

Bringing back SUNDAY

Tell all your friends — former members of Rockville Centre rockers **TAKING BACK SUNDAY** are reuniting, and it feels so good

BY GLENN GAMBOA
glenn.gamboa@newsday.com

No one thought it would work — not even Taking Back Sunday drummer Mark O'Connell, who came up with the idea of reuniting the "Tell All Your Friends"-era version of the Rockville Centre-based band.

After all, guitarist-singer John Nolan and bassist Shaun Cooper angrily left the band over personal issues in 2003 to form Straylight Run and hadn't been in the same room with Taking Back Sunday's singer Adam Lazzara and guitarist Eddie Reyes since then.

But last week, somehow, it happened, with the band announcing that they had reformed and were working on a new album.

"I always wanted Shaun and John back in the band," O'Connell says. "For a long time, they weren't ready for it, and the guys weren't ready for it, either. But I always hoped it would happen. Shaun's my best friend, and John and I would hang out when he was around, too. It's not because I didn't like the other guys. But after Shaun and John left, it was hard without my buddies there, without my writing partners."

Making a reunion possible

After Straylight Run went on hiatus in January, the idea to bring Nolan and Cooper back into Taking Back Sunday suddenly seemed possible. "Mark called and presented the idea, and we started the conversation," Nolan says. "I was open to the possibility of it, but I really

wanted to talk to the other guys because that's what was going to make it happen for me."

It was a big decision. Though Taking Back Sunday's "Tell All Your Friends" is regarded by many as the band's definitive album, the one that got the Long Island music scene national attention and inspired dozens of new bands, the group found greater commercial success with the three albums that have followed, all of which have hit the Top 10, including 2004's "Where You Want to Be" hitting No. 3 and 2006's "Louder Now" hitting No. 2. Those albums, as well as the Top 10 modern rock hits "MakeDamnSure" and "Sink Into Me," all came after Nolan and Cooper left.

Nevertheless, there was clearly something special about that lineup, about how

all of them, except North Carolina native Lazzara, had grown up on Long Island and in its scene, and how they had all spent so much time together as friends before recording "Tell All Your Friends."

Lazzara says he just thought that era had passed, asking O'Connell, "How would that even happen? I haven't talked to John in years." But Lazzara says that once he and Nolan started talking on the telephone in January, things started happening quickly. "It felt like no time had passed between us," Lazzara says. "I genuinely missed having him in my life. To be talking again, that was an awesome thing. We started basically by just catching each other up."

Lazzara says the calls grew longer and more frequent. "It

got to the point where I'd be sitting on the porch talking with John for hours, and [my wife] Misha would come out and say, 'Hello, I'm still here,'" Lazzara says, laughing.

Then, Lazzara and Nolan started sending song ideas back and forth. "We went into it very realistically, thinking, 'This probably won't work, but at least we were back in each other's lives,'" Lazzara says. But the collaboration went well enough that they decided to all get in the same room last month.

"It was like, 'Let's get together and see,'" Lazzara says. "The first time we were all standing in the room together, we were all giggling. 'Can you even believe this?' Then, all these songs just happened. We wrote all these songs in seven days, and two of those days we just sat around. That's kind of when we knew. It was all in the spirit of why we wanted to join a band in the first place. . . . It was fun. Who knew creating music with people could be fun?"

Two had to go

The strain that had been growing in Taking Back Sunday had lifted and Lazzara, O'Connell and Reyes decided they wanted to try to reunite with Nolan and Cooper. That meant bassist Matt Rubano, who replaced Cooper in 2003, and guitarist-singer Matt Fazzi, who joined the band in 2008, had to go.

"The decision to do that wasn't a quick one, and it wasn't an easy one," Lazzara says. "I was torn about it from the second that I realized what we're doing now was a possibility. But I still want to keep playing in Taking Back Sunday, and I know I can't keep going on like this. I thought, 'What's going to make



Good "Friends" in 2002 and

me the happiest?"

Rubano says he was hurt by the decision, which he learned of late last month. "Life is an unpredictable journey, and this is the beginning of a new path," he says. "I don't bear anyone any ill will. But everything we did, I thought was a success. I never lost sight of the fact that they asked me to come join this thing, and they gave me the chance to be embraced by all these strangers. I loved every moment with the fans, and I owe them everything. I look forward to getting back on a stage and seeing them soon."

The new/old lineup of Taking Back Sunday is looking forward to getting back on-stage as well. Their current plan is to continue work on their new album and a short

music on tv



WHO Train
WHEN | WHERE "Regis & Kelly" (Monday, 9 a.m., ABC/7)
WHY The "Hey, Soul Sister" guys have teamed up with rock CAN roll (rockcanroll.org) to help collect nutritious, nonperishable food donations on tour.

WHO Justin Nozuka
WHEN | WHERE "Letterman" (Tuesday, 11:35 p.m., CBS/2)
WHY He's still a youngster, but his new album, "You I Wind Land & Sea," is cool in a world-weary kind of way.

WHO Devo
WHEN | WHERE "Kimmel" (Tuesday night, 12:05 a.m., ABC/7)
WHY New album coming out in June, but you can help the band figure out which tracks make it. Visit songstudy.club or devo.com for more info.

— KEVIN AMORIM