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Opposites Attract for Sondre Lerche

Written by Cyndi Lieske

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Sondre Lerche's last stop in Michigan was a quick set as an opener for Elvis Costello at Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater in 2005 - this time he plans to stick around awhile.

He'll be playing back-to-back solo shows on Feb. 22 in Lansing and Feb. 23 in Detroit. That might mean a bit of respite for Lerche and opening act singer, JBM.

"It means we can actually enjoy ourselves or have a beer or a bottle of wine or meet the locals," he said. "You don't have to rush out after the gig. It means you can move at a slower pace and sort of enjoy little bit of luxury in the crazy touring schedule."

His September 2009 album, the fresh-sounding, pop-inspired Heartbeat Radio has earned him fans and good reviews from The New York Times, Spin and The Los Angeles Times. The Norwegian

singer/songwriter known for his clever, well-crafted, melodic songs has a string of club shows lined up. Lerche likes the intimacy of small shows where "you can see everybody clearly right in front of you and you feel you don't even need the microphone."

While he has a set list, there are times it is tossed aside.

"Every night I make detours into a song that somebody just yells out," he said. "I don't play every song that people ask for, because then I would never be done. But sometimes people ask for a song that I haven't been asked to play for some time. Or, a song that I'd forgotten about. Then you say 'Wow, that's exciting, that's a good one. I wouldn't mind trying to play that,' so you just follow that."

While jumping into an old song can lead to "mishaps," Lerche is willing to take the risk.

"Halfway through you realize you don't remember the chords or the lyrics, or the rest of the song and you've got yourself a problem. Although it doesn't really matter, it is sort of the feeling of it and being open and spontaneous and alert to the audience. I'd rather have it be more of a communication between us."

The 27-year-old, who has recorded six albums - including the soundtrack for the film, *Dan in Real Life* - said switching genres with records is "something that just comes naturally" and "is a curiosity that grows." One album might feature jazz vocals, another punk/rock riffs, and another acoustic folk pop.

"I am starting to see a pattern now that I have done a couple of records. I go for the opposite. I do one thing and I want something that feels like the opposite. The opposite can be lots of things, of course, I have never done a record that was more or less exploring the same territory that the one before did."

Photo: Isabell Wedin

Sondre Lerche wsg JBM

Mac's Bar, East Lansing

Feb. 22 6:30 p.m.

\$15 in advance, \$20 day of show

macsbar.com, (517) 484-6795

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