

Tubs

Rare breed

man of many moods performs on Hanover St.

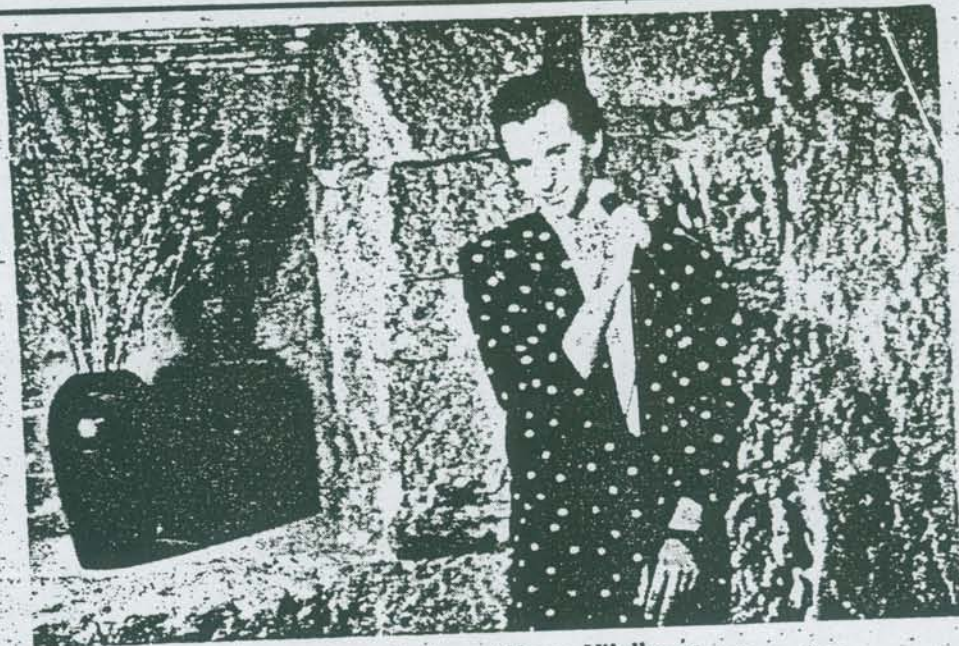
Joe Bovenzi

Alfonso Vilallonga
The Cabaret Rose,
Theatre Lobby at Hanover St.,
Boston, in an open-ended run.

Do you like Kurt Weill songs, Spanish guitar, Edith Piaf, Django Reinhardt's jazz violin, Marlene Dietrich, Billy Crystal's humor? If you've answered "Yes" to any two of the above, you'll like Alfonso Vilallonga, a Spanish cabaret singer of great versatility. To be even more accurate in describing his influences, I'll throw in Spike Jones' zany jazz improvisations, Chevalier's suave manner, and Joel Grey's y depravity.

Best of all is the fact that Alfonso is his own creation: a smooth, appealing male cabaret singer—a rare breed. For those of you who prefer to see and hear women on stage, give Alfonso a chance. He's sensitive but not campy; he's confident and powerful without being macho or as Vegas-slick. He's wonderfully mischievous at times, too.

Early in the evening, a conventional cabaret ambience was established with renditions of Weill's "Bilbao Song" and Piaf's "La Vie en Rose." Standing, Alfonso is sleek and androgynous—all sinuous hips, upraised arms, and arched eyebrows. But when he sits and plays guitar on "La Vie," he becomes more the Latin troubadour—lyrical and masculine in a gentle way. This duality is appealing in



Latin troubadour Alfonso Vilallonga

its fluidity—not a ploy, but equal facets of a sophisticated personality.

An initially unsettling aspect of the show was the Spike Jones component: a fine band (Cabaret Rose) occasionally and intentionally played off-key and made mock in some songs of Alfonso's pseudo-serious tone. But once I got used to this twist, the band's retorts made for great fun in songs like "Just a Gigolo" and "My Friend & I" (a Vilallonga composition that features the blasé refrain "Let's go out once, just once").

Not too seriously

Many cabaret singers take themselves far too seriously. Not this bunch! After acknowledging the recent passing of Irving Berlin, they proceeded to pay tribute with a Cole Porter song, "Let's Misbehave," complete with "Peter & the Wolf" riff on the piano.

Just when I thought I had Alfonso pegged, he shifted gears completely. His most interesting and complex song was "I'm on the Edge" (and so are you), which describes "a world of yellow pills & gin."

Staring unblinkingly at the audience, Alfonso confessed, "I'm more dangerous than you think." I believe him! This song took the show to a higher plane, but not irrevocably. His next song, "Dancing a Little Waltz with Danger," was tongue-in-cheek ("I don't want to go to hell in my bathing suit!"). Once again, a masterful change of mood.

For a final tribute to Piaf, Alfonso put on a single starburst earring and belted out "Milord," a fine display of his vocal power and dramatic range. Two encores followed, capping a generous 16-song evening.

A word about the Theatre Lobby: this European-style performance space is stylish, intimate, and perfect for cabaret and a light meal. Valet parking is available. ▼

SAV WINDS
October 11th 81

Globe October 11, 1981

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— Boston Globe
"THE CABARET KING!" — Friedman/Herald

"DANGEROUS!"

— Boston Globe
"THE CABARET KING!" — Friedman/Herald

"MAGICAL!..."

THE CABARET KING! — Friedman/H.

ALFONSO VILALLONGA