

# SECONDHAND SERENADE

STORY: AMY SCIARRETTO /// PHOTO: BRION TOPOLSKI

HO: Menlo Park, CA

NOW PLAYING: *A Twist In My Story*  
(GLASSNOTE; [myspace.com/glassnotemusicgroup](http://myspace.com/glassnotemusicgroup))

**WHY YOU SHOULD KNOW 'EM:** Secondhand Serenade vocalist/guitarist/multi-tasker John Vesely normally plays his precious, rip-your-heart-out-with-ragged-fingernails-and-slap-it-on-the-sleeve compositions by himself. However, on *A Twist In My Story*, he experiments with fuller instrumentation.

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"This is definitely *not* a way to meet chicks," exclaims Secondhand Serenade vocalist/guitarist/braintrust John Vesely about his often confessional, acoustic music. "I'll try to talk to fans as much as possible, but meeting [potential girlfriends] on the road is a dangerous thing."

Fans can almost always find Vesely on the road, but this Northern California troubadour spent most of his time in L.A. during the past five months recording *A Twist In My Story*. On Secondhand Serenade's sophomore effort, Vesely combines his signature high-pitched vocals with stripped down acoustic guitars, adding more beats and strings to give beautifully aching songs like album opener "Like A Knife" and "Stranger" a fuller, less delicate feel than some of the songs on his 2005 debut *Awake*. "It took me a long time to visualize the new record," Vesely admits. "I was writing songs that would work better with a full band, but I didn't have the resources or the members." Diehard fans need not worry, though. The trademark Secondhand Serenade sound hasn't changed too drastically ("While I love the full band sound, I love how an acoustic guitar can change the feel of a song, so there's an acoustic guitar in every song"), and Vesely is still playing

all the instruments himself—except the drums, where he had some help from Rancid's Branden Steineckert.

An appearance by the former Used drummer shouldn't be too much of a shock, though, because Vesely has always followed his own musical playbook, seeing as he comes from an ultra-musical family; his father was a jazz musician in Czechoslovakia before the family emigrated to the U.S. in 1980, and his older brother went to the prestigious Berklee College of Music. But Vesely was the rebel in the bunch, resisting the music lessons his father made him take. Instead, he preferred to improvise and do his own thing, which oftentimes meant baring his soul. For this, Vesely sees his music as a communal therapy session—and that's nothing he's ashamed of.

"I take a realistic point of view, like most singer/songwriters who write love ballads," explains Vesely. "While I don't consider myself a singer/songwriter by any right, other than the fact that I write songs and sing them, I talk about what happens in my life. It's so personal that it's like an invasion of my privacy, but I don't mind that. My fans get more out of it because they can relate." *alt*