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Weather Forecast

## Taking it personally

### French singer reflects on Paris attacks

by Al Sullivan

Reporter staff writer

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LiLi Roquelin had a lot to celebrate. The award-winning singer/songwriter was still basking in the glow of an award for best short film in the Golden Door International Film Festival in Jersey City when she heard the reports of trouble in Paris.



Her video "Like a Feather" had become an official selection in the film festival in early November, and she had just taken part in a fundraiser in New York City to help anti-human trafficking programs the day before the Paris attacks.



Late in the day on Nov. 13, terrorists connected to the Islamic State conducted a series of coordinated attacks that included suicide bombings, mass shootings, and the taking of hostages. The attacks killed 129 people, more than half of them during a rock concert in the Bataclan Theatre, and injured over 300 others.



The attacks started at Rue Bichat and rue Alibert, outside Le Carillon, a café and bar, and spread across the street to the Le Petit Cambodge restaurant, where 11 people were killed. A short time later, a man with a machine gun fired shots near Café Bonne Biere. More attacks happened at another restaurant, La Belle Equipe. At about the same time, a bomb was detonated at a sports stadium north of the city.



IN THE LIME LIGHT – LiLi Roquelin is seen here on the red carpet at the Golden Door International Film festival where her music video was featured.

**“My female cousins that I adore live in Paris. One lives near the restaurant Le Petit Cambodge and she bought food there a half hour before the shooting.” – LiLi Roquelin**

Most of the victims were patrons attending a concert by the American band Eagles of Death Metal at the Bataclan Theatre, where hostages were also taken.

A native of France, Roquelin had a number of friends and family members in Paris at the time. She contacted her family members one at a time.

#### Worried calls home

“My female cousins that I adore live in Paris,” Roquelin said. “One lives near the restaurant Le Petit Cambodge and she bought food there a half hour before the shooting. Her sister was in the soccer stadium and got evacuated in the other side of the kamikaze bombings. They stayed home and felt very grateful and waited for the police announcements to be allowed to go out.”

She said, “The attack at the concert hall during the American band show was horrific and it deeply disturbed me. Not just because of the number of deaths and the massacre itself. It was a music concert. I am a musician. I could have been on stage or in the crowd. The people in the crowd were there to enjoy

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American rock music.”

Long before coming to Jersey City to compete in the Golden Door International Film Festival, Roquelin made her cultural mark. She has done scores of performances on TV and radio, including an acapella performance of “God Bless America” in front of FOX5, NY1, sung the national anthem at other public forums, and was the opening act for Bruce Sudano [the producer for Michael Jackson, Dolly Parton, and his wife Donna Summer]. Several of her songs were on the official entry list for consideration at the 57th Grammy Awards.

“My dad is a musician,” she said. “I started performing when I was very young, maybe four years old. I was in the middle school band, wrote poems and eventually realized they could be turned into songs.”

She came to the United States with her family in 2004 and lived for a time in Cleveland, a city she said was comparable to the town in France where she grew up.

“I was from an average sized town in the south of France,” she said. “I don’t think I could have handled living in New York City at first.”

When she finally got to the New York area, her career blossomed. She got work in TV, radio, and short films and completed her own music videos.

She said she is still promoting her award-winning video, which ironically was scheduled to be featured in a London film festival the day of the attacks in Paris.

She said the attacks on her homeland were traumatic.

“It was hard for me to not take it personally,” she said. “Plus this [The Bataclan theatre] is a legend. Everyone grieves their own way. I personally didn’t feel the emotional strength to go to the memorial and get in the crowd. Instead, I am recording an acapella version of the French National Anthem. They attacked lives, happiness and music. I reply with singing the beautiful melody and words of my country’s values. Our history proves that we’ve deserved freedom for three centuries, and that’s not going to change.”

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**Lili Roquelin** | November 22, 2015

I would have loved to receive an "award" at the Golden Door Film Festival for my music video "Like A feather", I was thrilled to have received a "Nomination for Best Short Film"; maybe the Award next year!  
;)

Other of my music videos have received awards at multirole film festivals :).

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