

Firehall aims to be Delta's connection to culture

By KRISTI ALEXANDRA March 12, 2015 - Updated 4:03 PM

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NORTH DELTA - It's no secret that those living south of the Fraser may have to cross a bridge or two if they want to be treated to a soul or jazz show, but Firehall Centre for the Arts aims to change all that.

This Saturday (March 14), it's soul and blues singer Darlene Ketchum. Other nights, it may be an all-ages show, a Hindu festival or a night of poetry readings. "I think we're just trying to have as much culture as possible," Lisa Doepker, recreation planner at the venue, told the Now.

"In North Delta, I think we have quite a unique market because we have different pockets of demographics. Back in October we had a huge Halloween event here but then the next day we had a Diwali celebration, so we're just trying - as the community comes to us and says, 'we'd love to see this' - to accommodate," she said.

Ketchum, an internationally-known jazz and soul singer, will bring to the stage The Soul Connections Band this Saturday. They've performed alongside the likes of Celine Dion, David Foster, Kenny Loggins, Ray Charles and Colin James, just to name a few.

The band includes Bill Sample (piano), Rene Worst (bass), Randall Stoll (drums), Steve Hilliam (sax) and guest vocalist Marcus Mosely.

"We really had a desire to see the arts in Delta develop," revealed Ketchum, who's been living in Delta for 24 years.

"So, when I met Lisa, I was looking for a place to do my CD-release concert. I told her I would love to see some arts at the Firehall" - and Doepker jumped at the opportunity.

"It would be great to bring some music to Delta (and) get people realizing in their own neighbourhood that they can come and listen to good, quality music," said Ketchum, who "fell in love" with Delta nearly a quarter-century ago, but still finds an easier time performing sold-out shows closer to Vancouver.

"For me, this is a bit of a creative risk, you know. Doing it in your own neighbourhood, it takes a risk and vulnerability, so I'm hoping in doing this, it will encourage others to do the same. I would love to see us have some places, get a

reputation of, 'Hey, look, we can have some beer and wine and walk to the Firehall.' If it became known as a place for the community, that would be great." Ketchum hopes her own show, which is in support of her latest album, *Soul Connections*, will set the stage for other artists to come forward and perform at the intimate, 150-seat venue.

"It's very much going to be a lot of soul, RB. Any jazz we'll do will be jazz standards," Ketchum said of Saturday night's concert, which starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 to \$20 and can be purchased by calling 604-596-4485, or at the door, at 11489 84th Ave., North Delta.

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