

# R5

Words by **STACY MAGALLON** & Photos by **CATHERINE POWELL**







R5 FEEL REALLY GOOD ABOUT THEIR LIVES RIGHT NOW. WHEN I met them back in December, the members of five piece pop-rock band — dressed in coordinated black and white ensembles for their show at Highline Ballroom in New York City — were anticipating the release of their EP, *Loud* (2013). Since then, they've released a full-length album, and they're only getting started.

I meet up with the band at Bryant Park in New York City on the morning after their *Good Morning America* television performance. The band — Lynch siblings (Riker, Rocky, Ross and Rydel) and their long time friend, drummer Ellington Ratliff — welcome me with “How've you been?” and “Long time no see!” This time around, they're not dressed to match, but they follow a pattern of ripped jeans, comfortable T-shirts and combat boots or running shoes. We gather around two small tables with black folding chairs, still damp from the on-and-off rain. Lead guitarist Rocky takes a napkin and helps me wipe off some of the water off the chairs.

After playing to a crowd of roughly 17,000 people in Toronto a few days ago and performing on *Good Morning America*, the quintet has no complaints about their career. While Ross and Rocky argue over the size of their Canadian crowd, Ratliff gets a word in. “The last few days have been pretty epic,” he says.

Their eyes widen when I tell them I pre-ordered the deluxe edition of their new record. Their new album, *Louder* (2013),

is an extension of their four-song EP. Under the guidance of producers Emanuel “Eman” Kiriakou, Evan Bogart and Andrew Goldstein, the band worked to create the most versatile album possible.

It took much longer to record *Louder* than it did to record *Loud*. The band wrote most of the new material while promoting the EP on tour. They spent many nights recording and brainstorming on the back lounge of their tour bus, which cut down studio time to three weeks.

“Being with the same group of producers for three weeks straight was really fun,” Ratliff says. By the end of the third week, friendly pranks began. “Whenever someone left their computer open to go to the bathroom, one of the producers would take their laptop and send bizarre emails to the head of our record label,” keyboardist Rydel recalls. Her band mates laugh hysterically. In one instance, Rydel was the jokester sending out those emails. Fingers were immediately pointed at her brothers and Ratliff, while no one suspected her. She still takes pride in her prank. “Those emails said really bad things or were extremely inappropriate,” Ratliff says, smiling.

Over the past few months, R5 have traveled to London, Paris and Sydney. A cameraman filmed their overseas adventures for their behind the scenes collection of videos titled “R5 on R5,” which they made for their Vevo channel. There was a major language barrier in France, but that didn't stop the band from



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getting through to their international fan base. “We learned enough to get around,” Rydel says. “But we still can’t complete a full sentence of French.” Ross interjects with, “I said, ‘Je t’aime’ a lot,” before he tilts down the frames of his sunglasses and winks at me.

R5 tried to see as much of each new city as much possible, but jet lag got in the way sometimes. “If we didn’t have a camera guy with us, I’d probably be sleeping,” Rydel says. R5 are expanding their international travel soon — they’re set to visit Japan in November, hopefully South America during the holiday season and they’ve got their fingers crossed for a world tour next summer. Rocky is personally determined to play songs off *Louder* at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre in their home state of Colorado in 2014.

R5 are hopeful for radio play with their album’s recent release, but they are open to other paths as well. “I don’t want to stop at Top 40 radio,” Ross says. “I hope our album goes wherever it wants to go.”

“Is it raining again?” Rocky asks as he looks up into the light gray sky. Riker and Ross mimic their brother, squinting their eyes and staring upward. “No, dude,” Riker says. “I think the leaves above us are just wet.” It is indeed beginning to drizzle again, but I decide to let the two bicker it out in a brotherly fashion. It’s R5’s overall quirky, familial charm that makes their fans go crazy for them. “Why would you want boring

fans?” Rocky asks. Their fan base, commonly referred to as the R5Family, are anything but boring. Fans from the Tri-state area began lining up for their *Good Morning America* performance at 9 p.m. the night before, but it doesn’t stop there — fans spread their love for the band via social networking, specifically Twitter. “The crazier, the better,” Ross says.

R5 want to be known as a serious pop-rock group because they are constantly fighting a stereotype. Ross has a lead role on Disney Channel’s *Austin & Ally* and Riker has a recurring role on Fox’s *Glee*. “People don’t know what to expect, which leads them to make assumptions about us,” Rydel says. *Austin & Ally* premiered in 2011 and Riker has been a Dalton Academy Warbler on *Glee* since 2010. R5, however, have been rocking out since 2009. “Our management in the U.K. knew of our Disney affiliation and certain assumptions were made,” Riker says. “But after we got off stage, they told us we were unbelievable.”

The last time I spoke with R5, they discussed their persistent work ethic and how bettering themselves as a group for “next time” is crucial for success. They still stand by that principal almost a year later. “I feel like we raised the bar from our EP to our album,” Rocky says. His band mates agree. For now, they’re determined to write even better material, and somehow incorporate pyrotechnics and background dancers into their live shows. R5 agree that pushing that bar will extremely hard, but it won’t be impossible.







***IF YOU COULD PLAY THE LEAD  
ROLE IN ANY MOVIE, WHAT MOVIE  
WOULD IT BE?***

**RYDEL:** *Tangled*

**ROSS:** *That Thing You Do!*

**ROCKY:** *The Lord of the Rings*

**RATLIFF:** *North by Northwest*

**RIKER:** *Casino Royale*

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