Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 16 June 2017 03:26





Featuring Mato Nanji

of Indigenous

Gallup, for a small city, gets its share of diverse concerts, whether it's a Cuban jazz ensemble or a rock n' roll gig and everything in between.

It was the fusion of blues and rock that hit the stage in the downtown area at the Gallup Downtown Conference Center this past week. Taking the stage June 8 was "Indigenous." Indigenous is an American rock band that debuted in the late 1990s.

The band originally consisted of two brothers, Mato Nanji and Pte Nanji, their sister Wanbdi, and cousin Horse – all Yankton Sioux Native American Indians from the Nakota Nation, growing up on the Yankton Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

Currently, Mato Nanji is the remaining member of the original line up, keeping the band going with a diverse string of bluesy/rock music, and with a base core of fans still grooving on it. The *Gallup Sun* got the chance to rock out to the band that has been going strong for nearly two decades; then afterwards this reporter sat down for one-on-one interview with lead guitarist Mato Nanji.

Sun: Hey Mato how's it going … cool sound brother!

Nanji: Oh, thank you glad you enjoyed it.

Sun: I really liked the killer guitar riffs … how would you classify your music?

Nanji: Well, it's just good ole' blues and rock n' roll I guess. I grew up listening to the old blues guys, a lot of the 60's/70's rock, like Cream, Santana, the Eagles, you know just everything. Everything I've heard I tried to kind of incorporate into what I'm doing.

Sun: So those guys were your inspiration?

Nanji: Yeah, and I kind of grew up in the 90's too … I listened to a lot of the rock bands that were in like Pearl Jam, Black Crowes, you know different stuff like that.

Sun: Are you currently on a small tour right now?

Nanji: Yah, we'll probably be out for a couple of weeks, we were in Phoenix the other night and it was great there. Then heading up north here in New Mexico for some shows there, (then) off to Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, kind of doing the whole East Coast thing. Then coming home after that (he laughs) … get some rest, you know.

Sun: What's your latest album?

Nanji: The album is called "Time is Coming." I just finished a new record recently, which will hopefully be out this summer or hopefully in the Fall. It's called "Gray Skies Indigenous." Yeah, so pretty excited about getting that out. Probably be out on the road again with that.

Sun: You've won numerous awards, too right?

Nanji: Oh yeah, in fact at NAM (Native American Music), we played a couple of those shows, which was pretty cool.

Sun: How many guys are in your band right now?

Nanji: Right we got three guys. and every once in a while, my brother Horace from the original band accompanies us on our tour.

Sun: How do you get inspired?

Nanji: Well, uh I just saw my dad's guitar … always been interested, I guess it was always in my blood.

Sun: Who have you toured with?

Nanji: We've toured with quite a lot of people like: B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Johnny Lang, Los Lobos, we even did some stuff with the Dave Matthews band, just a long list. Bob Dylan, did a few shows with him, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Brown, Indigo Girls … yeah … it was pretty

awesome to play with all of them.

I also did a part in the Experience Jimi Hendrix tour, which was a couple months back and finished that. Touring the whole country for about six weeks. That had a bunch of guitar players in it like, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Zack Wylde, Dweezil Zappa, and Billy Cox, last guy of Jimi Hendrix.

It was definitely one my highlights of going out on the road, having to get up there every night and play with these guys was pretty awesome!

Sun: How does it feel to play here?

Nanji: We've been here a few times and it's been awesome, always love to come back and you know it's a good spot because it's between Albuquerque and Phoenix. It's cool to come here and play … like I always say … we'll play anywhere.

Sun: Any side projects you doing?

Nanji: I've been working with Noah Hunt the singer from Kenny Wayne Shepherd. He's a great singer and I've toured with him a couple times. So, that also we're hoping to release it soon too. It's cool to play and make a good living out of it (laughing).

Sun: Well cool Mato, hey thanks for doing this, and hope to meet you again brother, take care.

Nanji: Thanks for coming out brother … we'll just keep touring and playing and enjoying it.

By Dee Velasco
For the Sun