

Music

Matt & Kim just grin and blare it

BY MACKENZIE MOUNT
The Tampa Tribune

My Chemical Romance has Matt & Kim to thank for leaving it with an audience grinning like idiots. Though Matt Johnson shies from likening the rabid dental showcase a Matt & Kim show elicits to a crowd of beaming “idiots,” he’s no fool to the band’s effect.

“The way we sort of judge shows is how much we can see people moving and see people enjoying it,” Johnson said on a recent call from Pittsburgh. “And that just gets us more excited, and the more excited we get, the more excit-



CALEB KUHL

Matt Johnson (vocals/keyboards) and Kim Schifino (drums/vocals), who perform their merry synth-pop as Matt & Kim, play the 1-800-Ask-Gary Amphitheatre on Saturday, opening for Blink-182 and My Chemical Romance.

MATT & KIM

Concert preview

Opening for: Blink-182 and My Chemical Romance

When: 7 p.m. Saturday

Where: 1-800-Ask-Gary Amphitheatre, 4802 N. U.S. 301, Tampa

Tickets: \$20 to \$84.50

ed the audience gets.”

A Matt & Kim concert is a symbiotic experience, and it’s hard to resist.

The Brooklyn-based band opens for My Chemical Romance, which, in turn, opens for Blink-182, at the 1-800-Ask-Gary Amphitheatre on Saturday. As fans of the headlining acts — both a decidedly far punk-cry from Matt & Kim’s merry synth-pop — file into their seats, they’ll get the underbelly of emo: happy.

The Gary is “one of the wildest names for a venue on the tour,” Johnson said.

It’s also a major get, considering Matt & Kim played at Czar in June; while the Ybor City nightclub is a popular venue, it isn’t the Fairgrounds’ open-air behemoth, either.

If any pair can make a 20,000-person arena feel intimate, Matt & Kim are at least contenders.

The latter of the indie-pop duo, Kim Schifino, wails on the drums like a beautiful Animal — that percussion-pounding Muppet — mouth agape. She leaps onto her stool and beats her drumsticks overhead — conducting a frenzied, appendage-waving orchestra. Johnson keeps score on the keyboard, narrating Schifino’s seat-hopping and crowd-surfing between sets. They smile, a lot.

“We just sort of decided we were going to show how we felt when we were on stage,” Johnson said. “It’s so boring watching all these bored bands play.”

Jangly effects laid over zippy techno-pop constitute much of the band’s last album, 2010’s “Sidewalks.” Schifino can hardly contain herself playing it.

Johnson and Schifino don’t practice looking cool in front of the mirror, he



MATT HOYLE

Kim Schifino and Matt Johnson of the indie-pop duo Matt & Kim were roommates when they “ended up falling backwards into forming a band,” Johnson said.

laughed. (Good thing — “air-keyboard” doesn’t have quite the same ring.)

Apparently, they’ve kept it cool — the organic, just-happy-to-be-here kind — from the start.

“We didn’t really decide to form a band,” Johnson said of he and then-roommate Kim’s mid-’00s beginnings. “It just happened. I had this keyboard, and I was just trying to learn that. And she was trying to learn drums, and it ended up falling backwards into forming a band. Couldn’t even think of a band name.”

The duo’s lack of affectation, coupled

with beats that tickle heels higher, makes them a tough act to follow — though Johnson doesn’t frame the tour that way.

“We understood what we were getting into. We’re the first of three bands, soon after the doors open. We’re going to go out there and put on a Matt & Kim show. You gotta play it like they’re all right there. We do it, and by the end, I see people, smiling like ...”

He wouldn’t say “idiots.”

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