



THE TRUTH WELL TOLD

Independent

Groove warriors

By Richard Reyes

GALLUP — The distinctly Southwestern bounce of the Delbert Anderson Trio brought to mind an old-timey cartoon train bobbing through the desert, puffing smoke to the beat.

Like a steam engine chugging to a start, the drums pumped slowly and gradually increased in tempo. Then the upright entered with a swaggering bass line, and the trumpet came in with an eerie, .uttering melody.

Then, as if it had too much to drink, the trumpet melody began to sway all over.

“You can see all the squiggly lines on the composition,” trumpet player Delbert Anderson explained after the band performed the song at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Gallup Aug. 20.

Anderson wrote the song while on a train, so the shaking and frantic turns of the locomotive came through in the melody.

“That’s the reason why the song does not sound normal,” he joked.

The song, titled “Iron Horse Gallup,” tells the story of the trio - which includes drummer Nicholas Lucero and bassist Mike McCluhan - disembarking from the Indian Capital of the World via train through the Navajo Nation toward Los Angeles and back again.

You can hear their arrival in L.A. as the song shifts into a faster tempo and jazzier sound. The trumpet paints a picture of a wild party further emphasized by a boisterous drum solo.

Navajo chants meet modern jazz

The Delbert Anderson Trio - which formed in Aztec about 3 1/2 years ago - plays several songs with a similar duality. They started out playing jazz standards but quickly went into composing their own songs.

“We started digging a little deeper into our own cultures,” Anderson explained. “For me it was the Navajo tribe. I did a lot of study on early Navajo music - all the way down to when it was just chants.”

The song “New York Navajo” from their album “Manitou” exemplifies this. It opens with a man singing what sounds to be a traditional Navajo song. The voice and Anderson’s trumpet perform a sort of call and response between those traditional melodies and modern jazz.

Anderson said Navajo chants tend to have a natural swing to them, which provided the perfect transition into jazz.

On one side you have jazz, which was born in the United States, and on the other side you have indigenous melodies. So in a way, the Delbert Anderson Trio is playing an ultra American sound.

Another example of this is the song “Groove Warrior.” The opening beat is reminiscent of a drum circle and the trumpet again sounds like a wavering Navajo melody - for the music nerds out there, they rely heavily on the pentatonic scale. But things take a twist as the bass comes in with a psychedelic effect like a Herbie Hancock song. That’s when the drums and trumpet kick into a jazzy aesthetic.

Though they’ve been labeled a Navajo band, they are multi-cultural and pull together influences from several places. Lucero brings a funky, Latin sound on the drums while McCluhan is a jam band player who takes his inspiration from the Grateful Dead.

“I think jazz tends to be a little intellectual, and that’s the beauty of it, but when it comes to an average listener, I think we make it more of a visceral kind of experience,” Lucero said. “We have the heavy bass lines and the funk drums, and you can feel it a little more.”

Hip-hop fusion

If that weren’t enough of a musical cocktail, Albuquerque-based rapper Def-i, the Shiprock-born Christopher Bidtah, joined the trio during their Gallup performance, fusing hip-hop into their sound.

Together they’re known as DDAT. They met at a festival one year and Bidtah performed some spoken word atop their music. Then they wrote a song together, “Roadrunner,” and recorded a video of their performance at the Sunflower Theater in Cortez, Colorado. They entered the video in NPR’s Tiny Desk Contest.

Although DDAT didn’t win, NPR recognized their video with an honorable mention in March.

“‘Roadrunner’ makes it evident that these artists also share a forward-thinking restlessness and a refusal to be parceled into neat boxes,” NPR stated.

DDAT is recording an album that Anderson hopes to release before the end of the year. They performed some of their songs at the church and illustrated one of the coolest aspects of both jazz and hip-hop: improvisation.

Between trumpet solos, Bidtah freestyled while interacting with the crowd, commenting on the things people wore as well as the venue’s decor. A clearly proficient wordsmith, he incorporated religious themes in his rhymes and spit ridiculous tongue-twisters.

A poet herself, Tammy Iralu, a member of the Church of the Holy Spirit and organizer of the concert, said she enjoyed Bidtah’s poetry.

Iralu said a local family funded the show, so audience members were asked to make a donation to benefit Battered Families Services Inc., which helps survivors of domestic violence, and All Together in Dignity Fourth World, which is dedicated to literacy efforts locally.

DDAT will be going on tour through the West in September, starting with a show at 7 p.m. Sept. 13 at the Totah Theater in Farmington. Check their Facebook page for more details and dates.

Def-i also recently released a video on YouTube for the song “The Land of Enfrackment” in solidarity with all nations taking a stand against the Dakota Access oil pipeline.



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March 22, 2016 9:42 AM ET

Def-i And The Delbert Anderson Trio, 'Roadrunner'

Recorded at the Sunflower Theatre in Cortez, Colo., "Roadrunner" is a collaboration between Albuquerque rapper Def-i (given name: Christopher Bidtah) and a jazz trio led by trumpeter Delbert Anderson. Def-i and Anderson's trio each count indigenous music of the American Southwest among their influences, but that's not the only reason this project melds together so well; "Roadrunner" makes it evident that these artists also share a forward-thinking restlessness and a refusal to be parceled into neat boxes. —RH



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5 Musicians to Blast This Summer: 2016 Hot List

ICMN Staff

July 17, 2016

Delbert Anderson – Coolest Way to Avoid Jazz Fusion Confusion

Navajo jazz trumpet player Delbert Anderson and his band landed on the top 10 NPR Tiny desk concert list recently and that led to a series of steady gigs for the jazzman from the Four Corners area. He played shows all over Albuquerque during Gathering of Nations, and on his off-night he sat in with pueblo reggae band Innastate and captivated the house at Marble Brewery.

The band that was Delbert Anderson Trio has now become DDAT, with the addition of rapper Def-I, and people are reacting in a positive way. “The DDAT has been doing very well,” says Anderson. “Every venue has been 100 percent packed. We are working very hard on our first album. This album is going to be a huge step for DDAT, many labels are taking notice and wanting to work with our fusion music. Well known labels and AR men have been giving us great feedback. Something big will happen soon, I promise.

“I am very happy to work with such cool, professional guys. Each member of DDAT is world class at their craft. The world is going to be welcoming DDAT into their music playlists soon.”- J.A.

NAVAJO TIMES

NEWSPAPER OF THE NAVAJO PEOPLE

The Delbert Anderson Trio, featuring Def-i, Shine at the New Mexico State Fair

Native Village

Jason Morgan Edwards

Delbert Anderson (Diné) started off by wowing the crowd with his smooth, classical jazz riffs. Then, Def-i (Diné) introduced lyrical acrobatics over top to form DDAT. Their sound is reminiscent of the jazzy/hip-hop groups Digable Planets and A Tribe Called Quest. But, where Digable Planets were more spoken word poetry over smooth jazz, DDAT mixes Def-i's rapid fire lyrics over more up-tempo, contemporary jazz and funk.

The Delbert Anderson Trio, comprised of Anderson, Nicholas Lucero (drums) and Mike Mc Cluhan (upright bass) has been playing as a group for a little better than three years, although they've known each other much longer. They met Def-i (Christopher Mike-Bidtah) about a year ago. And, they've been performing together ever since. Anderson recounts their meeting, "We met at the Survival of First Voices Festival. We didn't know him, personally. But, when we played a show, we invited him to join us, freestyle. We put it together really quick. People really liked the different genres fused together."

What started as improvisation has developed into a concerted and directed collaboration, with them actually composing songs together. Anderson laughingly continues, "We thought we would just keep going with it, keep pushing towards whatever it is. We're still fairly new. But, there's a lot in store."

The combination works because the styles are not competing. Def-i says, "I feel like we both complement each other. The older crowd seems to like the jazz and the funk elements. And, the younger crowd seems to like the rap styles. It's a contrast, just like colors contrast and complement each other, I feel like our different genres do the same thing in audible form."

Anderson continues in that same vein, "The Trio had the song already. We just had to switch it up so Def-i could come in and rap over it. For our new release, those [songs] were specifically written for both of us. Usually, I'll come up with a melody. And, I'll take it to the group, and Nick composes his part. I don't write out everyone's part. And, Mike just sort of picks up what he wants to do. And, then, Def-i comes in."

"Once we bring it all together, we start to try to fuse it a little better, move things around a little -- try to create some structure. Like when Def-i is singing, sometimes it's just Def-i and the drums going at it. Sometimes, it's just Def-i by himself. So, there's all kinds of ways [we play]."

Anderson says, "We know how each other are, as musicians. We're all individual composers. But, we all know the fundamentals of playing with one another. We know how to collaborate. I think that's what is really special about this group."

The Delbert Anderson Trio released one album, Man Tou, in 2014. Def-i has been doing his thing for about fifteen years. He has recorded four solo albums, so far. But, the DDAT album is scheduled for release later this year.

Fans can view DDAT's video, Roadrunner, at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gh2K1eAokks. The Delbert Anderson Trio's music can be found at: www.delbertandersontrio.com/, as well as one facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/delbertandersontrio/>. Def-i's music is available at: <https://soundcloud.com/def-i> and www.facebook.com/defrapper/.