



The moody musicians who make up Blue Envy are Max Landis and Keva Tanyi.
COURTESY/BLUE ENVY

Big mood

Blue Envy

When Keva Tanyi and Max Landis release their first record as Blue Envy in late spring, the title might resonate with a lot of people: *#Mood*.

"The title does represent our music," guitarist and vocalist Tanyi said. "The mood is always changing."

"We're in a cool spot now where we can try anything we really want and see what speaks to people and then take it from there," said bassist and vocalist Landis.

Clearly, this is not a typical acoustic-based band, and that has shown in the variety of venues they've played in Reno, from places you might think would make sense for an acoustic duo, like Pignic and Ceol, to clubs that usually only serve up the loudest of the loud, like Shea's Tavern or the Holland Project.

Both musicians laughed when I pointed this out, and then Landis unreeled a story about his grandmother, a pastor who sometimes only preaches to a handful of people at her church.

"She told me that she just feels compelled to go up there and do it," Landis said. "'That's just how it is, and I will do it for anyone who wants to listen.' I think that's how personally I feel about the venues we've played, and they've been very accepting and supportive of us. There's been nothing but love."

Blue Envy makes it work with their songwriting skills led by Tanyi's expressive voice and guitar style. The duo has been charming audiences for a little over a year, building a buzz that's likely to continue throughout 2020.

Tanyi and Landis first met at a Halloween party four years ago, where the bassist heard Tanyi sing. From there, they joined a band called This Great State, which had members split between Reno and Sacramento. When that group ended

in late 2018, the two decided to continue as Blue Envy.

The group's sound is a mix of modern pop, '70s acoustic sounds, UK alternative rock, jazz and Afrobeat. Their first single, "Tell Me Why," is an up-to-date confection that would sound perfect on a modern indie pop playlist, yet it also contrasts with Blue Envy's live setting, where the mix of influences are more subtle.

"The reason why we are doing an acoustic duo is because those are the resources we have to work with to perform," Landis said.

"We'd rather do it this way than do nothing at all," Tanyi added.

African artists like Burna Boy and the late great Fela Kuti are the intersection where Blue Envy's songwriting meets. Tanyi's distinctive style on guitar comes from her family background.

"The reason why I even picked up the guitar in the first place was when I first went to Cameroon, when I was 10," Tanyi said. "My pa, Maurice, was blind and he played guitar, so I would try to emulate what he used to do. I know he was influenced by a lot of Makossa music and Fela Kuti, so I think I play like him, and he influenced me a lot."

With Landis playing in a more percussive style than your average bassist, the contrast of styles has clearly struck a nerve with listeners, which is part of Blue Envy's *modus operandi*: to help people forget about the stresses of the day.

"We both work in health care services in different ways for different kinds of people," Landis said. "And we were raised by people who were working in service to others, so that's the main objective here: to be of service to people in whatever way that works." □

Blue Envy plays with local rock bands Engine Fire and Statues of Bliss at 9:30 p.m. Feb. 28 at Shea's Tavern, 715 S. Virginia St. Hear the band's new single and more at soundcloud.com/blueenvybandofficial.

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