

Eighth Annual Native American Music Awards Rocks at the Hard Rock Live

Story and photos by Kimberlie R. Hall
Hollywood, Florida (NFIC)

The Eighth Annual Native American Music Awards was held on Thursday, June 8th, 2006, at the Seminole Hard Rock Live in Hollywood. Hosted by Navajo comedy duo James & Ernie, this year's program featured a magical evening of pride and musical excellence with over 28 awards presentations and a dozen live music performances.

Douglas Blue Feather opened the live performances of the evening with his flute instrumental. Just like in Tina Turner's rendition of "Proud Mary"... you start out real slow... then you speed up... with adrenalin flowing and music getting louder... and faster... and the Hard Rock was a rockn' before the night was out.

In between award presentations and speeches, more Native artists rocked the stage. This year's Best Female Artist of the Year, Pura Fé, founding member of the internationally renowned Native women's acapella trio Ulali, came out with a solo performance resurrecting the common bond and the

Indigenous influence of the "birth of the blues," playing a acoustic lap steel slide guitar and belting out the blues.

Violinist Arvel Bird (Pauite), this year's winner for Best Instrumental Recording, also performed. His sound is truly an eclectic musical experience. He can play anything from classical to country and bluegrass to jazz. Arvel added two new additions to his group, Eagle and Vlasis, the former drummer and guitarist from Brulé.

This year, the show inducted the late Link Wray (Shawnee) into the N.A.M.A. Hall of Fame. Link is known as the first Native American rock and roll star. He began his career in the 1940s with brothers Doug and Vernon in Portsmouth, Virginia. They played Western Swing - or as Link put it "rock and roll before it was rock and roll."

Link's first big hit was "The Rumble" and after appearing on *American Bandstand* the hit went on to sell four million copies. Link's other hits included "Rawhide" in 1959 and "Jack the Ripper" in 1960. Through

the years, Link has shared the stage with the likes of Patsy Cline, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, Neil Young and many more. His music has been featured in soundtracks for *Breathless*, *Desperado*, *Independence Day*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Blow* and *Confession of a Dangerous Mind*, among others.

Link Wray's induction was presented by Little Steven, one of the founding members of the Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band and star of *The Sopranos*.

After the presentation, a special tribute performance was lead by his grandson, Chris Webb, with guest Gary Small from the band Coyote Bros.

The NAMMYS also awarded original Doors drummer John Densmore with a Native Heart award for his contribution on Keith Secola's *Native Americana*, Miami-based 70s rockers, Tiger Tiger with a Lifetime Achievement, and GRAMMYS® MusiCares' Harold Owens with a Humanitarian Award.

Leading Award winners included Keith Secola for Artist of the Year and Best Folk Recording, Jana's *Flash of a Firefly* for Record of the Year, Jim Boyd for Songwriter of the Year, Bill Miller for Song/Single of the Year, and Rita Coolidge's *And So Is Love* for Best Blues/Jazz Recording.

Oh, and we can't forget Buddy Big Mountain, Windell and Lennord Fire Hair. They always add just a great comic relief to the evening every year.

And just when you think the show couldn't possibly get any better, just before intermission, a special All Star Rock performance took place with Micki Free (Shalimar), Jean Beauvoir (Plasmatics/Little Steven), Stevie Salas (Mick Jagger/Rod Stewart), John Brant (Cheap Trick) and Dave Abrusezze (formerly of Pearl Jam) and they rocked the house.

Other performances throughout the



James and Ernie, the Navajo comedy duo, were the host of this year's NAMMYS.

evenings show included Red Rhythm Band, Eagle & Hawk, Wade Fernandez and Gil Silverbird.

Out of all the performances that evening two stood out the most for me and that was Keith Secola's "Frybread" song and the closing performance by Bill Miller. "Why," you say? Cause just like the veteran Native musicians they are, they called upon Pura Fé, Soni and Jennifer... yes that's right... Ulali, to sing back-up for them on stage. You see those girls just can't show up somewhere and sit back incognito and just watch a performance. Once the likes of Bill or Keith know they are in the house they are always summoned to round out a performance.

This year's awards show was again broadcast live on the internet via Indigenous Peoples Music. Overwhelming responses were received in Australia, Nigeria and Venezuela. An edited version of the Awards show is expected to be broadcast nationally by Seminole Broadcasting.

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Clockwise from top left: Jim Boyd accepting his award for Songwriter of the Year, Stevie Salas, Micki Free and Jean Beauvoir, and Marlena with her award for Gospel/Christian/Inspirational Recording.

Photos by Kimberlie Hall



Jana takes home the Nammy for Record of the Year for *Flash of a Firefly*.



Keith Secola performing his famous "Frybread" song with Ulali's Soni, Jennifer and Pura Fé backing him up.



Family of late Link Wray with Little Steven (center). (l-r) Rhonda Sayen, Beth Wray Webb (daughters), Little Steven, Chris Webb, Tommy Webb (eldest grandsons).