



# Jewish rocker attracts fans with faith, music

## Some call Rick Recht the 'Jewish Dave Matthews'

**AP** Associated Press

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CHESTERFIELD, Mo. - Rehearsing in his basement recording studio, Rick Recht looks every bit the rocker with his retro T-shirt, worn jeans and medium-brown hair tucked behind his ears.

His left foot taps the beat while he strums an acoustic guitar and sings in ... Hebrew?

Recht's music, recorded in English and punctuated by Hebrew, is contemporary Jewish rock. Referred to in some circles as the "Jewish Dave Matthews," Recht and his band tour nationwide, delivering about 150 performances a year. They get fan mail and autograph requests. One concert photo shows teenage boys who have decorated their bare chests to read "Rick Recht Rules!"

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Tom Gannam / AP

Rick Recht and his band play contemporary Jewish rock music for an ever increasing number of followers.

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His home office has a well-equipped recording studio and a video editing room. He's starting a record label and two Web sites to raise the profile of Jewish radio and music. He also has shelves of Rick Recht Band merchandise — anyone searching for boxer shorts emblazoned

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with "All Tov" — the Hebrew equivalent of "It's all good" — need look no further.

"We want to give (fans) the opportunity to show their Jewish pride and let their friends share it," Recht says.

Recht, 35, lives in the St. Louis suburb of Chesterfield. He was raised by an Orthodox mother and a Reform father, practicing in a Conservative congregation. But Recht drifted from Judaism in college and began a career as a secular rock musician.

Back at home, he was giving guitar lessons to a young woman who convinced him to be a songleader at a Jewish day camp she directed. That woman is now his wife, and they have two young children.

"I had a life epiphany," Recht said of his time at the camp. He loved working with children and began writing and performing songs with a Jewish message. His work appealed to young people because of its pop sound.

Driven to share music

He recorded the "Tov" compact disc in 1999. By 2000, he was on tour almost the whole summer, often playing for summer camps and youth groups.

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He's now in the process of releasing "Shabbat Alive! Live," a compact disc and DVD of an interactive worship service including congregation and choral participation. He has

recorded a children's music CD, "Free to Be the Jew in Me" and a secular project, "What Feels So Right." An upcoming project, "Tear Down the Walls," is about dismantling racism.

Rabbi Daniel Freeland of the Union for Reform Judaism, a coordinating body for 900 synagogues, called Recht one of the more popular emerging artists in contemporary Jewish music.

"We need to have more Rick Rechts out there," he said.

Freeland said Recht can be seen as part of a 35-year-old line of contemporary Jewish music, including artists like Debbie Friedman, Cantor Jeff Klepper and Craig Taubman, though he notes Recht brings his own rock sound.

Recht, who is well-versed in other contemporary Jewish artists like Soulfarm, Moshav Band and Blue Fringe, is a firm believer that Jewish music can learn lessons from the popularity of contemporary Christian music. He praised the high-quality recordings, the reach of Christian radio stations and the way their broadcasts provide a

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emission radio stations and the way their broadcasts provide a spiritual context.

Recht would like to see his music reach a broader audience one day — “but not to cross over and leave the Jewish world behind.”

“I feel driven to share Jewish music with other people,” he said, “because I feel they’re going to feel that same connection.”

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