

## The Sound Dr.



As Rody Davis walks into the room and takes a look at the speaker rig, his eyes light up.

“Where did you get these?” he asks Brandon, and when our host replies, the conversation turns technical. Within seconds, I’m lost, staring blankly at the wall and waiting for talk to turn back to something, anything, within my sphere of understanding. Guys, remember sports? What about classes? Can we complain about classes?

When Rody talks audio, it’s like his first language. He speaks fluent jargon: knowledgeable, confident, engaged.

Later, Brandon confided in me. “I told him I knew what I was doing, but he didn’t believe me,” he laughed. “He’s not the only one who does audio here.”

But he may as well be. Around Florida College, Rody Davis—aka “Sound Dr.”—is the go-to guy for audio. He’s ubiquitous behind the soundboard at school functions, both official and unofficial. The 20 year-old sophomore has done it all. Managing audio during daily Chapel assemblies? Check. Pumping beats at college basketball games? Check. Traveling with the Florida College Friends, the school’s public relations band? Double check: Davis has made two tours with the group, the first before he took a single college class.



“My sophomore year [of high school], Ralph Walker [former Florida College PR director] spoke to my parents about recruiting me to be the group’s sound guy,” Davis told me. “I got a tryout my senior year, starting immediately.”

This type of story is typical for Davis, whose resume reads like an audio protégé. He’s mixed and mastered solo artists, full bands, and even choirs, not to mention films and music videos. He’s got an album available on iTunes, Amazon, and Android, and he’s just getting started.

"I want to explode in this area," Rody told me. "I want to DJ as much as I can. All the weddings I can handle. All the events."

Just Tampa? "No; Orlando, too. I'm working on getting gigs at Universal Studios."

I caught up with Rody at a pizza buffet to ask him how he got his start. He declined to eat, and instead pulled out his iPad (with him at all times) and began drawing on his new app, Paper.

"Have you seen this? It's incredible!" he says, demonstrating the zoom function. "It looks like blank white paper, but when you zoom all the way in...Look at that! What is that?"

It looks like it's supposed to be canvas, I tell him.

"That's so cool."

This type of exuberance is typical of Rody, as excitable as he is knowledgeable, and it is reflected in his outlook on work: "I'm not new to DJ-ing, but I look at each job as a learning experience," he told me.

As I eat, Rody sketches intently on the iPad screen. Suddenly, OneRepublic's hit song, *Counting Stars*, comes on over the restaurant's speakers, making Rody's head pop up. "I like my mix better," he says with a gleam in his eye.

This is the first comment he makes about the music playing in the pizza place, but it was not the last. "I love that they're playing so much house music. It's about time it got popular over here," he says, without looking up from his drawing. He is leaning over the screen and only just beginning, so it is hard to see what exactly the finished product will be. He continues drawing diligently as he tells us his story.

"The first time I decided I wanted to do audio was at the age of 8. I walked into an IMAX theater and saw the THX certified sound system...Yeah, that's when I knew." He laughs. "It was as if I was blessed by, like, a holy speaker that came out of the sky!"



At age 9, Davis recorded his first song, but DJ-ing didn't begin until his junior year of high school in Birmingham, Alabama. "I actually started as a wedding DJ," he tells me, his finger still scratching at the iPad, sketching away.

Now I can start to see what he is drawing, well enough that I notice when he makes a mistake. I point it out, and he smiles as he erases. "I knew I was going to do that. I'm just so excited to draw the *D*." Mistake fixed, he begins again as I take another bite of pizza.

"Traveling with the Friends has been such an amazing opportunity," Rody rhapsodizes. "I got to go coast-to-coast and see how people all over the country enjoy music differently."

This is the heart of Rody's mission. "I have a passion for using audio to make people happy," he declares when I ask him his motivation.

That passion reverberates all the way back through his life: to the little boy awed by the IMAX sound system and the adolescent building his own speaker systems from retro hunks of junk. (“Every time I played music in my bedroom, the lights would flicker,” he remembers with glee.) Today, the passion is clear in the young man doing what he loves most day after day, with an impressive past behind him and a promising future ahead of him.

I ask him where he got his nickname. “It comes from a discussion I had with [a member of the Friend’s singing group],” he answers. “We were talking about how I needed a DJ name. The conversation turned to the way doctors fix sick patients.”

The sketch is nearly completed, and Rody uses the erasing tool to remove some stray lines.

“That’s what I do with audio. That’s what I do with music. The tracks are my patients and I fix them.”

I ask to see the finished product and Rody obliges. He tilts the iPad up to reveal a graphic he has designed on the fly, a logo worthy of a t-shirt. The letters are red and black, the team colors of Arete, an extracurricular organization he serves as Vice President. The styled letters spell out a name, more like a mission: a drive to be the best DJ he can be. Accomplishment, ambition, and dedication are represented by that one name, a name everyone at Florida College—and someday, undoubtedly, the world—will know: Sound Dr.