

Editor's Note

Collin Tateishi uses his friend and musician Shaun Profeta as a profile subject. Beginning with an anecdote, Tateishi attempts to describe Profeta's lifestyle as a practicing musician. How do active verbs such as "intertwines" and "trekked" create an engaging essay for Tateishi's readers? Describing Profeta's family background and musical influences may seem superfluous and distracting to some readers, while others may find such information illuminates Profeta's personality as a musician. The quotations have been placed carefully, but could they have been integrated more effectively? For instance, in the third paragraph Tateishi quotes Profeta, writing, "Music was something that was always around me . . .," how could Tateishi more seamlessly integrate this quotation with his own writing?

Hope is Hope and Fate is Destiny

Collin Tateishi

Clusters of teenagers form on a Friday night in front of Jerry's Pizza: Bakersfield's main venue for up-and-coming bands. The mambo line of boys and girls both dressed in skinny, tattered jeans, multicolored band shirts, and vintage Chuck Taylors stretches down the street and wraps around the corner. When the sticker-covered doors finally swing open, the fans charge in as if they were going into battle. Sitting at a table perched against the front window is my friend Shaun Profeta: the lead guitarist and vocalist for the newly famous, alternative, pop-rock band A Cursive Memory. He pleads with the swarm of adoring fans to let him step aside for a quick interview with an old friend. Balancing two slices of greasy pepperoni pizza and several bottles of water in our hands, we find a solitary table to begin the interview. This is the story of Shaun Profeta.

When it comes to the Profeta family, music flows in their blood—Shaun's older brother Chris is the drummer for the internationally acclaimed indie-pop band Hellogoodbye, his father played drums professionally in various jazz groups, and his grandfather sang alongside Frank Sinatra. With a family name boasting such an impressive reputation, it is no surprise that Shaun would follow the same path to rock-and-roll stardom.

Profeta was raised in an environment where music was valued and highly respected. From a young age, he would accompany his brother to shows and help set up his drum kit. "Music was something that was always around me so I never felt forced into it—it was something that I was naturally drawn to." Inspired by the sounds of The Beach Boys and The Beatles playing off of his father's classic 33s, Shaun developed a strong appreciation and respect for "music's ability to provoke such powerful emotion." In junior high school, he began writing poetry as a means to express his own teenage angst, confusion, and joy. It was at this time that he was also heavily influenced by the ambient guitar tones of Jimmy Eat World and the facetious persona of Blink 182.

These four bands significantly shaped the style and lyricism that he would someday call his own. By the age of fifteen, Profeta teamed up with three of his musically driven friends to form A Cursive Memory.

The story of A Cursive Memory begins no differently from that of other bands. The group started as “something that we did for fun after school. We would cover our favorite bands and play small shows for our friends. We never imagined it would someday take us across the country.” While still in high school, they spent countless hours writing and recording the songs that would eventually become their debut album *Changes*, an album injected with intricate melodies and awash with the delicate touch of human experience. It intertwines the *Pet Sounds* of the Beach Boys with the compelling keys of Ben Folds, infused with the harmonies of a Buddy Holly after three cans of Red Bull. Their mind-blowing ballads result from the collaboration of each member’s skills and is coated with the heartfelt lyrics of Profeta and Baylen (rhythm guitar and vocals): a modern day McCartney/Lennon duo. As cliché as it is, there is no doubt that their songs will tug at your heartstrings and uplift your spirits.

The band trekked thousands of miles across the country’s barren landscapes to promote *Changes*. “Life on tour is not what everyone thinks it is; you’re not some rock star having it made. It’s hard work.” According to Profeta, the major disadvantage to touring is the hectic lifestyle that takes time away from family and makes having a serious relationship virtually impossible. The southern California foursome spent endless nights drifting between bizarre venues, often performing without rest. “Yeah, there are plenty of disadvantages to touring but I can’t complain. This is a dream come true and I’m thankful for every second of it.” In the eyes of a musician, making a living playing music is a blessing and walking out onto a different stage, in a different city, and in front of a different crowd each night is nothing short of exhilarating—it’s what keeps A Cursive Memory motivated through tough times.

One of the most impressive aspects about A Cursive Memory is its electrifying live performance. Sensually arranged vocals and powerfully progressive guitar segues break into the eager crowd and free the emotions of the tormented youth. “Having kids around the country sing back the words that Colin [Baylen] and I wrote is definitely weird . . . it reminds me of when we first wrote those lyrics.” This genuine bond with complete strangers showcases the honesty that forms the foundation of each song.

Similar to most musicians, their songs emphasize hope and the beauty of love: “you’re the air that I breathe / you’re the world that I see” (A Cursive Memory, “A Different Kind of Love”) and “you’ve got me lost inside your eyes with no way out” (A Cursive Circle, “Everything”). However, *Changes* isn’t solely about love; like Dr. Jekyll it possesses a darker, more mysterious personality. “Lions” tells of old friendships that Profeta had while growing up, and the frustrations of finding his place in the world: “My past is after me and I’ve been trying to break free from all these mess-ups and these bad memories / I just want to move on to a new place I belong to / new places and new faces

to meet” (A Cursive Circle). “Figure Out” is the album’s explosive finale about having the valor to face death: “It doesn’t stop here your journey goes farther . . . Go ahead and leave you’ve got to believe / don’t be afraid it’s okay . . . Go show all the angels how / show them what you found out” (A Cursive Circle).

Profeta believes that all people are connected through music because “the life that you’re living can’t be too different from everyone else’s—it’s honest; it’s something real.” Music is “the one international language that everyone speaks” and can relate to. It has become our generation’s vehicle for expression—it certainly worked for Lloyd Dobler.¹

Through relentless hours of practicing and touring, A Cursive Memory has matured as musicians and as people. They’ve grown from playing local shows at schools to opening for various highly respected bands in the pop-rock community: New Found Glory, Saves the Day, and Jimmy Eat World. Since the nationwide release of *Changes* in February, the band continues to gain success: the hit single “Everything” was featured on MTV’s Top Ten Countdown; and they have been featured in the well-established music magazines *Alternative Press* and *Billboard Magazine*. With a refined résumé in hand, the boys of A Cursive Memory continue to tour in support of the album and plan on heading to the studio to record a follow-up to *Changes* within the next year. They have only begun to discover the capabilities of their musical brilliance.

Shaun Profeta is an eighteen-year-old musical genius and without a doubt the most interesting friend I have. Successes aside, his honorable character is what I admire the most; he remains humble, honest, and loyal. He had the courage to chase his dreams and ultimately achieve them. Profeta’s story is one of great inspiration—encouraging many to hope that the impossible is possible and to have faith that dreams can become reality. “South” is the fast-tempo opening track to *Changes* that blares “As I hold hands with hope, fate lies right in front of me as my eyes have proven to show, that hope is hope and fate is destiny.” Anything and everything is possible—you just have to believe.

Works Cited

- A Cursive Memory. “A Different Kind of Love.” *Changes*. Vagrant Records, 2008.
- . “Everything.” *Changes*. Vagrant Records, 2008.
- . “Figure Out.” *Changes*. Vagrant Records, 2008.
- . “Lions.” *Changes*. Vagrant Records, 2008.

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¹Lloyd Dobler is the protagonist in the 1989 romantic film *Say Anything*. Played by John Cusack, Lloyd Dobler is an average student at a Seattle, Washington high school who improbably falls in love with the school valedictorian Diane Court. He is best remembered for the scene where he stands outside of her bedroom window holding a stereo above his head playing Peter Gabriel’s “In Your Eyes.”