

## Cheltenham's Carol Lester joins lineup for this month's SOS concert

By: Joseph D. Checchia - Correspondent

06/19/2001

**Cheltenham's own Carol Lester returns to familiar surroundings as one of several artists to play this month's SOS (Songwriters Original Showcase) concert. The lineup will include talents such as Philadelphia native son Ben Arnold, pianist Stephen DiJoseph, singer/songwriter Debra Lee, the funk of Vujaday, and Ambler's own Rick Denzien. This show will be held on Sunday, June 24 at Act II Playhouse in Ambler.**

Carol Lester joins Rick Denzien, Debra Lee, Ben Arnold and other local performers at the SOS concert at Act II Playhouse on June 24.

Lester, the pseudonym of Carol Shatten, has earned a name for herself locally. She now resides in Jersey City, N.J. and plays many small venues throughout the Big Apple. Coming off Jersey City's "Culture Arts Festival" and "Artist on the Verge," a showcase in New York City sponsored by Starbucks Coffee, Lester had time for an interview by phone.

"Independent artists craft their music very carefully," says this rising star. Her CD can be described as a warm and intimate emotional travelogue of songs where Aimee Mann-like vocal styles meet Joni Mitchell-esque poetic and melodic structures. "Spill My Soul" (Carol Lester, 2000), her debut release, has been bringing her name to local audiences and to millions on TV. When Lester was asked to record a track for a USA Network Movie, "Secret Cutting," starring Rhea Pearlman and Kimberlee Peterson, she had no idea that her song would affect so many viewers. Countless e-mails came in, requesting information on the artist and the song. "When I perform I like to touch my audience with my music and I like to be touched by their reactions," she says.

She names Cat Stevens, Stevie Nicks, Led Zeppelin, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and Jim Croce as influences on her songwriting. "These artists have intimate delivery, I hear who they were and I connect with them," adds Lester, who has been writing music since she was a young girl. Like many teenagers she grew up listening to music with a meaning behind it. "I love artists who are totally themselves."

"Spill My Soul" took seven months to record. Currently, Lester is putting together a follow-up album. "My favorite songs to play live are 'Spill My Soul' and 'Accept Them.' I teach the audience the chorus and I tell them to sing," explains Lester. "I love when the audience participates."

In the coming months, Lester will appear live on WXPN 88.5 FM's "Women's Hour" with Michaela Mujoun; she is also scheduled to play some summer festivals and is in the process of cutting tracks with Latin sensation Luis Miguel. She is also a full-time mother, a part-time community activist and she relaxes with yoga classes. Fans can listen to her tracks from her album on her website: [www.carollester.com](http://www.carollester.com).

Lester has no plans of leaving Jersey City. She loves the fact that all the connections are there at her fingertips. "I do wish there were more trees, though!," jokes Lester. She has built a strong following where she lives and is ready to move down the East Coast. Her first stop is Ambler and the SOS showcase. "At these showcases the artists performing tend to inspire each other," tells Lester. "This is a listening venue." Egg Harbor resident and close friend Tim Dowd will join her on percussion the night of the show. Don't be surprised if you are enjoying the lyrics of "Honeysuckle Slumber" or "To Be High" when all of a sudden

Lester breaks into a cover of Chaka Khan's "Tell Me Something Good!"

My responsibility is to vary the sound, tempo and emotions," continues Lester, "I want the audience to enjoy themselves as well as express myself."

SOS (Songwriters Original Showcase),  
featuring Carol Lester, Ben Arnold, Stephen DiJoseph, Vujaday & Rick Denzien,  
will take place at Act II Playhouse,  
56 E. Butler Ave., Ambler,  
Sunday, June 24, 7 p.m.  
Tickets: \$10.  
[www.SongwritersOriginalShowcase.com](http://www.SongwritersOriginalShowcase.com)

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