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Odyssey Artist Interview: Elephant Revival's Dango Rose Rose talks new album "Petals," and the band's amazing journey over the years.

Capturing Elephant Revival's incredible indie, folk, Bluegrass and Celtic sound--a few of the eclectic genres that the band encompasses--are five, multi-instrumentalist singer-songwriters.

Bonnie Paine serves as one of the band's lead vocalists, who also plays the washboard, cello and musical saw. Standing alongside Paine is Daniel Rodriguez, who is also a prodigious guitarist and percussionist. Adding to those sounds are Bridget Law on the fiddle, Dango Rose on the mandolin and upright bass, and Charlie Rose who plays the banjo, pedal steel and guitar. Together, Charlie and Dango (who have no relation to each other) and Bridget also serve as harmony vocalists for the two songsters, Paine and Rodriguez.

Dango Rose sat down with me to give me an inside look at the band's awe-inspiring odyssey while immersing us all into the world of Elephant Revival, as we discuss the backstory of "Petals" and all of the intimacy and spiritualness that lies within their new album.

Q: When and where was the first time you guys all played together as Elephant Revival?

DR: We were booking gigs under Elephant Revival Concept in August 2006, and that was kind of an open invitation in a way for a group of people to come

together, and it was the five of us that were consistently coming together. It was a couple months later, in October 2006, that we realized that we were a band and more than a concept. We were playing gigs together in some types of various forms for a couple months before we became a band. We met in 2003, all of us met in 2003/2004, and we were kind of just all over the country. We kept singing around, traveling with different musical projects and doing personal travel. The experiences; enjoying the world, enjoying each other; we just knew that we had a connection and that there was something there. When you just know, and you kind of have that feeling. But it was October of 2006 I believe that we played our first official gig as Elephant Revival after dropping the "Concept," and that was at the Gold Hill Inn, the historic Gold Hill Inn in Gold Hill, Colorado.

Q: What was the experience like playing together for the first time?

DR: It was great. Bonnie and Daniel kind of met on a rooftop after an open mic night in New London, Connecticut, and there was just that connection, the vocal connection, the content connection; musical connection. Bridget and I met at a festival in Colorado kind of dancing in the rain. Literally, dancing in the rain. She was there for a fiddle competition, and I was there performing with the Traditional Appalachian String Band, and it was just fun, lighthearted and joyful. Then Bonnie, Bridget and I met at Wingfield at Walnut Valley Bluegrass Festival in Kansas, and we just heard each other from across the campgrounds. It was literally an auditory experience of hearing the washboard and hearing the base. It was a rhythmic connection of where is that washboard coming from. It was kind of amazing. Towards sunrise, Bonnie finally sang a song in one of the jam circles, and it was just this moment of "oh wow, that's a very unique, special, beautiful voice." The connection of kinship and friendship; it was just so natural. There's just, like, a purity in that.

Q: How did you guys decide to adopt this very distinct Celtic and folk sound?

DR: It was just a natural process. We had no preconceived notion about what our sound was or what we wanted it to be. It is very naturally just what it is and what it's become over time through the instruments we play, through our unique sensibilities and influences as musicians and artists, and through the writing styles that each of us individually and collectively developed over time. It's really an organic unfolding and a natural process of who we are. That's who we are.

Q: What is the significance behind the name of your next debut album, "Petals?"

DR: I think it's about change and transformation from one state of perception to another. Petals of flowers fall; they bloom, they blossom, and then they fall away. And then they bloom and blossom and fall away, and I think it just represents how we hold ourselves in times of transition and change and the beauty of those times. It's a powerful album for us. It captures a transformation.

Q: On the publicity page for Elephant Revival, it says that "Petals" "achieves a compositional maturity that in moments can evoke the modern classical ensemble"—what can you tell me about that?

DR: There's a chamber element that's coming into the music at times. We've worked with symphonies in the past, so I think that's been influential. Bonnie has been spending a lot of time doing compositional work on the cello, and I do a lot of compositional work as well on the mandolin and different instruments. But then, of course, Bridget's arrangement skills and everything she hears, and Charlie's a genius. He's just a musical genius. Having high respect and regard for my bandmates, and I'm constantly in awe of Daniel's songwriting and guitar playing. He's overlooked at times for actually how incredible his guitar playing is. His style is so beautiful and subtle. If you put this all together and then having this new sensibility, it's sort of like chamber music and orchestral arrangements of our songs since we've worked with the Colorado Symphony and are going to continue to work with symphonies at times. It just became a natural sort of flow into how we begin to arrange our own music.

Q: "Petals" is a very intimate and personal for Elephant Revival, so what was the experience like recording all of the songs?

DR: It's kind of like the lead up to the moment of the recording. In the studio, we spent the first half of the studio time up in Maine at the great Northern South Society. Just the atmosphere there in the deep summer, and sort of this great Northern, Swamp-ey kind of feel. Having access to these big, beautiful percussion instruments and just being in this cool space. Coming back to Boulder and spending the second half of the time here and we're all kind of closer to home and going into the studio every day, and it being eTown Hall, which is sort of like this great community space that Nick and Helen Forster of eTown -- the public radio show on NPR -- sort of put together, and then just feeling integrated into our community here and finishing something. I feel like we're sharing something that's really meaningful to us. That's an amazing feeling, to be honest, as an artist to really feel that way about something that we're putting out to the world. It really does strike something deep inside our hearts, and to be able to share that is just such a gift.

Q: When you guys are creating new music, what processes do you guys go through?

DR: Song creation comes in so many different ways. Sometimes it's just a blast of inspiration and it's sort of the muse coming through, and there's a completed song within 30 minutes. Sometimes it's old pieces that have been kind of been floating around for years that come together with something new, and it's just like this puzzle finally fits together. I think each of us has this, like, unique writing processes, and how there's a mix of inspiration of the moment and form and the craft. Also, where the melodic ideas come from; sometimes they're in dreams, sometimes they're just in moments of tuning in, so the songwriting process is a mystery that I believe everybody taps into in their own way. That, of course, goes as well for so many different art forms. It's beautiful; profound in some ways, and

just kind of remain in awe of the actual process. When we come together, I think it's the spirit of collaboration and that's how we form the music and often times we arrange it together and we share parts, we share harmonies. It is a very well-rounded collaborative process that we go through.

Q: Do you guys ever play the same show, or do you guys offer a uniquely different performance every time you play in another city?

DR: Yeah, we vary up the set list each night depending on the feel of the crowd, the feel of the city, and the vibe of the area. It doesn't mean that we play all new songs every night, being that this is a CD-release tour, we most likely will be playing songs off the new album; pretty specific shows. But we do vary it up every night for sure, and there's always changes.

Q: How has your guys' fan base grown over the past few years, and would you say that you guys have a very diverse group of fans?

DR: Oh, totally. We have a diverse group of fans, I mean it's from the age group of like young children, I mean you could say the age of five to 95. There's a wide spectrum. We're not gauging our music to any one demographic.

Q: What's one interesting fact that no one knows about the band?

DR: We bring all of our own to-go containers, and that we use our own utensils so that we eliminate single-use waste while we are traveling on the road. So, we have our own Tupperware and our own travel utensils so we minimize our use of to-go containers.

Q: What's your favorite band or musician to listen to (if you have one) that's completely out of range from the Elephant Revival's genre?

DR: Right now I've been listening to a group called Hammock, which is sort of like this Zen, atmospheric-type of music that I've been listening to. It's totally different than what we do.

Q: If you couldn't be a successful musician anymore, what do you think you would be doing?

DR: I don't entertain that question, honestly. I'm grateful for the life that I've created. The life we've created. This is what I do. I'm a musician, I'm a writer and I'm grateful to be sharing this with the world and this is what we do. This is it, this is my life, this is our life and there're many other things that I could do, but this is my focus and I plan to continue on that way.

For more information about their journey, music, background and more, check out their [website](#) and their YouTube [channel](#)!