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# ARTS

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# “Milky Way,” Joy Harjo’s multi-talented world

BY BILL NEVINS

Award-winning poet, singer-songwriter, sax master and UNM creative writing teacher, Joy Harjo redefines the term multi-tasking. With her bands Poetic Justice and the current Joy Harjo Band, she is viewed internationally as a major voice of Native America.

Harjo’s much-anticipated new CD, “Winding through the Milky Way,” produced by Larry Mitchell, will be released in September.

In a July interview, *albuquerqueARTS* asked Joy about this new recording and her performance plans.

**JH:** This is the realization of what I was working through in my last CD, “Native Joy for Real.” Many of the tunes are songs that are part of one of my new projects, a one-woman-show with a band, “Wings of Night Sky, Wings of Morning Light,” which will be produced in 2009 in Los Angeles.

**albuquerqueARTS:** You’ve mastered spoken word, print, music. Do you enjoy any *one* of these forms more than others?

**JH:** The play “Wings of Night Sky, Wings of Morning Light” is the place where all of this can come together. I think of all these forms as one expression. I also photograph. Each project has a

spirit. I want this album to communicate to listeners in a way that is beautiful and revolutionary.

Singing was the first voice I employed. I love to sing, as did my mother.

**albuquerqueARTS:** Do you prefer to perform with a band?

**JH:** I like having company on stage. Solo is all right, too. With a band I stay with the standard rock set up: guitar, keyboard, bass and drums. My current set up is Larry Mitchell, the amazing guitar giant, Howard Cloud on bass, amazing, Robert Muller on keyboards. Steven Alvarez, on drums and native voice, who also performs with Medicine Dreams, an Alaska band. Right now I call the band, “Joy Harjo and the Arrow Dynamics Band.” It’s not the right name, yet.

**albuquerqueARTS:** Do you see your work as political in some sense?

**JH:** Everything is political, whether you choose to see it that way or not. I’ve weathered fierce tribal politics, canoe club politics, music, poetry, and anything you do out there as group politics. With whatever you say or do you are making a stand, one way or the other.



Photo by Paul Abdo.

**albuquerqueARTS:** You travel often between your home in Hawaii and your teaching work in New Mexico. What role does travel play in your artistic awareness and in your writing?

**JH:** Some of us move more vertically in the world. We stay in one place and go deep. Others, like me, move more horizontally. We go out and bring back

new ideas, synthesis, change.

**albuquerqueARTS:** Do you see a separate Indian Country culture outside the United States culture? What about the crossing of borders and boundaries, politically and culturally?

**JH:** I’ve always called the U.S. culture the “over-culture” and don’t consider it a true culture. Beliefs, social institutions, arts and traditions construct culture. The U.S. is made up of many cultures. There is no such thing as a melting pot. There are various cultural streams that are renewed, slowed, cut off, or otherwise changed. The over-culture is a culture of buying and selling.

**albuquerqueARTS:** What thoughts do you have for young and new writers coming up?

**JH:** Those who write are assisting in constructing the next world, the next consciousness. Study with all parts of your being, not just your intellect. Always allow yourself to be surprised. And, write.

**albuquerqueARTS:** What writers and recording artists interest you recently?

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AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS

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# Albuquerque's music heroes put the blues in Blues & Brews 2008

BY BILL NEVINS



TODD TIJERINA BAND. Photo by Christie Williams.

Both Tijerina and the Ryan McGarvey Band will be in the Telluride house, holding forth at the Friday and Saturday late night juke joints which many consider the hidden treasures of Telluride.

Collectively named Tijerina, led by Albuquerque native Todd Tijerina, is a rising force on the national blues scene, yet devoted to their rabid local fan following.

"We are very excited to be playing Tell Blues & Brews as it is one of the most prestigious blues fests in the world," Todd Tijerina comments. "We feel it will be a large feather in our cap and great exposure — something for which any unsigned, hard working act is desperate."

About the recent change of the band's name from Todd Tijerina Band to just one word, Todd says, "I personally felt that a single word works best to suggest that a group



ETTA JAMES. Photo by Priscilla Baca y Candelaria.

The Telluride Blues & Brews Festival is a mid-September journey well worth taking every year. Set in a beautiful box canyon nestled at 8,750 feet on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, it is just an afternoon's drive from New Mexico.

Telluride comes alive this summer with the best craft brews and the finest music gathered from across the U.S. This year's fest on September 12-14 will star legends including Etta James, John Hiatt, Joan Osborne, G. Love & Special Sauce, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Dwayne Dopsie, Susan Tedeschi and Canned Heat. And there is sure to be some wondrous quaffing during the annual Saturday afternoon Grand Tasting when 60 or more breweries proudly offer up their best, most original products for fest-goers pleasure.

New Mexico's many craft brewers will be on hand at Blues & Brews: Santa Fe Brewing, Marble Brewing, Il Vicino, and many others. But this year New Mexico will also contribute mightily to the other "B." Albuquerque's two world-class champions of the fine art of electric blues-crafting will be there to inspire and delight festarians.



JOAN OSBORNE WILL BE ONE OF THE PERFORMERS AT TELLURIDE.

is a cohesive unit, a band, as opposed to an act that is comprised of a front person and varying and ever changing personnel. And I've always felt that a name which suggests a collective creative effort, as is the case with Tijerina, is very potent and alluring. My band mates are Phil Petty (background vocals, bass) and Bjorn Hamre (drums)."

The Ryan McGarvey Band, fronted by a 22-year-old Albuquerquean who has been called "amazingly talented" and a "gunslinger of the blues," and compared to Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan by enthusiastic critics and fans, will bring their blistering vision of the blues to Telluride, just as they bring it with force and fire to Albuquerque audiences regularly.

www.telluridebluesandbrews.com  
www.tjerinaband.com  
www.ryanmgarvey.com

—Bill Nevins is a contributing editor to albuquerqueARTS.

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**JH:** I am reading the "Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature" out of Australia, edited by Anita Heiss and Peter Minter; the stories of Patricia Grace, a Maori writer; and poems by Bengali poets, especially Sunil Gangopadhyay. As for music, my listening is eclectic: everything these days from James Brown to Hawaiian traditional to Michael Brecker and Luis Miguel.

**albuquerqueARTS:** Any words for your New Mexico fans?

**JH:** I have three performances lined up in New Mexico this late summer and fall. All three are band performances. New Mexico audiences are my heart and soul, and I'm always happy to perform here.

—Bill Nevins is a contributing editor to albuquerqueARTS.

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