

Chasin' My Tail

By Paula Reynolds

It's May...spring has sprung, summer's crouched like a lion, waiting its turn! The Spanish Oak have pronounced it vividly with their flashy new chartreuse foliage. The hummingbirds are in full-fledged aerial combat around the feeders. And the teachers (self included) are counting the days til school is out...as are the students, I'm sure. Throw in a few back-to-back house concerts with the end-of-school crazies, along with the fodder of real life...and well, thus the title of this hastily written (sorry, Boss) column. However, I am blessed that a couple more house concerts await our doors this month featuring two highly talented fellows, and it's a pleasure to have this spot of newsprint to chat a little with you about it. So...pull up a chair, grab some coffee, and let's converse!

May 3rd brings the talents of the winner of the "Newcomer of the Year" Gruene with Envy Awards of 2006, **Josh Grider**. Josh has garnered a strong following with earlier hits such as "Mama", his breakout release that rose to #6 on the Texas Music Chart, along with "Everybody Knows" which holds the honor of Texas' 27th most popular song in '06. Josh first grabbed my attention (which is sometimes a hard thing to do) when I found myself singing along loudly with "Crazy Like You" every time it played on the radio, thinking to myself "This person really gets it about relationships...and boy, can he sing!" Quickly getting my hands on Josh's sophomore album, "Million Miles to Go", I found myself happily entwined with an album full of songs that were easy to listen to, told

truths beyond the years of this young singer/songwriter, and revealed a warm baritone capable of delivering tales and emotions we all can identify with.

Born and raised in Las Cruces, NM having spent his childhood singing in church, all the while surrounded by sounds of country music's classics, Josh found his way to Texas in 1998. The different sound of country he found in Texas, with its realism and stories, inspired Josh to try his hand at the same sort of sound. He formed a band with a few friends and had in place the training wheels that would lead him to develop the Josh Grider, and Josh Grider Band, that Texas proudly calls its own.

Come on over to the hilltop on **May 3rd** to see and hear for yourself what Josh brings to the table. His seemingly reserved affect quickly reveals itself as a misinterpreted gesture; he's immediately engaging, causing his audience to feel a quick connection. His dry wit and humor only add to the package. As his song says, he "may be stumblin' on the edge of greatness..."

And if all of the above weren't enough to make May a pretty darn awesome month, here's another event to note! **May 31st** brings us singer/songwriter **Jonathan Byrd**, Kerrville New Folk Winner in 2003. I have to be honest and tell you that Jonathan was one of those artists presented to me via an electronic press kit through his agent, John Laird of The Americana Agency (he also carries Hilltop House Concert past performers Michael Johnathan and Idgy Vaughn). I try to listen to every CD sent my way (refer back to column title...), and I was certainly taken by Jonathan's work. Having sampled a handful of his albums, I'd say Jonathan is an ever-evolving artist, which is certainly

refreshing. A listen to “The Sea & The Sky” with his band Dromedary quickly had me settling in to a sort of transcendental Bluegrass meditative state. Wonderful harmonies, smooth melodies, strings to make a hardened convict cry...a banquet of poetic balladry that has “something” just different enough to get your attention. His latest release, “This is The New That” is something more along the lines of Appalachia on speed, or maybe Southern Roots weds Bare Naked Ladies. It’s the product of the ever-evolving always intriguing, I’m sure, Mr. Byrd (“Everything I do is a departure from what I’ve done.” J. Byrd).

I was told once upon a time (or maybe I read it??) that a house concert host should never book an artist not heard/seen live. I can see the wisdom in that advice. However, I also like the idea of taking a chance on someone who comes across with that *something* in their songs...maybe it’s the voice, maybe it’s the lyrics, maybe it’s the combination, the vibes...who knows. I do know that we’ve done well in the department of taking a chance, stepping out of the box, and I anticipate that to continue with Jonathan’s show on the 31st. To quote a few others, Tom Paxton said, “What a treat to hear someone so deeply rooted in tradition, yet growing in his own beautiful way.” Well-known venue Uncle Calvin’s Coffee House in Dallas says, “Jonathan’s delightful, substantive songs are rich with imagery and textures of influences from Appalachian, country, early American balladry, modern atmospheric Mideastern, urban, and old timey folk music.” Yep...I’m looking forward to meeting the man, as well as hearing his chops right here in my living room. Y’all come on and join us.

Lastly, if there weren't enough going on to cause me to not know if I'm coming or going, I'm off on a grand adventure that will take place about the time the ink will be drying on the May issues of MYTH...the first "Romp, Stomp, and Chomp Round-Up" out on an 80,000 acre ranch about 40 miles south of Alpine. That's right, pard'ners, I'm off to participate in a real, live cattle round up (that "chasin'" metaphor fits in once again!) with campfire music provided by **Mike Blakely, Thomas Michael Riley, and Pauline Reese**, grub served from a chuck wagon, and nights spent out under the West Texas skies in my little Coleman tent! Truly, a dream come true for this wanna-be cowgirl. I'll share a full accounting of what promises to be a musical event to remember, as well as an experience that will rank way up there in my life-time events to cherish. Til then...come on out and catch a house concert, and Happy Trails to you!

For more information on upcoming house concerts, reservations, and contact information, go to www.hilltophouseconcerts.com or call (830)895-0975.

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