

RESORTIST



BEACH CROONER
Singer Nancy Atlas
in her '69 Cadillac
on Ditch Plains
Beach in Montauk

STROKES OF GENIUS

She's opened for Bon Jovi and Paul Simon, been flown around the world to play at private gigs, and entertained the Stephen Talkhouse crowd for two decades—yet Hamptons hometown favorite **Nancy Atlas** didn't even pick up a guitar till she was in her 20s. Thank goodness for late bloomers!

by DIMITRI EHRLICH photography by LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO

Local legend Nancy Atlas channels the raw, authentic spirit of bluesy Americana in a manner that recalls a sexier, more playful Bonnie Raitt, a less vulnerable Lucinda Williams and an even prettier Melissa Etheridge. Atlas performs like a house on fire, and her undeniable talent—along with the fact that she's been the in-house act at the iconic Stephen Talkhouse for more than 20 years—has earned her a rare honor in the music world: adoration by a group of people (including record moguls and TV execs who summer in the Hamptons) with the good taste and wherewithal to fly her to perform at private parties all over the world.

This has allowed Atlas to build a sustainable career over the course of five albums, all released independently on her own Neptuna Records

label (her sixth, *Cut and Run*, comes out this fall). While she has yet to land a major record deal, nothing can stop Atlas, who exudes optimism and walks with a joyful swagger.

This attitude translates well onstage for the 43-year-old mother of three. "I have so much fun performing," she says. "You're feeding off people's energy, and they're feeding off you."

Raised in the Long Island town of Commack by an aeronautical engineer and a teacher, Atlas was the youngest of four children. Her parents bought a cottage in Lazy Point, Amagansett, when she was 7, back when the town was little more than a dirt road. She studied fine art at Cambridge University and Richmond University in Florence, Italy, before finally making her way back to Long Island.

Surprisingly, Atlas didn't even pick up a guitar till she was 20—but when she did, it was love at first strum. At the relatively late age of 25, she decided to devote her life to music full time.

Today she considers herself a songwriter before a singer. She has an exuberant, husky voice that suggests a mix of whiskey, heartbreak and resiliency, and she can rock like her life depended on it—gifts that have earned her gigs opening for Paul Simon, Bon Jovi, Elvis Costello and The Roots, to name a few.

"I feel so fortunate to be able to make a living at what I do," she says. "When I'm rolling home in my '69 Cadillac, and I just played at some beautiful event, and then the next night I'm sitting by a bonfire with my kids running down the beach—to me, that's success."