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In the Clubs with Jets Under Fire

By Joe Gross
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF
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Jason Poe, leader of the Austin band Jets Under Fire, is a Christian, but he doesn't believe in Christian music.

"I really hate the term 'Christian music,' " Poe says. "The word Christian is a noun, not a adjective. I don't think music has a soul that can be saved. We play music. I am a Christian. That's it."

Even if you didn't know he was a Christian, one had to admire his and his band's willingness to remain cool and good-natured at their April 17 performance at Progress Coffee, one of the most technically disastrous sets I've ever seen.

Nothing seemed to work. The band — Poe, drummer Corbin Petersen and bassist Todd Meador — would play for a minute and the sound would cut out. They'd play, then the sound would cut out. (Let's hope this will not be the case when the band plays Friday inside at Stubb's.)

Poe laughs when talking about it. "As far as we could tell, the bass on the keyboard seemed to be overpowering the little speaker and overpowering the little system. We would turn the keyboard up, and it would crash everything."

But then, it seems a weird little miracle that Poe is playing rock 'n' roll at all. He grew up in Springfield, Mo., the son of devout Christians. "Nothing but Christian music for a while there. Then my dad brought home an old Boston CD, which I clung to," he says. By his senior year in high school, he had started to write songs and play in bands.

Jets Under Fire started as a side project, an offshoot of his main act, the Professional Americans. He knocked out two brief CD-EPs of piano-based rock under the Jets name before the Americans relocated to Austin in 2005.

"(The Professional Americans) kinda maxed out what we could do in Missouri," Poe says. "We had a friend who came down and started a church plant two years before, so we decided to move here and help them out." The church, the Southwest Family Fellowship, thrived and meets at the Barton Creek Square AMC theater.

But Professional Americans did not, and was gone within a year, leaving Poe free to concentrate full time on Jets Under Fire and its American brand of British-sounding rock. (Poe doesn't really deny the influence of such large-emotion rockers as the Verve, Radiohead or Travis.) The band released its debut full-length, "Kingdoms," in March.

Poe says the title refers to the impermanence of life, one of the most basic human questions. "We build whatever you want, but in the end, you're going to die," he says,

"Kingdoms rise and fall."

Jets Under Fire, however, would still like to find a guitar player to round out their sound live.

Jets Under Fire plays with Ars Supernova and Sounds Under Radio at 9 p.m. Friday indoors at Stubb's, 801 Red River St. $8 in advance, $10 at the door. stubbsaustin.com

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