

4B Thursday, May 9, 2013 WP

# REDBONE: Latest album sets English poet's work to music

Poison Tree," considered one of Blake's finest works, and the couple immediately saw how it could be turned into a mountain tune. Before long, they'd decided the entire record, "Garden of Love," would be Blake's poetry set to Redbone's blend of R&B, funk, soul and string-band rhythm and blues.

"The songs ended up writing themselves," she says. "The melodies came to me instantly. It was just a natural flow."

Redbone will bring some of those songs — and her signature eclectic sound — to the Nimham Mountain Music Festival on Saturday, held at Putnam County Veterans Memorial Park in Kent. The event benefits the Daniel Nimham Intertribal Pow Wow, an annual festival that honors a Native American chief who fought in the Revolutionary War, and will raise

funds to help cover the costs of making "Bomber, PJ & Beartracks," a documentary about veterans coping with the aftereffects of war.

Redbone has long been a champion of Native American causes: Her late mother, whose family has been rooted for generations in the mountains of Kentucky and Virginia, was a mix of Cherokee, Shawnee and Choctaw; her late father was an African-American from North Carolina. That diverse upbringing meant she grew up listening to everything from church hymns to country music, and she was raised on Tanya Tucker as much as the Jackson Five.

When Redbone was 11, she and her family moved to Park Slope, Brooklyn, and she realized just how much her musical education differed from her peers.

"I was the only 11-year-



Martha Redbone grew up listening to everything from church hymns to country music. FABRICE TROMBERT

old in our neighborhood who knew who Conway Twitty was," she says.

Redbone still lives in Brooklyn, with Whitby and their 4-year-old son, Zach. She was lucky enough to take a six-year recording break before releasing "Garden of Love" last year, riding on the success of 2006's "Future Street" and 2004's "Skintalk."

"We got wonderful reviews so we were able to

get on the road and tour ... for quite some time," she says.

Redbone also got the opportunity of a lifetime in 2009, performing at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian's Native Nations Ball to celebrate the first inauguration of President Barack Obama.

She reprised that honor this year for Obama's second swearing-in, watching the ceremony

## IF YOU GO

The Martha Redbone Roots Project band will perform at Nimham Mountain Music Festival in Kent this weekend, and Redbone has two other area appearances coming up. Here's where to see her live:

» May 11, 2-10 p.m.: Nimham Mountain Music Festival, Putnam County Veterans Memorial Park, Gypsy Trail Road, Kent. 845-363-1559, [www.hgfairfieldarts.org](http://www.hgfairfieldarts.org). Tickets are \$25.

» May 18, 7:30 p.m.: Common Ground Coffeehouse, First Unitarian Society of Westchester, 25 Old Jackson Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson. [www.commongroundfusw.com](http://www.commongroundfusw.com). Tickets are \$18 in advance, \$20 at the door.

» June 15: Clearwater Festival, 1:30 p.m.: Croton Point Park, Croton Point Avenue, Croton-on-Hudson. [www.clearwaterfestival.org](http://www.clearwaterfestival.org). Tickets range from \$60 to \$75.

from the museum's rooftop across from the Capitol before hitting the stage later on at the gala.

"It was magical," she says. "Tribal leaders from almost every one of the 566 federally recognized tribes attended the ball dressed in everything from black tie to traditional regalia."

She's reveling, too, in

how well her new album has been received, especially since it's the first time she allowed someone else to produce: John McEuen, one of the founding members of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

"It was kind of nice being in the back seat for awhile," she says, with a laugh. "And it came out great."