

The Capital

ONLINE ▾



[Top Stories](#) | [Search](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Archives](#) | [Local Directory](#) | [Subscriptions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Poll](#)
[Site Map](#) | [Home](#) | [Sports](#) | [Police Beat](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Lively Events](#) | [Pets](#) | [Neighborhoods](#)

Contents? Click! ▾

Lifestyle

[2002 Calendar](#)
[Lively Events calendar](#)



Local man's creative songwriting pays off

By THERESA WINSLOW, Staff Writer

Like just about every songwriter, Joe Thompson draws inspiration from everyday sources: leftover tuna casserole, hiccups and pirates that lurk in the bathroom.

Well, maybe not every songwriter.

But the Annapolis resident's sense of wonder and whimsy paid off recently in the form of awards on two different coasts.

He won gold in the children's category at the 18th annual Mid-Atlantic Song Contest, performing "P.U." at a ceremony in November at the Hard Rock Cafe in Washington, D.C.

He also won two awards in the Just Plain Folks contest, taking first place in the children's category for "Pirates in the Bath" and second in the best children's album category for his first CD, "Every Kind of Magic." He was invited to perform at that ceremony, too, but it was held in Los Angeles the same weekend as the Washington gala.

"He's just kind of a neat, imaginative guy," said Norma Byron, director of the Mid-Atlantic contest, which is sponsored by the Songwriters' Association of Washington. "I know the lady that judged the children's category thought he was head and shoulders above the rest."

Ms. Byron said the litmus test was that the judge played "P.U." (the ballad featuring the foul-smelling casserole) for her children "and they didn't stop singing it for three days."

When he's not performing, Mr. Thompson, 48, works as a graphic artist for the county Board of Education. He is also the creator of "Cabaret for



By Mark M. Odell - The Capital

Balladeer Joe Thompson strums a tune for his 9-year-old twins, Martin and Leslie.

Kids," which concluded its fourth summer of shows in August. His 9-year-old twins, Martin and Leslie, had parts in the show, and his wife, Susie, a former county kindergarten teacher, was the assistant director.

"He's so magical, musical and wonderful," said Laurie Berman of Annapolis, whose two sons, Alexander, 8, and Sam, 5, were in the kids cabaret.

"We just think he's amazing, and our children think Joe is amazing, too. I've referred to him as 'The Magic Man.' He's magical with the children." Child's play

At the Thompson home, which resembles a Spanish fortress from the outside, fun is the recipe for the day as Mr. Thompson talks about how he began playing music while the twins hover nearby, smiling.

He started playing the guitar at age 16 to get a part in a Colonial Players show. He told the director of the local amateur theater group he knew how to play even though he didn't. He got the role anyway.

Mr. Thompson says many of his songs start out as poems. He writes "adult" songs too, but has certainly found a niche with his children's music.

"In many ways, I don't consider them children's songs," he said. "They're people songs; songs explaining the things kids are more in touch with, imagination and fun."

As he strums "P.U." on the guitar, Martin and Leslie sing along.

In the deepest darkest part of my refrigerator

Where I keep the leftovers I think that I'll eat later

Behind the mayonnaise, ketchup and the mustard oh so hot

Was a bit of tuna casserole I guess that I forgot

At first it turned to yellow

Then it turned to green

Then it turned a kind of fuchsia purple tangerine

Then it started growing hair and about then I should think

Is the time that casserole started in to stink ...

Mr. Thompson said he was thrilled but a little nervous taking the stage at the Hard Rock Cafe, which is usually reserved for harder-edged music.

"Everybody in the restaurant was sort of looking," he said. "(But) everybody ... sang along in the right parts."

In fact, Mrs. Thompson said she heard the waiters humming "P.U." long after her husband left the stage. He used to try out his songs in front of her kindergartners.

Daughter Leslie said she was proud of her dad's performance, if a bit embarrassed by how he led into it. Mr. Thompson began his performance by talking to the audience about the senses of humor and smell, and related a story about cleaning dog doo off his daughter's shoes.

"He's always struck me as the funniest, most brilliantly talented guy I've known," said Jeff Holland, a longtime friend and performer in his own right with the duo Them Eastport Oyster Boys. "He's a funny, funny guy. Just an all around Renaissance guy."

Mrs. Thompson said she was thrilled when her husband played at the Hard Rock Cafe. When asked if the family's refrigerator was the inspiration for "P.U.," she replied, "I hope not, although the tuna casserole sounds familiar!"

For more information on Mr. Thompson and his music, check out his Web site, www.imaginesongs.com.

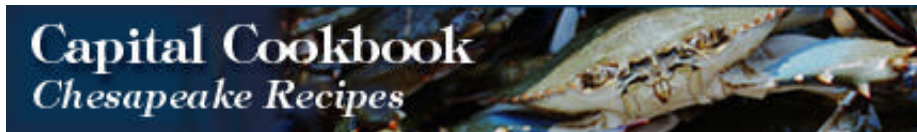
twinslow@capitalgazette.com

[Next Lifestyle story](#)

[Lifestyle Page](#)

[Top Stories Page](#)

*Published January 03, 2002, [The Capital](#), Annapolis, Md.
Copyright © 2002 [The Capital](#), Annapolis, Md.*



[Top Stories](#) | [Search](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Archive](#) | [Local Directory](#) | [Personals](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Poll Index](#) | [Home](#) | [Sports](#) | [Police Beat](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Lively Events](#) | [Neighborhoods](#)

Copyright © 2002 [The Capital](#)