



Sun-Sentinel Native American performances enthrall hundreds at awards show.

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HOLLYWOOD, Fla. _ The royalty of Native American music came to South Florida on Thursday to sing, stomp and dance, and to name the best and brightest in their growing ranks.

The seventh Native American Music Awards were celebrated at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, where 800 people filled an intimate venue called The Club to capacity.

Seats went for \$100 apiece in the show's first South Florida appearance. Spectators got three hours of award presentations and live performances that showcased the artistry of an ancient American culture that also embraces contemporary styles.

"Native American artists are representing R&B now," said rapper-singer Jay Nez, accepting the Nammy for debut artist of the year.

Even as they rapped or rocked, performers expressed Native American themes and identity. "Be true to yourself, learn the medicine way," went a lyric in a bluesy, guitar-driven song by the Red Corn Band.

The high, dramatic vocalizing of the Prairie Island Singers, accompanied by vibrantly costumed dancers, was pure Native Americana. The circular dance and chant performed by the nine-piece Seminole Stomp Dancers took its cues from a ceremony that, on reservations, is performed around a fire by as many as 100 tribe members.

Actors Adam Beech and Jana were co-hosts of the show, which opened with welcoming remarks from Seminole Chief Mitchell Cypress.

The performers and award winners are best known in Native American circles, but guests included singers Rita Coolidge and Crystal Gayle, both of whom have had careers in mainstream popular music and trace their roots to Native American tribes.

The Nammys, produced by the New York City-based Native American Music Association, previously have been held in New Mexico, Connecticut and Wisconsin. But association President Ellen Bello said that making the Seminole venue the Nammys' permanent home is "absolutely a consideration."

"It's a perfect venue, it's a credible name, it's a great host tribe," Bello said. "And the intention is, and has always been, to do it more than once here. And it would be wonderful to make it a permanent home."

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