

Biography: Marlene Tholl

When a singer-songwriter releases a debut album, the result can often be tentative and unsure. This is not the case for Marlene Tholl, whose debut release *KORE* (KOR-ay) leaves an indelible mark on the ears of the listener. There is nothing tentative about this album. Tholl is an intense singer with a solid rock/pop identity. For a first album *KORE* shows surprising sophistication and maturity. One reason for this is that Tholl is not a twenty-something fresh out of college. For more than ten years, she had a successful career in theatre and other musical ventures.

Born in the Boston area, Tholl spent her formative years travelling the world before heading to New York for an impressive stint as an actress, performance artist, and playwright. Tholl produced her own multimedia shows in residence at The Knitting Factory. "I was really steeped in the downtown theatre and jazz/rock community," says Tholl. "The Knitting Factory was a planting ground for me as a performer who writes and produces. I had the chance to collaborate with some amazing people." She wrote plays, "better termed as choreographies," for a close-knit ensemble of actors and non-actors, performance artists, visual artists and musicians. Producing such works of her own as "The Sitter" and "Clothed/Unclathed: A Twenty Act Play" she staged works by others as well, most notably Sam Shepard's rock one act "Cowboy Mouth," playing opposite Mike Doughty of Soul Coughing. Her productions formed a progression that, Tholl observes, "is pretty transparent now in terms of the direction I was going as an artist!"

Tholl also performed as a vocalist in a series of electronic dance operas by composer and They Might Be Giants collaborator Joshua Fried, an important alliance that spanned almost a decade. She appeared at the Ohio Theater in his "Travelogue," at La Mama in "Headset Sextet," and in "Spell for Opening the Mouth of N" at the Kitchen and Lincoln Center Out of Doors. The avant-garde wasn't the only forum for Tholl however. She did commercials, industrials and traditional theatre as well, which included extensive touring throughout the eastern US with commedia dell'arte and Shakespeare companies.

In 2002 Tholl contributed backing vocals to a track by rock singer Lisa Ellis on the CD compilation "Music from Ground Zero," a musical memorial to the victims of September 11th. Her relationship with Ellis is an important and abiding one. Throughout the '90's, while singing back-up for Ellis on the New York club scene, Tholl began to compose her own songs. Based in Boston again after ten years of gypsying, she workshopped the songs acoustically in local and New York coffeeshouses. In '99 she and Fried produced an acoustic ep at the prestigious MacDowell colony, an early manifestation of the work in progress which ultimately became *KORE*.