

//MUSIC// Agenda



NEW MUSIC



RAY GORDON

Josh Ritter

The Historical Conquests of Josh Ritter (V2)



The editors won't let me give this album five stars (or six, or 10) but if I could give this album all the stars in the magazine, I would. Josh Ritter is to singer-songwriter folk what the guys in Fountains of Wayne are to the three-minute pop song: Both are entirely, utterly brilliant songwriters without peer in their respective genres, both are only getting better with each subsequent album, and ("Stacy's Mom" notwithstanding) both are

almost criminally under the popular radar. That this Idaho native is much better known in Ireland than in his native country is as good a proof as any that something is desperately wrong with the state of American music. Here is Ritter's most ambitious, most diverse, most rocking collection of songs yet. The lyrics, dense with historical and biblical allusion, are both smart and clever, but never precocious, and there's no one in this generation who writes better ballads. If you like singer-songwriters (and perhaps even if you don't usually), here's your favorite album of 2007.

—MATTHEW C. POE