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MUSIC REVIEW | PETER GALLAGHER

Actor, Star, Singer, Raconteur: Baby, It's Crowded Inside

By [STEPHEN HOLDEN](#)
Published: May 17, 2007

Correction Appended

[Peter Gallagher](#) has the gift of gab. This New York actor, born into the Irish storytelling tradition, spins amusing yarns with an ease that turns the kind of polished after-dinner remarks usually accompanied by brandy and cigars at a black-tie function into yarns swapped by regular guys over beers in the local pub.



Erin Baiano for The New York Times
Familiar names and songs: Peter Gallagher at Feinstein's.

Yes, a few famous names pop up in "Songs and Stories," his auspicious nightclub debut at Feinstein's at the Regency. There is his spot-on imitation of [Dean Martin](#), an early singing idol, crooning a fragment of "Everybody Loves Somebody." And there is his remembrance of a mischievous [Peter O'Toole](#) boasting that the tall tales Mr. Gallagher might have heard about Mr. O'Toole's misadventures with the two Richards (Burton and Harris) were all true.

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But Mr. Gallagher is no name-dropper. Nor is he — as you might expect a performer with matinee-idol looks to be (those eyebrows!) — a vain, preening actor clutching at his fading youth. If anything, Mr. Gallagher, 51, appears delighted to be relieved of pretty-boy duties to play roles like “the cool dad” in “The O.C.” In rebellious teenage minds, he remarks, there is no such thing as a cool parent.

What makes Mr. Gallagher’s gift of gab so special is how naturally it extends to singing. He inhabits a song so comfortably that it flows directly out, a fusion of his own personality and the character he is playing. This talent, which theatrical coaches try to teach but is almost impossible to learn, was the secret behind his thrilling portrayal of Sky Masterson in the 1992 Broadway revival of “Guys and Dolls.”

It also animates his performances of all but one of the show’s dozen numbers, three of which come from “Guys and Dolls.” The only misfire at Tuesday’s opening night show was a perfunctory duet of “Baby, It’s Cold Outside,” sung with guest vocalist Holly Palmer. He is backed by a strong four-member band that includes Bob Thiele Jr. on guitar, Ted Baker on piano, Dan Falzone on bass and Ben Perowsky on drums.

Mr. Gallagher’s singing voice is warm, flexible and unaffected, with keening Irish tenor high notes that he uses sparingly and to powerful expressive effect. When a song demands introspection, Mr. Gallagher goes to its quiet heart without a second thought. There are no layers of masculine defensiveness separating the singer from his material. In “A Song for You,” “Everytime It Rains” and “Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered” he goes straight to the essence, without any melodramatic posturing.

The balance between singing and storytelling in “Songs and Stories,” which continues through June, is about equal. In his next engagement — and please let there be one — I hope he tilts the balance a little more toward song.

Peter Gallagher performs at Feinstein’s at the Regency through June 2; 540 Park Avenue, (212) 339-4095.

Correction: May 18, 2007

A music review in The Arts yesterday about Peter Gallagher’s nightclub debut, at Feinstein’s at the Regency, misstated the closing

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date of his engagement. It ends June 2, not tonight.

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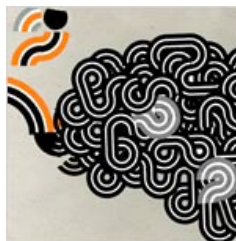
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