



(6.19.17) <http://www.cmt.com/news/1783132/bailey-bryans-solid-advice-for-your-festival-visits/>

## Bailey Bryan's Solid Advice for Your Festival Visits

In 2009, Rascal Flatts made history as the first country music group to play at Wrigley Field. The group, composed of Gary LeVox, Jay DeMarcus and Joe Don Rooney, is now returning to Chicago to help headline Country LakeShake on Northerly Island, Chicago's biggest weekend of country music.

We chatted with DeMarcus, the group's bassist, about Rascal Flatts' 18 years in the music industry and what fans can expect during LakeShake, the weekend of June 23-25.

Your most recent album, "Back to Us," was released on May 19. What did the three of you pull from to appeal to your long-time fans while still reaching new audiences?

We went back and scoped our body of work and tried to pinpoint areas that we felt were our strong suits and hone in on those types of songs that fans fell in love with. We tried to not regress, but push ourselves forward with the production, but also go back to the well that had been so good to us for so long. We went back to some of our foundations that made people fall in love with us in the first place.

You guys have been around for almost 20 years now. How have you seen your fan base change over time?

Well, now we're seeing a multigenerational fan base. Kids come with parents; grandpaThe festival season has arrived, including LakeShake — Chicago's three-day country music festival that kicks off this off Friday (June 23).

The LakeShake schedule is packed with all big stars you want to see: Thomas Rhett, Miranda Lambert, Little Big Town, Rascal Flatts, Randy Houser, Brothers Osborne, Big & Rich and a long list of newcomers worthy of checking out.

And one newcomer, Bailey Bryan, is so thrilled to be part of this Chicago live lakefront experience that she shared some of her most useful fest-loving advice with me. They work for this weekend in Chicago, but they also come in handy for any and all fairs and festivals across the country this summer.

"Music festivals can be the experience of a lifetime, but you've gotta do it right. As an experienced festival-goer, and performer, this is my list of festival essentials," Bryan (no relation to Luke) told me.

1. Stay hydrated: The weekend forecast calls for sun and heat, so Bryan recommends making sure you're drinking plenty of water to prevent dehydration. "It sounds simple, but without it, you will die. I have died before from not drinking enough water at festivals and it's not worth it," she joked. "Just trust me."

2. The right shoes: Something you can potentially stand in for seven or so hours. “This is vital. For me, it doesn’t matter if I’m playing onstage or watching shows as a fan. Festivals tend to be dusty and involve a lot of walking, and nothing ruins listening to your favorite bands like a blister. Or realizing that your favorite pair of expensive white shoes are covered in dirt and scuffs,” she said. “I am team Converse in any situation, but especially this one.” Cowboy boots work well, too, but just don’t wear brand new ones that haven’t been broken in.

3. An open mind: “A huge necessity for any social and musical experience,” Bryan insisted. “Chances are, you’re going to show up knowing what artists you want to see and what favorite festival foods you want to eat. But don’t be afraid to stop at a side stage and listen to a band you’ve never heard of or say yes to the fried pizza tacos.” Festivals are the perfect place to experiment with new experiences.

4. Fanny packs: This is no joke. They may be an outfit killer, but they are the only way to go at a festival, especially if you’re in a sundress or romper with no pockets. “Sooooo many people lose their phones and wallets at festivals. Your best bet is to wear something with pockets that zips, or bring a super secure purse, or go full ’90s dad at a barbecue mode and rock a fanny pack to hold your belongings. You won’t regret it,” she said.

5. Bring friends: The buddy system is one benefit of having a friend or two by your side. But fests are just more fun with the country lovers in your squad. “You can go ahead and lose your phone, wear uncomfortable shoes and even be dehydrated. But if you remember one thing from this list, remember to show up to this festival with all your favorite people. Life is about experiences, so pack your car with people that are going to encourage you to live in the moment, then blast Maren Morris’ ‘Company You Keep,’ and go to LakeShake,” Bryan said.

“Because you, my friend, are finally ready.”

Bryan’s LakeShake set is scheduled for Sunday night. rents come to shows. We’ve always prided ourselves on the fact that we’re a band that the whole family can enjoy together. We write songs that hit different people at different ages where they live.

Chicago isn’t necessarily a “country music” town. What do you think it is about Chicago that makes a festival like LakeShake so successful?

I think because it isn’t exclusively a country music city, Chicago draws so many types of fans that love different types of music. And when you put a bunch of music loving people in one place, it turns into one big, giant party. It doesn’t necessarily feel like all country music, it just feels like a big party for music lovers.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of playing a festival versus a tour?

A festival is a bit different because you don’t get to take everything with you, production-wise. We’re all flying by the seat of our pants because there are so many acts that plug-in, play, unplug ... but they’re among the most fun events to play because you never know what’s going to happen.

It’s a weekend-long event of people tailgating and partying, so they’re revved up for a weekend of fun. And our fans in Chicago have always been some of the best. We’ve been everywhere in Chicago and the fans are always fired up when we get in front of them.

What do you three have in store for fans during LakeShake?

I think it would be a bad thing to just do all new music ... there are certain songs people expect to hear every time: "Life is a Highway," "What Hurts the Most," "God Bless the Broken Road." We want people to hear their favorites, that's what they pay to come hear.

What's your favorite part of playing a festival like LakeShake?

I try to see as many artists as I can. Whoever's taking the stage, I'll wander off my bus and sneak on the side of the stage to watch. I love watching new acts find their footing. It's fun to watch them early on in their careers and get a gut feeling about who's going to be a superstar.

You guys have been doing this for 18 years. How do you keep your passion for your music alive when you've been doing it for so long?

You know, I think it's just the thing of appreciating where we are and feeling blessed for what we've been doing. So many people in this world get up every day and go to their nine-to-five job they hate for 12 months a year for 30 years. I kind of do a self-check and evaluation to realize I'm very blessed and grateful to be where I am.

Where are your go-to spots in Chicago?

D: Portillo's—I have to get my Italian beef sandwich. I always love to sink my teeth into some deep dish, too. But one place I really loved and I really miss dearly was Demon Dogs. I loved that place.