

Laughs and Vocals With DOUBLE TROUBLE at Don't Tell Mama

The Bubblin' Blonde from Babylon plays her crazy quilt of a cabaret one final time... for now.

By: [Stephen Mosher](#) Jan. 22, 2026



Legend tells the tale of a star who conquered show business during the first half of the last century, a comedic force of nature with a knack for singing torch songs that would break the heart. During the second half of the last century, the legend gave rise to another legend who is still conquering the business today, by way of a Broadway biography that audiences still celebrate. Those two funny girls were [Fanny Brice](#) and [Barbra Streisand](#), but it is Ms. Streisand's replacement in the musical, on the Great White Way, who was on my mind on Sunday night when I attended Debi Toni's musical cabaret DOUBLE TROUBLE. Said replacement was [Mimi Hines](#), who was a

GENUINELY funny girl and a heart stoppingly great singer who played nightclub circuit in the sixties, when people did club acts more than cabarets or concerts, and there is an actual distinction between the three. The sixties was a wonderful era in nightlife when a person could find any variety of entertainment on the stage, a veritable smorgasbord of programming from singers to dancers, from strippers to ventriloquists, from magicians to comics, and a big part of that time in our history was the women who did face-pulling sketch comedy and Broadway belting in the same club act. There were women like [Kaye Ballard](#), [Bea Arthur](#), [Pat Carroll](#), [Alice Ghostley](#), Totie Fields, [Imogene Coca](#), [Elaine May](#), and, of course, [Mimi Hines](#). They were, each and every one of them, special and unique and wonderful. And even though the era when those comedic songbirds is mostly a joyful memory for many, those types of talents still tread the boards of the cabarets and clubs, only in fewer numbers.

Well, New York City has a new name to add to that list.



Debi Toni has been playing her show DOUBLE TROUBLE for a while now (using a descriptive subtitle “The Bubblin’ Blonde From Babylon”) and this writer was lucky enough to get an invite to her closing performance, sad that it was the closing night and any amount of praise in print could have no effect on the previous presentations, which it might have because, had I known about the show sooner, I would have encouraged people to get a ticket since Debi Toni is more than double trouble, she is double delightful. The subtitle is not wrong, by the way, she is bubbly and she is blonde and her accent could place her in Babylon but it could also place her in Brooklyn or The Bronx - Debi Toni is a New Yorker, and it shows in her cadence, her carriage, and her character. With her quirky sense of humor and powerful singing voice, she has used Double Trouble to announce herself in the cabaret and concert season of 2025/2026. She has made

a big noise and a big splash, and here's hoping many of her newfound friends and colleagues will make way for her with welcoming arms. Toni has done some drive-bys in the business in 1986 and 2018 but this is her return to Manhattan and the club scene, and she's going to fit right in. This is Toni's time.



For her hour-long crazy quilt of a show, madcap and marvelous Debi Toni has wrapped the stories of her personal and professional lives up in songs that give her a chance to showcase the wonderful gift of versatility. Whether delivering good old-fashioned park and bark belt ("Don't Rain on My Parade"), expertly-timed comedy numbers ("Air

Conditioner”), sweet-voiced pop music (evening highlight “Could We Be Magic”), authentic torch (an impressive “Lover Man”), or classic American Songbook material like “How Deep Is The Ocean” (meticulously melded with Broadway tune “On My Own”), Debi Toni has the chops to deliver, and deliver, she does. Lovingly guided by Director [Jane Seaman](#) and diligently protected by Musical Director [Douglas J. Cohen](#), Debi doesn’t make an extraneous use of the stage in Don’t Tell Mama’s Brick Room. She keeps it (mostly) put at center stage, whether standing or sitting, with occasional trips over to the piano to nestle into the bentside for a ballad or throw a wink at Mr. Cohen, but she always returns center stage to talk to her audience. And although her show is crafted as a piece of theater (a sometimes tangential piece of theater), Debi does talk right to the audience, which rather encourages them to talk back, something that could throw other entertainers, but that phases Toni not even the slightest, which is to her benefit. The script is designed for Debi to tell her stories, and the conversational aspect of it makes the stories relatable, to an extent. They are, after all, her stories and quite unique to her life. There are stories about her parents and stories about her childhood, stories about her acting career and stories about her lovelife, there are even stories about the critters she loves so much (and you have to love someone who loves the critters), and all of them told with her rim shot style of comic timing (indeed, a drummer onstage could come in handy for her delicious yuk-yuk series of groaner jokes). It is a studied performance of a type of musical comedy cabaret that audiences still need, maybe even more, these days. The show is populated with a slide show to help audiences along with visuals of family members, younger versions of Debi, and some general visuals to aid in the stories. The slides are nice at times and distracting at others, and their presence in the program might be a topic worth revisiting for Toni and Seaman. Debi is enough - she doesn’t need the frills. The same goes for some props whose

attempted use became complicated when the inanimate objects didn't want to cooperate. Toni is funny and "Miss Byrd" is funny - the props were superfluous flotsam and jetsam, but the performance excelled, in the vocals and the acting.



And Debi Toni is up there acting. Her background in theater is showing like a set of comedy/tragedy masks. Thanks to her eclectic song selection, her skills as actress, storyteller, comic and singer, and Cohen's arrangements, Toni is given every opportunity to show her range, with standouts like a touching "I Still Believe In Love," the aforementioned "Could We Be Magic," and an extensive jazz treatment that featured the songs "Summertime" and "Pure Imagination," with

some “swinging” songs built in. This is a nice return to the New York nightclub stage for Debi Toni, and if everyone is lucky, a return upon which she will build. She is warm, she is hilarious, she is individual, and she is possessing of a voice that is a genuine pleasure to listen to. As the lights came up after her January 18th performance, my date for the evening remarked on HOW GOOD (!) Toni is, and my honest reply was, “I am really surprised by her - and it is **very** rare for me to be surprised.” Everyone should look Debi Toni up the next time she’s appearing in town (in any town) and go get their selves surprised.



Visit the Debi Toni website [HERE](#).

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Photos by Stephen Mosher





















