



STAR STAFF PHOTO

Tony Bennett captivates crowd at Indiana Roof opening.

## Bennett wows fans at the Indiana Roof

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STAR STAFF WRITER

As he promised in a recent interview, Tony Bennett set a most enjoyable (and danceable) pace for the grand opening of the Indiana Roof Ballroom Friday night.

Joined on stage by the Ralph Sharon trio and the Al Cobine Orchestra, the latter an ensemble from Indianapolis, Bennett performed a delightful 70-minute set before 615 patrons whose presence and financial support helped benefit the Indiana Repertory Theatre.

Opening with *S'Wonderful* and *The Girl I Love*, Bennett delighted fans, many of whom clearly remembered him from previous performances at the Roof.

Bennett concentrated on romantic ballads that were a dream to dance to. Indeed, he often encouraged fans to sway under the magnificent starlit ceiling of the Roof.

"What about this ballroom? Is this something else?" exclaimed the 60-year-old crooner as patrons applauded in agreement. "This is marvelous!"

Indeed it is. The Indiana Roof is a true jewel, a place where folks can get dressed to the nines and really have an elegant evening.

Sound quality was reasonably good for opening night, though we suspect it will be even better when the room gets more use. Bennett, who recently expressed his desire to become an even better singer as he grows older, certainly sounded swell.

Bennett performed a number of selections from his superb new album, *The Art of Excellence*, including his favorite Irving Berlin song, *I Got Lost in Her Arms*.

Other tunes performed from the album included *City of the Angels*, written by Fred Astaire (to whom Bennett dedicated a lovely medley of Astaire dance

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classics), *Everybody Has the Blues* and *Why Do People Fall in Love?*, the latter of which he saved to close his performance.

In general, Bennett seemed as delighted with the evening as his fans. He beamed as they took the floor on songs like *When You Wish Upon a Star* and *Just in Time*.

"I want people to dance! C'mon, dance when I sing," he said, encouraging the sitters to leave their elegantly appointed tables.

Bennett wound down his set with a romantic teaming of *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* and *I Wanna Be Around*, but was called back to the stage for encores.

Standing before a large screen, on which was projected a selection of his striking paintings, Bennett sang *From This Moment On* and *Why Do People Fall in Love?* Gentleman that he is, Bennett paused to shake hands with as many fans as he could reach before leaving the stage.

The show was opened by the Nylons, a Canadian *a capella* quartet. The group that has dazzled this writer on vinyl lacked the spirit (and interest) necessary to captivate the primarily older audience, most of whom seemed more puzzled than entertained.

Still, the Nylons displayed extraordinary vocal expertise. Songs like *Silhouettes*, *Up on the Roof* and, most notably, *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* proved the Nylons can hit the harmonies with the best of them.

As wonderful a place as the Indiana Roof is, its success will depend largely on the support of the city. We heartily urge music and dance lovers to visit this terrific new addition to the city's ever-growing list of exceptional night spots.