Shawn’s Favorite Things: Engine Down

August 8, 2008 By Shawn Decker

To escape the impending clot-fest of the Olympics, I ran off to Richmond to see a screening of Engine Down’s new DVD- “From Beginning to End”. Here’s the trailer:

Watching the documentary gave me a lot of insight into the band, whose music is still among my favorite. It also brought back a lot of memories, how I came to know their music and their bass player, Jason, the gentleman who open the trailer above with a toast to his friends.

I always assume the bands of mutual friends suck, because statistics back up such an assumption. So I wasn’t eager to check out this “great band” my friends, Kelly and Jeff, kept telling me about. Plus, back in 1999 it took more work to hear a band. The night I met Jason, I mentioned our group of mutual friends go putt putting and his eyes were the only set that lit up.

A friendship was born.

When his then-girlfriend, Danielle, got a job working alongside Gwenn at the local AIDS Services Organization, it only insured that we'd be hanging out and putt putting on a regular basic. I also heard his band- and they *were actually good.*

Very good.

Around the time I met Jason, I'd just started meds, and I remember Danielle telling me how much Jason enjoyed our friendship. And that he worried about me. I was still kind of skinny, gaining weight back on my first set of HIV drugs. But he was skinnier than me- he was in an indie rock band, after all.

After hearing Engine Down, I had an ambitious idea for the local goth music night, run by new friends in Bella Morte. Why not get Bella Morte and Engine Down together for a fundraising show? I selflessly offered Synthetic Division (just me swaying behind two synthesizers) as the opener, and both bands donated their services.

In 2005, cuddle-time with Jason and Jonathan of Engine Down

The Tokyo Rose, the sushi bar that hosted the show, was *packed.* Indie kids and goth kids bantied about in their skinny jeans and leather pants, and our friends from the AIDS Services Group gave out condoms to everyone. I talked briefly about my HIV status before launching into a 20-minute set, swaying behind the keyboards before the pros in Bella Morte and Engine Down took the stage.

For six years afterwards, the flyer stayed on the refrigerator. I have a feeling the flyer is going to make a dramatic return.

When I wrote My Pet Virus, I was so moved by a lyric on their final, self-titled album that I asked if I could use it. (They said, “Hell yeah!”) It goes as follows:

“Please don’t ask me again, please don’t ask her again. It’s okay you didn’t know we have a long time waiting.”

That resonated with me in regard to my job, working with Gwenn and educating about HIV, which means opening up our personal life for Q&A, often fielding the following query: “Gwenn, what would you do if Shawn got sick? Or died?” I take pride in making people comfortable enough to ask such questions, but Engine Down gave that pat on the shoulder. “It’s okay, you have a long time waiting.”

If you’ve never heard of Engine Down, check them out. I promise they don’t suck.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/engine-down