



John Dendy's first CD reads like a novel. With a hint of Tom Waits, his gravelly, soulful voice wraps around quirky, intelligent (and very entertaining) songwriting.

His songs are short stories set to music, rhyming sometimes but not often. No matter. The transplanted southerner, now from Gardiner, writes pretty, understated melodies and off-the-wall, on-target lyrics that mesh exquisitely. And even though no less than nine accompanists join him on the album, the arrangements never get in the way of Dendy's sound. He's endearing and hopeful and hilarious.

Take the "hazelnut heart" that fuels a breakup on Valentine's Day in the waltz, "Never Was Golden." Or "Restless," a walkin' blues that sings, "I don't know about love. I know about not love." In his send-up to all things manly in "Men," Dendy extols the virtues and foibles of his rural Montana pals. His slacker friend "can milk a job like nobody can. The only way to elevate your hourly wage is to squeeze four hours in an eight-hour day." Funny, yes?

Dendy sheds the rock salt in his voice to sing "Gardiner River Bridge," a ballad of loss and longing. And in the cool two-step, "Just Because," about the pain of a wounded relationship, he says, "Just because you want to kiss her, that don't mean that leaving her was wrong."

Ouch. Dendy's way with words makes you squirm, but somehow you know he's still optimistic. Poignant and to the point, this fella. Give him a listen. Visit the artist at www.johndendy.com.

– Mariss McTucker for Lively Times

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