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Dubai Drums in action, with host Julie-Ann Odell in white.

Reem Hobeldin photo

Dubai Drums Rock AUS

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By Sidra Tariq

SHARJAH — Nearly 800 students, faculty and visitors attended the Dubai Drums and Drums of the World concert at 8 p.m. on Aug. 27 at the American University of Sharjah's (AUS) main auditorium.

The concert, themed "Unity through rhythm," was organized by the Cultural Events Committee at AUS. It included performances by amateur and professional drummers from Afghanistan, Ghana, India, Iran, Malaysia, Syria and the UAE.

The event started with a welcome speech by Dr. Martin Giesen, Cultural Events Committee chair, who invited suggestions from the audience for future events.

The rest of the program was divided into halves. The first included guitar and drum performances that had spectators tapping their feet.

The second half entailed an interactive session where around 100 drums

were available for audience use.

During the second half, students and children went on stage to display their drumming skills while the seated audience played along with them. A number of enthusiastic spectators also stepped on stage to dance to the unique music created spontaneously.

The event, held at AUS for the second time, ended with a collective performance that got everyone off their seats.

Giesen said he was very pleased by the turnout which he called a result of word of mouth based on a Spring term performance by Dubai Drums at AUS. That concert attracted an audience of 500 and had comparatively less interaction, he said.

At a time when faculty and students are struggling with the expectations and anxiety of the first week of university, Giesen pointed toward the appropriateness of the event. "It is an opportunity to provide a relief valve," he said. "Not just to relieve the

pressure, but to transform [it] into productive energy."

In his opinion, one way to do that is to give students a sense of community by showing them that inexperienced people can also create "beautiful sounds" if they work together. He summed it up in the phrase: "Drumming is about community and community is about sharing."

The drummers

According to Julie-Ann Odell, managing director of Dubai Drums and the conductor for the event, the performances "from our hearts to yours" were impromptu. She revealed that the key to make the right sound is to maintain a common focus: "the down beat." Each drummer needs a good ear to work in line with the beat and the music everyone created today can never be replicated, she added.

The performers were also taken aback by the enthusiasm displayed by students. Malaysian drummer Azli found the energy and response twice as much as during corporate

performances. Master Drummer Atsu Dagadu from Ghana shared Azli's views, saying that the students gave them "a good feeling," while his brother, Prosper, noted that the audience helped them a great deal in putting up a "great show."

Student responses

Basim Ahmed, a junior at AUS, said he looks forward to more "one of a kind" concerts like these. "It was simply marvelous," he exclaimed. "It really got me connected to the beats from different countries." Freshman Noureen Adtani said she also awaits more events of this caliber, adding that "I truly loved the performance and the whole atmosphere."

Her sister Nishita, a senior who attended the previous concert, said she felt the same rush she did last time. "The drummers lived up to the expectations and their enthusiasm had no bounds," she said. "They did manage to keep the audience on the toes like last time. And if time permits, I am definitely going to attend their shows in Dubai."

Amid Web's info glut, what to believe?

By Aroob Abdlehaq

SHARJAH—The Internet's availability on UAE campuses across has made it one of the major sources of news to students. But paradoxically, the freedom it offers to bloggers and "citizen-journalists" has resulted in sites that still face the question of reliability and comprehensiveness. And accordingly, it may be too early to predict the death of "old media" forms.

Unlike traditional print and broadcast media, the Internet gives users immediate access to a great number of voices and opinions; contributors to the web find the possibility of wide freedom of expression, especially in areas of the world in which the press undergoes strict surveillance. But it has also transformed those older media: many broadcast and print outlets now have websites on which video and audio clips and articles can be seen, heard or read by anyone anywhere in the world with Internet access.

Synthesizing sources

Many critical media consumers use different sources of media everyday and form their view of the world by synthesizing them, says Dr. Muhammad Ayish, dean of the College of Communication and acting dean of the College of Fine Arts and Design at the University of Sharjah. He says he reads Al-Khaleej newspaper, listens to the BBC Arabic service, visits CNN.com and watches Al-Jazeera news channel. He says he uses "multiple sources of news because it is enriching for the communication experience."

But he cautions that not all sources are valuable, or even valid. Dr. Ayish says he "visits specific portals and websites associated with established media like al-Jazeera.net, BBC arabic.com, CNN.com and others [because] their association with media giants confers a lot of credibility on them."

He stresses the importance of reliability when judging a website, because none of the readers "want to learn something that turns out to be false or unreal!"

Commentary blogs make for interesting reading, acknowledges Dr. Harris Breslow, an assistant professor of mass communication at the American University of Sharjah

(AUS). But readers should understand that reliability with a blog is always in question. Someone reading a blog, he says, presumably understands he or she is "simply reading the personal comments and opinions of other people on a specific topic."

While acknowledging that he reads blogs in that context, Breslow says that when reading newspapers online, he favors specific established ones whose professional reputation theoretically assures their reliability. He points out that Internet penetration in this region reaches up to only 8 percent, which leaves an old medium – television – as the Gulf's leading conveyor of information about the rest of the world.

What the students think

As Breslow noted, media use among students depends on their available time and access to various media forms. Zeena El Kouka, a business-student studying at the AUS, says she



prefers Internet news "because it is the fastest and is available at all times, rather than TV or radio where you have to wait for a specific hour at which the news is broadcasted."

But reliability is also an important factor for El Kouka, who says believes it can be established on a website by "a link or an author's name" or other methods of checking credibility.

She adds that "the name of the newspaper itself might have already established a credible reputation in the market, [but] without reliability, there is no truth attached with the news, which makes news more of gossip or a rumor rather than real facts about what is going on in the world."

Noha Al-Agrab, a business administration student studying at Abu Dhabi University, also says she prefers the Internet as a source of news because she says it provides the user with more choice. Users, she says, can select immediately the stories or other information they want while effectively discarding the rest. This, she says, is more convenient and saves time.

Dina Khalil, who studies pharmacy at the University of Sharjah, says she finds the Internet more accessible than TV, especially as she lives at the university's dorms where TV is not always available.

She says she prefers visiting specific blogs that handle social and political issues. Khalil says she doesn't consciously worry about their reliability. "People are human beings who are able to distinguish ... false news," she says, welcoming the opportunity the Internet

He also adds that "news media vehicles no longer have to feel restricted with time or format of the content because the Internet solves these issues." And he points out that "new technology made it possible for people from across the globe to share their views and discuss current events and situations and made it possible for news to be updated by the minute and sent to subscriber's emails, cell phones, and PDAs."



Maha Arikat, a management major student at Abu Dhabi University, says she prefers TV because it not only provides visuals that enhance the understanding of a particular event, but also satisfies the curiosity of the viewer who wants to experience the event. But to Arikat reliability cannot be achieved in any medium.

Syed Bilal Shafi, a journalism major at AUS, says newspapers are his preference when it comes to news, because he believes that newspapers provides "much more detailed analysis than TV channels."

He says he admires newspapers as a source of news. He says "a benefit of this news source is that it encourages people to read."

Subway stops at AUS's station

By Salma Sidki

SHARJAH -- Subway restaurant opened at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) on Wednesday, August 27 with over 600 customers, said Suhail Muhammad, one of two managers.

"We've been trying to open Subway for five years on campus and this year it finally happened," stated Muhammad.

Several students, like Nora Bakhsh, a junior International Studies student, used to eat at Subway off campus frequently and are now "very happy" that a franchise opened at AUS.

"I like the fact that it's portable food; since it's wrapped, you can just put it in your bag and eat it at any time," said Bakhsh.

According to Muhammad, Subway offers fresh, healthy food that is made "in front of your eyes" and soft and hard cookies baked fresh every 30 minutes.

"It's the only restaurant on campus that's both healthy and tasty," said Bakhsh.

Muhammad stated that the campus Subway currently offers the same menu as off-campus Subways, but they are working on getting campus specials.

"Something like buy-one-get-one-free-type offers," he added.

Muhammad said that Subway will possibly offer muffins, pizzas and coffee in the future. He added that there is currently a breakfast menu of eggs, cheese, bacon and turkey that "not everyone knows of."

Currently, Subway only offers take-away but the restaurant is "trying to expand" and get umbrellas outside, said Muhammad.

"Subway is always crowded and it's really small," said Bakhsh, "They should add Subway tables in the Starbucks area."

A press release sent by Richard Mundy, the AUS Director of Operations, stated that Subway will be open daily from 8 a.m. to midnight and from 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. in Ramadan. Subway will also make home deliveries on campus.

AUS hosts model UN session

By Said Bilal Shafi

SHARJAH – Students from six UAE high schools debated global issues and passed resolutions during the first American University of Sharjah Model United Nations (AUSMUN) held on April 17-19.

Model United Nations is a simulation of the UN which enables students to experience the complexities and challenges involved in resolving international conflicts. It is hosted by many educational institutions in the United States.

At the AUS Model UN, organized by students of the Department of International Studies, 22 countries were represented on four simulated committees of the United Nations: Disarmament and Security Committee; Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee; World Health Organization; and the Historical General Assembly. The Historical General Assembly gives students the opportunity to debate past issues and change the course of events.

Pupils from Cambridge International School represented Turkey, UK, South America and India; Dubai International School represented Russia, Brazil and Sudan; Dubai Gem Private School represented Pakistan, Egypt, Australia and Japan; Dubai College represented Nigeria, Iraq, Afghanistan and China; Sharjah American International School represented Germany, Chad, USA and Iran; and students from English College debated in support of France, Cuba and Bangladesh.

The topics that were discussed included: Pakistani-Afghani border situation and its relation to regional security; the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India; the effects of global poverty and global warming on Sub-Saharan Africa; the issue of affordability of medication to cure diseases such as HIV and AIDS; and the legitimacy of invading Iraq.

On the day of the event's opening session that was held at the Main Auditorium, four professors discussed the role, accomplishments and limits of the United Nations in controlling the proliferation of armaments and managing crisis. Participants were also informed about the rules of a parliamentary gathering.

In her introductory speech, Dr. Nada Mourtada-Sabbah, assistant to the AUS chancellor for development and alumni affairs, welcomed the participants and said that the idea of conducting a MUN at the university emerged when several professors and thirteen students from the Department of International Studies participated in the Harvard Model United Nations, which is one of the largest and oldest MUNs in the world.

Also present at the event were Dr. John Mosbo, vice chancellor for academic affairs and Dr. William Heidcamp, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

During the two-day meetings that followed, each delegation outlined and debated the stance of its country on the issues, set an agenda, developed resolutions, made amendments, and tried to pass those resolutions; similar to what takes place in the actual UN.

They were held at the Faculty Senate Room and Lecture Hall B of the Main Building, and the School of Architecture and Design Lecture Hall.

When asked how the event contributed to the development of students' intellect, Dr. Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, assistant professor of philosophy and one of the faculty advisors of the

event, said: "AUSMUN taught our university students how to organize a complicated event; how to moderate parliamentary procedure; how to explain complicated political issues; and how to serve their communities through a fun event. It also taught high schoolers how to be a professional; how diplomacy works; how compromise is needed; and how much potential they have."

Ratheeshvar Mohan, a grade 12 student from Cambridge International School, said that the most interesting aspect of the conference for him was, "being able to debate and come up with solutions to real world issues that have massive consequence, in a risk free environment."

"I liked the event because we were able to hear different countries' position on the most pressing international problems and meet students from other schools," said Daniel Roberts, a student of English College Dubai, who represented Bangladesh.

Teachers of the participating schools said that students were chosen based on a number of talents. "I chose the most capable pupils based on their abilities to speak and write persuasively, as well their interpersonal communication

skills and leadership credentials," mentioned Kosta Lekanides, an English language and history teacher at Cambridge International School.

Hina Raja, an international studies student who served as the director of Historical General Assembly and head of logistics, said that the students had been organizing the event for almost a year.

"You cannot imagine the detail we have put into this conference," she said. "We personally overlooked everything from designing pens and T-shirts to writing study guides and managing budget. AUSMUN was the first large scale event that we organized and with academic commitments it became extremely difficult at times."

According to Bendik-Keymer, there were no declared winners or losers. "The student organizers and staff explicitly rejected the idea of making AUSMUN a competitive, hierarchical event because we disliked how Harvard made some schools losers and others winners," he stated.

"How does that teach the spirit of the UN, which is based on the rights of the most powerless and on the equal standing of every world nation in principle?" he argued.

Guitarist Jason Carter Entertains AUS Crowd

By Tahmina Mehdi

SHARJAH – Jason Carter, an award winning guitarist, performed at American University of Sharjah (AUS) on April 9 for the first time since he injured one of his fingers earlier that month.

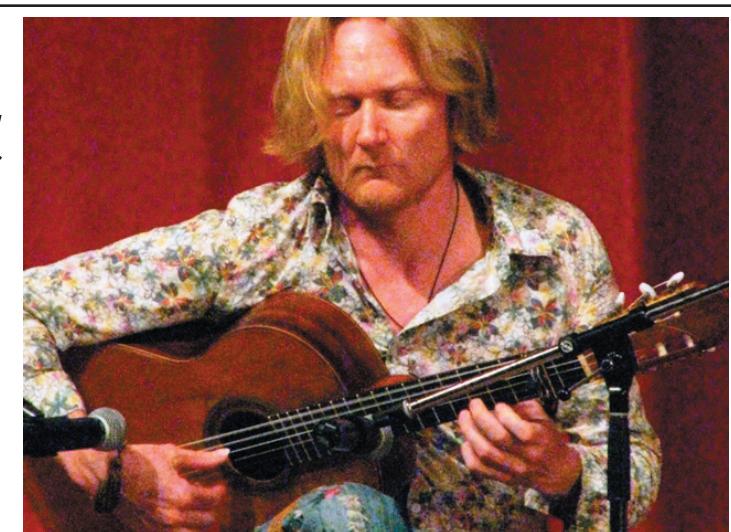
The event, which was organized by the cultural events committee at AUS, took place in the Main Auditorium at 8 p.m. and lasted one hour and 25 minutes. Entrance was free.

Carter has recorded 14 albums, received five awards and has collaborated with artists from all over the world, including rock legends John Paul Jones from Led Zeppelin, Ozzy Osbourne and Joe Satriani.

He has performed in over 70 countries such as: North Korea, where he received an honorary diploma from the government in 2007; Finland, where he currently resides; Uzbekistan; Iran; Northern Ireland; Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, where he received an award from Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin

Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa in 2001. He also has extensive teaching experience. Carter, who is self-taught, has been playing the guitar for over 30 years. According to him, it has always been his dream to be a musician and his "dream now is to continue doing these concerts, going to different places and bringing people together with it." He added, "Music for me is about atmosphere – an A or an E in the desert sounds different than it does in England... It evokes introvert feelings."

Carter performed nine original tracks and one cover: Going Home, which is about a journey into Africa; Personal Mountains, which is about an area in Helsinki where old, untouched houses still stand; Alabama, which he wrote on the way to Alabama; Requiem; Good Tomorrow My Angel, which is a lullaby he wrote for his German



Web Photo

friend's daughter; Re-creation, where he played with techniques and composed this song entirely on the fret board; Baghdad, which he wrote whilst thinking of the war and which has a Middle Eastern influence; Sandstorm, which he wrote in Bahrain after witnessing a sandstorm that blew in from the north; Color of Silence and then performed an epilogue of Over the Rainbow from The Wizard of Oz.

Carter took a minute before each piece to tell its story. Towards the end of the performance he broke a nail and while he filed it, he invited the audience of approximately 150 people to ask him questions.



Reem Hobeldin photos

Captured moments:

stage stomps

Clockwise from top: The audience stomps the stage at the event's finale; Two students lead an African dance as more participants gather nearby; After the intermission, children play various instruments and students join the drummers onstage; The serene beginning, with Iranian and Syrian classic guitarists playing Spanish music.

