

Nizhóní Girls jam out at Arts Crawl

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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All female band wows audience with their ‘Rez-Style/Surf’ beat

Three indigenous women rooted in the Navajo Nation and Pueblo of Laguna performed in Gallup after Arts Crawl at the Silver Stallion July 14. The trio sat down for an interview with the *Sun* prior to their evening show at the fledgling bike repair shop.

The Diné word *Nizhóní* means “beautiful” in English.

Rebecca “Becki” Jones, Diné/guitar and back-up vocals, Liz McKenzie, Diné/bass and vocals, and Lisa Lorenzo, Pueblo of Laguna/drums, are passionate about making and playing music. They came up with the name because each feels beautiful in their own way. Their sound can be described as “desert surf” with a sprinkling of country, pulling inspiration from a local Navajo radio station songs and femme fronted rock bands.

Based out of Albuquerque, and playing for the past two years, their music includes elements of their cultural background, such as turquoise jewelry, moccasins, and even the fun aspects of growing up on “the rez.” Their first EP Album entitled *Nizhóní Girls*, the songs *Somehow*, *Sludg e Pubby*, and *Louie* speak of the reservation humor and experiences.

All were friends before forming the band, and the idea to form the band came to them one night, according to Lorenzo, who plays the drums.

“We just wanted to start a Native girl band. Lisa and I went to high school together, then we saw Becki at a music scene and it all happened at once,” Lorenzo said.

Wanting to fit in and play along the lines of Indie rock, the girls began writing their songs and

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adding music to it. Bands like *Bleach* were the inspiration for the women, as Jones describes.

“We wanted to be like bands on the punky-pop-surf side, and I always wanted to be in a band like that,” Jones said. “Surf music is kind of like chord heavy, lots of reverb, and dreamy music is how I would describe it. This was a cool opportunity for myself to go into that kind of realm and try it out. It’s pretty fun once you hear us and see where we are coming from.”

Lorenzo said the take from people who have heard the *Nizhóní Girls*, range from awesome to unique and having a lot of fun at their shows – especially the little kids who attend their gigs.

“They say we’re definitely unique as well as fun,” she said, “They express they have fun at our shows, especially a lot of little Native American kids. They say we’re awesome and ask if they could do that; I tell them they can totally do this, just get some drums, guitar and learn – that’s how we did it.”

When writing songs, it’s a collaboration of all, each giving input of what each is feeling, memories, and other elements. Despite each member’s hectic schedule, they manage to get together and create new songs.

When not playing, Jones works as a sexual health educator with Planned Parenthood, Lorenzo repairs antique rugs in Albuquerque; and McKenzie works in the hospitality industry as a cook.

“We all kind of come up with it all together ... either I’ll do up the bassline and the other two will make up a song in one day,” Lorenzo said. “Our songs are Diné humor like being ‘somehow’ (laughing) we’ve all had bits of that kind of humor and fun.”

The Nizhóní Girls say this is their version of relieving stress while doing what they love. Aside from playing in the band, the group says they get involved in community organizations and advocate for causes they believe in.

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“We represent other Native women who are out there too playing music, which is very important,” Jones said. “We do play a lot of music in the punk scene, and those punk scenes are male dominated, and we just want to take up space in those scenes.”

For more information visit: <https://nizhonigirls.bandcamp.com/releases>

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