

[00:00:00] **John Moe:** Just a quick reminder that *Depresh Mode* exists because people support it financially. If people keep supporting the show financially, then the show will continue. If they were to stop, the show would stop. Let's keep the show going. If you've already donated to *Depresh Mode*, thank you. You are putting this show out into the world where it can help people. If you have not yet donated, don't worry. It's easy to do. Just go to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join), find a level that works for you, and select *Depresh Mode* from the list of shows.

Alright, now on with the show!

I've never done an escape room for a couple of reasons. One, I'm self-employed, and so my coworkers are just my dogs. And I think escape rooms are often done as a workplace team building exercise. And in an escape room, my dogs would be no help at all. They really don't have two neurons to rub together most of the time. Plus, we're already a team, inescapably, so no reason to build a team out of us. So, that's reason one. Reason two why I wouldn't do an escape room is I don't like the idea of being trapped. It makes me uneasy. I don't think I have claustrophobia, but maybe I do, because no thanks.

Of course, I don't want to disparage the world's fine, upstanding escape room proprietors and their delightfully tricky rooms from which to escape. And I don't want to disparage people who genuinely love escape rooms. It's the same thing with me and a lot of contemporary country music. Not my bag, but nothing but respect for those that love it. And also, I kind of get the appeal of escape rooms. You're in this place, and you have to come to a complete understanding of its complexities in order to be free. You have to read the clues, interpret their meanings, conduct some trial-and-error missions. You really have to think some things through in order to evolve and progress. You, the escape room player, must use the breakthroughs you've already made to break through to more breakthroughs, all for the purpose of freedom.

In case you haven't caught on, the escape room has become a metaphor here for your mind and getting to know it, so you can be free! Of course, it's a metaphor. It's the kind of show we are. It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here. Josh Ritter music!

[00:02:27] **Music:** "Getting Ready to Get Down" from the album *Sermon on the Rocks* by Josh Ritter.

*Mama got a look at you and got a little worried*

*Papa got a look you and got a little worried*

*The pastor got a look and said, "Y'all had better hurry,*

*Send her off to a little Bible college in Missouri"*

*And now you come back saying you know a little bit about*

*Every little thing they ever hoped you'd never figure out*

*Eve ate the apple, because the apple was sweet*

*What kind of God would ever keep a girl from getting what she needs?*

*And I'm*

*Getting ready to get down*

*Getting ready to get down*

*Getting ready to get down*

*(Music fades out.)*

[00:03:11] **John Moe:** That's "Getting Ready to Get Down" by Josh Ritter. Josh is best known as a singer-songwriter, having put out 11 albums over the past 24 years, including the recent *Spectral Lines*, which came out earlier this year. Josh was named one of the 100 Greatest Living Songwriters by *Paste Magazine*. Bob Dylan recently performed a song Josh wrote in concert.

But beyond being a musician, Josh is also the author of two novels. He paints, he's run marathons, he does a lot of things. And he's been working on his own escape room, setting himself free. Again, metaphorically. Back to the metaphor here. He's been figuring out some stuff about himself and his mind, including a diagnosis that he hasn't revealed until this interview.

Josh was in his home in Brooklyn when I talked to him. It's an urban environment, so there are some city sounds behind him, a siren at one point. It's fine. You'll get used to it.

[00:04:07] **Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

[00:04:13] **John Moe:** Josh Ritter. Welcome to *Depresh Mode*.

[00:04:15] **Josh Ritter:** Thank you so much for having me, John.

[00:04:18] **John Moe:** How are you doing today?

[00:04:20] **Josh Ritter:** Today, I'm great! The sun is shining; it's crystal clear out there. You know, the kids are in school. I'm talking to you. This is fantastic.

[00:04:31] **John Moe:** So, it got my attention a few weeks ago. You tweeted on World Mental Health Day, “It’s World Mental Health Day, and I know something about that. So, I’m on here saying to you that depression makes you believe that you don’t deserve to feel well. Sometimes those closest to you need to be the ones to help you in the simplest ways. Shout out to those good folks.”

And I gotta say, I have been doing this for a long time, I’ve been talking about depression in particular for a long time, and I still get fooled. Because I think, oh, like happy, well spoken, successful people couldn’t be depressed. And of course, they can.

[00:05:12] **Josh Ritter:** (*Laughs.*) Well, that’s funny. Like, you know, I find that there are things that make me happy. And then there are times when I think, well, I know what’s coming, and I’m going to watch for it. Because these are the warning signs. Each time it will be something, you know, different. But there are times that I know I will be reliably happy. No matter any other times in my life, I know I can return to those kind of like a bird to a fence post, you know, and I’ll be okay. That’s a good thing to know.

[00:05:4] **John Moe:** Well, that’s good. So, how far back does your relationship with depression go?

[00:05:53] **Josh Ritter:** I remember it was a kind of extraordinary amount of like spiritual warfare and spiritual ground that I covered before I was 19 or so. It was only after kind of coming through that first crucible that I began to find that I was having all kinds of other feelings and issues that were difficult for me to explain. So, I’d say I was about 19 when things just started feeling just a little wacky. You know, I couldn’t figure it out. And you know, I remember that the first person I talked to said that I was moody.

You know, at the same time, I was discovering music. I was discovering a little bit more about myself in that way. You know, paired with my falling away from the religion that I was brought up in, there was a real like kind of spiritual crisis that was going on. And it was probably like the depression hid itself within the layers of that kind of larger thing.

[00:07:03] **John Moe:** Well, let’s back up to that crucible then. So, let’s move over to—is it Moscow, Idaho? I know it’s Idaho that you grew up in.

(*Josh confirms.*)

Moscow specifically. And what is this crucible that you’re talking about? It sounds like a religious trial of some sort that you had.

[00:07:22] **Josh Ritter:** I think that I often take—I notice that I definitely work in like archetypes. I love those big archetypes—the ghost that’s like searching for its baby or the—you know, the god splitting someone in two. You know, big stuff. You know, that’s always so much fun to like—

[00:07:47] **John Moe:** Mythic proportions.

[00:07:48] **Josh Ritter:** Yeah, big helpings of drama. And the way I was raised and learned the Bible; it was pretty thorough in one way but certainly not in a way that helped me contextualize these stories. So, the stories that I got were the real deal. It was like a burning bush. It was a chariot, you know, a wheel within a wheel. And like, these things were so huge. And even though my—as my belief in those literal events, you know, began to run up against my learning about the real world, I started to ask questions.

And that—asking questions was fun, but I found that the fact that I was being provided with a sure answer was really unsatisfying to me at that moment. And without comfort. It didn't give me comfort.

[00:08:43] **John Moe:** When you talk about learning these things, were you learning these at a church? Were you learning them from your parents or from a school or what?

[00:08:50] **Josh Ritter:** Well, it's interesting. You know, my parents were both neuroscientists and like, you know, heavily engaged in like the scientific method and rational thought, and yet were very—they were real believers and participants in our Lutheran church. I was starting to find while I was still a believer in a real way, like that I was being drawn away by all this other beautiful, rich symbolism and all these other religions. You know, and that I was being taken away into these other stories.

[00:09:28] **John Moe:** This is you as a kid, as an adolescent, or—?

[00:09:31] **Josh Ritter:** As an adolescent, you know. I really started—you know, I was just—I found myself becoming like unsatisfied with the kind of stripped bare essentials of a Lutheran church. I was like—you know, I liked those stories. I wanted something with a little bit more, you know, meat on the bone, you know? So, I was always drawn away by the stories of the saints, and the angels, and the big mythic stuff. But I—you know, that wasn't anything that had anything to do with just growing up in this town where that stuff really wasn't like a pertinent thing to think about or anything.

So, I did feel a little bit like I was living in a slightly different world than some of the kids around me.

[00:10:18] **John Moe:** So, your adolescence then is spent in a kind of spiritual crisis, I guess. Or a spirit—or a sense of—yeah, a sense of spiritual crisis, really.

[00:10:30] **Josh Ritter:** Absolutely. Definitely. Yeah. It was a time when, you know, you start to look up and look around. And I believe very strongly in mystical experience, you know. I believe in things that we are incapable of expressing with words. But I wasn't finding any of that, you know. So, I felt like going through the motions wasn't something I wished to do.

[00:11:01] **John Moe:** So, this continues into your college years?

*(Josh confirms.)*

And you talk about how the depression showed up after this crisis. How did the crisis come to an end? Or has it? (*Chuckles.*)

[00:11:18] **Josh Ritter:** I think what I started to learn to do is to be understanding of my own vocabulary that I gained when I was growing up. My own spiritual and, you know, mystic way of seeing the world is all referenced by the first lessons I received. And so, for me to try and to deny that would be impossible and would also kind of rob me of the palette that I've been given to speak in. You know?

At that moment though—at that moment of leaving things, you know, or putting it aside, I realized that if I couldn't put it aside, I had to be able to integrate it into my life. You know, I had to be able to integrate that own struggle into my life, because that's the only way that like I can feel like, you know, my beliefs can change and be adaptive is if I don't say—you know, if I turn from being a believer into saying there is nothing, I deny myself such a full range of experience. You know, things that aren't explicable by a religion but are something that are more profound than that.

[00:12:40] **John Moe:** So, when this crisis kind of I guess more concludes than resolves—but when it concludes, what is that depression afterwards? What does that feel like? How does it show up? Because depression shows up in a lot of different ways for a lot of different people.

[00:13:02] **Josh Ritter:** Mm-hm. Yeah, well, for me it started with trouble sleeping, and I guess obsessions. You know, or very vivid playing of events that hadn't occurred but caused me the same kind of bodily reaction.

[00:13:19] **John Moe:** Like intrusive thoughts of some sort?

[00:13:21] **Josh Ritter:** Intrusive thoughts and, you know, that was the time when I was definitely deep in beginning to write a lot of songs and realizing that that was something I could do—where I would just tap out the syllables to the verses on my chest at night. Of each verse, you know. And if it didn't match up, it was just—at first, I thought it was a game. But then it started to feel like it was just something I was doing obsessively, and I couldn't stop. I was obsessed with the music and with the idea. And then, you know, just then going all the way over to the other side and staying up all night and working on my stuff or like writing songs. You know.

I didn't really go to parties or anything, you know. I kind of like started playing in the coffee shop, you know, but that was kind of the length of what I was doing. So, I wasn't like—I wasn't discovering anything, you know. (*Chuckles.*) Like, you know, there was no drugs or anything like that. Or drinking.

[00:14:24] **John Moe:** So, how long had you been playing music by this point? How long had you been playing guitar?

[00:14:31] **Josh Ritter:** Probably like three years. Yeah, three or four years. That was such a fun thing to do. You know, it was definitely like the thing I've concentrated the most on.

[00:14:42] **Transition:** Spirited acoustic guitar.

[00:14:49] **John Moe:** More with Josh Ritter in just a moment.

[00:14:57] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:15:00] **John Moe:** Back with musician Josh Ritter. Before the break, he was telling us about a method of writing songs by pounding out a rhythm on his chest.

Was songwriting—this sort of nascent, beating on your chest songwriting—was that the first songwriting you had done was when you were in college in this sort of post-crisis world?

[00:15:19] **Josh Ritter:** I had done some back in high school, but I was also like very new to playing guitar. I hadn't learned—I hadn't gotten good enough that I could start to imagine, you know, playing anything more complicated. So, I think that was the moment when I was starting to like learn how to do that and starting to see—also like starting to see past some of the very first music that I'd ever heard. And getting to listen to new music was really cool.

[00:15:51] **John Moe:** Yeah. How interesting that you're in this sort of depression and you're kind of in a bad way, and then you're able to channel that into something like songwriting. Which a lot of people would have a hard time doing if they are depressed, but for you, it sort of transformed into this creative endeavor.

[00:16:14] **Josh Ritter:** There's a period of time sometimes that, you know, when I look at the swings that occur, I see like this picture of that Einsteinian idea of like a wormhole. There's like this like one side where no light can escape. It's pitch black and like devouring everything. And then there's this like—this kind of filament that is like the conduit to white hole or whatever—wherever all this stuff comes out. And there's this beautiful line in there.

And in between like the moments of—you know, in that time, during the periods where there's mania, that's like sometimes also not a productive time. It's like, you can get a lot of pages, or you can—you know, you can write a lot of songs. But they're—I can tell when I've tipped over into that kind of mode. And typically, those aren't the songs I trust. But in that middle period—you know, which is so kind of blessed, like a lot of beautiful stuff can come in that time.

[00:17:36] **John Moe:** You started finding some success and recognition pretty early on, like during and after college, right?

[00:17:45] **Josh Ritter:** Yeah, I guess so. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

[00:17:49] **John Moe:** And tell me about—you went to—I understand you went to Scotland after college, and you kind of continued your music over there.

[00:17:58] **Josh Ritter:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. During college, I went over there 'cause I was like—'cause I had the opportunity, and I wanted to study a little bit more about like Scottish

music, the kind of early ethnomusicology that was done in Scotland. It was kind of—you know, it was a way to go to Scotland. I wasn't going to be an ethnomusicologist, but like I got to hear a lot of really cool, old music and stuff like that.

But in the meantime, I was playing in coffee shops and pubs, you know. Especially during the winter months. The area along the Royal Mile there has—you know, they got nothing else going on. They'll let like an American kid come in and play music. At that time, you know, for a while. So, I was actually doing that, you know, pretty much as much as I could. Just trying to play music. Until around the spring, when the *Braveheart* guys came in with like their half faces painted blue, and they started soaking up the foot traffic.

[00:19:00] **John Moe:** (*Laughs.*) *Braveheart* guys? What do you mean?

[00:19:03] **Josh Ritter:** Yeah, it was after *Braveheart*. And there was like a period of time when you would go down the Royal Mile or anywhere in the middle of town, and there'd be these like *Braveheart* impersonators. It was—

[00:19:18] **John Moe:** For the benefit of the tourists or—?

[00:19:21] **Josh Ritter:** I don't know who was benefiting there, but—

(*They laugh.*)

[00:19:26] **John Moe:** And so, then—so, you're in Scotland. How long are you in Scotland then for?

[00:19:32] **Josh Ritter:** Maybe seven months.

[00:19:34] **John Moe:** Seven months or so. And then back to the States and continuing with music. How is—you know, as a person kind of—that can be a real drifting time, that sort of post-college, trying to make your way in the world kind of time. How does your mental health hold up during that period?

[00:19:52] **Josh Ritter:** It was definitely a thing that I was still uncovering, you know. Like, you know, I wasn't aware that I would start, you know, filling notebooks—notebooks and notebooks—or that I would start to have these real—odd ideas would come to me at odd times. And I would—you know, I would hear things. I would feel things in a very vivid way that felt as—it was less that like I think I noticed them about myself and more that I had not realized that I was feeling certain things or thinking things in a way that was not the same as everybody else that I knew. And that like this thing that was like—you know, came to think of as like a depression also brought with it like some real strange kind of bedfellows. Wander-y thoughts and ideas and a willingness to entertain all kinds of scenarios. You know, a kind of a suspension of disbelief. Just frantic need to like work on a piece of writing that would always help me channel.

[00:21:14] **John Moe:** Was it songwriting? Or were you filling these notebooks with essays or what?

[00:21:19] **Josh Ritter:** Songwriting and, you know, many, many kinds of scenes and scenarios that I thought would one day turn into something. You know, in those times I hadn't learned that there are periods when I would fantasize about not just writing a novel, but like writing a trilogy. You know, and I would map it out. And for like a week, it was the most incredible thing. And then I would lose interest in it, and I would move on to something else. And for a long time, I got on my own case about that. Because I thought, well, like you always start things. You never finish them, you know. Those sorts of things.

And then I realized, no, that's like—it's a symptom in this way of something that I need to pay attention to. Because the manic periods are preceded by like a depressive period in a fairly regular way, you know. It's just something that—

So, nowadays I start to notice those things, and I really pay attention to them.

[00:22:25] **John Moe:** Is this bipolar type 2?

[00:22:28] **Josh Ritter:** Yeah, it's bipolar, yeah. Bipolar type 2, yeah.

[00:22:32] **Music:** “Honey I Do” from the album *Spectral Lines* by Josh Ritter.

*(Music continues under the dialogue.)*

[00:22:36] **John Moe:** More with Josh Ritter just ahead. Here's a little music from his latest album. This is “Honey I Do”

[00:22:42] **Music:** “Honey I Do” by Josh Ritter.

*Honey, I do*

*Honey, I do*

*They beat you 'til you're broken and you're all blues*

*And you're all blues*

*Ain't nobody ever gonna love you*

*Ain't no one ever gonna love you*

*Ain't no one ever...*

*(Music fades out.)*

[00:23:16] **Transition:** Relaxed acoustic guitar.

[00:23:19] **John Moe:** Back with Josh Ritter talking for the first time in an interview about having bipolar type 2.

When were you able to nail that as—get that terminology and get that knowledge of those tendencies?

[00:23:35] **Josh Ritter:** You know, yeah. I think that it took a long time, because I wasn't familiar with mental health. As much as my parents were a neuroscientist, like mental health was not something that they—

[00:23:47] **John Moe:** Yeah, it's a different bag.

[00:23:48] **Josh Ritter:** —they worked on. Yeah. And I remember one time—and I still don't know the details, but I went to the hospital when I was still in college. And I don't remember how I got there. That was a very strange time. But then, you know, for a good long while, I just remember finding certain times that I was just remarkably sad. And I couldn't tell whether it was because I was out on the road—maybe I was alone somewhere on the road, or like, you know, I played a bad gig, or—you know, whatever it was. I just felt like I was just sinking into the earth. You know, I was always writing stuff down. So, I remember writing that stuff down when I felt it.

But you know, it took about maybe 15—12 or 15 years for me to like start to like—I went to a number of doctors, and each one had different ways of framing the situation and good, useful ways of understanding what was going on in ways that I trust, you know. But there is something about that state, both in the mania and in the depressive state, that are so ineffable that putting them into words is like depriving them of so much depth. To tell the story of how you're feeling, even lose the weird vibrance of the experience, you know? So, it took me a long time to really feel like I was really describing—and being comfortable describing the facets of the illness.

[00:25:47] **John Moe:** Yeah. I mean, I was gonna say, it's hard to put some of those things into words and not be reductionist about it, given the complexity and the vastness and amorphousness of those sorts of conditions. But yet, you're a writer, and putting abstract things into words is sort of in the job description of a singer-songwriter, isn't it?

[00:26:12] **Josh Ritter:** Yeah, right! But I had never, ever pointed that lens really, truly on myself in that way. You know, like to talk about the illness, you also have to talk about so many things in your life and the realizations that like kind of open before you are kind of like these boxes where you realize, oh, this was happening. Why was I in Miami at 10 in the evening running on a treadmill like, you know, for a marathon? You know, running like 15 miles on a treadmill. Like, what was I doing? You know? (*Chuckles.*) Like, these compulsions that would—

But then when you start to understand it, you can look back at some of those moments and say, ha, okay. This is a different person than I am now. And these things can pass and change.

[00:27:03] **John Moe:** Did—and you've run marathons I understand, as well.

*(Josh confirms.)*

In addition—

[00:27:10] **Josh Ritter:** Yeah, you know, I started running marathons for the—'cause it gave me some like peace.

[00:27:17] **John Moe:** Did you find peace in—I mean, we'll jump ahead into the albums that have made you very successful and well known. Did reaching that audience and knowing you were connecting with people—and I'm sure getting letters and people coming up and talk to you about how much your music meant to them—did that provide you with any peace that, you know, you were doing something right, that you were doing something that was connecting with folks?

[00:27:45] **Josh Ritter:** Yeah, definitely. And over time, that sense of accomplishment is something that I've increasingly felt. Which is that like it is just so beautiful when somebody lets a work of art into their life and takes whatever amount of time—I mean, I don't spend four minutes looking at the greatest masterpiece on earth, you know, but somebody might spend four or five minutes with a song and then carry it around with them and use it in their life and use it and make it the soundtrack of those moments in their life.

That, to me, is the highest praise, and it has led me in some incredible places and allowed me to be part of people's lives that I never would have met.

[00:28:36] **John Moe:** Do you still have the highs and lows, the manic phases and the depressive phases? Is that still part of your life today?

[00:28:44] **Josh Ritter:** You know, yeah, to a lesser degree, thankfully. They are still like the weather though. They come and go. But you know, now I realize that I have to have a proper amount of sleep. I have to, you know, take care of myself on the road and be kind to myself in whatever ways I, you know, can muster. And then for me, action and having a project, having something that I'm working on—or one or more things—is just a way to keep that thing just a little bit farther behind me. Sometimes it does still get like bad for sure. Now I also have people around me, like you know, my doctor and family, you know, who understand those symptoms and see it and can help me see it coming.

[00:29:42] **John Moe:** Is—you talk about staying busy with things as being something that helps. You're somebody who—you know, not a lot of singer-songwriters also write novels and also paint. Is that diversity of these things that you spend your time on—is that part of a wellness plan?

[00:30:01] **Josh Ritter:** Yes, absolutely. You know, because—I mean, it started I think with the marathons, because I started to realize that I was in a van or by myself all day, or in a van with like the rest of the band, and there needs to be a time—especially when you're on the road with folks—where you can just be on your own. You know? And I started taking up

running. And of course, I had to do the marathon for it, because I don't know why. I'm a completist, you know. And then I realized, oh man, not only does the running feel good, but like it gives me another project that I'm working on.

So, like I wasn't—for the first time, I wasn't just relying on songwriting as my like—the field where I kind of grew my own self-worth. And then with prose and with the novels, like that was also something where I set about with the idea that I wanted to do this, because I felt like I was capable of it. But then it turned into realizing that it also gave me a chance to like let the songs lie fallow. You know, for a while. And that was a real good understanding, because there is a chance to like, you know, burn out the bulb. Songwriting is like such a (*stammering*)—I find that it's such a visionary sort of weird act. You can't rely on it to tell you something honestly 24 hours a day.

[00:31:29] **John Moe:** You're touring now on the 20th anniversary of your album, *Hello Starling*. What is it like to revisit the person who made that album 20 years later and kind of climb inside of him and walk around and play guitar? What is it like to reengage like that?

[00:31:51] **Josh Ritter:** Well, firstly, I guess I feel like profoundly lucky to be alive for it. I feel very grateful and also downright fortunate to be able to see it and to be able to go out and play those songs for people who, you know, met at my shows when I, you know, was playing first in Ireland and over in Europe and across the States where I've—you know. And then now I have kids.

That is something that's truly beautiful to me, but also, you know, like with each of these songs, it's like opening a box that you've had in your attic. And like, you think, oh, there's a box. I know what's in that box. You know, and you've always known what's in the box, but then you open it up, and it's got all this other stuff in there, you know? We recorded out in the south—kind of the middle of France. And you know, I remember eating like this really good chocolate that we got at the gas station and wine and like, you know, all sleeping on—you know, in this stone barn and like—you know, things that are so personal to me and like that I never really knew that I had. And there's so much that can kind of come out of a song.

[00:33:12] **John Moe:** You're talking about being lucky to be alive. I was reading about your condition. I think I'm pronouncing it right. Exertional Rhabdomyolysis?

(*Josh confirms.*)

Tell us what that is. And when did you get that diagnosed?

[00:33:31] **Josh Ritter:** It was in 20... yeah, 2010. I was home from a tour. The first couple of days after a tour are always—as anybody knows who tours, it's like those are some tricky days. Because you're going from constant movement, constant renegotiation with environments, constant—you know, meeting and interacting with people, in whatever capacity you have on the road. That's like always a given. And then you're home, and suddenly, you're not moving. You're kind of bringing your two lives back into something, you know, that seems stable. And you know, you're just—you know, it's just a weird time. I just started exercising. Exercising and exercising.

*(A siren in the background.)*

And you know, it ended up just—you know, actually some of my muscles kind of exploded. You know, it was a very—it was very scary actually. You know, I didn't—I ended up just becoming very—I just had a tremendous amount of this I guess protein that goes through the kidneys and is processed by the liver but can't really support that kind of like injury. A lot of people, when they're crushed in like a car accident, the rhabdom is what is—you know, overloads the system, and their kidneys shut down and things like that. And it was very scary, yeah. I was in the hospital for five days, and they were trying to—they were hoping to see that everything would be okay and that my muscles wouldn't have to be, you know, operated on and that my kidneys and liver would function. Yeah, it was scary.

[00:35:35] **John Moe:** What did that do to an already delicate mental health system that you had going on? Like, what did that do for you?

[00:35:42] **Josh Ritter:** It was, uh—it made me realize for the first time that the scope of the illness is both wider and more insidious than I can ever necessarily imagine. Up until that time, I had begun to think, okay, well, I found somebody to help me just explain my symptoms and things. And I'd begun to think, okay, I can live with this thing in harmony. I know what it is. It was like my—the kid goes out for his first swim in the ocean. You know? It was like, oh man, this fucker is a lot stronger than I am. You know? And I have to treat it with the respect it deserves, because otherwise I'm not going to see it coming.

[00:36:35] **John Moe:** What do you hope for the future in terms of your mental health? Because it seems like you've received a lot—you've had struggles, but you've received some gifts in terms of just all these things you're able to do and all these things that you're able to describe. You know, if you could wave a wand and have the same mind as the average person, would you do it? Or would you stick with what you got?

[00:37:03] **Josh Ritter:** I think that like there have been times when I have felt like I didn't know where my mind was gonna go, you know? And there have been times when I've been like shocked, you know, at the stuff that, that comes up. But I've learned that like that is part of the full like flower of my own make-up. The things that I find sometimes truly disconcerting, I can integrate them into my life with love and respect. I can see things, or I can hear things, and they are part of my—you know—own beautiful make-up. And they don't have to like control my life.

But I also, you know—I treat them with respect. I take those—you know, I go to my doctor, and like we make sure that everything's cool. And I just have to realize that this is the way sometimes I am—you know—that I think. And in seeing it that way, I've started to learn that it's much—it has pushed my own work in ways that I wouldn't get to otherwise, and I feel grateful for that, because I do love it.

[00:38:33] **John Moe:** When we end an interview, I'll often say, “Well, here's something from so-and-so's new album. Or here's, you know, a deep-cut from this person's catalog.” What Josh Ritter song do you think we should go out on?

[00:38:46] **Josh Ritter:** Oh man! Let's go out on a hopeful one. Let's do “For Your Soul”.

[00:38:52] **John Moe:** “For Your Soul”, Josh Ritter.

[00:38:54] **Music:** “For Your Soul” from the album *Spectral Lines* by Josh Ritter.

*You with the light on your face*

*Who walketh only in grace*

*Things about to get tough*

*There’s a battle that rages*

*You can’t wish it away*

*You’ll have to fight for your love*

*For your soul*

*Honey, for your soul; honey, for your soul*

*For your soul,*

*Honey, for your soul; honey, for your soul*

*Will you be worthy and yet...*

*(Music fades out.)*

[00:39:42] **John Moe:** Hey, the holidays are upon us, and if you need to do some shopping, check out the Maximum Fun merchandise store. The merch store, at [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.maxfunstore.com).

*(“Building Wings” fades in.)*

We have all sorts of things, all sorts of *Depresh Mode* gifts there. A lot of them that say, “I’m glad you’re here”. We got t-shirts, we got mugs, we got *Depresh Mode* sweatpants, we got blankets for the winter months ahead. So, check that out. [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.maxfunstore.com). Be sure to hit subscribe, give us five stars, write rave reviews. All of that helps get the show out into the world. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can be reached in the United States by calling or texting 988. It’s free, it’s available 24/7.

Our Instagram and Twitter are both @DepreshPod. If you're on Facebook, look up our mental health discussion group, Preshies. Our *Depresh Mode* newsletter is available on Substack; you can search that up. I'm on Twitter and Instagram @JohnMoe. Our electric mail address is [DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org](mailto:DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org).

Hi, credits listeners. One of my favorite Josh Ritter songs is called “The Curse”, and it's a love story about a woman and a mummy. And that's a funny conceit for a song that is actually quite lovely and heartbreaking. *Depresh Mode* is made possible by your contributions. Our production team includes Raghu Manavalan, Gabe Mara, Kevin Ferguson, and me. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, “Building Wings”.

*Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I'm John Moe. Bye now!

[00:41:14] **Music:** “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller.

*I'm always falling off of cliffs, now*

*Building wings on the way down*

*I am figuring things out*

*Building wings, building wings, building wings*

*No one knows the reason*

*Maybe there's no reason*

*I just keep believing*

*No one knows the answer*

*Maybe there's no answer*

*I just keep on dancing*

[00:41:51] **Sally Baker:** This is Sally Baker in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And my dog, Danny, and I are here to tell you that you deserve to be loved. Right now. Exactly as you are.

*(Music fades out.)*

[00:42:05] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[00:42:06] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[00:42:08] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[00:42:09] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[00:42:10] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[00:42:11] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[00:42:12] **Speaker 6:** —by you!