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Nosotros



"We upped our game a little bit moving here," says Dennis. "The level of musicians we started meeting inspired us to do better. The timing was good, people here wanted something new and we appeared out of the blue." Dennis explains that the band was well-established and -practiced at this point, adding, "This area welcomed us."

Latin culture is very diverse, and, it follows, so is its music. I ask if Nosotros plays a particular genre, and both Randy and Dennis are quick to say no. Their music is a fusion—not as in jazz fusion, but as in many influences being brought together, Latin and otherwise. Dennis grew up with music all around him. "My parents are both musicians, so I was raised in a musical household," he says. "But for me it was not a conscious decision. I would come home from school and play the drums, like going outside and throwing a ball for a lot of kids." Dennis moves his hands as though he were holding drum sticks. He is soft spoken, and I am sure that his singing voice has melted some hearts. "In my teenage years, I really wanted to start playing the drums [professionally]. I studied music in college and thought, 'Man, if I can just pay my rent and put food in my stomach, I'll be happy.' Luckily, Nosotros provided that for us."

Randy started by playing tuba in sixth grade. "I played in the school band and did pretty well with it," he says. "Then a friend of mine got a guitar, and I thought that was cool and wanted to get one. So I started playing guitar and got into Latin and flamenco." From tuba to guitar is quite a leap. Nonetheless, I can picture a younger Randy dwarfed by a tuba. (You've got to hand it to any junior high kid willing to tackle one of those things.) When the band moved north, Randy took some classes in guitar at what was then called the College of Santa Fe. "But I am pretty much self-taught," he says. "I also play *tres*, a variation of guitar from Cuba."

As musicians, Randy and Dennis—and by extension the entire band—are all about listening and taking cues from many types of music. "It keeps changing," says Randy, "and that's what's cool about it as you're going for things that might not work." He ponders this. "And that's cool (we laugh), but there's something that we'll hit with."

Dennis adds, "As musicians it's important to be well-rounded, to listen to everything. I could get as much inspiration from Pearl Jam as Beethoven."

"It has to be about the groove," Randy says. "That's what I listen for."

When asked about the challenges of the music scene, Dennis replies, "The biggest one is the business part, how to market yourself as a band. We're naturally artists." (Dennis, Randy and I understand this all too well—it's a right brain/left brain thing—and the three of us laugh.) "And we need to study and practice," Dennis continues. "Nosotros functions much as a family. You love your family members, but it can be tough at times." Then his face lights up. "We've been extremely fortunate: we've somehow managed to find the right people, we're really close."

On the challenges, Randy adds, "You got to make some money, but what we love is music, just getting into it." Now, after nineteen years of challenge and change, he says, "We see the fruit of it coming around. We've played some amazing gigs recently, and we got an album coming out."

Dennis has written a lot of new material, both music and lyrics, but, as he is quick to point out, "It's a collaborative effort," with band members giving input during the development of the songs. We talk about "Mama Tierra," one of Dennis' efforts. He says, "For every song it's a little bit different, but lyrics are usually the last thing. I have the music and a melody and the lyrics come. You really have to go on instinct." We listen to the song. The melody unfolds in an easy rolling rhythm, and it's sung in Spanish.

*Yo quiero vivir en tu luz
Yo quiero morir en tus brazos
Yo quiero ser uno con mi alma
Eso es paz*

*I want to live in your light
I want to die in your arms
I want to be one with my soul
That is peace*

No more beautiful words have been spoken, or sung, about Mother Earth. Dennis reflects further on songwriting. "As soon as you start thinking about it, it's really difficult. It comes when you're not thinking about it, when you're driving your car, and subconsciously the melody and lyric comes together. It is instinctual, and it is a little bit of pushing—working and working it."

He continues, "Our CD's are original music. We're working on our sixth album." The band's recordings have been under different labels. The current one is by Alma Productions, and, like previous releases, it will be available at their shows, via their website, and online at Amazon and CD Baby. On reaching their audience, Dennis says, "Social media has made a lot possible. It's not about hanging up flyers around town anymore, it's about Facebook and Twitter and having a YouTube channel."

Nosotros would like to take its performances to larger venues and festivals. But, says Randy, "You don't need to be a rock star to be successful. We're not big-time, but you can find a niche to be in and make a living doing what you love. I want people to know of us and respect what we're doing musically, and I want to play for people who are appreciative of our music. That's success for me."



Nosotros

One of my favorite bumper stickers reads: "Beer. Helping White boys dance since 1864." That one pretty well has me pegged. We Nordics are good at herding reindeer and taking saunas. But dancing? Not unless it's around the maypole—and fortunately we only have to do that once a year. However, as I sit in a chair and listen to the eight or so songs on Nosotros' website, pretty soon my foot starts tapping. First time this has happened in two years. And then my legs move, and then I can't sit in the chair any more. Suddenly, I jump up and dance around the house. There's no telling what would happen if I had a beer in me! Nosotros definitely has a groove.

For information about the band, including upcoming performances and CD's, go to nosotrosmusic.net. Along with Randy and Dennis, the band's current lineup includes Carlos Fontana (vocals), Felipe Ruibal (vocals), Shane Derk (guitar), Gilbert Uribe (bass), Manuel Ramirez (alto and tenor sax), David Weeks (trumpet) and Cristobal "Cha Chi" Romero (congas, vocals).



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