

Rock 'n' roll indigenous style

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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Navajo, Taos musician makes his way to Gallup

Mozart Gabriel (Navajo and Taos Pueblo) grew up listening to and singing traditional songs. But it's only been in the past four years that he's been writing his own music.

Before COVID, Gabriel was attending the BAU Design College of Barcelona, but the pandemic brought him back to New Mexico. While he was in Barcelona, he had the chance to perform his Indigenous rock n'roll for a multicultural crowd.

"They're two totally different worlds. I think what's really incredible about being in Barcelona is how international it is; it's such an international city," Gabriel said when discussing performing in the Spanish city. "You get everyone from everywhere, China, India, Austria, Japan, France, Ukraine, and Russia. It's all around the world, and to see everyone love rock n' roll still and get really excited by it from so many different cultures has been a very rewarding experience. Being able to have a connection with so many people from all over the world has been one of the greatest gifts that Barcelona's ever given to me."

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The rich experiences have only fueled his excitement to return to the New Mexico stage.

“Now, that’s all great, but it means even more to me when I’m able to play in front of my people, or indigenous people, because we’re so close in that world that we all live in. It feels more like family,” Gabriel said.

Gabriel was born in Santa Fe, raised in Taos, and moved with his family to Venice, Italy, New York, and Boston as a kid. He studied film and animation in Vancouver and art in Chicago, then moved to Nashville to make music videos and write songs. He moved to Barcelona in 2018.

His father is from Gallup, so Gabriel said that’s one of the reasons he’s excited to get to perform at the Levitt Amp Concert series on July 16.

“My dad is from Gallup and I grew up spending a lot of time there visiting my grandma and my grandpa [and] my dad taking me to look at the Red Rocks,” Gabriel said.

When asked what he loves about performing in front of a crowd, Gabriel said it’s all about the connection with his audience.

“You get to be 100% vulnerable with who you are, and I think that allows everyone to be very present. I think in the world we live in today everyone gets so caught up in our phones, and technology and Netflix and all of this stuff,” Gabriel said. “We’re always kind of glued to a screen, and if I’m able to get everybody off their phones then I know I’m being honest enough; that people want to listen, that people aren’t feeling lonely. Music is supposed to bring people together so we can all feel that we’re going through the same things, and we kind of forget time exists and we’re just in the present.”

Gabriel’s latest single “Till Dawn” comes out on July 29. He said the song is inspired by the movie “From Dusk till Dawn.” He said his next album would be coming out soon as well.

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Gabriel will be playing alongside the band Fox Royale as a part of the Levitt Amp Concert Series July 16. The concert starts at 6 pm at the Courthouse Square. The event is free to the public.

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