

## Matthew Good // Moving Walls

Leave it to Matthew Good — peerless singer/songwriter, bona fide if reluctant rock star, notorious straight-shooter — to transform a simple question into an astute observation about people's relationship to music.

To wit: ask Good to sum up his dazzling new solo album, the sumptuous, orchestral, and wildly multifaceted *Moving Walls* in an elevator pitch, and the B.C.-based performer responds not with a snappy list of styles and moods but with a clearheaded analogy fit for the era.

"Twenty years ago I'd be dying to tell people what my music sounds like and where it should be slotted in," Good says. "Not now. I made a piece of art and it's out there in the world for anyone who chooses to find it.

"Given my age and that it's mostly acoustic, I guess you could call *Moving Walls* adult contemporary. It's not a rock record, that's for sure. But in this day of everyone knowing everything, I really like the idea of people figuring things out for themselves."

And there you have *Moving Walls*, and Good's highly decorated and decades-long career, in a nutshell: he writes it how he sees it, straight from the heart. How the music is interpreted or consumed matters less than the fact that it's simply heard.

The methodology has worked wonders for Good since he emerged in the 1990s fronting the acclaimed Matthew Good Band, and it's kept him true through umpteen solo albums, culminating in the 11-track *Moving Walls*, which was recorded at the legendary Bathouse Studio in spring 2019 with multiple marquee guests.

"I had the album name going in. It seemed symbolic given what was going on in my life," he says. "It's the idea of being in situations where things just keep moving. Even something as seemingly permanent as a wall can be disassembled."

Entirely written by Good (who adds guitar, synthesizer, and all lead vocals) and cut with long-time collaborator, producer/engineer Warne Livesey (who adds various instruments while sprinkling pixie dust throughout), *Moving Walls* is at once a revelation and a return to form.

Buoyant lead single "Sicily" for example, finds Good traversing familiar pop territory, setting a chiming chorus against propulsive electric guitar from ace musician Stuart Cameron. Then comes the iridescent "Boobytrapped," with its soaring cello and viola and Good's achingly poignant lyrics, which find our man alone in a car at night, feeling "Quiet, like a lake must after the summer's gone."

"That song is about being lost but also about finding someone," Good offers. "After going through a lifetime of wrong people, and feeling booby-trapped to begin with, then feeling like you're not. I juxtaposed the verses and the chorus in between talking about a very solitary thing: driving and parking somewhere alone, which I do, then sketching out the empty spaces."

Elsewhere, the candlelit, slowing-building ballad "Selling You My Heart" offers an extraordinarily intimate window into Good's creative process throughout *Moving Walls*, which was at once challenging yet supremely freeing in its execution.

“During this album, I was living with my mom and dad. I moved here after my divorce. My dad has dementia and now terminal cancer, so I’ve been helping my mom,” Good says with estimable candor, no doubt reflecting the reality of many people old enough to clearly remember the 1990s. And maybe also the 1980s.

Good continues: “My mom and I basically created a space in the garage. I would work from about 8 at night until 3 am and then on the weekends I had my kids. I hadn’t really settled on any kind of direction for the album. Then I wrote ‘Selling You My Heart’ and it went from there.

“I’m not a guy with a bunch of ideas on his iPhone. I sit down and write. I wrote and demoed all the songs which is fairly typical going all the way back to *Avalanche* (Good’s smash 2003 solo debut also produced by Livesey). Warne added certain things such as real harmonium and organ but the ideas were already on the demos. Warne and I have been friends for 20 years, and we always seem to know what we’re doing when we go into the studio, kind of like telepathy.

“When I hear something, I hear it completely,” Good adds. “That was true even with *Beautiful Midnight* (the Matthew Good Band’s 1999 breakthrough release). I just didn’t have the technology to capture it, so I had to keep it in my head. These days, I just sit down at the computer with a very good microphone and do it.”

The softly swirling “Lumiere Noire” brings something completely new — and quietly thrilling — to the Matthew Good canon: a song sung in French. “I thought it would be neat to write a song in another language, to explore a different rhyming scheme and have it be coherent.

“I originally thought of writing in Spanish but I know more French so that’s what I went with. I had Andée Leclerc (who adds backing vocals on the album) in the control room when I was singing to assist with pronunciation. Now,” he howls, “I just have to remember the words live!”

When it comes to expectations for *Moving Walls*, Good once again offers the kind of pragmatic perspective that comes from years of working in an industry built on a tectonically shifting tastes and trends, yet consistently managing to stay on top.

“I am excited to release this record to the world,” Good offers. “Success is hard to think about. I mean, I’ve had the same job for 20-plus years. Most people have had three jobs in that time. I had various jobs when I was younger but ever since *Underdogs* came out (in 1997), this is what I’ve done for a living.

“It *is* amazing... even though I do think this career ages you and touring isn’t the easiest thing to do,” he laughs, “but it’s definitely *not* a matter of luck. An artist has a skill and if it’s lasted a quarter century, as it has with me, it’s obviously a pretty good one.”

No argument here.

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