

COMMUNITY

One amazing night

Women and Song brings well-known and local musicians together

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SPECIAL TO THE CHIEF

It's not often that three accomplished women share one stage for one night of spectacular, original music.

But that's just how Squamish Days will kick off this year when Sue Leonard performs with Leslie Alexander and Dana-Marie Battaglia at Women and Song, Thursday (Aug. 2).

Part of the appeal for the high profile performers is the intimate setting of the Eagle Eye Theatre.

"It's a treat for me," said headliner Leonard. "It's a totally different feel, especially for a vocalist. You have a lot more room to play with and change it up."

Leonard's music features a strong undertone of blues, mixed with contemporary pop and even a bit of folk influence.

"Mainly [my songs] are relationship driven," she said. "And they're about all the things that we all go through, all the dysfunctional things. All the things you have to either get into or get over."

A well-known vocalist and songwriter in the Canadian music industry, Leonard most notably backed-up k.d. lang on two world tours. Her performance at Women and Song will mark a first in Squamish, and one of the few times that she will take centre stage in such a bare-bones way.

"I'm really looking forward to not being in a big band situation, although I really like that, too," she added. "I just wanted to do it really stripped down."

Both Battaglia and Alexander are fans of Leonard's, and talented musicians in their own right.

"She's a world-class talent and we're so lucky to have her," said Alexander, a former Squamish resident who is touring her third record, *Garden in the Stones*, this summer.

"The record is all about the contrast between urban and rural living and about how I've come to terms living in the city and being a country girl," said Alexander, who was born on the Alberta prairies and now lives in Vancouver.

Alexander calls herself a roots musician, though she's also heard folk and country used to describe her sound.

"She's sort of the salt of the earth performer that writes from personal life experience," said organizer Brian Marchant. This is the event's fourth year as part of the Squamish Days festival.

Local songstress Battaglia



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Sue Leonard headlines Woman and Song, Thursday (Aug. 2) at the Eagle Eye Theatre. Leslie Alexander and Dana-Marie Battaglia also perform.

is known around Squamish for performing fun, upbeat covers at bars and cafés. But she said Thursday night will be an opportunity to hear a different kind of performance.

"My own stuff is darker, the personal, soft music style," she said. "And I'm going to play my own stuff at Women and Song so it will be a different side, a more real side."

Though some songs will feature her guitar, Battaglia will also play her first musical love, the piano.

"Some of it is folksy," she said. "It's a good opportunity to sing directly to [the audience] and share myself and my music with them."

The mutual admiration among the night's musicians makes this one gig that each woman is looking forward to.

"I'm sure I'm going to be inspired and I'm sure

I could learn a lot from them," said Battaglia of her fellow performers.

"It's going to be like walking into the kitchen and sitting down," said Leonard. "That's how good I feel about this gig. I'm so excited."

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres provided by the Naked Lunch and a cash bar bring a touch of class to the evening, which begins at 7 p.m. with the show starting at 8.

"We want people to come and enjoy the appetizers and mingle and enjoy each other's company before the show," said Marchant. "Come out and see some great music from people who will truly astound you."

Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors and are available at Billie's bouquet, Mostly Books, Sea to Sky Hotel and the Squamish Days Souvenir Booth.