



KJ DENHERT COUNTS HER BLESSINGS WITH *ALBUM NO. 9*

Singer/Songwriter's 9th CD, Featuring 9 Tracks Recorded with 9 Musicians, Will Be Released on Motéma Music on November 9

"This is an album about freedom," says KJ Denhart, reflecting on her ninth release aptly titled *Album No. 9*, with nine songs, featuring nine musicians and recorded over the span of nine months. "If you are into numerology, you might have guessed by now that my life-path number is 9. Coincidence? Actually, yes. All of it." Derived from one's date of birth, number nines tend to be creative, passionate, and humanitarian (Ghandi, Bob Marley and Jimi Hendrix are also nines).

Synchronicity has always impressed KJ, but never more so than with this project. "I began to record on September 9, 2009 (or 09/09/09)," she explains. "I'm releasing the CD in Europe just about a year later, in September. I didn't plan it, but we ended up with nine tracks on the CD. And the release of the first video for "[Help](#)," the CD's first single, was on September 9, 2010."

Although she continues to define herself as an "urban folk and jazz" artist, KJ decided to step outside of that box a bit for *Album No. 9*, opting to explore a few of the other genres that have also influenced her throughout her career. The result is a collection of jazz, pop and rock covers and original songs that paint a bold portrait of KJ as an artist fully realized. "This is the album where I got over some of my self-consciousness about the music I love" says KJ about granting herself permission to fully explore her creativity on this record. Unrestrained in its musical content and delivery, *Album No. 9* marks a number of firsts for KJ. From performing for the first time without her guitar on "Alfie" to writing and recording her first French song - "Chanson Baz Bar" - and her first reggae song - 'Choose Your Weapon,' to unveiling her first video for the iconic Beatles song "Help," KJ continues to push the boundaries of her own definition. The result is one of her most emotionally stirring records to date.

KJ's humanitarian side is particularly obvious on a number of songs, including her rendition of "Help." Touched by the devastating events in Haiti and by the Louisiana oil

spill, KJ believed that the essence of the song resonates stronger than ever today. Though she originally hoped that including the tune would inspire listeners to contribute to a cause that touched them personally, during the recording session, KJ came to the realization that the song's message is as personal as it is universal, and that it's just as important to be able ask for and receive help yourself at times of need as it is to be able to give. *Album No. 9* exudes a positive outlook on distinctive renditions of such well known songs as "Pennies from Heaven" - "There's no more hopeful song in the world," says KJ - and on powerful originals, such as "Choose Your Weapon." and 'Let it Go.' Recorded completely live, "Pennies from Heaven" remains one of KJ's favorite standards. Originally recorded by Bing Crosby, the song sends a message about the importance of facing challenges head on, believing that everything will be all right in the end. Powered by a strong reggae beat, "Choose your Weapon" rhythmically states KJ's belief in the individual power of one's voice, inspired by Saffire's Gaye Agedbola's quote, "Speaking your heart is your weapon."

KJ returns to her roots on this record, singing family favorites from her childhood. "The Shadow of Your Smile," the CD's opening track, melancholy while remaining hopeful, epitomizes the era in which it was written. Growing up in the sixties, the same period that marked her musical awakening was a time where KJ realized the world was an unpredictable and fragile place. One morning she remembers her parents talking during breakfast and by the next morning she, her mother and only brother were on a plane to her native island of Grenada during the height of the Cuban Missile crisis. Another version of the "Shadow of Your Smile", this one recorded in a single take, with the band unaware that they were being recorded, is featured as a bonus track on the album. "I'm including that track because it represents the very best aspect of freedom," says KJ.

With "Alfie," another childhood favorite. KJ delivers a beautiful and open performance that is especially vulnerable as KJ performs the song without accompanying herself on guitar - a first ever for the singer - with deep and sensitive musical support from Etienne Stadwyjk (Leni Stern, Richard Bona, Groove Collective) on piano and Francois Moutin (Jean-Michel Pilc, Rudresh Mahanthappa) on acoustic bass. When she first performed the song live, at The Blue Note in New York, "Alfie's" lyrics resonated so deeply with KJ that she found herself having to fight back tears during the performance.

KJ's talents have taken her all over the world, including St Barthelemy in the French West Indies, where she has had a winter residency at the popular Baz Bar for nearly a decade. A self-proclaimed Francophile, KJ here debuts "Chanson Baz Bar," the first song in French which she penned with a little help from her Baz Bar friends, St Barth locals Natalie and Armel. The song is marked by a hint of sadness, admits KJ. "What happens when you discover paradise on earth? The joy of experiencing such a beautiful place is balanced

with how hard it is to know that your time there is fleeting, as well as with seeing how the passage of time changes even paradise."

KJ's inimitable way with lyrics is obvious throughout, whether she's singing about the misadventures of trying to make a record on her remarkable version of Deep Purple's "Smoke on the Water" ("Richie Blackmore 'borrowed' the song's opening riff from a song recorded by Astrud Gilberto, so because of it's Brazilian roots, it's not such a stretch for me to cover it," laughs KJ) or learning not to sweat the small things on "Let It Go," which was co-written with German singer San Glaser, and which contains what she claims is "her favorite bridge of all time, offering a tip of the hat to Donald Fagen."

Recording at Bicoastal Music Studios in KJ's home town of Ossining, NY, KJ co-produced *Album No. 9* with studio owner Hal Winer, whose world class facility has hosted the likes of Rob Thomas, the Yellowjackets and Bjork. She is supported by a strong cadre of players, including longtime band members Mamadou Ba, (Harry Belafonte, Regina Carter) on bass and drummer Ray Levier. Saxophonist, Aaron Heick (Richard Bona, Chaka Khan, Sting) has remained a regular since his debut on KJ's 2007 recording *Dal Vivo a Umbria Jazz*, while balancing a busy schedule that paired him with Sting on the latest recording of "Englishman in New York."

A string arrangement by Clifford Carter (James Taylor, Michael Franks, Mark Egan) and performances by Ralph Farris (viola) and Dorothy Lawson (cello) of the happening string quartet Ethel (who have also collaborated with David Byrne and Kurt Elling) bring a sophisticated dimension to "Help," which was selected by KJ to be *Album No. 9*'s first single, with a moving video that debuted on the web on 9/9 to fete the European release of *Album No. 9* in September 2010.

Album No. 9 embodies all of the inspiring qualities of the number nine, emphasizing creativity, compassion and perseverance despite life's obstacles. With this further step in the evolution of her career, KJ once again reveals her true colors as a completely singular songwriter, musician, and performer.

Nominated for four independent music awards, and named one of Jazz.com's top female vocalists of 2009, KJ Denhert has been making audiences laugh, dance and cry for over three decades. Now in her eleventh year of residency at the 55 Bar in New York and at the Baz Bar in the French West Indies, KJ and her band are also set to perform for an eighth time as artists-in-residence at Italy's Umbria Jazz Festival in January of 2011. KJ has had music in her heart ever since she can remember.

KJ, born Karen Jeannette to parents from the island of Grenada, was the first US citizen

born to a small family. Her only brother, born in Aruba, had taken an interest in music and it was on one of his discarded guitars that KJ wrote her first song. "I picked up a guitar when I was ten and immediately I started writing music," she recalls. "I loved Sergio Mendes' songs, liked John Hartford on the Glenn Campbell Show and really got into James Taylor and Joni Mitchell, who I still consider my two main influences. I also loved other singer-songwriters of the time including Carole King and Laura Nyro and later fell in love with Steely Dan's music, and just about wore out my LP of Hubert Laws' *Rite Of Spring*. I was completely self-taught, by listening to records and playing them over and over, teaching myself tablature from a great James Taylor book and modal tunings from Joni Mitchell's *For The Roses* song book. I didn't really do much but play guitar through my teenage years."

In the 1980s, KJ toured for six years as the lead guitarist and occasional vocalist with an all-female band called Fire, playing rock and top-40 music throughout the US, Canada and Europe. After the group ran its course, she worked at a day job while continuing to write and play music. While working in Cleveland as a financial analyst, she started the Mother Cyclone label and made her first recording. Moving home to New York in 1997, she formed the NY Unit, a group with which she still performs. "I look for players who have an ability to groove and have lots of drama in their playing," says KJ.

In addition to running her own band and Mother Cyclone label, KJ was named among the six winners of the Kerrville New Folk Song contest in June 2006 for "Private Angel" and won the Mountain Stage New Song contest in August 2005 for "Little Mary." Her CD *Another Year Gone By (Live)* won the 2006 Independent Music Award for Best Live Performance.

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