

THE MAN

Michael Dutra is a man living a very large dream. After just four short years as a professional in the entertainment industry, he takes to the stage more than 300 nights per year, stunning audiences along the East Coast with his dead-on renditions of Frank Sinatra classics.

Though he's had no formal voice coaching whatsoever, Dutra sounds uncannily like the late great crooner Sinatra himself. "I've just always loved to sing," Dutra says, recalling his childhood years singing gospel in Pentecostal church services. From the time he was about eight years old, growing up in East Providence (RI), Dutra absorbed his father's fascination and fondness for Sinatra's sophisticated tunes. "We'd go to the store together to buy new lyric sheets, and I just learned the melodies by ear," he explains. Later in life, he operated a string of small businesses, but the thrill of music never left. He found his outlet singing informally for family functions. "And I was at karaoke bars almost every night!" he admits. "Singing is just what I love to do."

Then in 2002, his mother died suddenly. "I felt such regret that she never got to do some things she really wanted to do," Dutra says. "I determined right then I wouldn't share that sense of regret. I risked everything and turned to making music full-time." That turned out to be *A Very Good Year*...

The bet paid off handsomely, as Dutra performs in venues from Maine to Florida all year long. Bookings develop entirely by word of mouth among devoted fans. With gigs from Portland (ME) to Miami (FL) to Las Vegas (NV), impressive press clippings document Dutra's growing reputation as a headliner.* A resident of both Uxbridge (MA) and Naples (FL), Dutra, his wife, two grown children and three grandchildren enjoy living *The Good Life*. And, at 48 years of age, Dutra is certainly *Young at Heart*.

THE MUSIC

Michael Dutra's songbook offers infinite variety. "Sinatra sang more than 2400 songs," Dutra marvels, "and my repertoire features at least 500 of those." He finds that *My Way* and *Summer Wind* are runaway favorites with audiences everywhere. "Vocally, *My Way* is a killer," he smiles, "but I do it anyway since that's what people want to hear. I work from Nelson Riddle arrangements – the best there is – and I've had the honor of performing with musicians who actually played with Frank back in the day. Authentic tracks elevate the performance immeasurably."

Like the master himself, Dutra claims to be "musically illiterate. Frank couldn't read music or play any instrument and neither can I. But a good ear and interpretation are everything. And, like Frank, I've learned to surround myself with the very best talents in the business. Their brilliance and skill make me sound even better." That's professionalism, not *Witchcraft*.

Dutra is generous with praise for frequent partners in his "Rat Pack" vignette. The set recreates 1966 at the glittering Sands Hotel. The Sammy Davis character is played by Manny Barros [who has opened shows for Barry White and Jeffrey Osborne]. The Dean

Martin role is portrayed by Steven Palumbo [who holds motion picture and miniseries credits]. Lounge favorite Jen Mainelli adds class and female sensibility to the group's retro "Rat Park" tribute.

With or without the back-up ensemble, Dutra's channeling of seductive Sinatra classics makes him a regular on the lounge circuit in New England. Many venues host a weekly *Strictly Sinatra* engagement, and a loyal following enjoys the mesmerizing show. Fans also purchase Dutra CDs to spin out the spell at home. (www.strictlysinatranow.com)

THE MAGIC

Like the moody *Nearness of You*, Dutra's show wraps its arms around listeners. Wearing Sinatra's signature fedora, bathed in expressive stage lighting, and singing his heart out at a vintage microphone, Dutra brings a luxurious supper-club elegance to any venue. He headlines at private social events such as weddings and birthday parties, and electrifies music aficionados in concerts and jazz clubs. For corporate clients, too, he delivers a high-energy show. Commanding the spotlight for two to three hours in each performance, Dutra says "It's wildly exciting to sing for 1000, surrounded by a live band, backed by top-notch sound and lighting technicians, and reflected on a 60-foot television screen! That's a *Fly Me to the Moon* thrill, as when I sang for a worldwide conference on Sanibel Island (FL). But I get as much satisfaction, maybe more, from singing soul-to-soul in a much more intimate situation, such as Camille's on the Hill in Providence (RI). It's a very romantic little Italian restaurant where I can make every song personal for each guest." *The Shadow of Your Smile* comes alive in those veiled moments.

Dutra performs with a live band "not often enough" but whenever a booking's budget permits. "I have tremendous respect for trained musicians," he says. "It's always a great collaboration." For modest jobs, Dutra's a stylish, convenient, and self-contained package. The hands-on presenter indicates his portable speakers on stands, trademark microphone, laptop computer loaded with Sinatra selections, and versatile mixing board.

"The real trick is just in my voice, which blessedly sounds so much like Frank's. Older audience members just can't believe the similarity. They love to tell me they heard Frank perform live somewhere in the 50s or 60s. But I find younger listeners are just as passionate about the music, and quite well educated about Sinatra's catalog. I enjoy trading stories with both groups." True validation for Dutra comes through individual testimony. "Buddy Cianci [former mayor of Providence] had tears in his eyes when he heard me sing," relates Dutra. "He'd been friends with Frank, stayed at his house, and hosted him in restaurants many times. My show mannerisms and song phrasing struck him as remarkably accurate." Dutra also says he had the honor of meeting Frank Sinatra, Jr. once, and earned his blessing as well.

Dutra is tickled by a stroke of serendipity that has him sharing a birthday with the Chairman of the Board. "Frank Sinatra was born on December 12th, 1915," he says proudly, "and I was born on the same date in 1958!" The commonality seems anything but commonplace to Dutra. Does it mean anything – who knows *Where or When?* But in Dutra's heart, *Once Upon a Time* the musical stars aligned.

- Wesley Morris of **The Boston Globe** writes: *“Dutra's charm is old-school, a mix of flattery, self-deprecation, and innocence. He's the Bizarro Sinatra. From twenty feet away, the impersonation is disarming. Dutra is velour to Sinatra's Velvet.”*
- Ron Della Chiesa, music guru and **WPLM-FM 99.1** host says: *“Michael's Sinatra performance is outstanding. His rendition of the Sinatra sound is phenomenal, is superb, it flows. Keep swinging, Mike!”*