

## Nancy Atlas Performs a Retrospective at Bay Street Theatre

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This past week's Fireside Sessions at Bay Street Theater was a look back at some 20 years of song writing by the creator of the Fireside Sessions, Nancy Atlas.

The crowd finding their way to Sag Harbor through the heavy fog were treated to an Atlas on Atlas evening with her band and a few friends (backup singers Annie Morgan Rosch and Erin Doherty, and Skip Krevens on pedal steel) dropping in for a couple of numbers. Instead of highlighting some other very talented musician, as has been done each previous week, Friday evening was very much about what the talented Nancy Atlas has been putting out there for almost two decades.

For the past six weeks through this series Atlas has delighted her audiences by presenting some of her truly remarkable musical friends. The Sessions started off with a bang presenting the drumming majesty of Chad Smith; right before Bruno Mars, the Super Bowl and the Will Ferrell challenge pounced on the Montauk-based Chili Pepper. There has also been the virtuosic guitar styling's of Andy Aledort, blues, soul and zydeco piano and vocal magic with Danny Kean, Jonny Rosch and Brian Mitchell as well as the sizzling violin mastery of the insanely talented Randi Fishenfeld. Of course, each week there has also been Atlas and her band, holding it all together, putting it all out there and making it all work.

Throughout it all the impressive catalog of Atlas compositions has often taken a back seat with Atlas only performing a couple of her original tunes per show. The exposure for the largely local audiences to original tunes by the various guests has met with great enthusiasm and fulfilled what was stated to be a goal for the sessions. The opportunity to hear Atlas showing off her performance chops doing popular tunes written by others has also become a highlight of the series. However, the fact has remained that a good part of the "Nancy Atlas mystique" is wrapped up in her song writing—and on Friday night that aspect of her as an artist was finally showcased.

For the record, Atlas says her tenure as the leader of the "house band" at the Stephen Talkhouse began (way back when) with just eight original songs. According to the humorous anecdote Atlas shared Friday night, those eight songs didn't get her much past 8:30 p.m. for a Talkhouse show slated to run till that last call for alcohol around 4 a.m. What a difference 15 years can make as, on Friday, there wasn't enough time in the over two-hour show for the full set list. And that only included a partial sampling of some of Atlas' older tunes. It's clearly been a prolific decade and a half for Montauk's favorite local composer.

Opening with "You Take Me Away," a lovely song with a haunting melody off her debut album 27, Atlas proceeded to take her audience through her earlier song writing career occasionally including insights to inspiration for several of her compositions. Having put

a message out on her Facebook page for song suggestions, Atlas made a valiant attempt to give her fans what they'd asked for and included a few very nice dedications of specific requests throughout the evening. This coupled with shout outs to long time followers, friendly banter with the audience and her own particular blend of warmth, raw humor and self deprecating asides showcased what helps make Atlas even more than the tough talking, hard rockin', late night, sweaty body filled bar performer so many love. If the Fireside Sessions have proven anything to any doubters out there, other than the fact that there is clearly an audience for live music in the Hamptons during the off season, it is the undeniable fact that Atlas is just as at home in a lovely theater setting as she is at any waterside resort hot spot or honky tonk bar.

Standouts from the show would have to be a hard rocking performance of "Believe in Me" and an outstanding rendition of the rarely heard "Bourbon Street" (both off the aforementioned album *27* but also on her live from Guild Hall *Feels Like Home* recording). Any true Atlas fans in the audience must have been delighted to hear wonderful renditions of "Love You From the Sky," "Cold Comfort" and a rollicking version of the New Orleans inspired and as of yet unrecorded "Uncle Suzie."

For anyone who has enjoyed one or more of the Fireside Sessions but is not that familiar with the song writing side of Atlas, it's never too late. Most of her recordings are available through iTunes and Amazon. Also check out her CDs for sale at the last Fireside Session on Friday, February 28. The saleswoman will be happy to advise you and make sure you take that advice—she's Nancy's mom.