

Bathrooms, Boredom, Bereavement and now Bliss: The Musical Journey of the Lamb Siblings

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A six-year-old girl by the name of Jessica Lamb reluctantly sits through a piano lesson in southwestern Ohio, dirty blonde hair pulled out of her face so she can see the keys, green eyes roaming the room for something, anything, more interesting than the foreign music book that sits in front of her.

The lesson creeps on, a menacing metronome mockingly keeping time to Jess' torturous hour on that guillotine-of-a-piano bench. Tick tock tick tock tick tock tick tock ...

Fast-forward eighteen years and Jess is still sitting on a piano bench, but she now resides there by choice, not because mother is forcing her.

No longer is Jess accompanied by a derisive metronome and overbearing piano instructor, but instead by her band mates — bassist Kasey Williams, drummer Corey Carter, and guitarist/younger brother Kenny Lamb — the three musicians that, along with Jessica, form Ohio's next greatest gift to music, Jess Lamb.

From the Piano Lesson to the Bathroom

Though Jess never took to the rigid piano lessons, she did take to the piano. Her innate talent was evident every time her fingertips took to the keys, accompanied by her soulful vocals. Like his sister, Kenny had a natural knack for music, his instrument of choice being the guitar.

Kathy and Gene, the Lamb siblings' parents, recognized their children's inclination at a young age, recalling that it all started with their participation in worship music services.

"They would watch and listen to music in church, then gradually began participating as they picked things up on their own," says Gene. "I taught Kenny the basic guitar chords when he was about 7. After that, he taught himself everything."

It's hard to believe these two are almost entirely self-taught. Hearing them play today, one would never believe these two learned by doing. Jess's hypnotic vocals channel gospel stylings similar to Mahalia Jackson, (considered by some the first Queen of Gospel and one of Jess' greatest inspirations), her fingers flying seamlessly across the keys of her piano, and Kenny's guitar playing seems influenced by the spirit of Stevie Ray Vaughan himself (an American guitar legend whose riffs have influenced Kenny since his first chord).

So, what to do with a talent unparalleled only by their passion?

Nurture it, of course.

"Some kids play soccer or baseball or what not. My kids just always sat around playing music," says Kathy. "It was also something they were made to do, and we really encouraged them to do that. Music is just a natural part of their life — it's a huge part of who they are and their identity."

Wanting to further his son's said musical identity, Gene bought Kenny an 8-track recorder when he was thirteen (Jess was fifteen), and it was immediately put to good use. Kenny and Jess

recorded their first song on that little 8-track, locked in the bathroom and surrounded by half-empty shampoo bottles and dirty towels.

Ah, the glamorous life of a star.

Not to say it was always sunshine and good times in the bathroom. Like every person that is not secretly a carebear, Jess and Kenny encountered their fair share of struggles growing up. It was their music, and each other, that got them through.

“The heartbeat of our work is that we originally started doing our own music to get through what we were going through, what was going on in our home life and in relationships,” says Jess. “We were so close to each other and we had the music, and that really pulled us through. We pulled each other through.”

The strong tie between Kenny and Jess formed a solid foundation for their blossoming music career, which soon outgrew the 8-track recorder.

Their first band, Elijah’s fountain, won a talent contest at 93.7 WFCJ, a Christian radio station in Dayton, Ohio. They completed a full-length, original album and had it mastered and reproduced at Queen City Albums, which was then sold at church shows they did in the area. These instances and others opened their eyes to what they really could do with their music.

“The realization that we could actually become something and that others thought we could become something, too, was when music went from being something we enjoyed to something we enjoyed and could make a career out of,” says Kenny. “When we were given the chance to expand ourselves, we did. It’s what we’ve been aiming for and working toward.”

One such chance was a showcase put on by INO Records, a Christian music label based out of Nashville, Tenn. Elijah’s fountain had disbanded, leaving Jess and Kenny a two-man sibling act ready to wow audiences the world over. But instead of wow-ing the INO crowd, the young musicians learned a tough lesson about the music industry — namely that sometimes the industry part comes before the music.

“It exposed us to ‘the business,’” Jess says. “By the time the showcase was over, we realized that we wanted to own our music, that we could be powerful enough to make decisions about whether we should develop this way or that way and that we knew best. Ever since then, we’ve been developing in a different direction.”

That different direction led the two entrepreneurs straight to the recording studio.

### From the Bathroom to the Studio

The first day in the studio is an exciting milestone for any musical artist, especially two kids from rural Ohio whose only recording experience included soap dishes and rubber duckies. But what these two Ohio kids didn’t know on day 1 was that day 1 was to be followed by day 2 through almost day 550.

Before beginning recording, the Lambs needed a full band. Kenny and Jess found bassist Trenton Manning, who introduced them to drummer Corey Carter, and the quartet reported to Rick Brantley Studios in Forest Park, Ohio, to record a five-track EP (extended play — not enough tracks to be an album, but more than enough tracks to be considered a demo). That was over a year and a half ago in January 2009.

“We’ve really been waiting for this end product to be what we studied and cried about and what we wanted it to be,” says Jess of their long stint in the studio.

A primary reason for their extended stay in a soundproof room was the unexpected passing of Trenton not a month into the recording process. The tragedy struck the band hard, especially Corey, who described Trenton as his musical soulmate. “I didn’t think I was ever going to play with them again,” says Corey, “But Jess and Kenny told me that we were going to continue working together, that that’s what Trenton would have wanted.”

Persevering in the face of adversity, the Lambs began “writing like crazy,” as Jess puts it, inspired by Trenton’s talent and love of music, and it wasn’t long before that five-track EP became a twelve-track album. The influx of new material brought about an influx in hours, days, weeks spent recording, not to mention they still didn’t have a bass player.

“We tried to find a new bassist to replace Trenton for pretty much the whole process of recording the album,” says Kenny. “Until then, we were just finding whoever we could. It was a different person every gig, it felt like.”

It was while playing bassist roulette that Kenny took a job travelling across the United States and Canada, reducing his time in Ohio from 30 days a month to 0. Jess, already frustrated with making a permanent address of the studio, felt the band sink even lower.

“When Kenny took that job, I felt like things weren’t going to be held together, like maybe he didn’t want to do it anymore,” Jess recalls. “We’ve always had this connection since we were little; we’ve always said we wouldn’t do this without the other. I thought his taking the job changed that.”

But quitting was the last thing on Kenny’s mind.

“To me, it wasn’t like I was choosing the job over the music. I was making good money so that we could have some capital to do what we really love, which is music,” Kenny says.

After what seemed like decades to Jess (it was ten months), Kenny returned to Ohio for good, and the recording process was no. 1 on his agenda — after finding a new bassist, that is.

And it didn’t take long.

In January 2010, the band was introduced to Kasey Williams, a co-worker of Corey’s at Moeller Music. Kenny, Jess, and Corey finally found what had been lacking in the other bassists they had worked with, and Kasey, too, found what he had been looking for.

“I’ve been in a few bands, but this one is so unique in that the people actually like each other. They’re all there for the music and because they care about each other,” Kasey says, excited to be working with Jess, Kenny, and Corey — the feeling is mutual.

“We’ve loved and appreciated all our musicians that we’ve worked with,” explains Jess. “But there was never really a good fit as far as someone who was on the same page, who could get up and go and leave everything to do the music. To them, music was more of a really passionate hobby as opposed to a career, which was how we saw it.”

Kenny agrees, and feels that Kasey completes their sound. “I don’t know if we’ve ever done better as a band — we do better every day. The crappy things that happen, like things that made the recording process so long, those are just stepping stones to where we are now.”

From the Studio to ... ?

Where they are now is in post-production of recording, polishing and mastering their tracks to be featured on their album (full-length album release date TBA), and the band is anxious to get their music out to a wider audience.

“I’m looking forward to having the album done, but I’m more looking forward to getting on the road and playing for people,” says Corey. “There’s nothing like a live show to get your music out there.”

Jess is also adamant in getting their music out to as many people as possible. “I want to reach people. I want my music to touch someone, somewhere, who has gone through the same things we’ve gone through and can relate to our music. I love that our music can be a voice for people that are at a low point or are going through hard times, because we’ve been there.”

It isn’t just lyrical content that makes the music easy on the ears. The band’s enjoyable genre is a combination of everything from classic rock to bluegrass, and can’t easily be defined. Most listeners can easily identify the soul, blues, and rock influences in Jess Lamb’s music, but Kenny also includes jazz, pop, and country in their hybrid genre. He also accredits part of their unique sound to the band’s organic ambience.

“We sound the same live as we on the album, if not better, saying we actually know how to play,” says Kenny. “We’re not polished or made up to sound like something we’re not. Nowadays in mainstream music when you hear an album you don’t actually know what you’re hearing but with us, what you hear is what you get.”

And what you get is Jess Lamb, something that started with a boring piano lesson and grew into a musical sensation one can’t afford to miss.

To learn more about upcoming shows or sample Jess Lamb’s music, visit [www.myspace.com/jesslambband](http://www.myspace.com/jesslambband) or [www.facebook.com/jesslambband](http://www.facebook.com/jesslambband).



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