**JOSH ROUSE**

"I got too many things on my mind," Josh Rouse sings on his new album, 'The Embers Of Time.' It was that realization that led the acclaimed songwriter to find the only English-speaking therapist in Valencia, Spain—the small town on the Mediterranean coast where he's lived for the last decade with his family—and face his anxiety head-on.

"While I was writing these songs, I was having a mid-life crisis I guess," Rouse says. "I'd been living in a different country for a long time, and becoming a father and being someone who travels a lot, I was having a hard time."

In his sessions, Rouse was introduced to Gestalt Therapy, which focuses on fully experiencing the present moment and the thoughts and feelings it encompasses, with the belief that growth and change come about from a total acceptance of one's current reality rather than a pursuit of an alternate one.

"I started going back through my past and my childhood," the Nebraska native explains, "growing up and moving around a lot and never really having a father figure, per say. All those things came out in this new set of songs. This is my surreal, ex-pat therapy life album."

It's also one of the finest collections in a celebrated career that's earned him plaudits everywhere from the NY Times to NPR for his "pop-folk introspection" and "string of remarkable records." Hailed for his "sharp wit" by Rolling Stone and as "a talent to outrank Ryan Adams or Conor Oberst" by Uncut, Rouse has long since solidified his status as a songwriter of the highest caliber over his ten preceding studio releases. Q called his acclaimed critical breakout album '1972' "the most intimate record of the year," EW dubbed the follow-up album 'Nashville' "persistently gorgeous," and PopMatters called his most recent record, 2013's 'The Happiness Waltz,' "a big contender for Rouse's best work." In 2014, he won a Goya Award (the Spanish equivalent of an Oscar) for best song for "Do You Really Want To Be In Love," from the film 'La Gran Familia Española.' But as he navigated the unfamiliar terrain of his forties while writing 'The Embers of Time,' Rouse found himself facing difficult questions.

Album opener "Some Days I'm Golden All Night" finds comfort in accepting that there are no easy answers.

"I think I had been talking to my therapist about it, and he was like, 'It's OK to feel like shit,'" says Rouse. "There's a lot of emphasis out there on this kind of fake positivity, but if you feel bad you feel bad, and this song is about having good days and bad days just like everybody experiences."

The album's laidback, countrypolitan vibe—captured in part in Rouse's studio in Valencia and in part in his former American home base of Nashville with producer Brad Jones—continues on "Too Many Things On My Mind," which was inspired by economist E.F. Schumacher's book 'Small Is Beautiful.'

"It's a book on economics," explains Rouse, "but it was written in the mid-70's and predicts what's going on today with globalism and where we're at in the world right now with consumerism and technology. That song is about downshifting and trying to live a bit more simply."

"Taking care of loved ones / hanging out with friends / some big ideas going through their heads," he sings. "Can we recover what's been lost / So many people living in the box / Turn on your TV and stay offline / Too many things on my mind."

Simplification is a recurring theme on the album, as the pedal steel and harmonica drenched "New Young" finds Rouse "making plans to move out to the country," and "Crystal Falls" is propelled by uncomplicated rhythm from an unexpected source.

"That song feels very childlike," says Rouse, "and that's because my two-year-old son has a drum kit. He was banging on it and playing this beat, and I started playing along with it, and the initial idea for 'Crystal Falls' came out."

Fatherhood influences Rouse's writing throughout the album. "Just the other day I stopped by my stepfather's grave / He died at 30 way too soon I forgot his face," he sings on the delicate, mandolin-flecked "Time." The reminder prompts him to contemplate his own mortality and how to make the most of his days on Earth with his own kids.

"It's wonderful to bring my kids up around music and for them to have a father that does something different," says Rouse, "but at the same time, there's a sense of responsibility that can be overwhelming, especially having a career that’s as unstable as music."

"How am I gonna tell another story / How am I gonna live another line? / Gotta wake up early in the morning / Take the kids to school by nine," he sings on "Worried Blues," a JJ Cale-inspired, tongue-in-cheek look at his unusual lifestyle.

"I've always been a fan of JJ Cale, and when he passed away it seemed like an appropriate time to give a nod to him," says Rouse. "The song is about being worried about things I shouldn't be worried about, but I didn't want the record to come off as overly serious, so it was important to me that songs like this have a sense of humor to them."

That sense of humor sustains Rouse as he faces down some of life's biggest questions on this record with grace and humility. "Am I a hunter or a fox?" he sings on "Pheasant Feather." 'The Embers Of Time' suggests that Rouse has discovered he may never know the answer, and that's just fine.