

Bands With Benefits

May 6, 2007 By [Shawn Decker](#)

On Friday, Quatro de Mayo, my bandmate Kyle and I had a photoshoot for Synthetic Division. This consisted of much posing and trying to look cool, stupid, and/or interesting for close to six hours while Gwenn and the photographer, [Alanna Wiggins](#), did their best to contort us into positions that would reasonably convey the fact that we are indeed a synthpop duo.

✘ It's not that hard, really. Kyle has his Trek-esque una-shades and keytar, and I have my newly minted red hair.

The timing of which worked out quite well, since I always color my hair after the speaking season is over (CAMPUSPEAK, understandably, frowns upon Bobo Red for college programs). Last year it was blue, which I sported for the NY AIDS Walk as well as the cover of POZ. This year it's "Blood Red," which matches the band's neon Synthetic Division sign.

I gotta admit, it was kind of nice having my picture taken for something other than having AIDS. Music is something I've always wanted to pursue a bit more seriously, and for the last few months I've been making contact with DJs, who are actually spinning the new music, and recording the new album. The goal, much like it was with the book, is to have an album full of songs that I am proud of. So far, the feedback has been very encouraging. And we're booking some live shows, including a [fundraiser in DC](#) for the Whitman Walker Clinic on May 24.

Of course, I'm not shying away from my HIV status, as if I could at this point. The bio on [our band site](#) mentions my Make-A-Wish meeting with Depeche Mode, which is a nice way to disclose my status *and* drop my major musical influence. If Brandon Flowers can make Mormons cool, then I can do the same thing for positoids in music.

✘ Part of my brain understands that I should be focusing on the next book. But the reason why I'm so happy with how My Pet Virus turned out is because I went with my heart, and with what I was passionate about doing. I'm proud that I accomplished a life goal, but the book-writing process can be very lonely. I want to be out there, and I love the immediate gratification of writing a song with Kyle, posting it online and sharing it with others.

On top of that, my heart is telling me to give the music a real chance. It's what kept my mind off of HIV in the years when the thought of it alone made my stomach turn. In the last decade I've found peace with HIV, and the idea that I'm going to be around for a long time to come.

My brain, for all its faults, acknowledges that this life may be the only shot that I get. And aside from a penchant for excessive napping, I'm going to live it my fullest.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

The NY AIDS Walk is in two weeks! Please click on Support to make a donation in support of Shawn and Gwenn. Thanks to everyone who has already donated!

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