

Songwriter walks a winding road to success

By Susan Tuz

The News-Times

Bob Levy is a man whose dreams have come true.

An accomplished songwriter, he had his first full CD, "Out In The Cold," issued in September. And has garnered numerous awards from prominent music venues, including honorable mention in the VH1 Song Of The Year for 2006 jazz category.

Levy recently started a collaboration with Australian-born singer-songwriter Karen Jacobsen, who recently opened for Three Dog Night at the Ridgefield Playhouse. He is also working with Boston-based jazz writer Harriet Goldberg.

For Levy, reaching these levels with his music is a dream come true.

"It was my dream to be a songwriter since I was in high school," said Levy, 62. "I wrote a musical while going to the High School of Music & Art in New York City.

I still remember the melodies from when I wrote it in the 1960s."

At 21, Levy had had two songs recorded by Mercury Records.

But after his son, David, was

born, and Levy and his wife divorced, raising David became his priority.

He took a job with Hallmark as a store designer in 1967 and worked for that company for 28 years.

"I always said that if I could retire early from Hallmark, I would go back to writing music," Levy said.

Then a buyout from Hallmark 12 years ago made that possible.

Levy started writing country songs. He collaborated with many artists and had a song he had written in 1971 for his son titled "Innocent Little One," recorded by country-singer Christian Ramsey in 2002.

"It gave legitimacy to what I was doing," Levy said. "I could say I was a published songwriter."

Levy has recently formed his own publishing company, Silk River Music. And returned to his jazz roots with the CD, "Out In The Cold," with songs sung by new jazz vocalist Perry Danos joined by jazz singers Shelly Miller and Dane Vannatter.

"I started writing 'Out In The Cold' when my mother died," Levy said. "I wrote the song 'What Do I Do Now?' for her. I wanted the song to be a general one about loss. It was my first jazz song since 1968."

While Levy enjoys collaborating, writing both the lyrics and melodies for the songs on "Out In The Cold" was an joy for him.

"Everytime I come up with a song's lyrics there's always a melody in my head along with them," Levy said. "It always comes to me as a complete song. This CD tells me my instincts are good and that I understand by lyrics better than anybody else."



Bob Levy recently released his first CD, "Out in the Cold."

Vannatter, who was chosen Backstage Magazine's 2006 Bistro Award winner, likens Levy's songs on this CD as being like (Duke) Ellington songs and "harkening back to the classical Great American Songbook, when melodies were strong and lyrics caressed the notes."

For Vannatter, the songs on this CD are "sweet and simple but not simple-minded."

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- "Out In The Cold" is available at the Web site CDBaby and www.sillkrivermusic.com. It will soon be available soon at Amazon.com.