



KJ Denhert - Girl Like Me...

We speak to hot new music artist KJ Denhert!



Interview:

- How did it feel to hear your song played all over the airwaves?**

It felt good, I wasn't all over the airwaves, Å but I was on my way to an interview on WFUV with Meg Griffin here in NY- she and Rita Houston have these really distinctive voices and it was fun to hear my name. We were promoting my first appearance at the Bottom Line, so I felt good- but life and traffic and being on time for the interview kept me pretty rounded! A very nice thing was that some High School friends and old friends, heard the music and interviews and reconnected with me- that was sweet.
- Did you have any preconceived ideas about the music industry?**

I suppose the biggest misconception was about how radio really works. A By the time I understood the rules, it seems the rules were changing. In the US, the 1996, Telecommunications Act enabled a few giants to emerge like Clear Channel and independent media became smaller and smaller without many people even realizing.
- Do you write your own songs? What's your inspiration?**

Yes, I wrote my first song at 10 years old about a teacher that passed away during the school year. It's hard to call it inspiration, it's my nature. I've always made up tunes in my head and it's always going on in there. Lyrically I'm usually trying to make myself feel better or accept something. Little Mary, from my latest CD Girl Like Me, is a classic example "Little Mary don't you be afraid there are a million of us feeling this way..."
- What music/artists do you listen to when you are not playing your own?**

I listened to a lot of M'shell N'degeocello when I was in St. Barth's. I really love the jazz of the Yellow Jackets. Johnatha Brooks (formerly of the Story) can captivate me for long spells. Rickie Lee Jones had some great covers on her last album. Mary J. Blige has a live album that I play a lot on my way to gigs. Joni Mitchell's stuff can still move me to tears, as well as good old James Taylor. My longtime heroes are Steely Dan, Sting, the Police, the Pretenders, Thomas Dolby, Prince, Bruce Cockburn, Laura Nyro, Carole King, Stevie Wonder, Chaka Kahn, Bonnie Raitt, & Hubert Laws for this one record I just wore out in High School.
- What's next? Tour/Album/Single?**

Tour, it's in the developing stages, but that's my next adventure- I love to travel, love to fly, love trains and love being with my band, having breakfast together in the morning or reallllly late at night makes me feel very happy. It's the second best thing about being a musician. When you find the right group of

people as I have, there is a familial bond- healthier than many families I know because we share an experience. I have enough material to put out another disc, and I'm going to look at releasing some live stuff on MP3 as well as some of my earlier releases.

6. **Was there a moment you contemplated throwing in the towel?**

I think I did throw in the towel, I came off the road and I got a day job because I had to at the time. After seven years touring it was like I entered an alien land, but the aliens gave me plenty to think about, to love, to hate, to learn from etc. I started writing again, and working on my guitar playing and after about a year I was gigging again. I've never stopped performing since.

7. **Do you prefer performing live or recording?**

Both are really amazing to do but if I had to choose it'd be performing live. I just get carried away. My drummer Ray did an imitation of some of things I do when I get into it, I was on the floor laughing- no matter what mood I'm in, when the band locks in, I have an arsenal of involuntary gyrations.

8. **What/who was your inspiration to go into the music industry?**

I tried to do other things, I can't get away from music- I'm not wild about the industry, so to speak. The necessary evil of categorizing music, which still feels more important in the US than in other countries led me to finally define what I do as Urban Folk and Jazz. When I release a new CD and begin to promote it I am operating in the music industry, the songs that are on that CD exist because I accepted a long time ago that I am by nature a musician.

9. **What is the biggest challenge you have faced along the way to your musical success?**

The business of selling oneself is the hardest part, the hype just bugs me. I think there's an entertainment industry and a music industry that are talked about interchangeably, but they are really quite different. It's funny how many folks ask me why I don't try to get on American Idol, I'm flattered but I am a songwriter, a guitarist, a band leader, a producer and I run an independent music label, oh yes and I sing. It seems like they are looking for young singers to sell the next pop hit. That's a fine thing by the way and it's a well produced show too. That's what I consider the entertainment industry. I do live shows of a style of music that I am intimately connected to, which makes me immensely happy and entertains audiences which in turn leads to sales of my CDs. Similar business yes, but it requires a certain level of musicianship and the real key to urban folk and jazz is the improvisation, which is what makes it fun for me and the audience that is looking for over the top creative experience.

10. **What's a typical day like?**

I get up pretty early, have coffee on the back porch and then it's e mail for about 90 minutes. I try to get out in the morning by 10 and do whatever has to be done- the Post office just kills me though. I always forget something, I actually get nervous about mailing stuff. After lunch it 's phone calls- returning them and checking on progress of different projects. I 've always got guitars out of their cases on chairs and I pick them up and play all day between any task. I play the piano too, just for myself, mostly when I'm home alone. If I'm not playing, I like to go to the movies, though it gets harder to find stuff to see. If I like the movie, I definitely come home and play a lot. After seeing "Frieda," both times I played for hours-just making things up. If I have a gig, I let myself fall asleep in the afternoon and wake up and sing a lot before I jump in the car. Many days end at 4AM. I don't sleep much at night.

11. **What has been your favorite part of becoming a music artist?**

My relationship with the guitar is an endless quest. I can feel the comfort of the years of playing and there's always so much that I want from my playing.

12. **If you could collaborate with another artist, who would it be?**

I'd love to play guitar with James Taylor, and I think it'd be great to sit down with Sheryl Crow and do some writing. Oddly enough I wish it was easier to find out who makes the music in some commercials- that 's become some of the most creative stuff I hear. I have some favorites lately. If I worked at it I could probably find the writers that I'm enjoying anonymously in these ads. They are probably folks like me! I think I have some songs that could be a nice next step for Norah Jones actually.

13. **Are you single? What do you look for in a partner?**
I'm not single now, though I spent a lot of years single. I look for partners with a strong sense of themselves because I get a lot of attention as a result of being a musician and that can take it's toll on an unfulfilled partner. A sense of humor is key too. Someone who makes me laugh has the best chance and someone who laughs at my silliness keeps my loneliness at bay.
14. **Do you have a website fans can visit?**
Sure ... <http://www.kjdenhert.com>
15. **Can you tell us 5 things required for a happy healthy & enjoyable life?**
Friends that you love, challenges that humble and inspire you (that's what music does to me), a sense of what is right and wrong in your (and only your) life, the discipline of the life principle of non-judgment, and opportunities to laugh really hard.
16. **What message would you like to say to your fans?**
Thanks doesn't come close to expressing it all, especially the folks who purchase the new CDs. I like the folks who take that step to talk to me, the ones who are a little shy as I can be but try anyway. I see myself in that exchange over and over and it feels so good to be comfortable among strangers after we've shared music. What can you say besides thanks, you've kept my dream alive!

60 Second Quiz

- Full Name: Karen Jeanne Denhert
- Nickname(s): KJ , kaje, princess big hair, (the band calls me queen bee, behind my back but it came out on tour last year- I laughed)
- Star Sign: Taurus
- Favorite Food: Fish, sushi or cooked
- Favorite Film: The Shawshank Redemption
- Favorite Actor: Morgan Freeman, Meryl Streep
- Pet: none living- last pet, a big red chow named Addison
- Describe yourself in 3 words: Real, funny, lonely
- Best Feature: Hair
- Worst Feature: Hair
- Person You Would Most Like to Meet: Stevie Wonder (if we could play music together) Jimmy Carter if we could talk
- Hobbies/Interests: Movies, Golf, tennis, comedy, writing (short stories), finding eclectic restaurants
- First Job: Cashier, Chinese Takeout restaurant
- Are you a Pub, Bar or Club kind: Bar (like the 55 Bar in NY's Greenwich Village)
- What Can You Never Leave Home Without: A great pair of shades
- What is the first thing you think of when you wake up in the morning: Gratitude for my partner, unless I'm really mad, then I skip to coffee and the back porch to write.