

Boerum's Debut is Anything But a "Cold Hearted Disaster"

BY MIKE UNGER

The dark days of depression that followed a bitter breakup led Matt Boerum to one of the brightest times in his life.

Three days before Valentine's, Boerum, CAS/BS '05, and his band took to the stage at Arlington's venerable live music club Iota and rocked a sold-out crowd with tunes from his new album, "Cold Hearted Disaster."

The performance was in some ways the culmination of a musical odyssey that began on family road trips when he and his four siblings piled into the eight-seat burgundy-and-silver 1987 Dodge Ram.

"It was always sing-along time in the van," says Boerum, CAS's recording studio manager. "We'd listen to oldies stations and country stations. My parents are both big music buffs. They didn't sing or play professionally, but singing was always a huge thing in my family."

Boerum's musical magical mystery tour began at age 17 when he formed a band with some buddies in his hometown of Frederick, Maryland.

"I never really thought about singing, it's just what came naturally," he said. "The guys were all talking, who's going to sing? So we all took turns and they're like, okay Matt, you're going to sing."

Lather, as they called themselves, quickly washed away, but Boerum wasn't deterred. In his mid-20s he played with a band called Wait til Friday. While they recorded an album and achieved a certain level of success, Boerum felt they'd peaked.

His friend and drummer, Kurt Snyder, urged him to begin writing his own songs, and when his relationship crumbled, he dived in.

"When I write music it's always because of something," Boerum, 29, said. "I happened to be going through a really tough time in my life, so out came eight songs



Matt Boerum on stage at Iota

immediately. I ran with it."

The tunes comprise the majority of "Cold Hearted Disaster." In a way the album, on which Boerum sings and plays guitar, is misnamed; it's neither cold hearted nor a disaster. An emotionally frigid writer never could have penned lyrics to "Feels Like Hell," its first single.

"Let me out so I can breathe. Feels like hell inside of me. Take your time and tell me how I lost my heart inside a dream."

Boerum came of age listening to everyone from Johnny Cash to the Beatles to soul singers like Etta James.

"Growing up in the '90s my older brother was the cool kid, so I would listen to what he listened to, which was alt rock like Nirvana and Foo Fighters," he said. "So I kind of have a sound like '50s and '60s soul mixed with some aggression from the '90s."

"Leslie" (not his ex's real name) is Boerum's favorite song on the album.

"It was reminiscing about the beginning, looking back at why things could have been good, why they fell apart, the pain that happened, then the peace," he said. "The whole song transitions sonically through that."

Stop into Boerum's Kreeger Hall office today and you'd never guess he once was so down. Charming, affable, and absolute in his love of music and sound, Boerum is exceedingly comfortable in his own skin.

One of the 215 people in the audience at Iota was his fiancée, Mary Catherine Manning, special events coordinator in the Office of the President. The two met a year after the "cold hearted" breakup.

"She's a million times better than anything I could ever believe," he said, starry eyed. "I have a great band, I love the album, I'm really proud of what we came up with. Right now I couldn't ask for more."

Sure sounds that way.

JEFF WATTS