

## **"Million Miles to Go': Las Cruces Josh Grider's journey includes album release, opening for Reba**

By Lucas Peerman/Pulse Editor

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Country singer/songwriter Josh Grider is a native Las Cruces who is making a name for himself in Austin, Texas. He plans to release his new album in a "sit down and listen" show Saturday at the New Mexico State University Recital Hall.

Guests will be treated to not only the songs off of "Million Miles to Go," but the stories behind them, like that of "Crazy Like You," which has gained top 40 status on the Texas Music Chart, even though it wasn't supposed to be on the album.

Grider said the ballad about finding "someone who shares your particular point of view / they're bound to be crazy, just make sure they're crazy like you" took off as soon as he began playing it at shows.

"If I played it for 10 people, three would come up and say, "Dang, what was that "Crazy Like You" song? I love that song" or, "It reminded me of my girlfriend, my boyfriend, my wife, my husband. It gives me hope. I'm single, but I think I'm crazy and everybody else is, but that's a cool song. That's exactly how I feel."

"Million Miles" is a mix of acoustic and full-band tracks, a representation of where Grider has been musically since his band dissolved in late 2006. Grider spoke to Pulse over the phone last Friday about making the new album, where's he's been and where he's headed.

### **Pulse: Josh, Do you have a full band now?**

Josh Grider: Yes I do: Chris Grady (bass), Paul Pollini (guitar) and Daniel Jones (drums). (Saturday' show) will be me and one of the co-producers of the album, who played all the fiddle and mandolin parts, Tim Lorsch. And then (Kristie Grider, his wife) will be here, singing harmonies. Kristie and I have a couple of duets on the new album. It's a theater setting, it's not like a crazy bar show. It's going to be kind of a quiet, storytellers sort of thing, where I'm just going to talk about the songs on the record, where they came from, the inspiration behind them.

### **Was this your idea to have it at the NMSU recital hall? Most bands would want to release it in a bar setting.**

The bar scene can really limit your crowd. There's definitely a lot of people who don't mind going to the bars and doing that. But I think there's a big demographic É there's an older set and a younger set who either A) can't go to the bar or B) have no interest in going to a bar to watch a show that starts at 11. Bringing Tim and Kristie in, we just wanted to have it in an environment where people will sit down and É y'know it's a listening show, not a get drunk and dance kind of thing. É We wanted to present it in a distraction-free environment and I think saying it's at the recital hall makes it clear to people.

Your full band will be here for the Southern New Mexico State Fair on Oct. 5. Then, Oct. 19, The Josh Grider Band will open for Reba McEntire at the Pan American Center. What do you have to say about that show?

I'm excited for it, for sure. I saw Metallica, Garth Brooks, George Strait, Alan Jackson at the Pan Am when I was young. So, it's gonna be a trip to be on the big stage. It's weird, there's so much between now and then that's happening, it hasn't really sunk in. As it gets closer to the show date when I'm sound-checking in the Pan Am, I think I'm going

go, 'Wow.'

**Did you dream about performing at the Pan Am when you were attending shows there as a kid growing up in Las Cruces?**

Oh yeah. I remember watching Garth Brooks in there — just watching him wrap (the capacity crowd) around his finger for two hours. I thought Garth could go out there and pick his toes and everybody would go crazy; people just loved him that much. I sat in the sixth row watching Garth Brooks and I just turned around and looked at the whole place, and I'm like "Golly, that's crazy. Someday, I'm gonna play rooms like this." And of course, coming back to do it in Cruces is just really cool.

**In the song "City of Crosses," off your first album, you talk about taking the highway out of Las Cruces once you turned 18. Were you that eager to get out of here?**

I never really had any designs to stay. It's not that I had anything against Las Cruces. I knew I wanted to do music and I knew there wasn't much of a country music scene in Las Cruces. My folks, they really encouraged us to get out, go see something. They said, "Las Cruces ain't going anywhere; you can always come back."

**Where did you get your feet wet in Texas?**

"Waco. I went to Baylor (University) and that's where I put my first band together and started playing Honkey Tonk bars, dives. We got a house gig at a place called the Continental Cowboy. We'd play for \$250 a night, which was like all the money we could even imagine. We couldn't believe we were actually getting paid to play music. It was awesome. É I've been playing on average once or twice a week for the last seven, seven-and-a-half years now.

**And you moved to Austin to begin your music career after college?**

I hung out in Waco for an extra year. As soon as I moved here is when I decided to start The Josh Grider Band. And we went and recorded that album, the one with "City of Crosses" on it in late '04. It went out without a lot of fanfare. Not a lot was going on then. It's like, it's done, it's out, and my mom bought a copy. As '05 progressed, later in the year, "Mama" had come out and by the end of '05, early '06, it had done its big thing on the Texas Music Chart and put us on the map for '06. As '06 closed down, I knew it was time to do another record. I wasn't sure how I wanted to do it. We were looking at some deals up in Nashville, looking at some different stuff. The band that we were in, we kind of dissolved. Everyone shook hands and went their separate ways, very peacefully. I came into '07 knowing I was gonna do a record. I had met (producer) Walt Wilkins in Nashville in the last part of '06. We talked about doing a record, things went well. I got Walt my songs, he's like, "I love 'em. Let's do an album." Between doing the album, I was playing acoustic shows here and there, just to keep my name out there, get a little side money.

**You did an acoustic show at El Patio in February. What was the vibe like for that?**

That had the best turnout, a great crowd. It's really cool to play acoustic — there's nothing to hide. It's your voice and your guitar, that's it. É It really makes you a better singer and a better guitar player. It develops your rapport with the crowd, how to work with people. At the same time, I'm totally pumped to have the band back together. We had our first show here in Austin (last) week. And man, that felt good. We were just rockin' and rollin' it. It's awesome.

**"Crazy Like You,' which was recorded with Walt Whitman and Mystiqueros, almost didn't make the album. Now, it looks like your next big hit.**

It really hasn't been out very long, but the reaction from DJs and people everywhere is, "That's a totally hip song." The guy that engineered my record in Nashville É he said of all the thousands of songs he's cut, 15 of them have been No. 1 singles. They eventually got in the hands of George Strait or whatever, and it went to No. 1. And he said, "13 of those 15, I called it. When they first came in, I said. "Man, that's a hit song.' Josh, I'm calling "Crazy Like You'. It may take some time, but if you can get that in the right hands, or maybe you can take it there yourself, but I think that's a hit song." I said, "Wow," I better put it on (the album).

**What would you think if someone took your song and made it a No. 1 hit?**

I'd give them a big ol' hug. My goal as a musician is to get my music out to as many people as possible. And even if that means I'm not singing it, that's OK with me. If I can find a bigger mouth to sing it, well, that'd be awesome. I certainly wouldn't be opposed.

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