

CLAVEL



20 **KEN ONOZAWA**
32 **P&P TATTOO**
46 **FADE LONGBOY**
77 **NATIVE**

FEATURED MODEL: NATTYE USMANYI ON ALBODIA BOHENGRAO

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199PHP



We Are All Natives

By Eira Raye Gruta

“*Bakya mo, pare,*” that’s what you’ll hear when the colors of your outfit don’t match or the kind of shoes you’re wearing are just *wrong*. Incidentally, *bakya* is actually a type of shoes in the Philippines, a kind that is native to the country. Worn indoors, outdoors, on land and even in water, you would have seen these slip-ons everywhere circa 1800s. But as popular as they were, these wooden clogs were replaced when shoes more lightweight were introduced.

New Natives

200 years later, Filipinos are still looking for shoes as functional and comfortable, but not as heavy as the *bakya*. Combining the old with the new in a simple shoe, Natives Shoes brings to the Philippines what we have been searching for all these years.

“Keep it lite,” these are the words Native Shoes live by. Believing that life is heavy enough as it is, it is Native’s mission to make things a bit “litter” for everyone. Made of EVA or Ethylene Vinyl Acetate, light material usually used for shoe cushioning, Native Shoes offers a good mix of comfort and style. Not to mention, they see the need for “a great shoe that can be worn comfortably for everything” without having to be, in colloquial terms, *bakya*.

The shoe brand has also been working with Philgear Int'l Inc. of the Primer Group of Companies to achieve a notable footprint in the country. They have partnered with different retail stores in the country and have gotten a very warm reception from the people. In fact, their boat shoe, the Howard, in regatta blue is the best-selling design in Manila. Paolo and Blanca sandal designs are also a popular choice, especially in the summer. The Verona, the Native espadrilles, are also “making a lot of waves for both men and women” in the Philippines.

Global Native

Though as much as its name implies, Native is actually a foreign brand. Coming from two friends from Vancouver, it has journeyed its way to the heart of the Philippines and the Filipino people.

It all started from the idea that “the 14 billion feet that roam this land sing in unison for shoes that we can walk, jump and shout in, without scaring away potential mates.” It is a type of shoe you can use for going to beaches of Aklan, the streets of London, the clubs of Tokyo, the lawn barbeque in the suburbs of 90210, or even the flooded streets of your hometown, and still stand tall on any runway or any LookBook photo.

Anyone anywhere is a Native Man, Native Woman, or even Native Child. The world is a big place but with a shoe brand like this can bring us all together as natives of the world.

Interview:

Text in blue – items the interviewee might have copy+pasted from other Native sources

Text in red – mechanical edits

- What is 'Native'?

Native is an Idea, that the 14 billion feet that roam this land sing in unison for shoes that we can walk, jump and shout in, without scaring away potential mates. We are all natives of this earth and it's our given right to play free without being let down by our feet's greatest companions, our shoes. Who ever said that having a garden barbeque meant walking around in ugly sandals, or that helmet diving meant having to wear funny shoes that flop around? Why ruin that macho physic and sparkling personality with footwear only a mother could love, just so you can be comfy? Native combines the old with the new in a simple shoe. It's a piece of reason in this modern era.

- What sets Native apart from other shoe brands, especially from other EVA shoes?

We don't take ourselves too seriously in our quest to soothe the pains of feet found wanting. We are young, we are free, and sometimes a bit crazy. Unlike other shoe brands, we can hit the beach, the streets, the club, the lawn barbeque, we can wade flooded streets and stand tall on any runway. Native can strike anytime and anywhere and our shoes are the same way. Never has there been a shoe brand that offers so much versatility of use in a simple slip on or sandal. Life is heavy enough as it is, so we like to make things a bit lighter on everyone.

- What are the most common misconceptions for Native as a shoe brand?

Obviously, we are commonly mistaken with the "C word"... that we are either the same brand or a new collection of the brand. But no worries, we do our own thing, and they do theirs. We stick to what we know, which is enjoying what life has to offer. Some people think we copy everything, how hurtful! We just saw the "need" that nobody bothered to address. The need for a great shoe that can be worn comfortably for everything without hobbling your chances to procreate. Some people think we're crazy, well, some of them may be right.

- How did Native start out in the shoe business?

We've been single minded in our quest from day 1. *Native was born out of a vision: to create lightweight, comfortable, and good-looking shoes out of EVA. Fueled by this conviction, two friends from Vancouver embarked upon an uncertain journey.*

The pair soon found themselves hotel hopping in foreign lands, hunting down factories with their makeshift shoe design stashed in a backpack. In the fall of 2008, the first prototype emerged from development and the reaction was infectious. The clarity of their vision could now be felt in tangible form, the concept had been proven, and the potential was undeniable. And so, in 2009, Native was founded. The following summer, our first three designs hit North America, where media and industry tastemakers embraced the debut collection. The momentum propelled Native into its Global Spring 2010 launch and beyond. There was no mistaking it, we were finally happening.

Today, Native is recognized as an international footwear company, known for our belief in passion and possibilities, the values upon which we were founded. As we continue to evolve into the Native of tomorrow, these same principles shape our path. And so, as the narrator says, the journey continues.

- How did Native flourish in the shoe business as it does now?

What started as a clear but crazy idea seemed to be right on the money! Native is for everyone, all citizens and humans alike. 14 billion soles in different voice cry out for the same desire. We've been working hard not to let people down since 2009 as the world deserves to be a lighter place. Our vision is as strong today as when we began this crazy journey. *Built upon passion, belief, and dedication, we combine our creed with the best of evolving technology, light materials and great design. We produce lightweight, iconic footwear — for now and for the future.*

- How did Native start in the Philippines?

Native has been working tirelessly together with Philgear Int'l Inc. of the Primer Group of Companies to achieve a notable footprint in the Philippines. With countless visits, discussions, agreements and disagreements, we've fostered the support of major retail chains such as Shoe Salon, Res|Toe|Run and Bratpack in not just bringing our items to Philippine stores, but also helping promote our brand and products to a wide range of customers. From that small seed, we've been able to grow into more and more stores who share in our vision.

- How did the Filipino community accept Native as a shoe brand?

Filipinos seem to really "get" what Native is all about, it's almost a perfect fit. Culturally Filipinos are playful, free-spirited yet somehow still laid back, and Native is much the same way. Native has had a very warm reception in the Philippines, even better than in other parts of the world, so much so, that some people think that Native is a local brand! We remain true to our Canadian roots but the compliments are definitely flattering.

- Did you experience any difficulties with Native in the Philippines?

There's been little to no difficulty so far in the Philippine market. People have been flocking to buy our shoes as soon as we hit the local shelves in 2011. It's very encouraging for us that despite the density of competition in the casual footwear category, our local fans of the brand have been continually pushing us to open our own Native stores in most known malls. There are so many local malls but there are also so many other brands lining up for store space that it's been difficult for us to lock down the perfect location to open our flagship Native Shoes store in the Philippines.

- What's the best part about Native being in the Philippines? (Can you also say, 'Native, more fun in the Philippines?')

It's definitely more fun in the Philippines! Everyone is just so much more open and optimistic about life and there're parties going on everywhere. We are so much more free to hit the beaches and night markets and the local music scene and other venues for creativity all over the country.

- What are the bestsellers in the Philippines?

In the Philippines we sell the Howard (boat shoes) the best and of course our sandals the Paolo and Blanca. Our sandal range has been well received since we started retailing them in the summer of this year. One of our new styles The Verona (espadril) is also making a lot of waves for both men and women so we're very excited about how that style will develop moving forward.

- What can you say about the local retail and fashion industry?

– *What's there to love?* There's always a lot to surprise you in the local fashion scene if you look in the right places. There's a good balance between comfortable wear and the dashing stylista in most people. I think there's a good mix of both American and European fashion going on in the Philippines as people have started to embrace more fashion cultures outside of what the US has to offer. Fashion in the Philippines is very different though from the rest of the Asian region it's in. Nothing like the Japans and Koreas out there.

– *What's there to hate?* Well since it's quite warm in the country, it's understandable that people are not as used to layering various tops and slapping on their trusty boots for a stroll outside. People tend to dress down a lot during the day's heat I guess and dress up for the nights out but if it were a bit cooler through out the rest of the day, I'm sure you'd see much more killer boots and sharp coats and jackets walking around everywhere.

– *What do you want to see?* It would be great to see a bit more variety in footwear choices and looks for tops with bomber jackets and sweaters and other knitted tops. Everyone in the country is wearing boat shoes in all shapes and forms and there's not much else going around. Would like to see more high tops and boots, a few oxfords more often and of course, to see Natives on every walking sole on every street in Manila.

– *What can Native do so that we can all see what you want to see in the industry?* We just do what we always do, and that's to take on these iconic looks that we like and reincarnate them in a fashion that is comfortable and versatile, that speaks your language. A piece of the future need not be **overpriced**, and it need not kill your feet every time you wear them. This is where Native Shoes comes in to save the day.

• *What are the biggest accomplishments of Native? (local and international)*

I think our biggest accomplishment is just to have the global market accept Native as a brand and to have struck a chord, with our market who really get what we're all about. To just be in so many stores all at once and on our 3rd year in more than 48 countries across Europe, North America, Latin America and Asia and our crazy journey has just begun. **We**'ve only managed to scratch the surface. Things from here on will only get more interesting.

• *What are the future projects of Native? (local and international)*

We're definitely looking into opening several of our own Native shops with our great logo glowing at the front door. This is our major thrust in the coming future. As far as other plans go, we really don't want to spoil the surprise or else it wouldn't be fun anymore.

• *Who do you think best wears Native? (What kind of people should get Native as their everyday wear?)*

Native is for everyone really. There's a Native Shoe for every type of person out there. We are for the people, in whatever shape or form they might be in.

• *In distributing these shoes, do you think that there is a 'type' that wears Native?*

There's no specific "type" of person who wears native. Except maybe the enlightend ones, who have broken free from the slavery of compromise, and have come to realize that there is no need for our soles to suffer any further, nor should we be socially crippled by expensive compromises everywhere. The Native Man and the Native Woman, even the Native Child, can be anyone, and they are all among us.