

## Actor, musician Gary Farmer plays Gallup, chats with the Sun

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun  
Friday, 23 September 2016 03:14

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**‘If we can make ‘em laugh or cry, we can make them think’**

Along with film-fest staples like screenings and Q&A sessions hosted by filmmakers, the Gallup Film Festival rolled out the proverbial red carpet for celebrities and live-music acts alike – and afforded an opportunity for local folks to hobnob with entertainment’s finest.

One of the festival’s featured music acts included a Sept. 18 evening performance by Gary Farmer and *his* troublemakers. Farmer’s band, Gary Farmer and the Troublemakers, has released two CDs , *Love Songs and Other Issues*, 2007, and *Lovesick Blues*, 2009.

Before the show, the Sun sat down with Farmer and discussed music, acting, Native filmmaking, and beyond.

**Sun:** Welcome back to Gallup, Gary, how long have you been coming to Gallup to perform?

**Farmer:** Well, at least a dozen [years], I guess. I love playing music, people ask me to play music. You know, I try to oblige ... It keeps me young. [Laughs] I’m getting old.

**Sun:** How long has your band been together and how has it been going?

**Farmer:** The band has been performing since 2005 — about 11 years now. I’ve got five albums....

Today, we put on a very eclectic show. I try to get artists that have content as well as material.... so we’re all storytellers. It’s very diverse, interesting and eclectic, so it’s a lot of fun. That’s why I use different artists for different shows; we change it up depending on the situation.

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**Sun:** Are you considered a blues band?

**Farmer:** You can call us whatever you want — rock n roll, reggae, all kinds of things — but yeah, it's blues-based.

**Sun:** Do you guys tour extensively?

**Farmer:** We usually tour in the off-season, like the fall or spring, and sit by the phone during the summer, I guess. We'll probably do like the West Coast this year, but we do get around.

**Sun:** When you're not touring, do you still act?

**Farmer:** Yeah, I do, but not as much as I use to do, because I'm not as popular as I once was, I guess. I never do any of the historical mellow dramas they do; I'm not a starvation Indian, I guess — never have been. So I guess [I do] what comes to me, and that is contemporary [film].

**Sun:** How do you feel about Native American films?

**Farmer:** You want as much Native American content as possible. I always thought the best thing to do [for] anyone [with] any money was to make a Native American pilot and sell it to the networks — that would be the strongest thing [for] our Native young ones to do. We need a lot of Native American producers. Like if I had any time or money, I would do a piece on the Navajo [about] the degradation to what is happening to them.

**Sun:** Would you view those types of films as entertainment?

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**Farmer:** It's not entertainment as much as it's education. I mean, television doesn't have to be so fully entertainment. It should have a beginning, middle, and end, and we should have a sense of something we learned from the experience ... We need our voice out there more than ever, and I always believe that if we are the protectors of Mother Earth, let's get busy, man.

**Sun:** How did you get started in acting?

**Farmer:** I took an interest in photography in high school. From there, I went to cinematic interest and ended up in Toronto in college. Then I got into filmmaking, where I ended up in the theater. In the theater, I saw the power of story and how we can make people laugh — if we can make 'em laugh or cry, we can make them think.

I thought, now there's a way to make a change. Because I grew up in a fairly dysfunctional Native American community, I knew we needed change. So when I discovered the theater, that was when I realized this was how you do it: You just gotta make people think to make the world a better place — that's why I became an actor.

**Sun:** I heard that you also teach classes on acting ...

**Farmer:** I [pull students] together and pull on their subconscious and help shape the story, and then I help guide them through.

**Sun:** Do you see other methods in telling a story?

**Farmer:** We gotta continue doing the work, we're quite a few years behind in doing it, you know. We need some new stuff — you guys are gonna have to do it: the community, the people. [Figure out] what changes they want, and find a creative way of telling it and how it will help. That's how you make stories.

Radio is the best way to start because it's so cheap. Start with sound first, the story, that's the

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important thing, and when it's time for visual, that's when you do that. I like to work it like that — cheaply, you know. We are “Indians,” we don't have any money. If we do, then everyone is chasing you around for it. We gotta be wise for our dollars; we gotta get our people telling the stories.

**Sun:** Anything else happening with you?

**Farmer:** Yeah, I try to work on a new album every couple years.

**Sun:** Thank you, Gary. How would one get a hold of you regarding your music or acting?

**Farmer:** Thank you, I'm on Facebook, Twitter; I'm easy to get a hold of — just search Gary Farmer.

**Visit:** [garyfarmerthetroublemakers.com](http://garyfarmerthetroublemakers.com)

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