

Russell James plays Side A-ley concert Aug. 13

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

LA GRANDE — Russell James has toured the United States, but he's just now getting back on the road.

"Every single one got canceled," he said of his 2020 shows, which included 30 to 40 performances.

One of those gigs was in La Grande. This weekend he's making up for that lost show by taking the stage Friday, Aug. 13, at Side A Brewing, 1219 Washington Ave., as part of the brewpub's Side A-ley concerts in the courtyard.

"I'm really happy about it," he said. "So many people appreciate having live music again."

The music starts at 7 p.m. There is no cover.

James describes his music as "mellow, folk, relaxing, soulful, introspective."

"It's all original," he said. "I may throw in a cover or two, depending on how I feel."

He began playing music at a

LIVE MUSIC BY RUSSELL JAMES

Aug. 12: 6 p.m., Riverside Park
Aug. 13: 7 p.m., Side A
Brewing
La Grande

young age, and played with the band The Porter Draw while living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He's been solo for the last five years.

"I've been touring all over the country," he said.

In 2016, James spent a month as the artist-in-residence at Big Bend National Park in Texas. He was encouraged to "hike around, notice things, and be inspired." He also gave several concerts.

"It was the greatest month of my life," he said.

James landed in Corvallis in 2019 with the plan to stay regional, playing around Oregon as well as northern California and Washington.

"For a long time I was criss-crossing the country, and it was tiring," he said.

During the pandemic he finished his fifth album, which he'll release in December 2021. He's slowly building his tour schedule for the coming months.

"Right now everybody wants to tour," James said. "It's hard to find gigs."

But he has two in La Grande — in addition to the Side A show, James will play at the free Riverside Park concert on Thursday, Aug. 12. The music starts at 6 p.m.

During his concerts, he said he sometimes talks about having autism. This is why, he said, his tour schedule often includes extra rest days to recharge after several nights of concerts. By sharing his story, he can advocate for more autism awareness.

"Autism has a lot of misconceptions," James said. "Autism is really diverse."

To learn more about the musician, visit www.russell-jamesmusic.net or follow him on Instagram (@autism.sings).



John Ellison

Russell James, from Corvallis, plays twice in La Grande this week: Aug. 12 at the Riverside Concert in Riverside Park and Aug. 13 at Side A.

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