



## PACKING A PUNCH BUSY NORWEGIAN SINGER/SONGWRITER SONDRE LERCHE RETURNS TO THE BASICS ON HIS NEWEST ALBUM

by Nick Meador  
photograph by Ruvan Wijesooriya

**T**he world needs great singer/songwriters, and Sondre Lerche (pronounced Sawndruh Lerk-uh) is just that. The 24-year-old, blue-eyed Norwegian isn't new to the realm of international indie rock. His first album, *Faces Down*, was released on Astralwerks in 2002, when he was only 19. Then in 2004, the song "Two Way Monologue" (from the album of the same name) was playing continuously throughout college radio. After a change of pace for a jazzy lounge endeavor with *Duper Session*, Lerche and his band, the Faces Down, have returned with vigor on *Phantom Punch*, released last February. "I wanted to explore more physical energy than what we've done on our other records," Lerche says. "We wanted to keep all the elements on the record within the band—basically just bass, drums and guitar. There's a little keyboard, but that's it. It's stripped down, more energetic."

While many bands are exploring a collective sound or electronic options, Lerche stays true to a few key influences. "My favorite songwriter is probably Elvis Costello," Lerche says.

"I've always liked XTC and Steely Dan. There's so much great and exciting music out there, so much to explore."

The *Faces Down* is an integral piece of the music because they allow Lerche's guitar and vocals to shine. About an attempted departure from his staple instrument, guitar, Lerche says, "When I was younger I had a year when I played drums in a band that played old '60s pop songs, but that was pretty much it. We probably sounded more punk than any band with Credence Clearwater Revival on the repertoire." From then on, Lerche stuck with guitar and, on *Phantom Punch*, he switches from acoustic troubadour to electric genius, plugging in and setting things on fire.

Lerche toured the U.S. in March and April and ran into a fair share of problems—one of which led to rescheduling his show at Double Door: "We were stuck up in the Montana mountains," he explains. Otherwise, he says touring is an enjoyable venture. "It's always a blast getting to play every night of the week. It really gives you another perspective on performing and how you go about playing the songs every night. It demands more of you in terms of trying to make changes every night. You can't be playing the exact same thing."

Touring is the norm for Lerche, who seems to hardly ever settle down in one place. After his U.S. shows, he is off to Norway and the rest of Europe for five more weeks of touring. "Some countries didn't even carry *Duper Sessions*," he says. "With this record, it's really exciting to come back [to Europe] and play." Lerche's time off-tour is spent in Norway or New York. "I travel so much that it's a question of where I actually live. But my wife lives in New York."

Lerche also has a killer music video for "Phantom Punch," the title track from the new album, thanks in part to an amateur director contest. "We actually had a competition in Norway with the national radio," Lerche says. "We wanted to find a young person with some cool ideas and basically let him or her direct the video. We found this guy who was 21 years old, and he had this idea of me having a device to control the angle and motion of the camera. We were basically just at his service." The video also features a scene where people in horse masks pursue Lerche. It sounds odd in type, but the video sheds light on Lerche's amiable, adventurous persona. Lerche has accomplished great things in little time, and if his current pace is any indicator, he will be present and productive for quite a while.