

## Hesitant salesman

by Skylar Browning



### The real John Dendy stands up

John Dendy tells a listener almost everything he needs to know with his titles and lyrics. Take “Selling Myself,” off the witty songwriter’s debut album, *I Got Lucky*, whereon he sings, “Something about selling myself leaves me uneasy. Something about please, please, please.” It’s pretty clear that Dendy’s not into self-promotion, and he’s got a humble attitude toward peddling his music.

“I’m never sure what to say about myself,” says the current Gardiner

resident and former Missoulian in a recent phone interview. “I know I have to do them, but I’m not good with interviews. They scare me...I prefer to perform and I like writing songs. It’s as simple as that. That feels real.”

Real is something Dendy does well. Armed with a six-string, harmonica and sometimes an upright bass (he picked it up when some bluegrass buddies needed a fill-in), Dendy delivers Dylan-esque acoustic arrangements and Dennis Miller-like commentaries. Much like fellow singer-songwriter Dan Bern, his voice is tinny and unrefined, but it fits well with his often irreverent, sometimes vivid

material. For instance, he croons on one tune: “Jezebel joined the Communist Party. She has got a perfect ass. She believes in sharing freely with every comrade who makes a pass.” On another he sings sincerely: “I came for play but now I’m just praying I can leave without losing face. There ain’t no harm in the charm of the morning, but the nighttime tells the truth.”

“I try to pay attention,” Dendy says about his writing style. “Doing that provides what I need.”

But recording is a new endeavor. He didn’t play publicly when he lived in Missoula in the late ’90s, but for the last five years he’s played solo in and around Gardiner and with various Montana bands. He maintains his day job at Yellowstone National Park and is eager to get on the road to play more.

“Gardiner’s a small town,” he says. “I only play there about four times a year, because, you know, I wouldn’t want to hear me every week.”

Others disagree. Dendy’s already scored gigs around the state and in Spokane, and KBGA has started playing some tracks from I Got Lucky, including the devilish “Tattoo.” In the song, Dendy musters the courage to sleep with a girl only to get caught getting her pregnant. The ending lyric works for the song, and maybe for Dendy’s new musical career: “Now I’m on the windowsill. I’m hardly hanging on, but my hands are getting stronger.”

**John Dendy plays his first Missoula show Saturday, Feb. 11, at 8 PM at Liquid Planet.**

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