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JOSH ROSENZWEIG WITH MOLLY SHANNON

Josh Rosenzweig, host of the wildly popular "here! With Josh and Sara," returns with his own original series. Filmed on location throughout New York City, Josh turns the traditional talk show format on its head. From celebrity interviews to premiere VIP events, Josh brings his own brand of humor and his intense love of New York City to the small screen, treating fans to a

unique and entertaining spin on pop culture.

"Building on the success of the fan favorite *here! With Josh and Sara*, we are excited to welcome Josh back on the air with a new and exciting talk show," said Eric Feldman, here! TV's Executive Vice President and General Manager. "*Just Josh* gives a new spin on the traditional talk show format, taking Josh out of the confines of the here! TV studio to explore and introduce our audience to the wonders of New York City and beyond."

The *Just Josh* debut episode features an in-depth interview with writer, actor, and drag legend Charles Busch. Additionally, Josh explores the cutting-edge work of photographer Johnny Rosza, currently being featured at New York's Christopher Henry Gallery, and visits the trendy Alias restaurant.

An all-star cast of characters will join Josh in upcoming episodes, including rock legends Duran Duran, screen beauty Isabella Rossellini, Emmy Award nominee Molly Shannon, *Tabatha's Salon Takeover* star Tabatha Coffey, and New York staples Sherry Vine and Joey Arias.

Vital VOICE recently had the opportunity to pick Josh's brain via telephone about the show:

Colin Lovett: So... tell our readers a bit about your background... Who's Josh Rosenzweig?

Josh Rosenzweig: My background is in film & theater. I attended school at USC and bounced back and forth between LA and NYC balancing school with plays & short films. I decided at a certain point to jump from the creative side to the executive side. I worked for Harvey Keitel's production company and then got involved with here! TV. After helping grow the network, I wound up getting a show. So the show came out of the executive role...

I never thought I would have an on-air show. I have always been entrenched in the downtown counter-culture community – the alternative gay scene that wasn't being portrayed by the LGBT movement or media.

CL: Originally you had a show with Sara. How did that program evolve to where you are now?

JR: 4-5 years ago, Sara and I started as a podcast. Then a video version of podcast was formed, which then became a longer format. Eventually, we taped it like a radio style show, which resulted in 200-250 episodes. By the time Sara left to go to grad school, I was burnt out. But last summer, the producer introduced the idea of a solo show for me. We started shooting in November, and now here we are!

CL: I'm a city boy... you seem to be a bigger city boy... do I need to be a New York insider to really get your show? What would you say you provide for a non-New Yorker, or even someone who's not planning on going there?

JR: It's totally not a New York insider show - the goal is exactly the opposite. The intention is not something that's meant to be cliquish but just the opposite. What we're saying is "Hey - look how accessible all this stuff is, because it's there. If I can do it (because I'm sort of a grown-up geeky guy) then anyone can do it."

CL: Several LGBT stars have started getting into the talk-show business. Jason Stuart, Rosie O'Donnell, Ellen DeGeneres, etc... You had Here! With Josh & Sara... What's going to be different about your show?

VITAL VOICE TV

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JR: I Love New York City. The show will show my ongoing love affair with the city; hopefully my love can be infectious to other people. The show is a true organic reflection of who I am and what my interests are – when I feel so strongly about something, hopefully I can convey that interest in other people, who may not usually see it. It's kind of like what my parents did for me - they weren't art officianatos - they were jocks - they put the pieces out there and showed that it's there.

CL: What do you think about the LGBT equality movement? Where do you see yourself in it?

JR: I came out at an early age for my generation, it was before kids were coming out in high school – there was no community support, no educational support. I sort of fell out of the closet – I had a boyfriend in high school. So I feel that my life has sort of been political by nature - I am who I am, and have never been anything but an openly gay man who is doing what it is that I do. It certainly cost me jobs early on in my life, but I sort of am political by being alive, and who I am. Growing up, I was taught that you have to take a stance somehow – you have to make your voice known.

We have to be careful when being political - taking something that is issue oriented is more important than representing any particular candidate. It is equally important for people to just "be there" and be in the main stream.

In the past, I have worked with Act Up in LA and NYC and directed plays that were political. That sort of cause-related work will come and go in your life as you need it and see fit. The key is visibility – being the man who is openly gay wherever you go."

CL: What's something the world doesn't know about Josh Rosenzweig?

JR: They're going to find out what a big silly goofball that I am. The end of each show is goofy outtakes. Another is that I spend most of my time sitting on my couch watching TV.

CL: Who were (or are) your influences, either in media and/or the LGBT world?

JR: My influences were a patchwork of so many different things. Artistically and spiritually: David Bowie. I've had a David Bowie poster in my room since age 14 - it used to drive my mother crazy. In the poster, he's in crazy makeup (see Aladdin Sane) – everyone knew then that he was bisexual. Bowie presented the opportunity to know that there was another option. I grew up in an affluent Jewish community in Chicago - there was no glorifying the other. Bowie glorified the other. He was a sort of beacon. Beyond Bowie, alternative bands and counter culture bands were an influence. Then I realized, OMG there's a whole other world out there.

CL: At the Vital VOICE, we pride ourselves on showcasing the St. Louis LGBT community to the mainstream. Who would you say is your primary audience that you speak to? Will you only cover LGBT material, or will you provide the LGBT perspective on mainstream material?

JR: The audience is geared towards LGBT community; it encompasses so many different types of people. The diversity within the population of LGBT is similar to the diversity in the mainstream: Pop Culture, Counter -Culture – the edgier crowd. I want to give the introduction into an edgier world. Every day there is a mission aspect of our job - we're doing something every day to increase visibility to the LGBT cause and issues. I believe that until we have complete equality and are part of the mainstream in the world at large, there's a place for these stories to be told."

Learn more about *Just Josh* at: http://www.heretv.com/Just_Josh/about

BY: COLIN LOVETT

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