



Divas Belting It Out

Even Broadway stars like to show off at parties. The difference is, when they do it, they bring sheet music so that top musicians can accompany them live...and about 250 people show up to listen. At least that's the case at **JIM CARUSO'S CAST PARTY** (Birdland, 315 West 44 Street, NYC, Mondays at 9:30pm), a daffy, joyous night of music and jokes that spontaneously erupts every Monday night (the dark night for most Broadway shows.) Along with the Broadway types, both known and wannabe, are top talents from the worlds of jazz, cabaret and pop music. (When I was last there, an inventive, awesomely synchronized a capella quartet performed.)

Jim Caruso, the host, is hilarious – an affable guy who reminds me of a modern-day Paul Lynde. He keeps the show moving, deciding who gets to sing. The tension in the room is palpable just before the next name is announced. You'll likely

meet some showbiz types while there. Last time I went, I saw at the bar next to a would-be jazz singer who squealed with delight when Marilyn Maye took the mic. (When I asked who she was, my neighbor said with indignation "Who's Marilyn Maye? Why she appeared on The Tonight Show more times than any other singer!") Along with Maye, an actor who played Tony in the original "West Side Story" sang a duet with his daughter, famed cabaret performer Billy Stritch tickled the ivories, and a whole host of folks made a very good case that they should indeed have careers in showbiz.

It feels like a combo of the ultimate insider's night and the best cocktail party you've ever been to. Best of all, it's an adrenaline rush thinking, "Should I?" If you've got the courage (and the sheet music), you could get up and sing, too!