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Secondhand Serenade

A Twist In My Story
(Glassnote/East West)

★★★★☆

John Vesely's Secondhand Serenade project is a powerful example of what a talented musician can accomplish as a one-person act. His songs stand their ground, delivering emotion and sincerity packaged in a soothing blend of vocal harmonies and simple yet effective acoustic guitar work. The songwriting has a universal sort of appeal, transcending the types of categories usually reserved for solo songbirds. John's voice is intense with an impressive range, but the blending of melodies and harmonies really brings out the mood of each track. There is also a dreamy, atmospheric quality present on this release that sets your mind adrift. The added rhythm section is used effectively to enliven each song's feel—meanwhile the lyrics are relevant and personal. The stories and feelings expressed are ones that we can all relate to. This is a high-quality package, combining pristine engineering with mature songwriting. For those not interested in exploring their "emo" side, this music will still draw you in and hold your interest due to its richness in substance. If you're feeling reflective and don't mind opening your heart to your iPod, then this is just what the doctor ordered. The only bummer is the prime-time drama theme-song factor. I could totally picture hearing this music on *Grey's Anatomy* or *Gilmore Girls*. Let's just hope John doesn't go that route... —Dustin Umberger

Standout Track: Standout Track: Why