



THE GLOWING STARS

"There are a lot of chiptune artists with a lot of talent," says multi-instrumentalist Matt Payne, "but not really a lot of *bands*, per se." The answer: The Glowing Stars, a musical duet with guitarist/vocalist Lizzie Cuevas that combines the clicky waveforms and perfect arpeggios of 8-bit processors with the fury of live drums and distorted guitars. It's a little bit Weezer, a little bit Wario - in other words, utterly unique.

Matt and Lizzie realized they wanted to form a band together...when they were in a band together. When Lizzie left Bay Area punk outfit Sputterdoll to focus on academics in 2005, Matt replaced her on guitar; when she returned two years later, Matt shifted to keys and trombone. The common musical ground was evident early on. "From the start, we talked about wanting to combine our love of retro video games with rock music," says Matt, but outside of a few Sputterdoll NES medleys, "it didn't happen for years."

When The Glowing Stars inevitably did happen in late 2010, it was greeted by overwhelming support, thanks to their first downloadable tracks and an epic live debut at the DNA Lounge in San Francisco, where the audience experienced the band's musical 2x multiplier first-hand. "We're big advocates of combining chip sounds with other sounds," says Matt. "I've made a lot of discoveries of great combinations and I know there's more to be made. There's also a fun element of challenge in trying to sonically blend the Game Boy with the guitar and drum tones — and when it fits together, it's just magic."

While The Glowing Stars are quick to acknowledge that they are building on the legacy of Mega Man and Metroid, it's the band's other influences - from Frank Zappa and Kraftwerk to Freddie Mercury and Radiohead - that set them apart from "pure" chip acts. The lyrics reveal wistful emotions and romantic uncertainty that recall vintage Rivers Cuomo; songs like "Got It Bad" and "I Know Now" are more boy-meets-girl than Game-Boy-meets-end-boss. "When I write, I think mainly about the music and not quite so much about nerd appeal," admits Lizzie. "I love rock, and I love chip, so I might as well combine my two loves together to make something I'm personally proud of."

Instrumentally, the band uses real Game Boy handheld systems, custom programmed via Little Sound DJ, and plays them live on stage along with the traditional instruments. "I feel like anyone can use synths or keyboards to emulate the sounds from Game Boy, but it's not quite as rewarding as programming it yourself in LSDJ," explains Lizzie, who admits that Matt takes the lead on that aspect for now while she tackles the bulk of the songwriting. The resulting mix is real-time manipulation of multiple machines and traditional rock weaponry - no small feat for a duet. "We try to let the Game Boy and the live instruments do what they're best at," says Matt, who customizes the handheld hardware himself. "It all comes down to the live energy. And there is still so much yet to be created on all of this hardware that we may never run out of new sounds."

The Glowing Stars are currently finishing up their first EP, with a regional tour this summer, and a full album next year. For more information, visit <http://theglowingstars.com> or contact theglowingstarsband@gmail.com.