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TEXT

Broken Umbrella Academy

A collective word list and a walk around Hastings Entertainment partly inspired members to name their band Broken Umbrella Academy. The band's vocalist and guitarist Matthew Schuster, Texas State alumnus, and vocalist and musician Casi Moss, Texas State communication design junior, saw a comic book series called *The Umbrella Academy* written by Gerard Way while walking the aisles of Hastings. The *Umbrella Academy* series is about a disbanded group of superheroes who are reunited after the death of their adoptive father. "[U]mbrella, the word, is such a beautiful word, and then when you put broken in front of it is has this sort of sadness about it," Schuster said. "If you have a broken umbrella in the rain it's still raining on you." Schuster said the Broken Umbrella Academy name was also influenced by the idea of umbrella corporations and is the band members' way of "breaking the economic mode."

BROKEN UMBRELLA ACADEMY

The six piece lineup began when Schuster, who is also a member of the Gypsy-funk band Kabomba!, decided he wanted to start a more acoustic and folk based band. The Dallas native asked his girlfriend Moss, who was also a member of the San Marcos band The Jenna Tellyas, and fellow Kabomba! band mates Bryce Gorski, who left the band for personal reasons shortly after its formation, and Talley Barnes to join the band. He placed an advertisement on Craigslist for a cello or violin player. Josh Weber, Broken Umbrella Academy cellist and vocalist, answered Schuster's advertisement. Weber is a Texas State Sound Recording Technology student. The band's vocalist and pianist Shannon O'Shea, Texas State alumna, and drummer Luis Omar Rodriguez rounded out the lineup. Broken Umbrella Academy started in May 2011 and played their first show at Triple Crown. The Austin/San Marcos-based band performed on KTSW's specialty show Other Side Drive last semester and is available to play at local house parties. The band's first studio album will debut November 2012. I had the opportunity to speak with Schuster on the phone after a Kabomba! rehearsal, who said being in two bands simultaneously keeps him organized.

- Jordan Gass-Poore

JGP: When did you start playing the guitar?

MS: I've always had music as a part of my life. I started taking piano lessons when I was four-years-old. I played saxophone in the fourth grade and began

playing guitar in 7th grade, but became serious about it in college, when I began playing in bands in 2007 when I moved to Austin.

JGP: What was the first band you joined?

MS: It was called Next To Building One. My buddy had a duplex and behind it was an apartment complex. Building one was in his backyard. We played together for a year, and then I moved to San Marcos. I then became involved in the band One Less Car. It was my first endeavor in an ensemble band. The band split and then I became involved with Kabomba!

JGP: I understand you write for both Kabomba! and Broken Umbrella Academy. Can you describe your songwriting process?

MS: I've been writing songs since I took up the guitar. I learned a few cords after my first guitar lesson and then went home and wrote a song based on those cords. I probably don't still remember it. It's really weird where songs come from. They can come from you and a personal experience, or they can come from just what's going on around you now. We have one song with Broken Umbrella Academy called "Ode to Traffic." My roommates put up these traffic signs, that they just hung up on the wall, and I was playing this riff and just started singing all the different traffic signs that were around, like, "My car only goes five miles per hour. Road construction ahead." That became a song that we play.

JGP: How did you find out about KTSW's MR Fest?

MS: When I moved to San Marcos I found out about MR Fest. When I started playing music in San Marcos it had been a goal of mind to play the festival. Kabomba! played at the Texas Music Theater last year on opening night with Soul Track Mind and Zeale. Henry from Henry + The Invisibles backed out because he was double booked. The Organics reminded me in January.

JGP: What has been your favorite venue to play at with Broken Umbrella Academy?

MS: Tantra Coffeehouse because the sound is so good. The crowd is always amazing and in to it. We played an intimate gig at the Center for Music Therapy. The center utilizes music as a means to help people with various issues. Shannon works there, she leads group activities.

JGP: What are some of your favorite local bands?

MS: I love the San Marcos music scene. It's so great. The music scene that's going on in San Marcos is the best thing that I think I can be a part of. One of my favorite local bands is Whistle and Fish. I put on a music festival called All Hollows Preamble in 2010 with local artists Henry + The Invisible, The Blue Hit and Green Mountain Grass. I was running around that festival like a chicken with its head cut off trying to handle and organize everything. The only show that I got to just sit and be at was there's. There music was so perfect for what I needed right then.

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