

Carmen Marotta Brings The Live Music For Free To South Jersey



Carmen Marotta at Kennedy Plaza during Mardi Gras AC. photo: Press of Atlantic City

ATLANTIC CITY (August 8, 2023) - South Jersey residents and visitors who love live music, but who don't have the extra money to pay for concert tickets, have Carmen Marotta to thank for enjoyable summers.

For the past 30 years and 12 years, respectively, Marotta, 67, of Egg Harbor Township, has hosted free concerts on the beach in Somers Point and at Kennedy Plaza on the Atlantic City Boardwalk.

Marotta books nationally known acts such as three-time Grammy-nominated blues singer Shemekia Copeland, two-time Grammy Award-winning zydeco musician Terrance Simien and Cyril Neville, a former member of the Neville Brothers.

"We produce these concerts because we love it. We have a legacy in the music world," Marotta said.

According to USA Today's 10 Best readers choice 2023, the Somers Point Beach Concert Series ranked No. 1 as the best outdoor concert series, beating out live music series in major cities across the nation.

Somers Point Mayor Jack Glasser has known Marotta since he was a senior at Holy Spirit High School in Absecon and Marotta was a freshman.

Somers Point is known now as much for its beach concerts as it is for Bayfest in April and the Good Old Days Festival in September, Glasser said.

Glasser gave credit to Marotta, his wife, Nancy Marotta, and the beach concerts committee.

"Carmen has really made such a great contribution. He has made Somers Point a focal point during the summer with beach concerts," Glasser said. "It is one of the jewels we have in South Jersey. It's fabulous for Somers Point, for the whole area. ... We have been so lucky."

Marotta is the son of club owner Anthony "Tony Mart" Marotta Sr. Tony Mart was a rock 'n' roll showplace on Bay Avenue in Somers Point that operated for 40 years. Bob Dylan discovered Levon and The Hawks in 1965 while they were playing at Tony Mart, which started the recording career of The Band.

Marotta's promotion company, Tony Mart Presents, is named after the now defunct venue.

He uses a variety of methods to book his annual free summer concert series. Sometimes, he reaches out to an artist directly. Sometimes, artists' representatives contact him, if they know they are working on something he might like. He also reaches out to artists' agents.

Marotta knows Cyril Neville well. He booked Neville's last performance on the Atlantic City Boardwalk in 2014 as a member of the Royal Southern Brotherhood. He contacted Lyrica Neville, Cyril's daughter, to lock down his appearances with his son's band, Omari Neville & The Fuel, on Sept. 6 in Atlantic City and Sept. 8 in Somers Point.

For next year, a talent agent has already contacted Marotta about the possibility of landing a date on a potential Devon Allman and Duane Betts tour.

Allman is the guitarist and singer son of late musician Gregg Allman. Betts is the guitarist and singer son of Dickey Betts. Gregg Allman and Dickey Betts were two of the founding members of the Allman Brothers Band.

Marotta booked the Honey Island Swamp Band for the second time Aug. 2 in Atlantic City. He is thinking about bringing them back next year with at least a couple of his regulars, Johnny Sansone and Dave Malone of The Radiators, to play the music of "The Last Waltz" as a tribute to The Band.

"We have relationships with the artists. The agent is in the loop," Marotta said.

Marotta has more than 70 different sponsors for the Somers Point beach concert series, including AtlantiCare and The Point Tiki Bar, but most of the money comes from donations made by attendees at each show.

He usually has a partial or full schedule between February and April for Somers Point while the Atlantic City Boardwalk lineup is not finalized until he is given approval by the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority.

The CRDA supported Tony Mart Presents in 2018, 2019 and 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the shows did not take place in 2020 or 2021, said Maisha Moore, CRDA's deputy executive director.

This year, the 11 free Mardi Gras AC Wednesday evening summer concerts will end Sept. 6. CRDA awarded Tony Mart Presents \$216,120 to be used for talent, promotion and production of the concerts, Moore said.

"With approximately 10,000 attendees over the course of 10 concerts in 2022, Mardi Gras AC has proven a very successful and valuable cultural asset. The concert series provides an authentic Mardi Gras experience for Atlantic City residents and visitors alike and activates the portion of the Boardwalk right outside Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall," Moore said.

Along with bringing in nationally known acts to play for free live in South Jersey, Marotta acts as a consultant to the Billy Walton Band, who mix rock, soul and the blues. As the talent buyer for The Point on Bay Avenue in Somers Point, he has booked the Billy Walton Band to do shows there from 7 to 11 p.m. Thursdays until Aug. 31 as a residency.

"Every week, you change the set," Walton said. "I don't want to play the same song the same way. You painted the song that way that night."

Also this summer, Walton will be playing with trombonist Richie “LaBamba” Rosenberg, a Philadelphia native, in LaBamba’s Big Band from 7 to 10 p.m. Aug. 30 at Kennedy Plaza in Atlantic City as part of Marotta’s concerts.

A former member of the house band on Conan O’Brien’s late-night talk shows, LaBamba, like Walton, played at one time with Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes and became familiar with Walton through that group. They did not play together in the Jukes, but they did perform together previously.

“We (he and Walton) have done that before. At City Winery in Philadelphia, he came in and was in the guitar chair and also at the Stone Pony (in Asbury Park),” LaBamba said. “He is great.”

LaBamba said he used to play at the old Tony Mart growing up for Marotta’s father, but he said this will be his first time performing in Atlantic City.

LaBamba’s band plays rock ‘n’ roll with a 13-horn section — five saxophones, four trumpets and four trombones.

“It’s gonna make a good party,” LaBamba said. “Everybody that sits into that atmosphere usually walks away with their head spinning.”

By: Vincent Jackson – Press of AC

Link to article: https://pressofatlanticcity.com/news/local/carmen-marotta/article_98165638-2f94-11ee-87cd-4f3671f426d2.html

Free concerts in Somers Point and Atlantic City

2023 Concerts on the Beach in Somers Point 7 p.m. Fridays, New Jersey and Bay Avenue, Somers Point

Aug. 11: Terrance Simien & The Zydeco Experience

Aug. 18: Tommy Castro & the Pain Killers

Aug. 25: Tom Hambridge & The Rattle Snakes; opening, The E Street Shuffle

Sept. 1: '80s Tribute RED

Sept. 8: Cyril Neville with Omari Neville & the Fuel; opening, The Jimmy Brogan Band

2023 Mardi Gras Atlantic City, 7 p.m. Wednesdays, Kennedy Plaza on the Atlantic City Boardwalk

Aug. 9: Tito Puente Jr. Orchestra; Willpower, a tribute to Tower of Power

Aug. 16: Shemekia Copeland Band

Aug. 23: The Weight Band, featuring members of The Band & The Levon Helm Band

Aug. 30: LaBamba's Big Band with Billy Walton

Sept. 6: Cyril Neville with Omari Neville & The Fuel; opening Ocean Avenue Stompers

Rockin' The Point With The Billy Walton Band

Rock music, full menu and tropical bar

7 to 11 p.m. Aug. 10, 17, 24 and 31, The Point at Gull and Bay avenues, Somers Point