

Seth Lakeman

Fiddle-playing festival favourite

Words: Laura Dixon

The sexy face of folk, Dartmoor's Seth Lakeman, is touring his latest album, 'Poor Man's Heaven'. Seth, clad in a tight black T-shirt with trademark bulging biceps, has been a regular feature at festivals across the country all summer and, after just a short respite, has now embarked on his longest UK tour to date. Known for raw energy on stage, foot-stomping violin playing and bringing folk into the mainstream, the Mercury Prize-nominated Bristol resident plays the Academy on 29 Oct.

How are you doing?

Great! This year has been amazing. 'Poor Man's Heaven' went straight in at number 8, and we were all blown away by that. We've had a very positive response at festivals this year, and it's incredible how we've grown as a live outfit. People have been learning the lyrics, and really enjoying the songs. We have a single out, 'Solomon Browne', and I'm writing my new record now.

How are you feeling about the tour?

It's going to be good - it's a long one, though. I had a great gig the last time I played in the Academy, and I have played in Bristol already this year - with Jethro Tull at Colston Hall. Ian Andrews, the singer, gave me a call to come down for a guest spot. That was cool.

Which was your favourite festival this year?

I really liked Beautiful Days in Honiton, and a festival called Hebrides [on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland]. Myself and my girlfriend are going to Malawi to do Lake of Stars, too. We don't know if it will be good - it's supposed to be a mix between Creamfields, Ibiza and WOMAD, and a complete mix of people, African and Western.

What do you think of Bristol?

I've been enjoying hanging out in Bristol, having a great time on Gloucester Road and Whiteladies Road. I've been living here for a year with my girlfriend, up Gloucester Road, but we're moving back to Dartmoor soon. When it was hot, I chilled out in St Andrews Park a lot. I also go running on the Downs - they're nice, aren't they?



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Where do you go for live music in Bristol?

I love the Prom [Gloucester Road] - it's an old rock'n'roll place and has live gigs on every night of the week. It's not trying to be trendy and I like that. I've played impromptu gigs there and in Halo on Gloucester Road. Thekla is pretty cool, too - good stuff always goes on down there. I've played lots of venues but I've never played there. It would be good to play a floating venue. For dancing, I've jumped around a bit at the Prom, the Elbow Rooms, Henry Africa's, and anywhere on Whiteladies Road. And I went to The Croft recently and saw Rose Kemp there.

Did you try one of their cider cocktails?

No! It's a good venue though, quite indie.

Any other favourite places in town?

Simply Thai on Gloucester Road. When my girlfriend's working, I eat there three or four times a week. I'm going to miss that more than anything when we move. I'm addicted to it!

What's so good about it?

The price. It's a family-run business, you can bring your own wine and booze, and it's really cheap, amazing food. The Thai Chicken Curry that Choke [pronounced Chok] - that's the cook - cooks is amazing. I travel a lot and you won't find better food than that. I wanted him to cook for us on our tour... I like the Prince of Wales on Gloucester Road. And Halo. It has all sorts of poetry readings on a Monday night, then salsa on a Tuesday, and it's open 'til late. It has good beer and good food, too. And I'm good friends with the people at Cremona violin shop, it's very much part of the Bristol scene for me. They fix my fiddle. Park Street, that's good for shopping. And Hobgoblin, past Fopp on Park Street, do a lot of work on our instruments... I've enjoyed Bristol and have always had great fun hanging out here.

SETH LAKEMAN PLAYS CARLING ACADEMY BRISTOL ON 29 OCT. NEW ALBUM 'POOR MAN'S HEAVEN' IS OUT NOW, AND SINGLE 'SOLOMON BROWNE' IS AVAILABLE VIA DIGITAL DOWNLOAD. ALL PROFITS WILL GO TO THE RNLI. VISIT WWW.SETHLAKEMAN.CO.UK FFL