



## **Free Concert in the Taos Town Plaza with KONGOS, Thursday September 25th**

The Taos Solar Music Festival and the Town of Taos have partnered to present live in Taos, NM the “**KONGOS**”, coming direct from a sold out show with the Kings of Leon at the Red Rocks Amphitheater.

This multi-media event will be a free show to the public to be held live on the historic Taos Town Plaza on Thursday, September 25, starting at 6:30 pm at the gazebo.

This internationally skyrocketing band made up of four brothers (with the last name “Kongos”) from London, South Africa and Phoenix recently burst onto the American music scene with their explosive Platinum selling hit, “**Come With Me Now**” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gz2GVIQkn4Q> showing up on everything from HBO movie previews, and NFL and NBA promos, to the lead song on the soundtrack for Expendables 3, and a live performance in New York’s Rockefeller Plaza for NBC’s The Today Show. The Kongos continue to be a rapidly a rising mainstay of internet, college, satellite and FM radio with their latest release “Lunatic”.

“SolarFest is proud to bring this amazing young band to Taos. The Kongos bring that kind of excitement factor that SolarFest has come to be known for. We really want to associate Taos and cutting edge music and the Town has become increasingly supportive”, said Dawn Richardson, founder and producer of **Taos Solar Music Festival**.

“The combination of this upbeat urban rock with the intimate setting of the historic Taos Plaza gives us a wonderful canvas for an artistic endeavor which will be a fun kick off for the legendary Taos Fall Arts Festival. We are going to try to give the audience an up close and interactive experience that will include unique tree lightings and visual displays- basically a working artistic collaboration between The Paseo and SolarFest.”

The Thursday night free concert and “music experience” will kick-off the first year of Taos’s “Paseo”, a unique interactive street celebration of the arts, spanning ½ mile of the Town’s main thoroughfare, Paseo del Pueblo Norte (US and NM Route 64) from the Plaza to the northern Town limits. (*visit [PaseoTaos.org](http://PaseoTaos.org) or [Taos.org](http://Taos.org) for more information*)

According to the Paseo’s founder, architect and artist J. Matt Thomas, “The Paseo” will

transform the downtown into a one-day-only outdoor art exhibition featuring 20 international competing artists from as close as Taos to as far away as Atlanta, New York, San Francisco and Germany.

The outdoor “exhibits” will feature everything from “x-trees” that grow live from a Wi-Fi connection with branches made of audience generated data, to live performances, user interactive wall and sound projections and a 30 foot robot controlled by passer’s-by.

The Paseo itself kicks-off the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Arts Festival, a week-long town-wide multi-venue exhibition of local and international art held at historic buildings, galleries, museums, churches and public places. (*visit [taosfallarts.com](http://taosfallarts.com) or [taos.org](http://taos.org) for details*)

Rick Bellis, Taos Town Manager said, “We are really excited about this band, the Paseo, the Arts Festival and the whole connection between Taos’ arts and music community. We wanted to bring both the music and the arts out from behind the security gates and gallery walls and give it back to the people, to get everyone involved. What better way than a free concert on the plaza and interactive art on the streets”.

“As always”, Bellis continued, “We’re ecstatic about partnering with Dawn and Dan of Solarfest, with their 15 year history of stellar events, including most recently the opening of the Old County Courthouse as a new hip venue and the record-breaking “**Mumford and Sons**” experience last year.”

The Town and SolarFest will be coordinating with the numerous music venues, clubs, hotels and restaurants in Taos to schedule additional special music, food and arts events throughout the Town before, during and after the concert for visitors and locals alike to really create a rich Town-wide festival experience. So come early to beat the crowds and plan on staying overnight.

Both Bellis and Richardson concurred that the collaboration on the Kongos event is likely just “a taste of things to come” in the new partnership between the Town and the business, arts and music community to put Taos back on the map as *the* international destination for “cool”.

The Kongos will play the Taos Plaza gazebo starting at 6:30 pm, but pre-concert music and entertainment should begin around 5:00 pm or earlier. Rain or Shine.

Event parking and shuttles will be provided by the Town and other acts may be added to the event but have not yet been confirmed at press time, so please check for additional information and updates for “everything Taos” and “Kongos” on the Taos Solar Music Festival Facebook page and the Town of Taos website at [taosgov.com](http://taosgov.com) or the Taos Tourism website at [taos.org](http://taos.org).

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## Kongos - A biography

The brothers KONGOS -- multi-cultural, multi-faceted, multi-instrumentalists -- craft a unique and irresistible sound spawned from shared DNA, diverse influences and spot-on melodic and lyrical sensibilities. On "Lunatic," their 12-song Epic Records debut, the band's talent shines on "Come With Me Now"; the title an impossible-to-resist aural summons, the rock-alt crossover tune kicking off with the accordion, jumping into foot-stomping, staccato rhythms, slide guitar, and soaring epic soundscapes reminiscent of U2. "I'm Only Joking," whose lyrics hint at the album's title, hits the mark with decisive tribal rhythms and Pink Floyd-esque mysterious modern rock. Thanks to an earlier self-release of "Lunatic," KONGOS are already stars overseas, playing their numerous hits off "Lunatic" for crowds of up to 65,000 at South African festivals and touring the Republic with Linkin Park, and the UK and Europe with AWOLNATION and Dispatch. With a Feb-March North American tour with Airborne Toxic Event and alternative and rock radio hot on "Come With Me Now" and "I'm Only Joking," (not to mention "Come With Me Now" in promos for NFL, NBA and ESPN), 2014 is quickly shaping up as the year the U.S. catches KONGOS fever.

KONGOS' life story is as cinematic and captivating as their songs. The siblings, who range in age from 25 (Danny) to 32 (Johnny), were born to popular '70s South African/ British singer-songwriter John Kongos ("He's Gonna Step On You Again," "Tokoloshe Man"). Spending their early childhood in London (all were born there except Danny), then South Africa before settling in Phoenix in the mid-90s, the boys were exposed to a wide variety of sounds. "We listened to everything from classical and opera like Puccini to African tribal music to 60s and 70s pop and rock," says Dylan, who cites African bassist Richard Bona, Béla Fleck's Victor Wooten, and singing players like Sting and Paul McCartney as influences. His rhythm section partner, Jesse, who studied Jazz at ASU (as did Johnny), remembers learning boogie-woogie and classical piano as a child before getting into African drums, then jazz greats like Jack DeJohnette. As KONGOS grew together as a rock band, Jesse loved the vibe and feel of Zeppelin's John Bonham, and currently admires gospel and hip hop drummers like Aaron Spears and Carlos McSwain. Danny also boasts a myriad of influences, ranging from Jeff Beck to Mahmoud Ahmed -- "the James Brown of Ethiopia" -- for his use of unconventional pentatonic scales. Johnny, who is a student of jazz and classical piano, cites Keith Jarrett as a hero, while his accordion playing draws from various world styles, including South African maskandi and Qawwali music.

Despite the immense and wide-ranging familial talent, the brothers were never groomed to be a "family band," and as Jesse notes, "our parents wanted us to learn music like you do Math or English." But the siblings joke, "we got to a point where we didn't want to get a real job so we stuck with music." Johnny adds, "Hey, most of the family bands everyone knows have been hugely successful!" Of course, the Jackson 5, Beach Boys, the Osmond Brothers and more recently

minted family bands like Kings of Leon do seem to have an advantage inherent in the DNA. That said, despite inborn talent, KONGOS are all about hard work and humility. Interestingly, each brother writes separately and brings completed songs to the group. Additionally, they don't necessarily sing their own songs. Live, Jesse and Dylan share lead vocals, while on "Lunatic," Johnny and Danny also sing: "It depends on whose voice works for that song," says Dylan. "It's a lot of rehearsing to find where each voice fits; like Danny has a high register that's nice." To make the family and musical dynamic smooth, Johnny notes with a laugh: "We are a democracy with an occasional dictator. Everything band-wise is done together, but recording we give the power to the songwriter. As for the day to day organization and business, it's a total democracy."

Clearly, it's a formula that works, and on "Lunatic," they put all the pieces together into a cohesive whole. The brothers use a family recording studio -- Tokoloshe Studios -- named after their father's hit song. Completely self-contained, they write, produce, engineer and mix/master their music as well as direct, shoot and edit all their own music videos. Hardly hermits, since debuting at a high school talent show in 2003 (covering "Eleanor Rigby"!), beginning in 2007 KONGOS played out incessantly, focusing on building a following in Phoenix, garnering local airplay, West Coast tours, and eventually coveted slots at SXSW and CMJ. The years of dedication paid off: In 2011, hanging in the studio, the brothers decided to email a few songs to South African radio stations. 5FM, the biggest Top 40 station in South Africa, playlisted "I'm Only Joking," which hit No. 1 on the rock chart and was the most requested song for 11 weeks in a row. "In retrospect it was one of those crazy stories; the guy opened the email and played it on the radio and it changed everything for us in South Africa," recalls Johnny. "We didn't expect anything like what happened."

While live is where KONGOS' uplifting, universal musicality reaches the masses, the studio is indeed a second home for the brothers -- as kids, at their father's home studio in London, Elton John's or Cat Stevens' group was often the house band, while the elder Kongos worked with Mutt Lange to program Def Leppard's drums for "Pyromania." The total lifelong musical immersion makes "Lunatic" -- and KONGOS -- a rare breed of band. Fluent in numerous styles and eras, still, at the end of the day, a rock band. "We're making rock and pop music and our more obscure influences may only come out when we are attacking an extended solo," they explain. "But we definitely relate to bigger bands like Daft Punk, Coldplay and Queens of the Stone Age."

The band also agreed that they were happy with "Lunatic" being a diverse record: "We each have different styles and personalities, so we embrace that. We have a KONGOS sound which is not exactly assigned, but we have an essence, a picture in our mind of what it will sound like." The press concur, praising the band's "classic rock elements, African rhythms and Balkan beats" and their "incontestable youthful talent..[and] emotional outpourings." The bottom line? KONGOS "want to write music that we like listening to." Fortunately, with

tastes as diverse as theirs, that's a winning proposition for fans of all ages and predilections.

Kongos Marketing Assets:

<http://www.paradigmagency.com/divisions/artist/index/2474>