

ON TRACK: Q & A WITH O.A.R.-MEN NEW CRYSTALPHONIC-MADE ALBUM SLATED FOR OCTOBER

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THEIR name might be somewhat unwieldy, but O.A.R. no doubt still maintains that "Of A Revolution" is an appropriate moniker— even if MTV.com has likened their "jangly pop and sing-along melodies" to the Dave Matthews Band.

Yet, thanks perhaps to a liberal in-concert taping policy (hey, that sounds familiar) and four studio albums, the young rockers have been on a steady climb from scrappy regional act to college radio favorite— to today's unlikely pop-culture darlings.

O.A.R. played Charlottesville below the radar in 2002 as a student favorite. Since then, they've managed to grow into a formidable rock force while retaining their indie credibility by releasing a string of albums on their own Everfine Records label.

However, they've recently come under the management umbrella of Charlottesville's own Coran Capshaw and signed to Atlantic Records, which is releasing the upcoming album, *Stories of a Stranger*.

Recorded at Crystalphonic earlier in the summer and produced by Talking Heads guitarist Jerry Harrison, *Stories* is due October 4. The title's appropriate since the band still writes music that germinates thematically in the short stories written by frontman Marc Roberge.

Back in May, the *Hook* shared a few words with guitarist Richard On and bassist Benj Gershman about their surprising growth, their unconventional creative process, and the role that Charlottesville might play in it all.



The Hook: You're here working on a new studio album, but it seems like you've released a whole lot of live albums along the way.

On: When we were making our deal, we wanted to make sure we had that option. For every studio record, we put out a live record.

The Hook: Given that you've had the experience of working, touring, and recording in much larger markets, how has the small town experience been?

On: Live and studio are two totally different worlds, and we're trying to break into the studio side of things. We feel very comfortable on stage, and we're very comfortable with what we do live, but we've never actually felt that same comfort in the studio. The last record we made was kind of awkward.

The Hook: Is there anything Charlottesville evident in this album?

On: I think the fact that it seems pretty laid back, it's relaxing, it doesn't seem like a very fast-paced town.

The Hook: How much of the record was done here?



O.A.R./DANIEL LEVIT

Bassist Benj Gershman, lead guitarist Richard On, singer/guitarist/short-story writer Marc Roberge, saxophonist Jerry DePizzo, and drummer Chris Culos

On: We've done basic rhythm tracks and a little bit of vocals. You kind of want to get the basis of the song before you start adding on different colors, like vocals and sax.

The Hook: Do you think your college appeal is still in place?

On: I hope so. One of the ways we figure out how our appeal is doing is by touring.

Gershman: A lot of our fans travel, so there's no way to tell if they're local.

On: Just from going out and talking to people, it seems like there's an audience here.

The Hook: How long do you think it will be before you're too big for Starr Hill?

On: There are not too many places to play, are there? Starr Hill, and then there was Trax—we played that way back in the day.

Gershman: Are there any other bigger venues?

The Hook: There's a new large venue on the far side of the downtown mall.

Gershman: This seems like a music-oriented town. I couldn't imagine a place like that not doing well.

On: Otherwise, to get a decent large place to play, you have to be hired by the school.

Gershman: And the school, probably, does only a couple of shows each year.

The Hook: How has the creative process changed over the years?

On: I think we're just more confident now.

Gershman: We take it a lot more seriously.

On: A lot of the songs come from these short stories that [vocalist Marc Roberge] has been writing since high school, and there are a lot of characters in the first two stories and recurring themes that just came from his crazy imagination. ■



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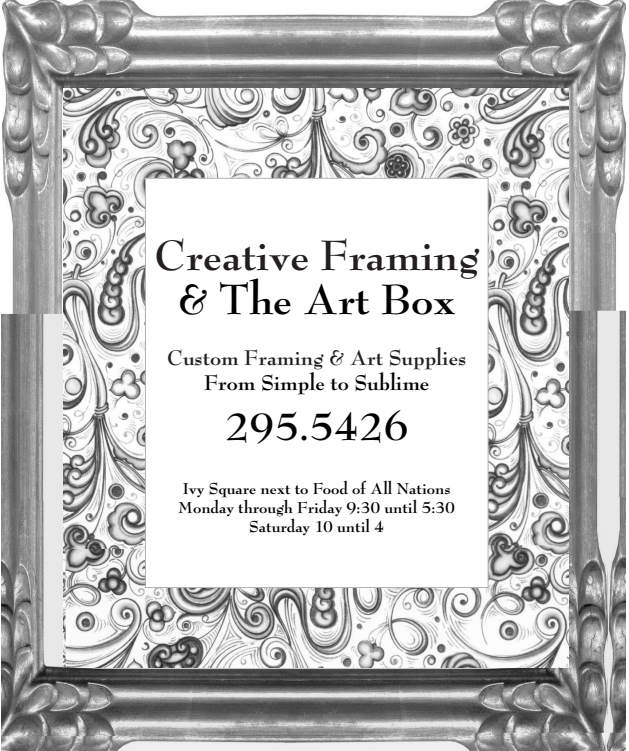
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