

Navajo heavy-metal band makes an album in Denmark

Written by By Dee "JC" Velasco Sun Correspondent
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Album produced by Metallica's producer

Imagine your wildest rock-star dreams have come true: You play in front of a huge crowd, fans scream your name, and you're producing your very first album. Well, that's exactly what happened to three Native American heavy-metal musicians from the Dine Nation.

The band, "I Dont Konform," from Window Rock, Ariz., consists of Kyle Felter on guitar/vocals, Brett Begay on base, and, Randy Billy on drums. The band's dream came true when they found themselves heading to Denmark to have their first album produced by the legendary, Flemming Rasmussen, the producer of Metallica's *Ride the Lightning* album.

The Sun sat down with the band; university professor Ashkan Soltani, who is currently filming a documentary on the heavy-metal scene on the reservation; Jerold Cecil, the bands manager; and the legendary Rasmussen.

Gallup Sun: How did you guys come into contact with Flemming Rasmussen?

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Felter: I wanted a good sounding album, because today's albums are too machine-like, there's no attitude or feelings in it. So I decided to look online for analog recording, and I came across some notes on how to do this. At the time, I didn't know [Rasmussen] was the Metallica producer. I just saw the notes, every detail drawn out, and that's what caught me, I was like, "Wow." I emailed him.

GS: Now Flemming, so you get the email and what caught your attention of this band?

Rasmussen: I got the email and said to myself, "Navajo Nation ... where is that?" (Laughs.) It instantly caught my attention, and I wanted to know more about it, so I listened to their music. I liked the aggression, the style, and the energy, so I thought about it, heard the songs a couple of times, and I contacted Kyle.

As I said before, I see the same aggression with this band as I saw when I produced those albums for Metallica. So it should be very cool, we're gonna produce the album in my studio, Sweet Silence Studios, in Denmark

GS: So Ashkan, how did you get involved in all of this?

Soltani: I didn't intend to meet these guys. I was working on a documentary about the whole heavy-metal rez scene. At the time, I was on my way to another heavy-metal concert on the rez, and I meet this lady who insisted I meet with this band, I Dont Konform.

I actually met the band at this Zumba place in Window Rock, and they really rocked! So now I'm actually going with them to Denmark to film the whole process, being right there in the studio and seeing what happens.

I'm simply amazed at what great talented heavy-metal musicians there are from the reservation. I found this with both Navajos and Zunis, and I'm sure there are other great talents from other Native American tribes as well.

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GS: Jerold, what was your reaction when Kyle told you about Flemming?

Cecil: I was pretty stoked, and when he told me it was the Metallica guy ... I didn't believe it. But the more Kyle kept telling me it was really him, I just thought ... man, this could really be a reality.

So we started raising money, hitting the streets, like simple things like getting ourselves out there in the community so that they know us. That's the whole key to what we were doing, we would go out and push our business card on to people, telling people to listen to our music, asking local businesses and establishments if we could post our show flyers there.

GS: So it really paid off, huh?

Cecil: (Laughing) I think Kyle put it best ... "This would be really messed up if it was a dream."

GS: Now Brett, you're the bass player, what do you think?

Begay: I still think it's all unreal (laughing). It's crazy because when I joined the band three years ago, I never would have thought this would happen. I went from fan to roadie to now playing in the band.

GS: Flemming, what do you see is going to be the final project?

Rasmussen: I'm hoping we record a very killer album with some good songs. We've been composing some songs already and fine-tuning some of them, doing some rearranging. I got a game plan so we won't be wasting time.

I'm gonna do whatever I can to get these guys on a label when the album comes out. I'm hoping

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in 10 years, we'll look back and say, "Hey, remember [when] you came out to that Hogan, and now look where we are."

GS: One last question for the band. How's your family feel all about this?

Felter: (Laughing) Our family is pretty freaked out about it ... they just keep saying, "Wow...wow!" Our families are trying to help us out as much as they can here and there. I'm hoping in 10 years we'll be on our third album.

GS: Guys, I wish you nothing but the best, and Flemming, thank you so much for doing the interview.

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Sun Correspondent