

- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Submissions](#)

The Berklee Internet Radio Network: [1 Student Radio](#) [2 Special Events](#) [3 Alumni Programming](#) [4 Famous Alumni Tracks](#) [5 Berklee International](#)



- [Featured Articles](#)
 - [News »](#)
 - [Reviews »](#)
 - [Opinions »](#)
 - [Profiles](#)
 - [Clubs/Organizations »](#)
 - [Extras](#)
 - [Interviews](#)
-

Categorized / [Profiles](#)

Groove Exclusive: Seth Glier Interview

Posted on November 19, 2009.

By Zac Taylor
Managing Editor



Photos by Tom Moore

At 20 years old, Seth Glier has already made quite a name for himself as touring singer-songwriter. After leaving Berklee in 2008, Glier has been all over the country playing everywhere from coffee houses to theatres. After being recently picked up by MPress Records, his label debut *The Trouble with People* has just been beautifully remixed by Grammy-winner Kevin Killen, and he is excited to release it to his Boston fans at Club Passim on November 25.

The traveling minstrel took some time in between stops on his tour to have a telephone interview with BerkleeGroove.com to talk about the ins and outs of his current lifestyle, alma mater, and big bro.

Zac Taylor: Tell me about life on the road over the last few weeks.

Seth Glier: Life on the road has been amazing. We're on a 40-city tour, and it's a green tour. We pretty much left at the end of September. It's been taking us all around the country, from Motel 6 to Motel 6, and the occasional couch. But it's been a blast to play every night and see the rest of the country.

ZT: When you're playing to a different crowd every night, do you really feel like you're in the groove, and that each show is a new adventure?

SG: Well, I'm traveling with a guitar player, so each night I feel there's a growth, but as a duo, I feel it takes about two weeks to get into that groove—when you're not even thinking anymore, you're playing. But then three weeks from there, you have to do everything you can so you don't press the auto-pilot button—so you're playing, but you're also still feeling it. So that's been the greatest challenge for us.



Photo by Tom Moore

ZT: How did you hook up the Clif Bar sponsorship?

SG: It was an idea to do a zero carbon footprint tour. It was more like a challenge. I really didn't know if it was even possible. But I got in touch with my friend Kate Bradley at Outlandos music, and she put me in touch with Clif Bars. Kate used to be the music director at XM The Loft. So I pitched Clif Bars this idea where we'd be traveling around in a Prius, and we would make an effort to create all of our merch out of organic cotton and print everything using soy and vegetable-based ink. And Clif Bar was totally down with the idea, and they gave us 4,000 Clif Bars to hand out to all the fans at all the shows. We've almost gotten rid of all of them, but I still have about 400 in my basement.

ZT: Tell me about getting a real website, having a real publicist, and what it's like taking these first few steps as a professional in the music business. How has that been going over the last year or so?

SG: I think 'professional' can be kind of a dirty word, but I signed to a record contract in June, and from there is when a lot of these things changed. It's really about creating a team around you that share your vision. And I've been lucky to have about nine really great people that I work with every day on all things music.

ZT: Who are the nine team members?

SG: Well, I look at managing less as a relationship as a manager and an artist, and much more as a brainstorm session with a bunch of creative people. So for instance, in planning this green tour, it wasn't just me that was involved. I got opinions from other artists, too. Clif Bars sponsored Martin Sexton's last tour, and he was crucial in helping me plan this green tour out. As far as the nine people, there is a publicist, label manager, someone who does my day-to-day stuff, college radio person, AAA radio person, social networking person at the label that does all things Facebook, Twitter, and Ryan Hommel, who's been my guitar player and kind of right hand man for the last seven years. And there's also the street team, and there's a few people that help me organize the street team's efforts.

ZT: It sounds like you have a tight-knit group now that eases your stress, and you can really concentrate on what you're doing musically better now?

SG: Yes, I would agree with you, but also—someone told me a few months ago, 'Things will never get easier, they will just get different.' And that was really important for me to hear, because when I was booking and managing everything myself, trying to network shows, that was hard. And at this point, where there's already a tour in place and you're performing the shows, it's still hard, it's just different. At times, it's easier when you're doing everything yourself because it takes a lot of energy to communicate with a team of people, however I think the result is much, much greater.

ZT: When you're on the road, how much time do you have to write or work on unfinished material?

SG: To be honest, I don't. I was recently reading this interview with Randy Newman, and he said he will not write while on the road, and inspiration does not strike him. He'll only write when he schedules time for it. He's only writing when he has to make a record, and he sets up a nine-to-five slot like a normal day, and he just writes. And lately, I've had a similar approach. I was just home for four days, and one of those was my writing day. So I typically write when I set time out of my day to it, but at the same time I have difficulty writing about anything if I'm not on the road, if that makes any sense. For me, it's like an input-for-output project. I remember when I was at Berklee, [Songwriter Professor] Henry Gaffney had this assignment, and it was basically to leave your apartment, and go experience something, and then write about it. And for me, that's what touring is about.

ZT: Are you excited about your CD Release show at Club Passim coming up?

SG: Absolutely. I've played Passim a couple times, but this is my first headlining show there. I can't wait—I love that room. Even when I was at Berklee, I would go every Tuesday for the open mic. That was really kind of like my third party learning space when I was a Songwriting major.

ZT: So you would try out new songs at the open mic?

SG: Yeah, I did the open mic a couple times, and I would just go and hear great songs. It's a really amazing place. I wish Berklee was a little more tapped into that community. As great as Berklee is, there's a little bit of an American Idol syndrome. The one thing about Passim is that there may not be a huge stage setup, lights, or background dancers, but it's as real as it gets. There's great songs and great musicianship there.

ZT: Have you been playing a lot of places like that on this tour?

SG: Yeah, on this tour we're playing places like Eddie's Attic in Atlanta, and we actually just got back from playing a couple shows with Edwin McCain. He had that big "I'll Be" hit. He's one of the nicest guys I've ever met. We were supporting a couple dates for him in the Northeast, and we're going to be supporting him again in January.

ZT: Is that something you've been consciously trying to do—find bigger acts that have been around awhile, and open for them and try to build your audience by incorporating theirs?

SG: That's the only thing I've been trying to do. And it's hard, because I'm not on an agency, and I don't have a booking agent. So a lot of that stuff is just reaching out to the venues, and the venues will sometimes approve it, and they'll have to approve it with the artist's management. With Edwin, it first started with a venue wanting to put me on the bill, and when it was approved, Edwin's agent said, 'If you're going to support one show, you might as well just support the run,' which was an incredibly generous move by him. Then the January run with Edwin is based on the relationship we built from the first couple shows.

ZT: What have you learned from Edwin as far as life on the road or life as being a 'professional'?

SG: Well, his life situation on the road is a little different, because we're traveling in a Prius, and he's traveling in a bus. But I think the main thing I learned from him was really hopeful. In the past year, I've opened for a lot of people, but it's not all the time you see someone who still loves what they're doing. And he's twice my age, and he is still just as passionate and energetic as he was when he was 20. He loves performing, and he loves being able to have a relationship with the fans. And for me, that was really refreshing to see.

ZT: Speaking of relationship with fans, have you been following Livingston Taylor's advice with stage

performance, making sure your audience is being taken care of? Having you been ‘watching it land’?

SG: I’m actually opening for him in a couple weeks. He’s one of the smartest guys I know. And I’ve never played a show with him where I haven’t walked away learning some information, and typically it’s something I incorporate into what I do. He’s one of the smartest performers. But when I’m on stage, I try not to analyze my every move. It’s just a difference in approach. When I’m onstage, or in a conversation, I’m going to be myself, and I’m not going to censor or cater to people because it would sell more tickets. I suppose the correct word would be, I’m not going to ‘tailor’ my performance, no pun intended.

ZT: Whoa! Look out! Aside from Livingston’s class, what else from Berklee have you really taken with you with regards to performing or songwriting?

SG: Before I went to Berklee, I was just a dumb singer-songwriter. I wrote songs, and I kind of knew what I wanted to say, but I didn’t know how to communicate what I wanted to say to another musician. So when it came to making my next record, I wanted to arrange a string orchestra, and I didn’t know how to write the sheet music for it. So from a communication standpoint, Berklee really helped me along those lines.

But from another standpoint, what it really taught me was to know who you are, especially in this industry that can easily suck you up and spit you out. But I didn’t want to sing all the pentatonic scales and riffs. I wanted to be a storyteller. That was another reason I left Berklee, but at the same time, when I was there I figured out who I was, and more importantly, who I wasn’t.

ZT: What are some things you felt didn’t have as much value at Berklee, like the American Idol syndrome? What felt superfluous for you?

SG: Two things that happened for me when I couldn’t help but run. The first was in the vocal department, in an *improv* class. We were handed sheet music that had the blues scale on it, and we were to sing the blues scale back and forth—in an improv class. And I understand that there are people who need that, but quite frankly, I just felt like of all places, Berklee might not be the right place to learn that, when I’m paying \$40,000 a year.

The other thing that I kind of ran from was in Songwriting class, we spent two hours analyzing the chord structure to “Blowing in the Wind” by Bob Dylan, and never once did we talk about the lyrics.

ZT: That’s about 40 minutes per chord.

SG: You’re right. Ha, I’ve never broken it down that way. At least what I’ve understood in the short period of time I’ve been in this industry, is that no matter what you’re doing in this business, you’re not selling music. A CD may be what people purchase, but what we’re really selling is a connection, and fans will pay for that connection. I feel like Berklee is a little too close to the trees to see the forest.

ZT: I see what you mean. So you’ve been playing piano and organ for Richard Shindell and Antje Duvekot?

SG: Yeah, we just played the Somerville Theatre. And I played piano on both of their records. They’re two of my favorite songwriters. And I’ll also be at Café 939 opening for Graham Colton in December.

ZT: Tell me about your new record *The Trouble with People*.

SG: Well, I wrote the entire record while I was living in Boston when I was going to Berklee. One of the reasons I write songs has a lot to do with my brother. He’s 24 years old, and he’s nonverbal and autistic. And whenever I’m not touring, I wake him up every morning, get him showered and get him breakfast. And once I learned how to communicate with him, or with anyone, without words, it drastically changed my songwriting

approach. It became more about what words to leave out, than what words I made sure I got in.

I think a lot of that transcended into my Berklee experience, because I felt like music for me never started from the page. It only went to the page if you needed to communicate, but that was only one form of communicating, and it had to come from somewhere else. And for me, that's why I still do it. There's so much mystic in songwriting, and creating songs from nothing. But I think I owe a lot of that to my brother, Jamie.

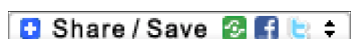
ZT: So he digs the music when you play?

SG: Well for a while, when I was 12 or 13, I didn't really know how to have a relationship with him. I kind of wanted a brother who could play basketball with me, or take me out to the movies, or do normal brother stuff. But that just wasn't the case. So we would just sit on the couch together silently and just listen to music. That was where our relationship really kind of brewed from.

ZT: Well good luck with your CD Release show, and you're doing a great job.

SG: Thanks!

Seth Glier's CD Release Show will take place November 25 at Club Passim in Harvard Square. For more information, visit SethGlier.com.



This post was written by:

[Zac Taylor](#) - who has written 50 posts on berklee groove.com.

[Contact the author](#)

« [Want to Get Sponsored?](#)
[Yes Dom Can](#) »

Leave a Reply

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.



- [Popular](#)
- [Latest](#)
- [Comments](#)
- [Tags](#)
- [Subscribe](#)



- [Berklee's First Fulbright Scholar](#)
- [Singer-Songwriters Swarm Cafe 939](#)
- [Groove Exclusive: St. Vincent Interview](#)
- [Jazz Revelation Records 2009](#)
- [Cold 'Bore' Kids](#)

- **Mon, Nov 30 | 8:00pm @ Harper's Ferry, Cafe 939 @ Berklee**
2 SHOWS!!!!!!
- **Mon, Nov 30 | 8:00pm @ Harper's Ferry**
THE YOUNG REPUBLIC - LIVE at HARPER'S FERRY
- **Tue, Dec 1 | 4:00pm @ Berklee Performance Center**
Ensemble Showcase: Music for Rosa Parks
- **Wed, Dec 2 | 1:00pm @ David Friend Recital Hall - 921 Boylston**
Berklee Metal Ensemble Recital \m/
- **Thu, Dec 3 | 6:00pm @ The Loft**
Culture Matters Film Series: Democracy in Dakar

[Next »](#)

- Seth Glier CD Release at Club Passim tomorrow! BerkleeGroove.com has the deets and an exclusive interview!

- exclusive interview with up and coming singer-songwriter Seth Glier! www.BerkleeGroove.com
- Don Was concert at the BPC tonight!
- Sponsorship Clinic in the Loft today 6-8, check out more at www.BerkleeGroove.com!
- Ice Cats Win! Synth Major Changes Name! Songwriting Department Townhall Meeting Today!
Check it out at www.BerkleeGroove.com



[Berklee College of Music](#)

[Berklee on Twitter](#)

[Berklee on Facebook](#)

[Berklee on YouTube](#)

[Berklee on MySpace](#)

[Berklee on Flickr](#)

© 2009 - All Rights Reserved.

Berklee Groove, The Student Voice of Berklee College of Music.

Design and Development by [cdeVision](#)