Figuring the Foo Fighters

December 21, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

In matters big and small, I've learned that life isn't neat and clean. Since I was diagnosed with HIV in 1992, I've encountered that truth over and over again.

Well, chalk this matter up as small yet significant to me: I still like the Foo Fighters and I love their new single "Wheels" so much, in fact, that I bought their "Greatest Hits" album.

The witty among you have already judged me for my (lack of) taste in music, although I assure you that my rock credentials are solid since my favorite rock group is Led Zeppelin.

No, my problem is not the Foo Fighters music, it's their politics. Specifically, their past support of AIDS denialist Christine Maggiore, who died about a year ago.

Mother Jones reports that in 2000 the Foo Fighters bassist Nate Mendel helped organize a sold-out benefit concert for Alive and Well AIDS Alternatives, an AIDS denialist group founded by Maggiore.

These excerpts from the article disturb me:

> "Foo fans were treated to a speech by Alive and Well founder Christine Maggiore, who believes AIDS may be caused by HIV-related medications, anal sex, stress, and drug use, and implies that people should not get tested for HIV nor take medications to counter the virus. Free copies of Maggiore's self-published book, "What If Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS Was Wrong?," in which she declares "there is no proof that

> HIV causes AIDS,“ were also passed out to the concert-goers ... Mendel says he was won over by Maggiore’s book, and passed it around to the rest of the band, which includes former Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl. Mendel says that he would steer anyone considering an HIV antibody test toward Maggiore’s group.”

The band used to have a link to the Alive and Well website from their official site, but that link no longer exists. Apparently that link was active until a few years ago, so their support of Maggiore seems to have been serious.

I don’t know if they’ve had a genuine change of heart or if they’re just being savvy in selling their new album, but the fact that they’re no longer linking to Alive and Well in either circumstance is welcome news.

I don’t know if that’s enough to forgive them their past support of an AIDS denialist. What I do know is that I’d feel a heck of a lot better with an explanation from the Foo Fighters as to their current beliefs on HIV/AIDS. What I also know is that I just can’t get that “Wheels” song out of my head.

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