Why I’m Rocking My @theaidsmemorial Shirt At 80s Night

April 25, 2019 By Shawn Decker

This weekend I’m going to be fronting an 80s coverband called Film On Girls for an 80s Prom Dance Party. It’s a ton of fun getting together with some friends and performing songs like “Everything She Wants”, “Safety Dance”, “Into the Groove” and “Tainted Love” to an energetic crowd. My first exposure to pop music happened in the 80s, and I have a ton of memories attached to songs like “Take On Me”, which I included in a top 5 list of songs I slipped to my 6th Grade girlfriend during class.

But I was also exposed to HIV in the 1980s. And kicked out of sixth grade for testing positive. I wasn’t supposed to make it out of the 80s, much less still be here alive and kicking in 2019.

When I decided to open up about HIV in the mid-90s, I met a lot of fellow positoids who were diagnosed in the 1980s. Some were kids with hemophilia like me. But most were people who had lost their unfair share of friends to HIV. A lot of them probably have bittersweet memories attached to ear candy tunes like “Mickey” and “Just Can’t Get Enough”. One year you’re dancing with your friends, and then the next you are attending their funeral. I can relate to the silent terror of living with a ticking time bomb in a decade when there weren’t any treatments, but I can’t relate to watching that bomb go off in a room filled with people that I love.

That’s why, this Saturday, I’m wearing my AIDS Memorial t-shirt under my white jacket. I’m planning an outfit change between the two sets, but that shirt? It is staying close to my heart and on my chest. Don’t get me wrong; I plan on having a good time. I’d like to think that our fallen friends from the 80s and beyond would want those of us who are still around to honor them by enjoying our lives. But doing so with a promise to never forget them.

“Don’t you, forget about me. I’ll be alone, dancing you know it baby.” - Simple Minds

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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