris Ripple, Carlos Saucedo, Ginny May, David Cunnif, Miguel Torres, Kristin Connor, Thea Chip, Ryan Thorpe, Bob Burns, Dr. Bill Clark, Clint Bellows, Ila McCoy, Shannon Ellison, Leslie Kowalski, Mike Cook, Dave Edwards, Amanda Husson, Anthony Kumpf, Ashley Foster, Margie Brouhard, Lisa Clark, Charles LeCocq, Corey Dlask, Trey LaFleur, the students of Alma d’arte Charter High School, and of course, the cabaret’s original bartender and master of ceremony, Justin Raines.

Spotlight



Diffusion Sax Quartet

Claiming tongue-in-cheek to be “the only active saxophone quartet in North America,” this four-some treated audiences to some raucous evenings of jazz music as they concluded last month’s Winter Concert Series.

The four-piece (above from L-R) consists of Esteban Camacho, 20, government and economics major, on both alto and soprano; Shawn Silva, 35, Band Director at Oñate High School, on alto; Stephanie Muñoz, 21, music education major, on tenor; and Jon Swann, 24, pursuing a M.A. in performance, on baritone.

This was their second time playing at the cabaret, but not since a lineup changed almost a year ago to include Shawn.

After hearing their performance, it certainly seemed like they had been playing together for years. Of course they sounded amazing, but they also had a great time. Jon demonstrated how to do the hora, a Jewish dance, several students of Shawn’s brought many high-pitched screams with them, and Stephanie and Esteban nailed their fun solos.

In fact, for their final number, a soulful tune called “Gospel Fever,” Esteban flamboyantly stepped in front of the stage at the end to play a very high note on his soprano sax. Stephanie, in good fun, put down her sax, marched out next to him, started singing at that same note, and managed to steal his thunder. To which the audience roared in laughter and applause. A fitting end to a wildly entertaining show.

Starving Artist

By Mark Kitanga

Self-proclaimed artist/designer/painter/sculptor/illustrator/songwriter/composer/playwright/performer returns to Cabaret stage

Kicking off Boba Cabaret's Winter Concert Series last month was the incorrigible, multi-talented Bob Diven. Making his first appearance in just under a year, the local singer/songwriter once again brought his guitar and unique one-man show of folk balladry and wry humor. Audiences found themselves howling, chanting, and dreaming throughout. BCR caught up with the jack-of-all-artistic-trades in a bold attempt to discover what makes him tick. Better step back, this could get messy.

What have you been up to since your last Boba Cabaret performance?

Completing a hand-formed bronze and stainless steel outdoor sculpture for a house in Mesilla, finishing a large painting commission (and managing an art-buying contract) for a corporate client, touring my one-man play "John Singer Sargent: Painting Madame X" through the Midwest, writing and workshopping a new play, launching a new blog, premiering my "Happy Birthday Charles Darwin at the Church of Evolution with the not-so-reverend Bob" show at the Black Box Theater (in February), performing "Forbidden Love of the Pleistocene" for the NMSU Museum, helping along the fabrication of my design for a city "Art Bus Stop" that will be installed near the new Las Cruces City Hall in the next month or so, working on "Dawn of the Dinosaurs," a narration piece for the Las Cruces Symphony Orchestra that will be premiered this coming May, and doing other small projects and my weekly Las Cruces Sun-News Sunday editorial cartoons.

How would you describe your musical style?

Best I can do is "Singer/Songwriter." Folk doesn't seem to catch it, does it? I grew up with four older brothers, and was exposed to John Denver, Joni Mitchell, but also to Homer and Jethro, The Smothers Brothers, Peter Paul and Mary and Tom Lehrer -- all good musicians who set an example of being serious and funny at the same time.

As a musician, what drives you?

Same thing that drives all of my work: a need to express myself. Music has a particular path into others that requires an equal blending of musicality, tunefulness and wordsmithing that seems to suit me. Lyrics are a specific kind of writing that I seem adept at, and I love melody. My music is like all of my work: fairly direct, certainly not avant-garde or cutting edge, but accessible, clear, and with just enough surprise to tickle my listeners.

What is your songwriting process like?

Depends. I've had lyrics just come pouring out of me as if the songwriting was done subconsciously and I'm just the guy writing it down. Often, I just start playing the guitar and a melody joins in with some words. I quickly capture it on a recorder and

listen the next day at the coffee shop and start writing the rest of the words. With composing (for my musicals or for band/orchestra), I'll just have a melody start in my head (often in the shower at the gym for some reason), and once I start singing it into my recorder it just rolls out seemingly complete. Then all I have to do is write it out and arrange it -- which takes forever. The deal I have with my muse is that I will respond to any signal and just start writing or drawing or making notes, never asking where it's going to lead. Generally, I don't know what the punch line's gonna be until I get to the end.

Being from the Midwest, how does this region appeal to you artistically?

The clear sky allows us to see as far as any humans can across a landscape. The incandescent force of the sun here informs the hard edges and distinct light and shadow in my paintings, and the sheer expanse of what I see engenders a sort of expansiveness in my own soul. The days are glaring and inescapable, but the evenings are soft and perfumed and bring out the moody and pensive sides of me.

How would you describe the local performing arts scene?

The outlets for performance are limited, most especially for music (it's better for theatre). Our talent pool is impressive for its quality and variety, though we lack the depth of talent of a larger city (meaning we've got a lot of great talents, but sort of "one of each"). We self-generate a lot of creative endeavors here without a lot of support from above; a lack of support which I attribute in part to a strong tendency to look outward for art, design and performance instead of a concerted

effort to build our own "sandbox" here to which others will come.

What do you like about performing at the Boba Cabaret?

What I like MOST is that it is a true performance venue: people come there for a show. I'm done playing bars or coffee shops where the performer is generally an annoyance interrupting the real activity people are there for (drinking, talking to their friends). My songs are stories and need to be heard from beginning to end to make sense. Plus I've had the loveliest of audiences there. And that funky little space was made with performers in mind, not as an afterthought.

What can we expect in 2010?

At least one new play (maybe a musical), the new city bus stop, maybe facial hair again, and the symphony premiere in May. Otherwise, my usual output of work as I meander down my creative path. Oh, and I may finally finish the final touches on my life-size Billy the Kid sculpture!



Cabaret Dining 101

The best thing about eating at Boba Cabaret is that you can enjoy everything on the Boba Café regular menu, plus more!

That means all the appetizers, soups, salads, and sandwiches that have made Boba Café such a popular lunch and dinner destination are also available during Dinner Theatre.

In addition, there are some specials offered exclusively for Boba Cabaret patrons.

First, a wide variety of sushi rolls can be ordered as appetizers, such as the california, tempura shrimp, and New Mexico rolls.

For dinner entrees, the delicious Chinese vegetable stir-fry is the special and a very popular dish. It comes with your choice of beef, chicken, or shrimp with a medley of stir-fry vegetables sautéed in your choice of sauces: kung pao (spicy), plum (sweet), or oriental (regular).

Boba Cabaret also offers a wide variety of wines by the glass or bottle, from brands like Kendall Jackson, Avalon, and Kenwood Reserve. Our house red (Black Box merlot) and white (Black Box chardonnay) wines are also available by carafe in liter or half-liter sizes.

Our bottled beer collection ranges from the normal domestics (Bud, Miller, Coors) to common regional selections (Corona, Tecate, Negro Modelo) to premiums (Newcastle, Anchor Steam, Sierra Nevada). On draft we offer Michelob Ultra and Blue Moon.

Ordering at Dinner Theatre is simple. For the cost of the ticket, each person gets one beverage and one entree. For appetizers, it's one for every two people. If a party has an odd number of people, round up. For example, for a party of three, two appetizers are included.

Of course, additional food and beverages are available a la carte, as are all items for the Cocktail Show.

COMING SOON...

"The Waiters Guide To Love"

After a wonderful January of musical performances, Boba Cabaret is switching gears back to performing arts in February with this collection of humorous vignettes focusing on the trials and tribulations people experience on their journey to find that special someone.

"Most people who are looking for love know what a mess it can be," cast member and local theatre veteran Dave Edwards explained. "There are those awkward moments when you first meet.

"You have to be brave to even attempt venturing into the dating world and there are so many ways it can go wrong."

The cast includes Dave and Gail Wheeler as the singles, and Bob Diven, playing the singing waiter and providing his usual eccentric musical touch as a backdrop for many of the show's sketches.

Check out this absolutely hilarious show on Friday and Saturday, February 12-13, & 19-20!



Boba Café
1900 S. Espina St.
Suite #8
575.647.5900
bobacafelc.com

Details, Details

Boba Cabaret takes place in the room adjacent to Boba Café's main room. Shows are Friday and Saturday nights on most weekends, usually with 2 performances each night.

Dinner Theatre costs \$25 per person and covers the show admission, appetizer (one per two people), dinner entree, beverage (beer/wine included), gratuity, and sales tax.

Seating begins at 6 pm, and it is HIGHLY recommended you arrive at that time so that dinner can be served as quickly as possible. The show begins promptly at 7 pm and once it starts, service will no longer be available.

The Cocktail Show costs \$10 per person, with seniors and students (with proper ID) at \$8 per person, and only covers the show admission. Appetizers and beverages are available a la carte.

Seating begins at 8:15 pm, and it is HIGHLY recommended you arrive at that time as the show begins promptly at 8:30 pm. As with Dinner Theatre, once the show begins service will no longer be available.

Reservations are not required but are highly recommended, as shows can sell out fast and tickets are issued on a first come, first serve basis.

If a show is not sold out, walk-ins are acceptable, but, as with reservations, it is HIGHLY recommended you arrive at the applicable seating time.

Upon arrival at the café, please check-in at the front register to receive a ticket so that you are directed to the proper table once seating begins.

Reservations can be made by in person at Boba Café or by calling us at (575) 647-5900.

We look forward to seeing you at the next Boba Cabaret show. And don't forget to tell your friends about the best dining and entertainment value in southern New Mexico.