

The obsession / religion issue

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THE OBSESSION / RELIGION ISSUE

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SONDRE LERCHE

text **Mark von Pfeiffer** photo **Marte Rognerud**

From that crazy country who gave us the wacky hijinks of the Vikings while thrilling us with the soothing, natural beauty of its fjords comes Sondre Lerche! Just out of high school, this young Norwegian is out and about banging the gong to promote the international drop of his debut album *Faces Down*.

Close on the heels of two narrowly distributed and widely acclaimed

between the melancholic self-effacement of Belle and Sebastian and tenderhearted confessionals à la Burt Bacharach.

But such mastery didn't come without sacrifice. As a youngster, when most of his friends were out ice fishing and cross-country skiing, Lerche was back at the lodge mastering guitar and picking up the occasional piece of advice from his drum-playing sister. Notably an early bloomer,

"MOST OF MY SONGS ARE ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT AND DON'T GET AND WHAT YOU HAVE BUT DON'T WANT... I TRY TO WINK AT THE LISTENER."

EPs, *Faces Down* is an upbeat and textured acoustically-based blue ribbon winner that has been cross-pollinated with just the right amount of in-studio electronic tweaking that aptly differentiates it from the sixties pop it often references. It's both simple and melodious, but easily avoids the dooming prong of folksiness. "When I set out to record the album I didn't want to sound like some acoustic troubadour," he asserts, "I'm into some adventurous arrangements and my producer Jorgen Traeen is a madman with digital equipment." Lyrically Lerche achieves a range, and at times a profundity that belies his age—songs that pinball with purpose

under heady inspiration from the 80s synth pioneers A-ha, he set down "Locust Girl," his first "proper" song at the age of thirteen. "I had to learn what the word locust meant before I wrote the song," he laughs.

His brute-force honesty makes Lerche shine. The bedrock of his storytelling is formed of the small stuff in life. "Most of my songs are about what you want and don't get and what you have but don't want," he says. "But, in doing that I try to wink at the listener. You don't have to do much, just add in a small detail like a wordplay, something to ease the spirit and allow yourself to see the humor and irony in the whole picture." ■