

# Bringin' it home: Moscow's Josh Ritter headlines Saturday's Rendezvous show

By Omie Drawhorn, Daily News staff writer

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### **IF YOU GO**

- **WHAT:** Rendezvous in the Park: Tonight: J.T. Grauke, Carrie Rodriguez; Friday: JJ Grey Saturday: Lady Drama, The Helio Sequence, Josh Ritter; Sunday: Rendezvous Orchestra
  
- **WHERE:** East City Park, Moscow
  
- **WHEN:** 6 p.m. Thursday-Sunday
  
- **COSTS:** Individual concert tickets for tonight, Friday and Sunday available at the gate only. Buttons good for all shows available at BookPeople of Moscow (521 S. Main), the Saturday Moscow Farmers Market and the gate.

Tonight: \$15, Friday: \$20, Saturday: \$25, Sunday: \$10. Button good for all shows: \$50. Tickets for students ages 13-18 are as follows: Thurs., \$8; Fri., \$10; Sat., \$13; Sun., \$5.

Children 12 and under free with adult.

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Josh Ritter remembers attending Moscow's Rendezvous in the Park growing up and finding inspiration in musicians who played.

"Arlo Guthrie was amazing," said the Moscow-raised, internationally known folk singer. "He made me think, not just about writing songs, but about performing and putting on a show. I couldn't believe the show and how classy and generous he was; it really opened my eyes."

Now, Ritter has come full circle.

He is headlining Saturday's show at Rendezvous in the Park in East City Park in Moscow. Local musicians in the Hog Heaven Big Band will provide back up.

Ritter is still on a high from his July 4 show in Cork, Ireland, where he was backed up by a full orchestra.

"It was amazing, really beautiful," he said.

Ritter is making his way across the country, playing shows from Cleveland to Canada with his full band. Ritter last played in Moscow in 2006 as part of a benefit for the Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute.

"I really wanted the next time I played to be special, I wanted to come back and have something to show for myself, and I definitely don't feel that way everywhere," he said. "I want to bring whatever it is that is going well with me."

He credits the university environment and close-knit feel of Moscow for helping to nurture his music career.

"There's something cool happening, a philosophy. You make your own entertainment when you aren't plugged into a place like New York," he said.

He has always looked to books for musical inspiration even more than musicians.

"People like Philip Roth have really changed the way I thought about the world," he said.

Ritter is in the process of recording his latest album, which should be finished in August and released early in 2010.

"It's more patient musically, and more musically fleshed out," he said. "It's like painting with oils on bigger canvases; it feels big to me, which I'm excited about. It's like taking two nights rather than just one to tell a bedtime story."

He has been recording for the past six months and moving slowly so he can soak in the music and take time to think.

He played a show earlier this summer in Central Park, backed up by the New York Pops, which drew 6,000 people.

"It was amazing, it was my biggest solo show," he said. "It was remarkable and it was also my parents' 42nd wedding anniversary, so that was cool."

Despite that impressive backdrop, Ritter said he is more nervous for the Moscow show.

"Some of my Sunday school teachers will be there," he said.

In addition to the excitement of the upcoming album release and tour, Ritter also took a large leap in his personal life about three months ago.

"I got married," he said. "It's awesome. I recommend it."

He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, a fellow musician.

"She's all over the place as well (touring), so it's a great thing to have somebody whose life you understand," he said.

Ritter is ready to hit the stage Saturday with a mix of older songs and songs off his upcoming album.

There is a sense of magic on stage that keeps him coming back for more.

"It's a feeling like anything can happen, an unpredictability," he said. "It takes a lot willingness to take chances, not just me but the rest of the band, and it all doesn't happen perfectly.

"Once a song is over, it's never heard (that way) again, that moment is gone. If it's not a special moment, it's a missed opportunity."

The potential that he could make a mistake makes it all the more exciting.

"I could go out there and potentially really mess up; that's more fun than knowing you're not going to make any mistakes."

As a musician he has always dreamed of coming back to his hometown and "making good."

"On the other side you can't pretend to be anything that you're not, and that's great," he said.

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