

For Kimpton's Andrew Freeman, life is a cabaret.

BY CHARLES BERNSTEIN



The Music Man

The showbiz bug first bit Andrew Freeman in the early 1970s, when he played the role of "The Mighty Germ" in a sixth-grade play. "I've got to admit that I wowed the crowd in that one," he says.

Yet even before that, the vice president of marketing for San Francisco-based Kimpton's Restaurants grew up with music. "My mother, the late Gerry Freeman, would grab me and dance with me all around the house to the ballroom music of Ella Fitzgerald and Doris Day when I was only four years old. My mother was so passionate about music and the arts that she drilled it into me, and I loved it."

By the time Freeman was a teenager, his love of musical theatrics was turning into an immense passion. Name any song, then or now, and "I could tell you who sang it, what show and when."

There's No Business Like Show Business

Somehow at age 16, he was the youngest Teyve ever in the acclaimed *Fiddler on the Roof* Broadway show. And "fake facial hair was a must for me in that show," he fondly recalls.

As he matured through Passaic High School in New Jersey and Montclair State

University, he sang a lot, both as an amateur and semi-professional. He also found time for two or three shows annually.

While at Montclair, Freeman waited on tables and became "a starving actor." He decided he didn't want to be a waiter and made it his business to "learn a lot about the restaurant business." He switched his major from theater arts to marketing. "Although my passion for the restaurant business increased," he says, "I never gave up my love of the arts, movies, show music and the wonderful world of cabaret."


Combining his talents, Freeman became an artist book-er and promoter for cabaret

rooms at New York's Russian Tea Room and Rainbow Room. "I got to work with stars like Rosemary Clooney, Cybill Shepherd, Tony Danza, Anita O'Day, Maureen McGovern and so many others," he emphasizes. "I really was in heaven."

Let Me Entertain You

Nowadays, when he isn't focusing on the marketing of Kimpton's 32 restaurants, Freeman volunteers at the Richmond Ermet AIDS Foundation, which produces San Francisco's largest musical event to provide relief for people living with AIDS. He also spends time at Kimpton's Harry Denton's Starlight Room, where the orchestra plays big band tunes nightly.

"I still sing—mostly in the shower or in bad karaoke bars," he says. But on special occasions, he will get up in a piano bar and belt out a tune. The 40-year-old admits to being "a big ham."

Freeman's ambition is to have a small dinner-club theater where he can "bring talent and great food and drink together." When it comes to working, his theatrical passion works in his favor. "After all, the restaurant business is so much like the theater," he observes. "When the doors open, it's showtime." 

Andrew Freeman listens to big band tunes at Harry Denton's Starlight Room, one of his favorite spots.