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## Atlas Project Saved East End from Winter Blues

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It never seems fair but all good things must come to an end. This time it's the end of the weekly Nancy Atlas Fireside Sessions at Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor. The final concert in the two-month series last Friday featured saxophonist Arno Hecht as special guest and, as we have come to expect, the show blew the audience away.

Fireside Sessions star and creator Nancy Atlas was sounding in top form and put it all out there for the theater full of music fans. Joining her band was the very talented keyboardist Dan Koontz and guest guitarist Klyph Black, sitting in for Neil Surreal and Johnny Blood respectively. Popular Hoo Doo Lounger Dave Giacone played percussion while longtime Nancy Atlas Project members, bassist Brett King and drummer Richard Rosch, were once again expertly holding the beat and keeping time for Atlas and guests.

It feels apropos as the series ends to point out that what became the highlight of live entertainment on the East End during the winter of 2014 was the product of a perfect storm. This winter has been chock full of all sorts of storms; snow, hail, rain, nor'easters, rolling fog and, for anyone making it to any of the shows, there has also been the tumult of talent, vision and place that created the Fireside Sessions. Most of these storms seemed to happen on or around Friday nights and still the crowds packed Sag Harbor's Bay Street Theatre.

First and foremost must be a nod to the passion, talent and vision of Atlas; without her none of this would have happened. We should also probably offer thanks to her 6-month-old daughter who made Atlas's annual trip out of the country for January and February impossible—otherwise the eight weeks of joyous live music might have been something more like two.

Sag Harbor became the fortunate eye of this perfect storm when Atlas sought out Bay Street Theatre managing director Gary Hygom with an idea. Her vision was to put on a weekly series of live music with special guests, maybe on Thursdays in January and February—keeping the ticket price low and the bar open. After hearing who some of the guests might be, and having a vision of his own, Hygom suggested moving the series to Friday. He then designed a simple stage set featuring assorted vintage rugs and lamps and a large projection of burning logs, lighting the way for weeks of record-breaking live musical shows. How fortunate for us that these two came together under the roof of Bay Street Theatre.

As often happened in this guest star-driven weekly series, the song writing talents of Atlas took a backseat, although fans were front and center on the dance floor for her original tunes "Large Marge", "Galaxy Eyes" and the encore finale "Talkhouse Song". For an artist who has at times been presented as 'a very talented songwriter who can also sing,' Atlas has

shown throughout this series that her pipes and her range are right up there with the best of them. We should never be complacent about what to expect from Nancy Atlas.

Hints that this series will return next winter with Atlas once again at the helm were thrown out during and after the show on Friday night. It was clear Hygom was very positive about the theater wanting to do the series again. When asked specifically if she would be back next winter Atlas would not promise a commitment but offered this thought:

“If this never happens again the point is it happened and that is amazing and special and truly gratifying.”

However, the post-show entry on her Facebook page seemed a bit more promising:

“The fireside sessions shall burn again when the days grow shorter and the lone buoy bell rings in the cold winter harbor. Till next year! Peace. Out.”