

SHIRTS

for a

CURE

PUNK ROCK'S FIGHT AGAINST BREAST CANCER

words jessica ridenour

The statistics are sobering, to say the least: One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year in the U.S. As much as we'd like to pretend it doesn't exist, the truth is we're likely to know at least one person who has come face-to-face with this vicious killer at some point in our lives.



Acclaimed punk rock photographer Mark Beemer is all too familiar with this experience. After losing his wife, Syrentha, to breast cancer in early 2002, he decided to take action by creating the Syrentha Savio Endowment (SSE), a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing financial assistance and education to underprivileged women who may not be able to afford the costly checkups and treatments associated with breast cancer. "I started the foundation as some sort of therapy, not wanting to let go," says Beemer. "I wanted to do something to keep her name around."

Since its early days, SSE has held fund-raising dinners, organized teams for the Komen Race for the Cure—the largest series of 5K runs/walks in the world—and published a coffee-table book of Beemer's photos called *Stealing Time: 13 Years of Punk Images*, but the photographer was still looking to raise the ante. The next step was to approach the band Kid Dynamite, who were friends of Beemer's but happened to be split up at the time. They graciously agreed to reunite for a

weekend-long benefit show that brought in 1,800 concertgoers and \$20,000. Beemer was inspired. "I figured out that this music that I grew up with, loved and always have been involved with really does give back," he says.

SSE continued to put on punk shows for the following year, but according to Beemer, "It didn't feel like enough." Over dinner, he and some friends brainstormed and came up with a new plan: the Shirts For A Cure Project. The idea was to approach some cool bands and work with them on an exclusive T-shirt design, which would be manufactured and then sold at shows, like at this summer's Warped Tour. Most of the bands that SSE approached were eager to sign on, not only because it was for a worthy cause, but also because Beemer is a respected figure in the punk rock community. "I'm lucky enough to be friends with some bands that actually matter because I'm an old guy," he says with a laugh.

For \$12 (plus shipping and handling if you order online), you can get your hands on a comfy cotton tee featuring mainstream pop

punk favorites like Fall Out Boy, My Chemical Romance and Blink-182, or more hardcore bands like Darkest Hour, Thrice and Anti-Flag. Plus, it's all for a great cause. So far, Shirts For A Cure has given gifts of over \$100,000 to institutions such as the Capitol Breast Care Center in D.C. and the L.A. Free Clinic. They're also producing their own educational materials that teach the importance of early detection and how to do breast self-exams. Beemer is passionate about encouraging young women to get regular mammograms, and to hopefully save a few lives in the process. He's grateful to the punk rock community for helping him do that.

"The foundation was born out of grief and has survived on the loyalty and commitment of the community that is, was, and will always be punk rock," he says. ●

For more information, visit: syrentha.org or merchnow.com/shirtsforcure.

metallic silk

words jessica ridenour



ROCKER SEAN YSEULT SHOWS HER SOFTER SIDE THROUGH DESIGN

Touring with metal band White Zombie for eleven years might seem like more than a full-time job, but it was during those years of late-night gigs and endless freeway miles that bassist Sean Yseult earned her design degree from NYC's Parsons School of Design. "I knew during all those years on the road with White Zombie that one day I wanted to return to the design world, I just wasn't sure when," says Sean, who moved to The Big Easy after the band split in 1998. "Just since the hurricane hit in New Orleans, it was kind of like a wake-up call: 'Oh yeah, there's this other thing I wanted to do.'"

Today, Sean is putting that Parsons degree to good use in her new business, Yseult Designs, through which she produces colorfully eye-popping silk scarves that are large enough to be worn as sarongs, bandeaus or dresses. The inspiration for her trippy designs comes from her early childhood memories of psychedelic rock-and-roll posters and her stylish mother's Pucci tights and scarves. Her parents, both English professors, had an eclectic collection of books around the house—Sean's favorites include *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak and books of pop artist Peter Max—and often had the Rolling Stones or Jimi Hendrix blasting from the stereo. "We kind of grew up on the yellow submarine," the North Carolina native laughs. "I definitely got a good dose of the psychedelic era. It's funny—I didn't really care for it at the time but it's kind of coming out in my drawings all these years later. It's not anything I'm trying to do. It's just what comes out."

What exactly *is* coming out? Her two collections (soon to be three) feature kaleidoscopic imagery of bubbles, teardrops,

stars and flowers, all strikingly similar to the designs in her childhood sketchbook (although since then, she's learned to color in the lines more precisely, thanks to Photoshop). "When I showed my family [my drawings] they said, 'Wow, you were doing these when you were six or seven years old,' and they pulled out all these drawings that I'd forgotten." Sean hand-draws the designs and has the scarves manufactured by silkscreen experts in Shanghai; they're then sold in select boutiques across the country, such as at Santa Monica's Fred Segal.

Although Sean's one-year-old business is off to a promising start, that doesn't mean she's left the music world entirely. In the few years after White Zombie called it quits, the bassist toured with Famous Monsters, an instrumental garage band that performed incognito in colorful, glittery outfits. Sean describes the band as "Josie and the Pussycats meets the Munsters." She also did a short tour with "psychobilly" rock band The Cramps, and currently plays bass and piano for New Orleans-based rock band, Rock City Morgue.

Sean splits her time between New Orleans, where she finds creative inspiration, and New York City, where she focuses on the business side of her new enterprise. "It's so hard to get business done in New Orleans right now," she says. "Things came to a complete standstill for a while [after the hurricane hit]. There was no mail. We finally got a couple of post offices reopened. It's just hard to function fully down there." Sean's Garden District bar, The Saint (which she co-owns with boyfriend Chris Lee of the band Supagroup and former White Zombie bandmate Jay Yuenger), was looted during Hurricane Katrina but is relatively back to normal these days.

What's next for the rocker turned designer? Magnets, wallets, stationery—you name it. "So far it's just been me and my friend doing this," says Sean. "Now I have a whole team across the world representing me and actually getting me in stores, so I feel like it's going to be a very good year." ●

For more on Sean Yseult's Designs, click on: www.yseultdesigns.com