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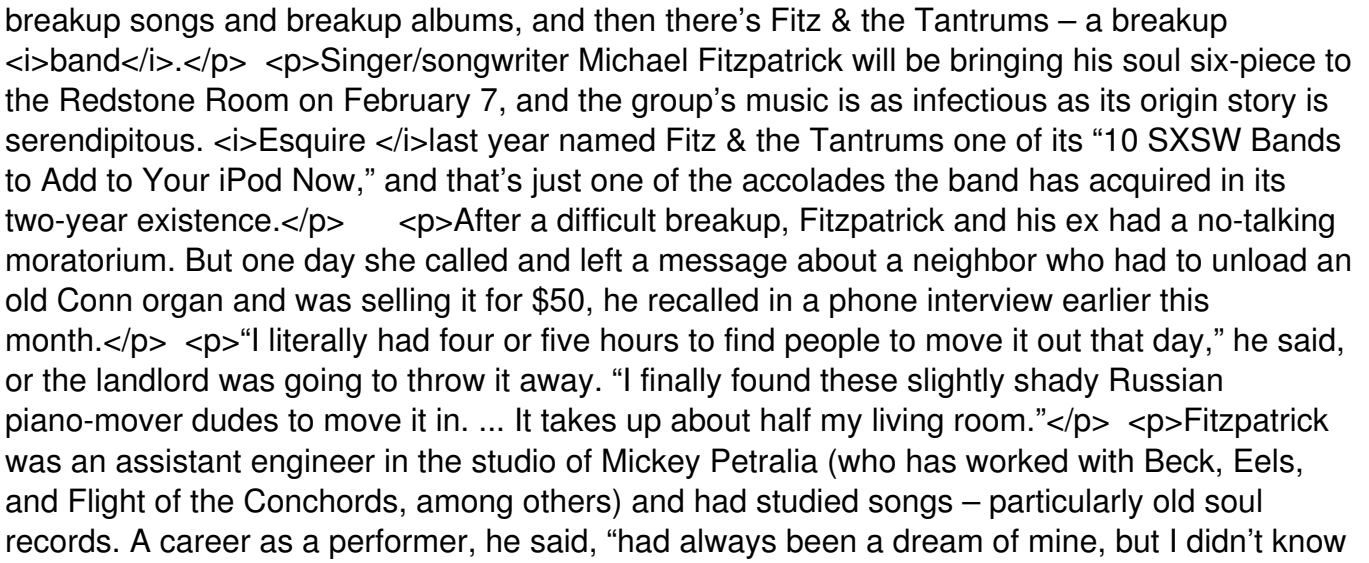
Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Structural Detailing 2011 (en) 
src="images/stories/2011/770/fitz-and-the-tantrums.jpg" alt="Fitz & the Tantrums. Photo by Alicia Rose." title="Fitz & the Tantrums. Photo by Alicia Rose." class="caption" />There are breakup songs and breakup albums, and then there's Fitz & the Tantrums – a breakup band. Singer/songwriter Michael Fitzpatrick will be bringing his soul six-piece to the Redstone Room on February 7, and the group's music is as infectious as its origin story is serendipitous. Esquire last year named Fitz & the Tantrums one of its "10 SXSW Bands to Add to Your iPod Now," and that's just one of the accolades the band has acquired in its two-year existence. After a difficult breakup, Fitzpatrick and his ex had a no-talking moratorium. But one day she called and left a message about a neighbor who had to unload an old Conn organ and was selling it for $50, he recalled in a phone interview earlier this month. "I literally had four or five hours to find people to move it out that day," he said, or the landlord was going to throw it away. "I finally found these slightly shady Russian piano-mover dudes to move it in. ... It takes up about half my living room." Fitzpatrick was an assistant engineer in the studio of Mickey Petralia (who has worked with Beck, Eels, and Flight of the Conchords, among others) and had studied songs – particularly old soul records. A career as a performer, he said, "had always been a dream of mine, but I didn't know if it would ever happen." (In an industry that prizes youth, Fitzpatrick is getting a late start; he's in his mid-30s.) When that organ came into his life (and house) more than two years

ago, it was a happy accident. “I sat down that night and had one of those magical music moments, where the song writes itself,” he said. That was “Breakin’ the Chains of Love” – the lead track on the band’s debut full-length, Pickin’ Up the Pieces – and it emerged in five minutes. “I’m still waiting for another one of those moments,” Fitzpatrick said. Beyond that instant inspiration, Fitz & the Tantrums is a result of a natural musical chemistry and plenty of good luck. The band had played all of eight shows before going out on the road with Flogging Molly, and its 10th show was at the Red Rocks Ampitheatre in Colorado. Another tour happened because a tattoo artist in New York was playing Fitz & the Tantrums’ EP when Maroon 5’s Adam Levine was getting inked. But it all began with the organ. “The organ was so inspiring to me because it just had so much personality to it,” Fitzpatrick explained, and that character combined with his breakup was alchemic. “I definitely had stuff to say at that moment. ... “For me as a vocalist, also, it was the first time ... after a whole lifetime of singing that I’d finally found what was my authentic, natural voice.” Fitzpatrick initially envisioned a solo project and played his first few recordings for friend and saxophonist James King. They decided to put a band together with a few stylistic rules: It needed horns, there had to be a female vocalist to pair with Fitzpatrick, and there wouldn’t be any electric guitar. “We made five phone calls, and that’s the band that we have,” Fitzpatrick said. “We went into rehearsal, and we could have gone and played a show that night. ... It just clicked.” Soul appealed to Fitzpatrick because of its songwriting and harmonies, and “as a studio nerd, I was obsessed with the way those [old] records sounded. They’re so unique, and they’re not technically correct but they have so much personality to them.” An emphasis on studio perfection, he said, has robbed much music of something essential: “People are thirsty for some kind of authenticity.” So the band’s first release (the EP Songs for a Breakup, Volume 1) and Pickin’ Up the Pieces were recorded in his living room – even after Dangerbird Records signed Fitz & the Tantrums for that full-length. Fitzpatrick’s primary technique was to fiddle little with the setup: He kept the instruments far away from his mic for a roomier sound, and he employed just a few EQ settings. He said his studio time taught him that “just because it [tweaking] is satisfying your OCD doesn’t mean it’s helping the music.” The hands-off approach to recording “lets it be a more human experience, and it sort of counterbalances the sterile nature of what the digital world is.” But Fitzpatrick emphasized that the band doesn’t want to simply ape old recordings. “I didn’t want to ... make a record that was just a pure pastiche or a carbon copy of that era,” he said, “but I definitely wanted to use it as a major jumping-off point, and say: Can we continue the dialogue of what this genre of music is and put a modern twist on what soul music is?” Based on the attention and praise the band has received, the answer is “yes.” Fitz & the Tantrums’ full-length debut has spent 10 weeks on Billboard’s “heatseekers” album chart – peaking at number 20 – and critics have largely been enchanted. DJ Eric J. Lawrence of taste-maker radio station KCRW wrote that the band’s songs “manage to sound both cutting-edge and timeless at the same time, echoing a range of artists from Tom Jones, David Ruffin, Daryl Hall, and Raphael Saadiq. But the group is not just a big soul voice – the band, anchored by the catchy interplay between organ, sax, bass, and drums, is sharp and funky, featuring players having previously worked with Macy Gray, De La Soul, and others. And backup singer Noelle Scaggs is much more than just a mere backup; she’s a force all her own, expertly trading riffs with Fitz.” Pop & Hiss, the L.A. Times’ music blog, said the band “makes brash ’60s-style pop that clearly derives from artists like the Temptations, but singer/bandleader Michael Fitzpatrick brings his own punky attitude into the room and makes

the sound fresh.” And Spin enthused (in a review subtitled “The ’60s Shtick Is Thick, but the Yacht Rocks on”): “Many recent students of old-school soul get the rhythms and vibe right, but what sets Michael Fitzpatrick and his L.A. crew apart is their mastery of Motown-esque melodies. Guitar-less but heavy on the organ, sax, and hands-to-the-heavens claps, this home-recorded debut swings like demos of actual ’60s hits.”   Any person’s journey with Fitz & the Tantrums should start with “MoneyGrabber” and its diamond of a chorus; it feels like it’s been part of the pop/soul canon forever. But it’s hardly alone on Pickin’ Up the Pieces, nearly matched by “Breakin’ the Chains of Love” – the spark that lit this fire – and a handful of slightly lesser gems. Fitzpatrick and his crew lodge into your consciousness, and that’s a function of writing and performance – not merely mimicking a genre or an era. “I’m always trying to write a great song,” Fitzpatrick said, and he added that this band came along when he’d had sufficient technical and life education: “It just happened when I was finally ready and had learned ... .” Fitz & the Tantrums will perform on Monday, February 7, at the Redstone Room (129 Main Street in Davenport). The show starts at 7:30 p.m., and the bill also includes Bermuda Report. Tickets are $10 and available from RedstoneRoom.com. For more information on Fitz & the Tantrums, visit FitzAndTheTantrums.com, Myspace.com/fitzandthetantrums, or Facebook.com/fitzandthetantrums.