

Gotham Valentine

A Tribute to New York City

"I'm not a librarian," says Scott Paulson. "I just work here." The statement by UCSD Arts Libraries outreach coordinator is meant to be a disclaimer. But it doubles as an explanation. That must be the reason why his exhibits in the lower level of the Geisel Library are always so quirky and so, well, un-librarian-like.

This time, the exhibit theme is New York. His boss, head arts librarian Leslie Abrams, asked him to create one about 9/11. Paulson asked her in turn if he could wait until February. That way, Paulson says, he would be able to send a metaphorical Valentine "instead of a memorial card" to Manhattan.

LOCAL EVENTS

Those who have been to other exhibits designed by Paulson know there is always a participatory element. For WE ♥ NY — a reference, of course, to the slogan/rebus invented by graphic artist Milton Glaser in 1975 — he wants people to lend their Big Apple subway tokens, tourist snapshots, Broadway ticket stubs, and personal I ♥ NY



Sue Palmer

T-shirts. He is also soliciting written thoughts and memories about the city that can fit on an index card.

Paulson's exhibits always have a live component.

On Friday afternoon, there will be a free concert featuring the locally grown jazz pianist Sue Palmer, who will perform the music of Manhattan lounges and Harlem nightclubs of the 1920s and 1930s.

"I'll do a mix of jazz standards," says Palmer, who names George and Ira Gershwin's "Nice Work If You Can Get It" and "Love Is Here to Stay," and Thomas "Fats" Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose."

"I've always had kind of a fantasy of being the Bobby Short of San Diego," she says, referring to the legendary New York cabaret singer.

She'll also do some boogie-woogies of her own.

Palmer, who was born in San Diego in 1947, lives in Talmadge. One place she will evoke at her Friday concert is far from her neighborhood — Harlem's Cotton Club. "I really, really love the Duke Ellington period of music when he was writing for his big bands that were



Cotton Club

playing there in the late 1920s," she says. "I have a recording of one of them, called 'Black Beauty,' on an album of mine. This was a time of mixing of white and black cultures. They were influencing each other. Swing was beginning. Jazz had just barely started."

Palmer has played at another of Paulson's exhibit events. "He called me last year to do this funny little concert on his toy pianos. He has this wonderful collection that he keeps at the library." The one she played on was no more than a foot wide. "It was about two octaves at the most."

She will play her New York tunes on "a very nice" electric piano, says Paulson, but even on the tiny piano she

was a smash, he claims. "Three notes out of her, and people's jaws dropped, because when there's real talent, you know, you can just give them a garbage can, and..."

What's a nightclub without drinks? Paulson has thought of that detail. Along with the concert, the library will host a "mocktail" party. "It's actually going to be a parody of a cocktail party," says Paulson, "because none of us here get invited to them."

Palmer will be dressed in vintage clothes. Paulson encourages others to do the same. "We're telling people to polish their tiaras," he says. "I expect lots of feather boas."

The mocktails will be New York-

themed. "We've invented some special drinks, including a Rudy Rudy Rudy, named for [former New York mayor] Rudy Giuliani, which is apple juice and caramel-flavored soda, so it tastes like a caramel apple. And then there's a Donna Hanover, after [Giuliani's] ex-wife: that's good for a hangover. It's just tonic water and a 'very fashionable' garnish, since she's on A&E and HGTV as a home-fashion guru. And then we've got a Rockefeller Ice Rink, which is apple juice and cracked ice. And since the party happens to be on Friday the 13th, we'll have a drink that's sour apple with a black cat garnish that hangs on the side of the glass. It's modeled after the famous Black Cat cocktail."

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