

D'DAT coming back to Gallup

Written by Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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Delbert Anderson was in the fourth grade when he discovered his passion for music.

In an interview with the *Sun*, he said it all started in fourth grade because that's when he was supposed to pick out an instrument to play in band. The day before the students were supposed to pick their instruments, a jazz combo performed at the school. The trombone player began talking about improvisation, and that struck a chord with Anderson.

"He said 'music doesn't come from the sheet music; it comes from inside. I always thought that was really cool that you didn't have to have music, and he was saying you could play whatever you want,'" Anderson said. "There was a sort of freedom within it."

Anderson said that after the man had explained improvisation to the fourth graders by flipping his music stand towards them and still being able to play his trombone, Anderson went home and tried to do the same thing. Anderson eventually went on to play trumpet. He said he tried to play trombone initially, but he couldn't play any notes on it.

He said he still thinks about that experience as a little kid when he's performing with his band D'DAT.

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“When we’re doing our shows, especially playing in front of the youth, I always wonder how many students get that spark kind of like I did,” Anderson said. “If we can do that at our shows it feels great. It feels like we can do something really special for the youth of our community.”

Anderson started looking to form a band in 2010 once he was out of college. He was trying to get a group of five or eight people together, but he just couldn’t seem to get people to routinely come to practices. Except for two people: drummer Nicholas Lucero and bass player Mike McCluhan.

The three men eventually decided to just play together as D'DAT, or the Delbert Anderson Trio. Since that official start in 2013, the three men have also been joined by James Pakootas, who writes their music.

The group’s music has been described as “funky,” “complex,” and “poetic,” but when he tried to put a label on it Anderson called it “fusion music.” He said the group is inspired by Navajo music and jazz, among other styles.

Anderson said his favorite thing about performing is when he gets to do a trumpet solo.

“I like communicating with the drummer and the base player while I’m performing, especially when I’m soloing. I like solos because I like playing in the moment, and I think that’s what the band is very good at,” Anderson said. “We’ve been playing together for almost nine years, and you still get goosebumps every time.”

Anderson said the band never plays the same version of a song twice.

“... [The] music is personal, it’s an expression of ourselves. If you’re trying to just put on a show, I feel like it loses a lot of authenticity,” Anderson explained. “We could do that, we could play things exactly the same all the time, but that’s not the case. In fact, we’ve never played a show the same.”

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D'DAT will be performing as a part of the Levitt Amp Concert Series on July 23. The concert starts at 6 pm at the Courthouse Square. The event is free to the public.

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