

Q&A: Rising Country Artist JT Hodges

Written by Suzanne Koch



Coming off a packed house at CMA Fest in Nashville and a recently released album, *Locks On Doors*, country artist JT Hodges is belting his way to the top.

Following the release of his 2012 self-titled album, Hodges is changing up the sound of country for all fans. Adding in hints of rock, R&B and twang to the recent release, Hodges is beginning the next phase of his career.

We had a chance to catch up with the “Ray Bans” star in anticipation of his free show Saturday, June 27 at 8 p.m. at Harrah’s Ak-Chin Casino in Maricopa.

AFM: I loved seeing all the photos from CMA Fest! How was that experience for you?

JT: It was awesome. We had a packed house at every single show and you really can’t ask for much more than that! The crowd was amazing and so energetic. That’s what makes the shows great – the crowd.

AFM: What is a “normal” day for you when you are not on tour?

JT: Days off usually consist of hanging out with my family and friends and a lot of writing. (I’m) always looking for great new music.

AFM: Your latest album has a wide range of sound. You have “Ray Bans,” which would be your more fun, summery song, and then close it out with “She’s Alive” that definitely has a rock feel to it. How do you choose what goes on this album and what goes into your live sets?

JT: It’s funny that you mention “She’s Alive” - that’s actually the second single from this EP. That song seems to be a favorite with everyone. Truthfully, I have a lot of smart people around me that help with these decisions! It’s always great to switch up the sound and feel to each record. I like there to be a little bit of everything to my sound, because that’s what makes music so great.

AFM: There is definitely a different sound to your live sets as well.

JT: That’s the best part. My fans are definitely fans of *music*, not genres. I like to envision that my fans are also die-hard fans of artists like Kanye, Lenny Kravtiz and George Straight. Then, to them it’s about the music, not going to a show because it’s a country show. Growing up, I listened to a little bit of everything; it’s the reason I make the music that I make.

AFM: What is the song that means the most to you?

JT: Oh man, I can’t pick that! It’s like picking your favorite kid. But, if you’re asking my favorite at this moment, I would have to choose “Gonna Need a Guitar” from the EP. I just recorded a special version of that where my 4-year-old sings a bit of it at the end. Perfect for Father’s Day, and it’s a sweet little memory for me and her.

AFM: Does that make it your favorite to play live as well?

JT: Favorite to play live right now is a toss-up between “Ray Bans” and “She’s Alive.” They are both so fun and definitely get the crowd going.

AFM: You have had the chance to play some amazing places. Do you have a favorite venue to play?

JT: I love the big shows. To have that many people there listening to you is an incredible feeling. My favorite memory from a show has to be when I played Gorge Amphitheatre in Washington. There was a crazy amount of people packed in there just waiting for someone to play. And, let’s face it, if you are not the headliner, chances are the fans are not there for you. But, to have the entire crowd captivated by the end of your show is an amazing feeling.

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AFM: Any bucket list venues?

JT: Hollywood Bowl in L.A. and Red Rocks in Colorado, for sure. Those venues are so unique and iconic; to be a part of a different show like that would be amazing.

AFM: You played at Harrah's a few months back – are you excited to return to the venue?

JT: I am! It's definitely a cool place to be, and it's inside, which is a plus for Arizona.

Interview by Kelly Potts