

## Reviewing the best in non-mainstream acoustic guitar music

### K.J. Denhart, "Lucky Seven," 2007



KJ Denhart toured North America and Europe for seven years as the lead guitarist in an all-female Top 40 rock band. After that, she worked as a financial analyst. As incongruous as those careers seem, so are the influences Denhart brings to her true calling, with musical heroes like Sergio Mendes, John Hartford, James Taylor (see "Sad Song"), Hubert Laws, and others. "Lucky Seven's" straight ahead jazz version of "Over the Rainbow" – the only non-original on the CD, performed with as much ache as that much-covered classic can bear – shows one side of KJ. But she has also won the folk world's prestigious Kerrville and Mountain Stage Newsong contests. Putting together all that and more, Denhart makes uncategorizable music that sure does a soul good. Denhart and her band sharpened their chops with a long and continuing residency at the 55 Bar in Greenwich Village. Clearly, she is ready now for more than regional recognition. So she's gone all out with "Lucky Seven," her seventh CD (one per year since quitting her day job). The funky


opener introduces the album's theme: "Little Problems" provide opportunities and, in this case, the uncontrollable desire to move to the music. A Steely Dan influence comes through in the swinging title track, propelled by the funky lick Denhart plays on her Martin 00CXAEB. The extended jam of the closer, "Rivera," the hottest song ever written about a Mexican muralist, showcases what Denhart and her band do live. Pay attention to bassist Mamadou's extended solo. "Lucky Seven," an enhanced CD, gives access to a revealing interview, a live performance (a real crowd pleaser in which Denhart also raps), and a video, all worth checking out. Denhart dubs her music urban folk and jazz. The label fits because of its R&B, hip-hop, folk, and jazz elements. But any label is unnecessary because only one artist makes music like this. I could call it terrifically ambitious and thoroughly listenable, but let's just call it Denhart music.

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