

# Happy being blue

## Midwest favorite Indigenous finds national audience

By **CHRISTOPHER HEINE**  
*Senior staff writer*

It's been proven. Successful people can stay humble.

Even if their blues-rock band has been invited to play for the president. Even if they have the second-most requested song in America.

Even if they're Indigenous.

The Marty, S.D., four-piece band, burgeoning in popularity with blues fanatics across the country, is expected to play to a packed house at The Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th, tonight at 10.

But the American Indian band of two brothers, a sister and a cousin would never let you know that they are a hot item.

Its 20-something members would rather talk about the source of their music, and the reason why they are so successful at their young ages.

"We owe everything we are musically to our parents," said bassist Pte, which means "Buffalo" in Nakota Sioux.

"It's almost like they planned everything."

Pte, brother Mato Nanji (guitars) and sister Wanbdi (drums) were home-schooled by their parents as they grew up on the Yankton Nakota Indian reservation in South Dakota.

Pte said their parents, Greg and Beverly Zephier, have always encouraged them to pursue the band. Their father played in a group called the Vanishing Americans in the 1970s.

"Some parents don't let their kids join bands because of what they see on TV," he said. "I feel so fortunate to have parents who let us do what we love

to do. And we've learned a lot from what they've taught us about music and life."

One of the things they picked up from their intimate learning environment was their father's love of such blues-rock legends as Buddy Guy and Stevie Ray Vaughn.

Mato Nanji, whose name means Standing Bear, said his father's influence is a key to his guitar style. He said any of the same popular blues influences that make up his father's record collection, are his favorites as well.

Whatever the source of inspiration, Mato Nanji is making waves of his own.

The tall, broad-shouldered 24-year-old is widely considered to be one of the most exciting young blues pickers in the world. Yet, Mato Nanji said his father "takes over the room" when he plugs in to jam with his children.

"When he starts playing I just have to stop and go, 'Whoa,'" he said.

It was Zephier's collection of music equipment that led to each of his children finding an instrument to learn.

Pte said his father didn't push the children to play or teach them how.

"He wanted us to do it if we wanted to," he said. "He'd teach us how to tune our instruments and some basic chords. Beyond that he believed if we learned on our own that we'd never forget it."

Indigenous began playing as a three-piece until their cousin Horse came to live with them. Horse

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**MATO NANJI**, the frontman of Indigenous, plays in the Nebraska Union Ballroom on Wednesday night. Indigenous will take the stage tonight at the Zoo Bar, at 10.

# The beat plays on for Polka fans

*Polka concert at Pla-Mor raises questions about its future popularity*

By **JASON HARDY**  
*Staff writer*

During the 1950s, a polka show in Nebraska was a sure bet for a big crowd and a fun night.

Since then the turnout at polka shows has dwindled both in size and variety of those attending. Performers and venues alike just aren't getting the response they once enjoyed.

Still, those loyal to the music persist.

"Let's face it, when I started in the early '50s we used to get 1400 people easily," said Ron Nadherny, frontman for the Ron Nadherny Polka Band of Omaha. "You can't get that anymore, but the music has still maintained itself throughout all these years."

Tonight, as part of the ongoing Great Plains Music and Dance Festival and Symposium, the Pla-Mor Ballroom is showcasing a night of polka music and dancing with the



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Ron Nadherny Polka Band and the Colorado River Boys.

Unfortunately, events like tonight's have become increasingly rare, and since he founded his group 26 years ago, Nadherny says the opportunities to perform aren't as plentiful.

"The demand isn't as great anymore," Nadherny said. "As people grow older the crowd kind of dies off. Around our area we have mostly older people. Wisconsin still maintains a fairly young crowd, but we have a lot of great bands still working here."

"I think Nebraska and Wisconsin are the states that are really holding it together."

Nadherny said a key player in keeping polka alive was Pla-Mor owner, Bobby Lane, who has contin-

"I think Nebraska and Wisconsin are the states that are really holding (polka) together."

**RON NADHERNY**  
 polka artist

ually booked polka acts over the years, despite waning attendance. Lane said that while the shows didn't attract massive crowds anymore, there was still a loyal group who made booking polka acts worth it.

"The people who love the music really put out an effort to attend," Lane said. "One of the disappointing things is that we're not seeing as many young people attend as we used to."

"It's something that people are clinging to, but everything changes."

He said that while younger generations weren't being exposed to as

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MATT HANEY/DN