

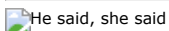


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He said, she said

Perhaps better known for their other bands, this artsy couple dabbles in music, love and mind-melding

By Sammi Skolmoski



Zack Wentz is heavily invested in making dinner. Preparation, concentration, improvisation and composition all lead to a complicated masterpiece that will, night after night, be scooped up and devoured without a second thought or leftover evidence of its existence. Sure, a bucket of slop from the nearest fast-food trough could save him the time and effort, but to Wentz, cooking, like anything worth doing, is not about the product. It's about finding fulfillment while you're lost in the process.

"When I'm making food, I become completely absorbed, and the perpetual movies and soundtracks playing over each other in my head largely seem to subside," Wentz says. "It's a similar process to making other things, but so much more immediate. I get as much satisfaction out of that as anything. Maybe more."

Wentz is a compulsive creator. Drummer and singer for local bands The Dabbers and Kill Me Tomorrow, he's also a published author, poet, record-label owner and blogger, among other active endeavors. For him, "think" and "do" have practically become one in the same.

"There are more than enough people trying to be artists," Wentz says. "You should never expect an audience just because you've gone through the trouble of making something. Do it because it's either beautiful or necessary to you, or don't do it."

Lately, his focus is The Dabbers, his project with bassist and girlfriend Shelby Gubba, formerly of local hardcore horror freaks BRAAIINS!. The two craft an adorably synchronized, compact and direct take on low-fi indie rough-and-tumble fun. The sound is surprisingly light-hearted considering the dark intensity of both musicians' previous material. The change could have something to do with Gubba, an artist who envisions a personality in everything she sees and whose work brings life to inanimate objects like staplers, rocket ships and cutlery—among other things. Gubba finds the feeling of pen rolling on paper and the texture and weight of her bass as irresistible as Wentz finds the indulgence of his wild and extravagant ideas—so they run with it.

"We both speak the same language, but in a different style," Gubba says. "More often than not, our styles merge into one and that is the music we make."

Their history is typical: Boy meets girl. Boy and girl date. Boy and girl share insatiable mutual need for creative expression. A few months after they began dating, they started the short-lived band Unplanned Hands with Gubba on drums and Wentz on guitar. Before and after practices, the like-minded couple would jam on drums and bass, and a little more than a year ago, that became The Dabbers.

"I can't even say this without grimacing a little," Gubba says, "but it's very organic—and *not* in the Whole Foods kind of way."

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Both Gubba and Wentz find the two-person dynamic refreshingly productive.

"Two-piece bands are generally either solo projects for a songwriter, with someone else just to make it possible to perform live, or to record, or they are intensely collaborative, where you are both writing everything," Wentz says. "We work the latter way. It's very nice. I've never made music like this before."

"Well," Gubba begins to add, "everything that Zack said. See, isn't that easy? That's exactly what making music is like."

The resulting debut album, *And I Was Like, And They Were All...*, comes out next week on their own Rax Records. The 10 songs are equal parts odd and catchy. Poppy, for sure, but kept raw with Wentz's distorted lead vocals and Gubba's bass serving as a lead instrument as well as half the rhythm section. The sleeve features one of Gubba's cutesy characters, a fly, and Wentz's classic construction-paper cut-outs—the first medium he ever worked with as a child that snowballed into the creative monster he is today. This could perhaps be looked as regressive and, along with the Dabbers' music, an indication that both are in a more playful mood these days. But they don't have time to get all analytical. Love and music keep The Dabbers busy and satisfied and, for now, there's no shortage of projects for either of them.

"My goal is to maintain this surreal music- and art-soaked existence with my best friend, Zack," Gubba says. "Growing up is secondary."

"Most won't happen, some won't be finished, some will, and maybe some of those will make it out there," says Wentz. And to him it's all the same. "This is it. This is the only way I know how to live."

The Dabbers play with Street of Little Girls, Lion Cut and SamHears on Wednesday, Dec. 30, at The Casbah.
www.myspace.com/wearethedabbers.

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