

APRIL SAMUELS: METALHEAD, DRUMMER, & FOUNDER OF BREAST CANCER CAN STICK IT

Posted on July 12, 2014 by Damian



This is probably the most important thing that **Amps and Green Screens** has ever done. About two weeks ago I got to have a sit down with **April Samuels**. She is a breast cancer survivor and founder of the **Breast Cancer Can Stick It Foundation**. She also plays drums in **METAL SHOP** a rockin' Dallas-area band, and she is metal through and through. After seeing her play with **WINGER** a month ago and learning her story I knew I had to speak with her. This is something that is very near and dear to me as my mother Rita, was a two-time breast cancer survivor. Plus, we all know someone who has been or could be affected by this disease: our mothers, sisters, wives, and friends. So I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it. Without further ado, here is April:

Amps: Tell me about METAL SHOP, your band that everyone goes out to San Antonio to play the Spurs win!

April: I know, right? It's awesome! **METAL SHOP** has been around for nearly 10 years. I joined the group two years ago. It's really a cool story. I was friends with everybody in the band, and the last day of chemo that I had I was like, "I wanna go out and celebrate with the band everyone thought I was crazy because chemo doesn't exactly make you energetic. So I went out to see my friends in **METAL SHOP** play and they got me up to play a **POISON** song with them. There's a picture out there of me playin' with my bald head and everything. And almost a year to the day from then their drummer

quit and I joined the band. It's cool because they were friends of mine already and that whole story makes it even more special.

As you know, **METAL SHOP** is kind of like an 80's spoof band, we got the spandex and the eyeliner and big hair and all that stuff; it's total metal (laughs)! And so we play all the greatest stuff from back then, too.

Amps: That WINGER show was such a fun night! How was it playing a drum kit lefty? Did we have to fix the kit for that or what?

April: You know, before they played Kip (Winger) mentioned maybe getting me up and so I was already kind of thinking about it, and during the show I was watching to see if Rod (Morgenstein) had a double-kick pedal, and I was like "That'll be my cheat; I can totally get away with it!" And the only time it was weird for me was during the end of the song ("Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love") because there are some fills, but it wasn't terribly difficult. Plus, I had a good opportunity to play left-footed about a year and a half ago. I dislocated my right foot and I was out for two months. But I didn't wanna not play so I taught myself how to play left-footed and I went out and played the opposite way so that my left foot was on the spare pedal and

Amps: Let's talk about the foundation. Tell me how it came about and what our mission is at this point.

April: I was diagnosed in October of 2010 and right after that happened I just felt the urge to do something, to take that energy and put it somewhere. So probably mid-November I had the idea of getting some t-shirts done and I was like, "Breast Cancer, Beat It" or "Breast Cancer Can Stick It" or something like that. I told my graphic artist that I'm picturing this cartoon chick, tough girl sitting behind a drum set with one of those slogans behind her. And she came back with our design four days later. So I started selling shirts on cafe press and any money that I got from that I just donated to **Susan G. Komen**. Well then people started really wanting shirts so I thought I'd just start buying them in bulk and selling them at shows or wherever. And it just caught on, you know? I was already planning to get involved in different fundraisers, like **Susan G. Komen**, and there's another one I really support called **Swim**



Across America that benefits **Baylor Charles A. Sammons Cancer Center at Dallas** where I was treated.

So I started incorporating **Breast Cancer Can Stick It** in with those fundraising things to raise money for the teams I was on. And momentum just started building and people really started getting into it and I decided to start having bigger events. And the first one we did was actually my second **METAL SHOP** gig ever and that was in 2012. So then in October I knew I was gonna go nuts since that's **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**, so we held two primary events, one in Dallas and one in Corpus Christi. And we had a makeshift kissing booth, and a game called "Pin the Bra on the Hottie"! (Laughing) we had these bras with Velcro on them and they had these "Hottie" shirts that they Velcro onto. It was a lot of fun and we had trophies that they won and everything. We had a sponsor from **Crown Trophy** in Plano and we raffled off guitars and autographed merch. And last year it got bigger, so we had kissing booths built. And we had two kissing booths at every show. One is **Crash Gordon**, my name in **METAL SHOP** and **Michael Diamond** (lead singer), and we charged \$5 a kiss. In the past three years we've raised over \$40,000.

This year I did something for **Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation** and we did a webcast where myself and another woman spoke who also had Triple Negative Breast Cancer. She was kind of my mentor since she was the first person I met after I was diagnosed. You could type in questions and we would answer, and we raised \$2000 in two hours. The next year we had three bands play and it was for **Swim Across America** and we had speakers from **Baylor-Sammons, Swim Across America**, and a photo therapist who's done some photography for people who've had mastectomies and stuff. She spoke as well. And that week we made \$5000. And those are things that take a lot of planning, but they're NOTHING like what we do in October.

Amps: What's next for you?

April: We want to continue to grow **Breast Cancer Can Stick It** and our goal is to make everything music-minded. We want to expand through music and keep everything connected that way. So we're getting a lot of endorsements from a lot of celebrities across the country that are donating different autographed pieces of merch or coming out to shows and performing. Last year for example we had **Troy Luccketta** from **TESLA** and **Jimmy D'Anda** from **BULLETBOYS** and they

celebrities will get up and drum with the band throughout the night, take pictures and sign stuff all night for donations. My dream is to have a **Breast Cancer Can Stick It Tour** where we go from city to city as a fundraising thing and you're bring people together through music and making people aware and making a difference.

Amps: Sponsored by Tequila?!?



April:(Laughing) YES!! We'll try and get everybody who's got a liquor or a hot sauce! It's funny though, we started working up a timeline recently and it's really super-motivating to see how far we've come. One thing that happened I went to NAMM last year and I was really interested in **Rockett Drum Works**. They have great custom drums made here in the U.S. and Rikki Rockett is the founder. I had been talking with John, the manager of a shop about getting a kit and we were working that out off and on for several months and I hadn't really hunkered down and focused on a kit. Well Troy ended up giving me Rikki's number and said, "Give him a call. I think he'd love to be involved and help out." So I talked to him on the phone about general stuff

he asked me what kind of kit I was playing. I told him I was playing a Pearl Custom but I was looking into getting a Rockett kit and he goes, "Hmmm...Let me see what I can do."

A week later I get an e-mail from John saying, "Rikki and I are gonna send you a black glitter drum kit with pink coated hardware and we want you to have that kit and we would like to add you as an artist to our roster." And now that's THE **Breast Cancer Can Stick It** kit!! It's been such an awesome experience with all the cool, awesomely generous people who have come out to support and help us win this fight.

Amps: And how is everything with you now, health-wise?

April: Yeah, everything is great. My last visit with my oncologist was last October and she said I looked so great that I need to see her once a year now. I had Stage One Triple Negative Breast Cancer, which is a very rare form. Maybe ten percent of people diagnosed get it. It's really aggressive which is why I chose to take an aggressive route and have the double mastectomy and no reconstruction or anything. I had four months of chemo. I didn't care if my hair fell out or my boobs fell off; I just wanna live, man! That's all I cared about. I need to be around people, they energize me.

Amps: OK. Time for the Lightning Round.
How long you been playing?

April: Since I was 11. That way I don't give up my age, hahaa!!

Amps: Who was it that made you pick up the sticks?

April: My friend's brother and my cousin. If I hadn't had those two guys in my life I don't know if I ever would've thought of it.

Amps: Who's your favorite drummer?

April: My favorite drummer is Sean Phillips of **SISTER 7**.

Amps: Favorite drum fill/solo on any record?

April: The song(s) where the drums always make me go "yes!" are **SISTER 7'S** a) "Nobody's Home" off the self-titled album especially at the 1:27 mark b) "Guilty Sin" especially at the :49 mark, and 3:52 thru the end, c) "Forgiven" especially at 3:15 mark. Sean is an amazingly tasteful player. He may come across basic and simply at times but he plays to the song by adding to it and not distracting. No matter what he plays, you can feel the energy, passion and pocket better than any player I have listened to. Hearing Sean's drumming for the first time in the early 90's was a pivotal point in my career. It altered the way I viewed drumming from that point on.

Amps: What would you like to say to everyone out there who has supported you musically and through the foundation?

April: Oh man, I don't know. I don't even think I have words for it. There are too many people to thank and not a good enough way to say thank you for everything. I hope that I can do everything that I set out to do and that you expect me to do. I intend to make you beyond proud of the efforts of **Breast Cancer Can Stick It** and I hope to fulfill all that you believe can accomplish ten times over.



April Samuels says that people energize her. Well, one conversation with her and I felt like I could lift cars and fly over buildings. HER energy is contagious, and she is a wonderful, fun-loving person with a highly infectious laugh. I have to give a big THANK YOU to **Halley Roberson** for setting this interview up and the amazing photos. Catch **METAL SHOP** at **Tre Dallas** tonight, and check [HERE](#) for upcoming gigs. And to everyone out there reading this: Go get yourself checked out regularly. Knowledge is power, and early detection is key. Thanks for reading, and remember...**BREAST CANCER CAN STICK IT!!**

