

Cosmic Slop Music Festival Forges ‘New Cultural Frontier’

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CORNELIUS FORTUNE



Lindsay Kathleen

Roxolydian, one of many multicultural rock bands, will appear at this year's Cosmic Slop.

Black rock is alive and well.

And it's living in Detroit.

That's the message Deekah Wyatt, leader of the rock band Roxolydian and founder of the [Cosmic Slop Music Festival](#) wants to get across – on stage and in conversation, fashion, and attitude. It's not just music, it's an ever-evolving lifestyle; a culture that in many ways has been in the shadows for far too long. Audiences will get a taste of Detroit's multicultural rock fest on Saturday, Sept. 3, at the Tangent Gallery/Hastings Street Ballroom, 715 E. Milwaukee, from 1-11 p.m.

Don't let the name dissuade you. Cosmic Slop is a nod to Funkadelic's (aka Parliament/P-Funk's) classic 1973 release, "Cosmic Slop," an innovative mix of funk and rock leanings by George Clinton (and his famed collaborators). While the organizers are paying homage to the past, the Cosmic Slop Festival is a forward-looking excursion into some of the best minority rock acts working today.

Detroit acts scheduled to appear are Nadir, Pancho Villa's Skull, Caleb Gutierrez, Roxolydian, and a host of others, including New York's Rain of Kings and Philadelphia's Ghetto Songbird. This tradition of handpicking the best multicultural acts goes back to the festival's original launch in 2011, which ran until 2013.

Why the three-year gap? A lot has happened since then, says Wyatt.

“After three successful festivals in 2011, 2012, and 2013, we applied for a [Knight Foundation Arts Challenge](#) Grant in 2013 and we were awarded,” Wyatt says. “We took some time out to figure out how to expand and make the festival what it should be. We took the time out to plan. We get to come back with sponsors and sponsorships.”

In addition to sponsorships, Wyatt says what’s different this year is that more multicultural acts will grace the stage: black rockers, alongside Latinx rockers, and more “stuff for families.”

“We didn’t realize how many kids came in 2013, and they all had such a good time,” she says. “And it made me want to have more stuff for them to do.”

This will include having the Detroit Food Warrior Youth working on a banner where attendees can add in their own paint, or markers to decorate. Additionally, they’ll have some make-and-take crafts for kids to do, so they can take a piece of the festival home with them. Throw in more food vendors and food trucks, and you’re looking at a special kind of party.

“I try to think about as if I was having this at my house...I want to get as close to feeling like a Juke joint as possible,” Wyatt says. “I don’t want you to have to leave if you don’t want to.”

The venue was originally held in the Artist Village. In contrast, the Tangent Gallery/Hastings Street Ballroom is an indoor affair. One of the challenges they faced this year was finding the proper venue. Wyatt and her co-organizers were turned down by several establishments (even those with popular hip-hop nights) because the Cosmic Slop Music Festival seemed exclusionary.

“We’re *excluding* people because it’s a black, Hispanic, Arab rock festival, because we’re focusing on the fact that rock’s root have color,” Wyatt says. “But here we are.”

The singer/songwriter/guitarist can trace her musical legacy all the way back her great-grandfather, Henry K. Kailimai, a Hawaiian musician and songwriter famous for his Ukulele playing and penning the standard, “On the Beach of Waikiki.”

“Making music accessible to people was his life’s work and this is the blood that runs through my veins,” Wyatt says. “I wouldn’t look and sound the way I sound if it were not for music.”

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“Representation matters. I can’t stress it to black folks enough,” Wyatt says. “I feel like the taboo of black people listening to rock ‘n’ roll is the new cultural frontier for us as a people aside from the LGBT (issue). Letting people be themselves is what we’re all about.”

And you can be yourself at the Cosmic Slop Music Festival. If rock music moves you, and you’re black, Latinx, Arab, or of any other persuasion, you’ll feel right at home, Wyatt adds. People with active melanin – who happen to be rockers at heart – need a place to relax, be communal, drink in the rich culture of a music that has no real (or imagined) color barriers.

“Nobody’s looking at you like you’re weird,” Wyatt says. “If people are looking at you at the Cosmic Slop Festival, they’re probably trying to figure out where you got that T-shirt, or where you got those earrings, or those boots. That’s the environment we fought for since 2011. I’m looking forward to showing the people something different.”

Advance tickets are \$10 for adults (\$15 at the door), \$5 for teens (\$7 at the door) and free for children under 13. After 8 p.m. the program changes to adults-only performances. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.cosmicslopfest.com, or e-mail cosmicslopdetroit@gmail.com.