

Star-gazing requires looking up, not down -- an act that is a little out of the ordinary for the average human tethered to an iPhone. But, as their name implies, Atlanta-based electronic indie-pop duo *star-splitter* is clearly an exception to this rule. The duo, comprised of Andi Rogers (Night Driving in Small Towns, andi.) and Torin Degnats (The Well Reds), is fully committed to the difficult work of gazing upward and outward, and to operating outside the confines of the ordinary.

The duo met fortuitously, when Degnats began drumming for Rogers' indie rock band, Night Driving in Small Towns, who have received nods from *Rolling Stone* and NPR and opened for power acts like Fruitbats, Death Vessel, He's My Brother, She's My Sister, Lera Lynn, and Natalie Prass. At the time, Degnats was busy touring with a variety of bands, including The Well Reds, who have toured the country multiple times, opening for bands like Daughtry, Hot Chelle Rae, Parachute, and Minus the Bear. Over time, though, they realized there was new and different work to be done; it was then that they decided to form a side project wherein they could carve out the new vision they had in mind.

Although Rogers and Degnats have been in dozens of bands during their lifetimes, they have never before explored this specific aural space. Degnats describes the duo's first three-song maxi-single, "Afterglow," as "space-inspired, synth-driven music with depth and width, with sounds that sweep forward and backward and accents that twinkle, just barely audible, in the distance. I wanted to highlight less common textures and ranges in Andi's voice: sometimes angular, sometimes rhythmic, with a juxtaposition between pop melodies and more quirky vocal parts... But always returning to, and revolving around, the theme of space and time."

Mixed and mastered by Swaff (Family Force 5, Third Day), "Afterglow" is only the beginning of *star-splitter's* realized vision -- a vision that is very consciously focused on and around the concept of space. "It wasn't intentional at first," Rogers says, "But once I started writing the lyrics, all of these space images kept coming up: first images from outer space, like comets, and then all these images of the type of emotional and physical space that exists between two people, and that can eventually drive them apart." Rogers, a Ph.D. Poetry candidate at Georgia State University, had been working on poems about the Apollo missions at the time, as well as reading poet Tracy K. Smith's *Life on Mars*, which details Smith's relationship with her father, who worked on the Hubble Space telescope. Later, when Rogers and Degnats were looking for names for their new act, the idea of space stayed with them. After much deliberation, they chose a name which originates from Robert Frost's poem "The Star-Splitter." "You know Orion always comes up sideways," the poem opens, spoken in the conversational cadence of its main character, a failed New England farmer who burns his house down for the insurance settlement in order to buy a telescope, which he then dubs the Star-Splitter. Rogers says she aims to make her lyrics "conversational, like Frost's speakers are. That approach, coupled with the open-endedness of the concept of space, really opens the content up for a variety of interpretations, I think."

Rogers and Degnats have an undeniably easy connection, both in person and in their music. Given their busy schedules, it would have been easy for them to discuss the possibility of a collaboration without ever following through; at the time, the two were wrapped up in a variety of other projects -- Rogers was recording for her solo project (andi.) and traveling across

Europe, while Degnats was touring the country with The Well Reds -- but, sensing something exciting was in the works, they made the time to work together. Rogers recalls their first conversations about the project as "innocent. We started by talking about different bands we were listening to at the time, and then began to discuss the possibility of a themed project. Then Torin worked up some songs and sent them over, and it was like fireworks went off inside my head. The lyrics were finished within a matter of days."

The "gunpowder," if you will, having been lit, the duo are currently working on new songs, which they hope to release in the very near future. "We're excited to see what comes next," Rogers adds. "And, to quote my favorite line from Frost's 'The Star-Splitter,' 'The best thing that we're put here for's to see.'"