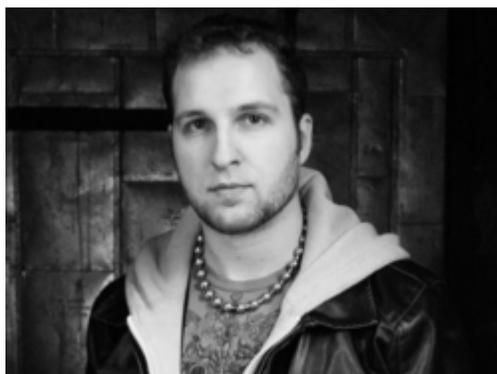


# CD Review: Matt Vanaria's Soaring



What I'm about to say might not win me any popularity contests among the younger indie crowd, but as a rule I frown upon artists recording their commercial releases in their "home studio" (a.k.a., mom's basement), armed only with their laptop and a midi controller keyboard. Skipping over the professional recording studio environment, with its visceral, almost magical trappings that add immeasurably to any musician's project, is akin to skipping over the 12-year classroom experience and just jumping right to taking the SATs (sorry homeschoolers ... ) Rarely have I been impressed with a CD project born from what I've considered this shortcut.

But today I've had to seriously reexamine this dogmatic philosophy after hearing what I consider to be a skillfully crafted, fully-baked, four-track EP from local musician Matt Vanaria titled *Soaring*. This homespun project is unabashedly culled from the heart of Vanaria, a craft beer loving military serviceman, who makes it clear that his purpose is to certainly entertain, but more importantly, touch as many souls as possible through his art: "If there is something to aim for in my music, it is to bring out shadowed passions of lyrics that have meaning to anyone who has ever felt something before — I tend to bring out what others cannot describe but through lyrics and music ..."

Matt Vanaria's overall style can best be described as an updated version of The Goo Goo Dolls, with a slightly edgier alternative vibe. The track "Until You Walk Away" enters with searing guitars and heavy bottom end, but soon Vanaria's vocals unveil a vulnerability rarely found in today's "alt-rock" sound: *"The golden silence comes around, until you walk away. Undecided by those who've died, until you walk away. All remains are the stories, page after the page. Black as night upon the sight, until you walk away."*

Another standout, "Everything Inside," is one of those songs that would fit perfectly in a teen-movie, playing during the scene when the 20-something boyfriend learns his girl has been diagnosed with some rare fatal disease that she picked up last year in the Peruvian jungle, during her stint in the Peace Corps. Does Peru have jungles? No matter, because the point remains that Vanaria pours emotion, real or otherwise, into his performance: *"Every time you enter the room you light the flame inside. Never had a question within my thought, I never felt so alive. I don't need no simple gifts or to pretend when I'm with you. All I need is the love you give from when you say you love me too."*

From reading through his Facebook, it appears Matt Vanaria is appending the EP with some forthcoming recordings that I'm anxious to hear. Credible singer-songwriters are fast becoming a rare commodity. But Matt Vanaria has already established himself as one such artist to keep an eye on.