

JOSH ROUSE

The pensive singer-songwriter strikes an upbeat tone on his latest effort

FOR JOSH ROUSE, FAMILY PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN the writing and recording of his 10th album, *The Happiness Waltz*. In 2006, Rouse moved from Nashville to Spain with his wife, and the couple now has a young child. He's settled happily into fatherhood and married life, but his newfound responsibilities make for a delicate balancing act. "Before I was just a selfish singer-songwriter," he says. "Now I'm responsible for somebody else. If I feel tired, I can't put the right energy into the songs. Thankfully the good ideas are still coming, and I try hard to find time to write them. I usually put them together first, and then the melody comes naturally after that."

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Allen Clark

The result is a collection that showcases the full scope of Rouse's talents, with compositions drawn from various stages of his career. "These are songs I've collected over the years," he says. "Sometimes I'll write a lot of songs in one month and then nothing for a while. I'm not a disciplined writer. I'd love to be able to. I'm not someone like Nick Cave who writes every day."

With its upbeat sound and uplifting theme, *Waltz* marks a shift from Rouse's more introspective material. "I liked the last few albums a lot, but they were less pop and not as immediate," he says. "They're kind of moodier and a bit more sophisticated compared to my records that are more popular. I've put out a lot of records and have fans of all ages. Maybe it's a complex I have, but I feel like I have to please everyone. I try to give them a wide range."

Reunited with longtime producer Brad Jones, Rouse approached the making of *Waltz* with a crisp, snappy focus. The two

met in his Rio Bravo studio in Valencia and completed most of the recording within a week. "It started with me cutting demos," Rouse says. "Then Brad flew over and the musicians just banged it out. I've been lucky to play with great musicians. We did some additional overdubs later, but besides that it was us playing in the studio—very organic. You can do a lot of production stuff and try to make it sound amazing, but if the storyline and melody isn't there, it won't work."

After a brief hiatus from touring, Rouse is eager to get back on the road and gauge reaction to the new songs. Each show represents a fresh challenge for the veteran performer. "I have a younger audience here in Spain," he says. "In the States, it's kind of a mix, but there are a lot of people my age—in their 40s, more public-radio listeners. I'm just glad that people want to come and see the shows."

—Blake Boldt

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