

Capturing It: Bedroom Sons, June 11 at Rozz-Tox

Written by Jeff Ignatius

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It's not often that a performer who sings and wields an acoustic guitar – and who writes songs – will claim not to be a songwriter. Modest ones say they're still learning the craft. But Chris Dertz – half of the acoustic-guitar-and-drum outfit Bedroom Sons, which will be performing at Rock Island's Rozz-Tox on Saturday – won't even go that far.

"I don't really think of myself as a songwriter," said Dertz, who grew up in Woodhull, Illinois (halfway between the Quad Cities and Galesburg) and now lives in DeKalb, Illinois. "They just kind of come through me from wherever they come from. ... I don't really know where they come from."

And once he's got them down – which usually takes half an hour, he said – they're finished. "Sometimes it feels like I might be cheating them by not giving them their due time to sit with them and think about what they are, what could be changed to make them better. But usually, songwriting is a very isolated incident for me. It's hard for me to start writing a song and then come back to it weeks later. When it comes, I have to sit down and capture it."

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Dertz considers himself a performer rather than a songwriter. “I think it’s less about creating different sounds for people to hear live than it is just trying to be as energetic as possible and give people something compelling to watch,” he said. “When I was playing solo, there was rarely a show where I didn’t break something.”

Lest you think that Bedroom Sons involves Dertz and drummer Ben Gross thrashing about with no larger purpose, it must be said that Bedroom Sons’ new EP, *Father*, is an adept blend of the acoustic oddity of Neutral Milk Hotel and the unfiltered, direct rage of Against Me! In six minutes, the first two parts of “My Blood” build from warm memory to anger and then collapse into spent reverie. The rawness and soft/loud/soft dynamics of “Frozen to the Bone” suggest Nirvana through an Americana filter.

Dertz does a lot of distortion on his acoustic guitar, but other elements of the recording – the organ and horns, for example, of “My Blood Part 1” – are discarded for performance. “A lot of the stuff, compared to how it sounds on the EP, will probably sound kind of bare-bones to people live,” Dertz said, “but I think that’s part of what makes the show unique. It’s all about putting out a bunch of energy to try and make up for any instrumentation that’s lost.”

But he admits that the band’s aesthetic has pragmatic roots. “Nobody knows who I am at all,” he said. “I wanted something that would grab a bunch of people’s attention but that didn’t have all the things you have to work around with your traditional four- or five-piece band. ... It just simplifies things, and I think, for my songs, two people is really all that’s necessary to play them well”

Bedroom Sons will perform at Rozz-Tox (2108 Third Avenue in Rock Island) on Saturday, June 11. Cover for the 9 p.m. show is \$5, and the bill also includes Carver and Jeremy Suman.

For more information on Bedroom Sons, visit [Facebook.com/bedroomsons](https://www.facebook.com/bedroomsons) . The Father EP can be downloaded for free at

BedroomSons.BandCamp.com

. Chris Dertz’s solo recordings can be downloaded for free at

ChrisDertz.BandCamp.com