

Local Musicians Make It Big

By PATRICK L. FANELLI

The six local members of the band LAREAU are pretty excited. And with the national release of their new album *Changes*, they have a pretty good reason to be.

"We weren't necessarily expecting to land a national gig," said Jamestown resident and LAREAU drummer Darrin Payne, who also serves as the band's music director. "So we're really excited."

July 3rd 2007 marks the release of the band's first album with Warrior Records/UMGD an imprint label with Universal Music Group, giving the band more international exposure.

"We're going for the whole shebang," said Warren resident and lead singer Larry Lareau, from whom the band derives its name.

LAREAU can best be classified under the "adult album alternative" or "adult contemporary" genres, like the Dave Matthews Band, the Barenaked Ladies and Ben Folds Five. It really can't really be considered a local act according to Lareau, over the last three years the band performed only once in the area.

But the band members themselves, who range in age from 27 to 35, are all local. Payne, guitarist Chris Saxton and bass player Roger Christopherson hail from the Jamestown area; Lareau and keyboardist Anthony Brown hail from Warren; and guitarist Pete Gool hails from Erie.

In fact, Payne's parents own Framemasters on the corner of Cherry and West Third streets, where he used to work. "We'd rehearse in Jamestown, we'd record in Warren," Payne said. And sometimes, he added, they'd hit up the Cherry Lounge after rehearsal.

According to Lareau, the band really skipped the local scene, touring regionally up and down the East Coast. "You can beat each other up locally, or you can compete against the world," he said.

That philosophy isn't just the secret of their success. It's also Lareau's advice to local musicians aspiring to make it: think bigger. "There is a lot of talent in our area," Lareau said. "They're just not hooking up with the right people. You need those professional connections."

Lareau specifically touted AllSound Group, a professional studio in Warren where the band does most of their recording.

"The fact that we have a studio in Warren is phenomenal," he said. "Not too many people take advantage of that. Who has the chance to do world-class work in this small town?"

According to Lareau, who's been writing songs since he was 10 years old, the band's beginnings can be traced back to his self-titled solo act.

With the help of friend Dave Hone, founder of AllSound Recording, he cut his first album *Reasons Why* in 2001 and took it with him on a trip to Germany, scoring some stage time. But when he came back, he realized he needed the support of a band.

"There's a certain synergy you get from being involved with more than one person," he said.

Payne's own band Brandy Lies, which played for a number of years around Jamestown, was breaking up around the same time, Payne said. So him and Saxton, former Brandy Lies guitarist, joined up with Lareau. They brought in Reed, Brown and Gool to form LAREAU as it stands today.

"We all met by chance, everyone freeing up at once," Payne said. According to Payne, their big break came while returning from a mini-tour in Florida and playing a show in Grove City, Ohio. It was there that they met Jim Quinn president of Sunburst Entertainment, a veteran in the business, and now Lareau's personal manager. "He liked our music and really wanted to shop us around," Payne said. Their music was sent to Jim Ervin president of Warrior records, who signed them to the label in January, 2007.

"We're on the same label as Eddie Money and Warrior Records really knows the AC Market, so they were really psyched to take on the band," Payne said.

According to Lareau, much of their music comes from his early songs, which Payne arranged and redesigned for the six-piece band. "That's what I like about our music," Lareau said. "It still has that new kind of sound, but it's not so far out there than it's not accessible to radio."