

CABARET REVIEW

The Genes Aside, Freddy Cole Fills Nobody's Sho

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

Freddy Cole has the mixed blessing of being the younger brother (by 12 years) of a legend, Nat (King) Cole, whose reputation has steadily grown since his death 40 years ago from lung cancer. Because the younger brother (now 73), like his older sibling, plays the piano and sings in an easygoing lounge style that hovers on the borders of jazz, blues and pop, comparisons are inevitable. But as he declared in a song on Thursday evening at Au Bar, where he and his trio are performing a tribute to Nat (King) Cole through June 12, "I am not my brother/I'm me." The song goes on to say, "I'm not trying to fill nobody's shoes/ My brother made a whole lot of money/ I sing the blues."

And indeed Mr. Cole is his own man. Despite the genetic connection and a repertory for this engagement

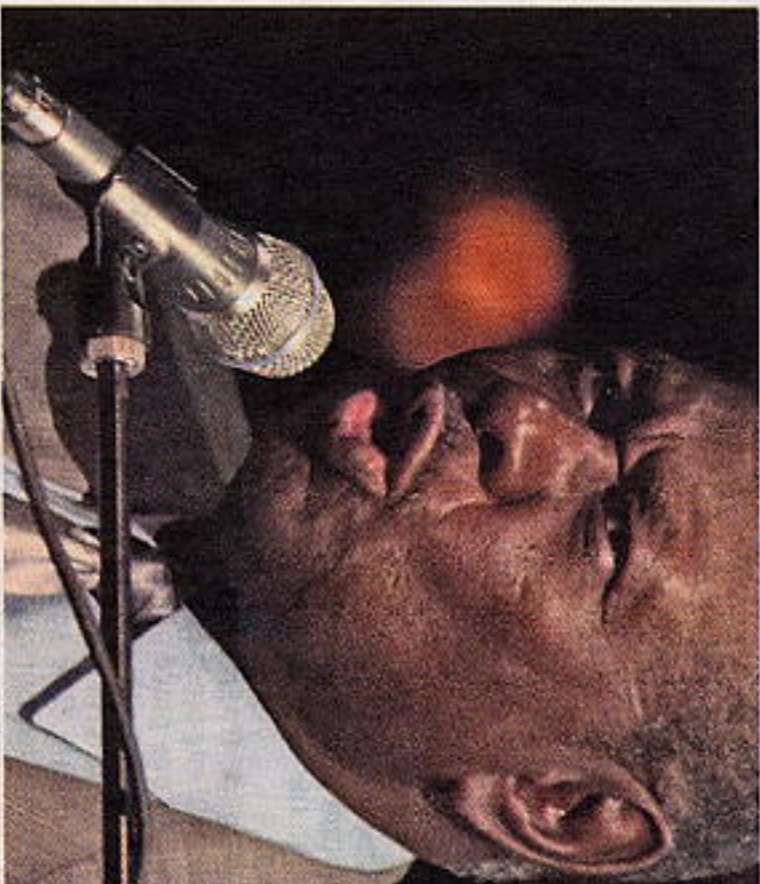
Freddy Cole performs at Au Bar in a tribute to Nat (King) Cole through June 12.

Freddy Cole Au Bar

that encompasses many of his brother's signature songs, Freddy Cole does not strive toward the immaculate vocal production and elegance of a classic crooner. His singing never conjures the image of a courtly lover in formal dress, waving a sheaf of poetry and mouthing sweet nothings to a sweetheart in the rose garden on prom night.

The blues are embedded in singing that refuses to smooth out the voice's rougher edges. That element is most pronounced in Mr. Cole's growled, dropped-off phrase endings. This grainier texture lends his mostly quiet singing a steady emotional weight. When he sings the ballad "Never Let Me Go," what you notice is not the flowery declaration but the undertone of worry conveyed in the half-murmured words, "You couldn't hurt me, could you?"

Mr. Cole is accompanied by Jerry Byrd on guitar, Curtis Boyd on



Justin Schlieper for T

Freddy Cole at Au Bar sings on the borders of jazz, blues and drums and Zachary Pride on bass, an ensemble that makes a heavier sound than his brother's famous trio. Among the songs scattered among the chestnuts on Thursday was Mr. Cole's original "Home toes," his answer to his lifelong hit "Frim Fram Sa ference between potato fram says it all.

NY

oes



er for The New York Times
s and pop.

ome Fried Pota-
his brother's fan-
m Sauce." The dif-
otatoes and frim-

NY TIMES 6-1-05