

## **An Interview with Josh Rouse**

**by Frank Goodman Puremusic 3/2002**

One of Nashville's best pop songwriters, Josh Rouse, is making a move with *Under Cold Blue Stars*. It's a bigger canvas, and there are more colors on the palette. He's cutting up other paintings and incorporating them into this new canvas, as well.

A thin, quiet, talented shadow named Pat Sansone has been here. We had him in Nashville for a little while, he currently resides in NYC. He'll show up on many records (including those of PM favorite Swan Dive) and the NYC gigs of Jenifer Jackson, and many other pop places. He's liable to show up on most any instrument, and he makes everybody sound better. We hope to hear a CD from him in the foreseeable future.

Producer Roger Moutenot has done an enlightened job. The personality of the artist's previous *Home* is present, yet raised to a new level. (Moutenot's a versatile guy—you may recognize his name as the producer of Jorma Kaukonen's new record of white country guys from the 20s and 30s, which we covered last month.)

The artist himself is a melodious writer with plenty of groove, and an eminently listenable singer. The strong batch of songs on *UCBS* centers loosely around a couple in the 50s, and he used his own nuclear and extended family for models. When PM caught up with him, Josh was running late in preparations for a European tour, so we did a little interview by email. Rouse is a thoughtful, intelligent pop writer with a very young sound and a preserved naivete that enables him to continually straddle the line between appealing to the young and mature listener alike. He's a single away from cracking it wide open.

**Puremusic:** I'm still on my second pass of *Under Cold Blue Stars*, it sounds great. I understand that it's Darren Jessee from Ben Folds Five on the drums, and that megaman Pat Sansone is all over the joint. Would you list all the players involved, and give us a few words on Pat in particular?

**Josh Rouse:** We did a session with the producer Roger Moutenot in September of 2000 and Dennis Cronin (trumpet), David Gehrke (drums), and Mike Grimes played on a few songs. The only song from that session we used was "Christmas with Jesus," so that's the reason for so many names on the record. Primarily it was Pat and myself doing bass, guitars, keyboards, and vocals. Roger and David Henry played here and there. Also, Darren Jessee played most the drums while Marc Pisapia played on a few tracks. The key man was Pat, we have a nice chemistry, he knows where I'm about to go before I do. We did some touring together on my last album so he was around while I was writing for *UCBS*.

**PM:** You're going to Europe with one of my favorite rhythm sections, James "Hags" Haggerty and Marc Pisapia, both from Joe, Marc's Brother. As guys and players, both top of the pops. How about a few words on them, and how that band came together. I regret that I am not familiar with Curt Perkins, please tell us about him, as well.

**JR:** I've known Marc and Hags for about five years now, and I'm a big fan of their band. We've been playing together here and there (studio), and I just asked them if they wanted to go on tour with me for several months, and that was that. Curt Perkins was in a band called Stella for several years, he also has toured with me more than any other musician, so we get along very well. They are all good players and we get along well, that's 99 percent of being on the road, getting along.

**PM:** That's exciting, all those European dates. Are you getting airplay over there?

**JR:** I'm not sure about airplay, there's some, but it's the press that really creates a buzz. The press on *UCBS* has been amazing thus far.

**PM:** Ryko has been a very good label for you, is that right? Is that a licensing deal you have with them?

**JR:** I have a full on record contract with Ryko. This is my third record with them, I'll owe them a couple more. I feel blessed to have built a good little career with them. Do they bother me about singles? Yes. Should they sell more of my records? Yes. But at the end of the day we find a way to deal with frustrations that occur with putting out records. So to answer your question, yes, they do a good job.

**PM:** I seem to have more questions about the people involved than I do about you directly. I think that's because it's better to know the artist through his work, and how he feels about the people he's working with says a lot about him. Tell us something about producer Roger Moutenot, please.

**JR:** That's fine, I've been doing too much talking about myself anyway. Roger was going to produce *Home*, my last album. He was tied up with some other artist and it never happened. When it was time to do this record he had an open month or two. We work well together and that's all there is, really. He's experienced and very talented, something I'm not.

**PM:** There's a dense beautiful soundscape of texture in a lot of the tunes on the record. Will that be hard to replicate live with two guitars, bass and drums?

**JR:** We are using keyboards live so it's not really a problem, although I'm not so interested in exactly replicating what's on the album.

**PM:** Who is Jason Phelan, the author of "Ears to the Ground"?

**JR:** Jason Phelan is the singer of a wonderful band called The What Four. If you haven't heard of them, you will soon.

**PM:** What happens after Europe?

**JR:** A 40 date U.S. tour. Please see [www.joshrouse.com](http://www.joshrouse.com) for details.