

June 3, 2015

## Alan Cumming Sings Sappy Songs – an intimate evening with dirty jokes

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### Café Carlyle, New York

The actor brought a hedonistic vibe to the swanky Upper East Side venue, covering songs from Noël Coward to Miley Cyrus



📷 Alan Cumming: designed to make patrons clutch their pearls. Photograph: Michael Wilhoite/Supplied

The Café Carlyle, a cozy New York nostalgia den where the likes of Woody Allen, Jeff Goldblum, and [Molly Ringwald perform](#) intimate shows for the city's most well-to-do, is very much a Classy Establishment. It's also very much an Establishment Establishment.

And then [Alan Cumming](#) began his two-week engagement on Tuesday and that all went to hell.

Cumming, currently seen in *The Good Wife* as Eli Gold, is fresh off a Broadway revival of *Cabaret* at [Studio 54](#). He brought a touch of that hedonistic vibe uptown on Tuesday night, temporarily rechristening the joint "Club Cumming" with a vibrant neon sign whose fuchsia glow overpowered all the stuffy little fringe lamps that illuminated diners' tables.



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In the relaxed spirit of Club Cumming, he removed his blazer early into his act, revealing a fitted, sleeveless black button-up shirt and skinny leather tie beneath. With his short, spiky haircut, he looked like a refined elder statesman of the punk era. Or a male stripper about to begin his routine. Either way, he owned it.

In fact, everything he did seemed to be designed to make the cafe's patrons clutch their pearls, both literally and figuratively.

But even more daring than the sex and drugs were Cumming's jokes about class.

As is requisite at Café Carlyle, there was a great deal of celebrity-audience banter. But when he asked how many people had heard of *The Threepenny Opera*, there was only a light smattering of applause. Cumming didn't miss a beat.

"Now you know what it feels like to be in a minority," he said.

And, in one final act of admirable gall, he chose for his encore *The Ladies Who Lunch*, Stephen Sondheim's ode to the ennui of New York's wealthiest women.

But at this point, Cumming had been so successful in establishing a connection with the audience – sharing stories of his most emotionally harrowing moments and singing sentimental tunes to match – that this ribbing was received as one would a barb from a notoriously mischievous friend.

All in all, it was truly an evening of intimacy at Club Cumming.