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**HEEBONICS**

## Pop rockers aim for music that gets 'stuck in your head'

By **RITA POLIAKOV**  
Staff Reporter

**J**oseph Shabason always thought he'd become a jazz musician. Then he formed a pop-rock band.

Shabason, 27, has played jazz since he was 10 years old. He graduated from the University of Toronto's jazz performance program, but after a year, he started to have doubts.

"I realized, maybe I didn't like jazz anymore. Instead of giving up at jazz altogether, I thought it would be a good idea to try my hand at writing rock music."

This is how Everything All The Time was born. The band, which was started by Shabason and his friend, Kieran Adams, about two years ago, plays mainly upbeat indie rock with a splash of pop. For Shabason, the switch from jazz to rock wasn't an easy one.

"It was tough. I think, at first, I was really kind of scared... to be out of my element," he said. "After a while, it sort of felt completely natural. It felt the most natural that any type of music ever had."

From playing in various punk and rock bands while in high school, he learned the power of catchy lyrics.

"Jazz is a sort of intellectual pursuit," he said. "[In rock] you can write songs that people can sing along to. Seeing people singing your songs is a pretty amazing thing."

Everything All The Time is a unique rock band.

When on stage, the members may be hammering on keyboards, but it's hard to find a guitar. The band mostly uses synthesizers—at least seven or eight per show.

Everything All The Time is made up of vocalist Alanna Stuart; Adams, who plays drums; Jeremy Little who plays bass and bass synthesizer; Dafydd Hughes; Robbie Grunwald; Mary Cobham and Shabason, who plays the keyboard and sings backup vocals.

Band members use laptops as well as synthesizers that date back to the 1970s and '80s. They find their synthesizers on Craigslist or in stores that sell used musical instruments.

"It's all synthesizers... They're quite a spectacle... We're doing that in lieu of having guitar and bass and stuff. It's sort of a different sound," Shabason said, adding that the band's use of synthesizers came more out of need than choice.

"It started because of my limitations as a musician. I played sax and was trying to write songs for a rock band. All I had were synthesizers and keyboards. From there, we all took it and ran," he said.

Most of the band's songs start from a piano chord.

"Because it's all synthesizers, we'll write songs based on a sound. Once we have a general progression, we'll put it into the computer," Shabason said, adding that he usually writes songs with Adams. After the initial chords are chosen, Shabason will write a demo and the band will discuss it.

"It really takes shape from there," he said.

While most of their songs start from a chord, their lyrics usually start from one line.

"What ends up happening is maybe a line will get stuck in your head, and from that one line, I'll build that song around that," Shabason said.

This is how *The Only One You Love Is You*, a song

"A lot of the people in this band are a lot of side people for other bands... we just wanted to do... something that was our own," he said. "This is something we got interested in doing for fun, and it's just kind of gone from there."

Grunwald, 31, agrees. His favourite part of playing in the band is watching the audience's reactions.

"The reactions we get are just so strong... When you're on stage, you look up into the crowd and people are just dancing, they're really into the music. It's a great experience," he said.

While the group is gaining in popularity, being a Toronto band is an uphill battle, Grunwald said.



From left are Everything All The Time members Joseph Shabason, Dafydd Hughes, Alanna Stuart, Kieran Adams, Mary Cobham and Jeremy Little. Robbie Grunwald is not pictured.

about a narcissistic friend, was born.

"Some of our best songs come from personal experiences," he said. "What we're trying to do is write pop music that people can sing along to and dance to and it gets stuck in your head."

Most of the band members also play in other groups. Shabason and Grunwald played in Bass Groove, a band that often performed in the Jewish community.

For Little, 32, who's involved in three bands, Everything All The Time is about having fun.

"It's really tough, especially in Toronto, because there are so many bands," he said. "It takes a lot of persistence, a lot of luck, a lot of strategy."

For Shabason, the main challenge is apathetic crowds.

"People don't necessarily go out to see music unless there's a seal of approval on it, and that's a tough thing," he said, adding that the band is about to tour Ontario and Quebec. "Ultimately, if you write good music and people are into it, they're going to like you."

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