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Urban Folk and Jazz Artist KJ Denhert performs at the Triple Hill Music Festival Concert in Mt. Vernon

By Deena Parham

Ossining resident KJ Denhert, and her band, fresh off of an appearance in Germany, performed at the Doles Center on May 3. The free community concert was part of the Triple Hill Music Festival. Musicians Mamadou Ba (bass), John Caban (guitar), Ray Levier (drums), and Peter Vitalone (keyboards), joined Denhert at the event.

Denhert, whose music incorporates an eclectic blend of jazz, folk, bossa nova, funk, r & b, rock, and soul among its many genres, has recently been invited to play at Italy's prestigious Umbria Jazz Festival for the third time in July. When introducing the singer, guitarist, and songwriter, Jonathan Mann of the Westchester Arts Council said, "Her energy and style is all her own."

Donna Jackson, the Creative Director of the Triple Hill Music Festival, suggested Denhert for the artist roster. Jackson stated, "I saw KJ two years ago and I was an immediate fan."

Denhert and the band played a dynamic ninety-minute, eight song improvisational set that included several tracks from her upcoming album, *Lucky 7*. Although there was a small turnout for this extraordinary event, the outward enthusiasm from the audience made Denhert comment, "It's beginning to sound like a stadium in here. I like to call this a rather intimate house."

One of the show's many highlights was Denhert's overwhelming charisma, as she adeptly showcased her gifted songwriting ability, and explained the meaning behind each of her songs. The interactive nature of her storytelling drew the audience in, and they never let go. Before playing a song called "Beautiful", she said, "This song is a journey through the stories of who I am, and who we are."

Denhert, a Bronx native, whose parents were from Grenada, named several of her musical influences, which are reflected in her songwriting. She stated, "I listened to Dave Brubeck, Sergio Mendes, and later Joni Mitchell and James Taylor. In the song 'What's My Name?' We will travel from Brazil to Detroit back to Castle Hill in the Bronx."

Before the concert's conclusion, Denhert and the band performed a song called "Rivera" in honor of artist Diego Rivera. Denhert said Rivera inspired her because "His sacrifice and passion were true, and were the ingredients for life."

Denhert introduced the talented musicians, who have performed with her for more than 10 years. Before leaving the stage, Denhert gave thanks to Donna Jackson, for inviting her to perform, and praised her tremendous efforts for making the Triple Hill Music Festival a reality.

The Triple Hill Music Festival is a project of the Westchester Arts Council, with \$115,000 in grant funding from the New York State Music Fund. Jackson, the festival's Creative Director, had the idea for the music

festival to expose the community to a variety of musical genres in venues throughout the city. Other sources of support include, the City of Mount Vernon, Fleetwood Neighborhood Association, the Mount Vernon Public Library, the Boys Clubs of Mount Vernon, and the Mount Vernon Parent and Community Forum on Education.

Residents are encouraged to participate in the festival's 14 free workshops at the Mount Vernon Public Library, and six public concerts. Students in the city's public schools will benefit from more than 15 in-school performances.

The festival also features, *Rock My Soul: The Black Legacy of Rock and Roll*, which is on loan from Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. It is on view until June in the library's rotunda. The festival's events schedule is listed in the *Mount Vernon Inquirer*. For more information, call the Westchester Arts Council at 914.428.4220 x-236 or visit www.westarts.com.



(l to r) Peter Vitalone, KJ Denhert, John Caban, Mamadou Ba, and Ray Levier



(l to r) Kelly Jackson, Westchester Arts Council, KJ Denhert, and Donna Jackson, Creative Director, Triple Hill Music Festival.



Jonathan Mann, Westchester Arts Council



KJ Denhart



KJ Denhart and band members perform at Doles Center