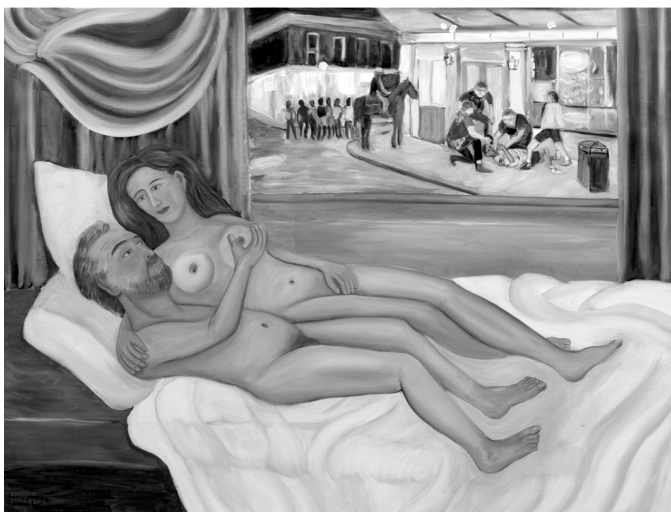


# OH (ohio) by lambchop



**MRG 335**

**Release Date: October 7, 2008**

**Matt Hanks**

Shorefire Media  
718.522.7171 ext 42  
mhanks@shorefire.com

**Christina Rentz**

Merge Records  
919.688.9969 ext 120  
christina@mergerecords.com

1. Ohio
2. Slipped Dissolved and Loosed
3. I'm Thinking of a Number
4. National Talk Like a Pirate Day
5. A Hold of You
6. Sharing A Gibson With Martin Luther King Jr.
7. Of Raymond McGinley
8. Please Rise
9. Popeye
10. Close Up and Personal
11. I Believe

**MERGE**  
RECORDS

Few bands succeed in making it this far into their career, and rarely on their own terms. **Lambchop** continue to pursue their own path and release challenging, mold-breaking records. **Lambchop** are part of Nashville's alternative establishment, an inspiration for the growing independent scene that flourishes alongside the prevalent country music tradition. The unique sound that they have refined over the years is now one that artists from around the world travel to the city to replicate with sometime member and producer Mark Nevers: Will Oldham aka Bonnie Prince Billy, Tindersticks, Andrew Bird, Howe Gelb and even Candi Staton have recorded at the Beech House, Nevers' studio-cum-bungalow. Kurt Wagner too has collaborated with a host of successful artists from Josh Rouse (whose profile as a young songwriter was considerably raised by *Chester*, the mini album they recorded together) to downtempo mainstays Morcheeba and dance floor masters X-Press 2. Hell, the term "Lambchop-esque" is now thrown around freely and gleefully by critics to define a particular musical or vocal style, most recently at My Morning Jacket whose *Evil Urges* at times sounds not unlike some of **Lambchop's** breakthrough album *Nixon*.

With **OH (ohio)**, **Lambchop** continue to reveal unique charms and nuances with their customary modesty. Change is a subtle thing in **Lambchop's** world; Wagner is simply a great believer in the natural pace of life. Each successive record they've released has represented a new stage in the evolution of their distinctive sound. It's a natural process which has seen them progress from their shambolic early recordings on *Jack's Tulips* / *I Hope You're Sitting Down* to the off-kilter pop experimentalism of *What Another Man Spills* on to the joyful soul of *Nixon* and then, pointedly, its polar opposite, the piano-led minimalism of *Is a Woman*. Most recently, *Damaged* saw Wagner leave the porch from which he had viewed the world for so long and start looking inside himself, his dark meditations on mortality and human frailty matched by a band capable of taking delicacy to delicious new heights.

Every record has been a step forward, and yet **Lambchop** remain somehow a constant entity, refining their trade, their continued survival in an increasingly turbulent music business a cause for celebration. **OH (ohio)** continues this expansion of their horizons: its highlights include the slow-motion soul folk of "Slipped Dissolved and Loose," the shuffling shimmer of the brilliantly titled "National Talk Like a Pirate Day," the somber majesty of "Please Rise" and the intimate sentiment of "Close Up." Melodically stronger than ever—the gentle hook of "A Hold of You," the wordplay of "Please Rise" matched by a heartbreaking simplicity—it also sees their trademark leisurely pace imbued with a notion of beat and movement driven by recent recruit Scott Martin's drumming, most notably on the surprising, almost funky coda of "Popeye."

**Lambchop** have always evolved, adapted and tested themselves. **OH (ohio)** follows this pattern in typically oblique but deeply satisfying ways. For starters, it features a new producer, Roger Moutenot (Yo La Tengo, Sleater-Kinney, Freedy Johnston), who splits duties with Mark Nevers. "This is the first record where I've written and picked the songs and chosen the producers to make it, then stepped away," Wagner notes, often employing them to work on different versions of the same songs and then picking the most successful.

He also acknowledges that the fundamental nature of the band itself has altered. “The last five years have been about a distillation of the collective into a core band: Tony Crow (piano), William Tyler (guitar), Matt Swanson (bass), Alex McManus (guitar) and now Ryan Norris (keyboards, guitar) and Scott Martin (drums). This is their sound, and it’s **Lambchop**’s sound. But,” he continues, “**Lambchop** more and more has become a vehicle for my songs and myself as an artist. I’ve fought against that interpretation for twenty years, but now I’ve just given up trying to fight it anymore. I am simply going to accept that this is how it’s evolved and leave it to others to define.”

Wagner’s lack of interest in being “the frontman” was one of the appeals that the collective mentality the band championed for so long held for him. Recent releases have seen him shy away from the spotlight by showcasing other members of the band, most notably Tony Crow on *Is a Woman* and William Tyler on *Damaged*. **OH (ohio)** again sees a subtle shift in the way they operate. “Marky would say that I was the ‘featured player’ on **(ohio)**,” Wagner concedes, “and he would say it’s about time, too. I don’t know if he’s right on that or not, though. I would tell him that it was a band record. He would just say I was full of shit.”

Moutenot concurs that Wagner represents the central figure of this line-up. “My intentions were to cut a live record,” he explains. “No Pro Tools, no moving things around, no headphones: they sat in the same room and played together. I wanted to document Kurt’s song and that band’s ability to embellish the music.”

The result is a record on which both Wagner and **Lambchop** as a whole have perhaps never sounded so comfortable in their own skin. Although **OH (ohio)** seemingly presents a more relaxed **Lambchop**, it also includes a number of upbeat tracks that see the band at their most joyous and soulful since *Nixon*. Most of all, there’s a newfound confidence that reflects Wagner’s recognition of how the band has developed and altered his own place within it, as well as confirming his success in reconciling that with how **Lambchop** originally began.

They remain as enigmatic as ever, of course, even more so this time thanks to Wagner’s refusal to reveal the album’s lyrics. “Suffice to say,” he insists, “that from time to time I use ‘found’ content, something I’ve done on and off for years. Too many records have lyrics proudly displayed in booklets, and that detracts from the idea of thinking about a song and how it works as a whole. I use language in a reckless, abstracted splatter of phrase and meaning that somehow comes together through association with the music. Presenting words without music strays into the territory of poetry or something other than its intended use. With the advent of the ‘free burning music’ thing, people who get their music this way don’t have any of that stuff and don’t care, either. They just like the song and don’t have to have a sheet of words to get it. Hell, my stuff doesn’t make sense even if you have the words. That’s part of the point, I guess.”

It’s a different world that **Lambchop** inhabit from the one into which they first emerged, but they are now a vital part of its landscape. Unyielding to the vagaries of fashion, working entirely on their own terms and responding purely to their artistic muse, they have earned the considerable respect they now command. **Lambchop** continue to stand proud, a subtly altered but solid landmark in Nashville’s ever-changing scenery. Long may they remain so.