The Maine Interview

The day of The Maine's show in Tucson, I met up with Tim, the band's manager who led me onto their tour bus where I met with vocalist, John O'Callaghan and bassist, Garrett Nickelsen. They took the time to answer my questions regarding their current tour, The Lovely Little Lonely World Tour, their newest album, Lovely Little Lonely, and their strangest fan experience.

Danielle Perry: Do you guys notice a big difference in the crowd reaction or size here, being a band from Arizona, compared to other states or even cities in Arizona?

John O'Callaghan: There are so many variables that go into it, you know, the night of the week, time of the year, location of venue, who's on the bill with us, but I think what we find is that it's not necessarily-I think that the enthusiasm for music translates all across the board, whether we're in Arizona or playing to a crowd in Sao Paulo, Brazil or some of the really beautiful places we get to play, and what really varies is size of the crowd but the goal is, what we try to do, is to not let that variable affect our performance. We try to put on the same show every single place that we go to.

Garrett Nickelsen: We're lucky for the most part that people at the show usually look like they're having a good time.

JO'C: Yeah, it's a trip that we've been doing it for 10 years and that people still show up and that's half the battle. Everybody always asks, and I guess realistically there are different crowds all over the world. But, I think music is universal and I think that that anybody that listens to music fervently and has that passion for it shows that whether it's by jumping up and down or by clapping after a song.

DP: I know you guys just released your newest album Lovely Little Lonely, and I wanted to know which came first, the title or the individual songs: “Lovely”, “Little”, “Lonely”?

Both: The title.

GN: We didn’t actually have the idea of naming each song a part of it until the middle of the writing process.

JO'C: The middle of the pre-production.

GN: We knew we wanted to do an interlude-y sort of thing in the album and we felt like that would be a cool way to do it rather than just one song and it would kind of make the whole record tie together and feel a certain way.

JO'C: I think having the title in place and having a sort of general idea of a vision for the sound and for the feeling that we were trying to convey I feel that the title kind of inspired or helped shape those tracks as well as far as ambiance or the kind of use
of instrumentation and different elements but manipulated in a way that was melodic that we felt like helped with the flow of the album from start to finish.

DP: Do you have a favorite album that you’ve made or is the most recent album usually your favorite?

JO’C: That’s usually the case.

GN: Yeah, the stuff that is fresh always feels the best. You know there’s things that have meant a lot, like the album Pioneer, that meant so much, it set us down a path to where we are now but this one is the first album where we actually did what we wanted to do, like we talked about before hand a vibe and a goal that we wanted to do and this was the first time we actually achieved that thing. We wanted the whole record to flow a certain way and connect. It’s definitely my favorite.

JO’C: It’s hard cause you know, you have to put a little distance in-between yourself and the work so having ten years from our first album to now, of course, it holds a sentimental place in our heart just as every other album does but this one is the most fresh and I feel like this one is the most complete album that we’ve ever made. Because like Garrett said, we did have a vague outline of what we were trying to accomplish and I feel like we landed pretty close to what that outline was in our heads so two years from now who knows how we’ll feel and if we’ll be in a position to make another record and have another go and see where that puts us and how we feel then.

GN: Well I feel like it’s a mile marker for us that we now know this is something we can do, like because of the things we experimented with a lot on the album. Like there’s a sound that goes the whole album and there’s things like that we’ve talked about for years and years and years and to finally do it and people finally seeing it –

JO’C: And react positively.

GN: Yeah, and even like friends of ours who don’t really react to any of our albums and getting texts like “this is awesome” so like it’s cool, it feels nice. Now we know we can even go farther next time.

DP: So do you get a lot of support from friends and family? Or do they know you make music and are like “oh that’s cool” (as if it’s not a big deal)?

JO’C: No, friends and family are very supportive. And I think that’s a huge part of why we’re still a band together and I think that the leash that is present as far as your ego and yourself is very short for us because our friends would snuff it like that *snaps*. Which is great and I think that the way that we’ve maintained a close relationship is by doing that to each other as well holding each other accountable. I think that even beyond the five of us in the band and our sixth member, Tim, our manager, I think
that we and our family and at least our immediate friends share the same enthusiasm for what we’re doing and even the crew guys I feel like they feel like they’re a part of it because they totally are. They feel like they’re just as invested in what we’re doing as we are. When you have something like that it’s hard to take it for granted. We’re just very fortunate that we have such a close knit relationship.

GN: And everyone’s fighting the same fight. It’s not always the easiest to be out doing this for how long we do it so just to have people around that are positive and love being around each other, it helps.

DP: Yeah that would be really rough if someone wasn’t supportive.

GN: You’d be surprised at how many people that happens to. It’s a bummer.

DP: Have you ever made a song and shown it to someone close to you and they were not super into it?

JO’C: I’m usually, personally, very reserved when it comes to showing people things. I think this is therapeutic for me and cathartic for me and that’s why I chose to continue to do it. It helps me, in some way, say the things that maybe I wouldn’t get to tell. It helps me at least frame things differently and kind of pose questions to myself so I get really, not that I’m embarrassed about anything, I’m just very introverted when it comes to “look at me look at me” which is kind of an interesting juxtaposition because I’m the frontman of the band but, I’m really proud of what we do I just don’t really want to go around and like you know, “bring your roller blades to class” kind of thing. Show ‘em off.

DP: What is your favorite part of doing live shows? Or maybe all of it is your favorite?

GN: Well, you connect in a way that is very bizarre, not a lot of people get to do, because there’s these things that you created and people are reacting to it because they know it, like you’re feeding off that energy, is really crazy. Like singing things that you’re a part of making, reacting to music that you helped create and people feel like, so excited about it. You can’t really express what that feels like, like you just start laughing sometimes.

JO’C: It’s like out of body and you think more so it makes you almost feel like a different person, at least for me. You know there’s a level of theatrics that I’ve kind of imbued into our set and I kind of put on a little bit of a personality but most of the time I try to stay as close to whatever I think I am.

GN: You’re just the most extreme version of yourself.

JO’C: And that’s the weird part and that’s the coolest part to experience, is being able to take it to that extreme and people react well to it.
DP: You just tone yourself up a bit.

JO'C: Yeah it’s like steroids.

**DP: Do you have anything that has been your most memorable memory on this tour?**

JO'C: It has been great in general and just having that steam of the album release at the front end of the tour. I think again, steroids, really kind of elevates the whole experience or at least the whole vibe. But Anaheim, that was the biggest show that we’ve played in Anaheim, ever. Headlining, and that was I don’t know. There’s personal goals that we set out and we were saying things before this tour like if we could just bring a couple hundred more people, or even a hundred more people, or even fifty more people, or even ten more people than the last time we visited that city then we know we’re doing something okay, we’re doing something in the right direction. And that’s happened thus far.

GN: Every show has been bigger than what we’ve done before.

JO'C: People are reacting.

**DP: What was your favorite aspect of creating Lovely, Little, Lonely?**

JO'C: The environment we recorded it in. We were right on a cliff in Northern California just off the beach, literally backyard was the water.

GN: We would sleep in what was the living room and it was also the room that we made everything in and I slept on the couch and he (John) slept on a blow up mattress and you’d wake up and you’d look out at the ocean.

JO'C: You could hear the waves and it was surreal. Recording to our computer, the horizon in the distance was all water so it was pretty unreal. Close to almost beating Arizona sunsets.

**DP: Have the reactions to Lovely Little Lonely been what you’ve wanted or expected?**

JO'C: I don’t know what we wanted and you never really know what you want. You just don’t want boos and thumbs down and we’re not receiving that. I don’t know what utopia is, I don’t know what ideal is, because even if we were selling out Madison Square Garden I’m sure we’d want more. And I think that that’s the drive you have to have especially ten years in because this thing could get monotonous easy so we’re just fortunate there’s even a reaction in the first place, it means people are listening and it’s a very humbling thing to have happened at this point.

GN: It’s cool to see a lot of people like “I haven’t listened to them in like three or four albums or something and my friend told me to check it out and I love it” that stuffs super awesome and then the people that have been around the whole time reacting in positive ways, that’s the best.
DP: Was there a specific message you were trying to convey in Lovely Little Lonely?

JO’C: I think that there are a lot of things I’d like people to take away from the album but most of them to just deduce for themselves and to attach their own meaning because obviously I’m not living anybody else’s life so I’d like for them to live their own and associate the way they see fit. But I guess maybe just the idea that there is comfort in solitude and that there can be a lot to learn from being alone.

DP: What is your strangest fan experience you’ve ever had?

JO’C: That’s hard to say, there have been many weird things. I’ll never forget, we for whatever reason, the people in South America, specifically Brazil like us a bunch, first time we got off the plane, the very first time we touched down, in Brazil there were probably a few hundred people at the airport, at the terminal, at the gate that we were arriving at and it was unlike anything I’ve ever experienced.

GN: it’s the closest we’ll feel like what The Beatles felt like

JO’C: And that pales so, so small.

GN: It was like this thing of you’re excited but you’re also kind of scared. And it was like what is happening?!

JO’C: They rushed us into a van and we’re in a foreign country and people are holding up signs and yelling at us in Portuguese and screaming and crying.

GN: And hitting the van and getting in taxis to follow you to the hotel.

JO’C: The strangest but the neatest experience.

Catch The Maine on the rest of their tour dates for The Lovely Little Lonely World Tour and Lovely Little Lonely is available as of April 7th. Photo courtesy of 8123 Records.