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WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE VALLEY — MUSIC, THEATER, ART AND MORE

LOCAL MUSICIAN CHANNELS HIS LATE MOTHER ON NEW ALBUM

'Slingshot Kid' proves cathartic for grieving son

By JESSICA LIPSKY

It takes a village to make a record, from musicians to producers to friends and fans. But between major life events and the imagery on Lucas Ohio's latest release, "Slingshot Kid," family has played the biggest role.

Ohio, or Lucas Pattie, grew up in Pleasanton and graduated from Foothill High School. But just before "Slingshot" went into the recording studio, the singer-songwriter's close-knit family suffered a tremendous blow.

"I lost my mom one week before I recorded this album. That was pretty heavy, really intense," Ohio said.

"My mom (Sage) was an active member of the Pleasanton community," he added.

"My mother's passing definitely affected the mood and tone of recording."

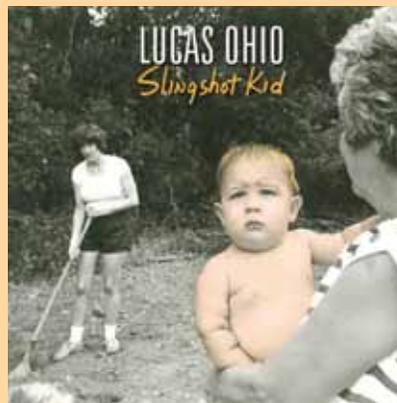
"Slingshot," Ohio's third album (and his first outside of trio The Shamblers), features a variety of backup musicians — including rock critic Sylvie Simmons on ukulele (whose father played trumpet for Elvis Presley) and Lucero's Rick Steff on accordion and organ — and a more distilled sound that harkens back to the Grateful Dead. Folk rock and Americana sounds play prominently on the release, made more poignant by lyrics about growing up and mourning.

"I felt like I was looking for something a little bit different to color my songs," Ohio said, adding that family evolved



"I really believe she was there for us in spirit and it really made for a great record. It was really cathartic, really emotional, really intense."

LUCAS OHIO



COURTESY LUCAS PATTIE OHIO

Clockwise from top right: The "Slingshot Kid" session band; Lucas Ohio in San Francisco; Lucas Ohio performs at the Gilroy Garlic Festival; Sage Pattie passed away in 2012 and inspired much of the latest album of her son, Lucas Ohio.

as a major theme on the album. "I really felt like (my mom) would have been like, 'You go for it, record this album.' I really believe she was there for us in spirit and it really made for a great record. It was really cathartic, really emotional, really intense."

Ohio counts "Tequila Rose" among his favorites, a longing number that reminisces about living in Pasadena, where Ohio uses making pull taffy with his mother and brother as a metaphor. The slow, winding tune is simple, with a heavy focus on guitar and gently pleading vocals.

"You'd take this big blob (of taffy) and walk away from each other, then walk back together. It's symbolic of the ebb and flow of life — the ups, the downs, the good and bad and between," Ohio said. "The times when you really miss your family, when you really miss your friends and want to be away from your family."

Most of the songs on "Slingshot" were written while Sage Pattie, a marriage and family therapist, was alive. She favored "Johnny Blazes" because of its chorus about thinking positive — "Think of angels/Better places/Think of angels/Painful graces."

"She really related to that, sort of being able to extract oneself from some of the more painful chapters or moments in any life and not forgetting about it. Burying it

in the past, but being able to rest and rise above," Ohio said.

Sage Pattie was diagnosed with colon cancer and died in May 2012. The album's first track, "Always See You (Wide Awake)," came together on the last day of recording as a tribute. Multi-instrumentalist John Howland had been haunted by Ohio's description of his mother lying dead in her bed. The line, "I'll always see you wide awake" resonated with Howland.

"He was telling me, 'I can't shake that you were there in your mom's room and I just have a feeling that the memories of your mom that will be the most poignant and long lived, will be the ones of her awake and well' — and John was right," Ohio said. "I'll forever remember her with the energy and kindness and grace that she had. We kind of launched from there."

The country twang on "Always" details Sage's personality, zest for life and knack for accomplishing her goals. As Ohio sings about his mother's life of riding horses, building her dream house, and seeing her children grow, he promises to remember her in full health: "I'll never let go/Your blood's my own/I'll always see you wide awake ... I'm feeling better each day."

Sage had an "all about living, the time is now, live each day like it's your last" mentality, Ohio said.

"It's a real tribute to my mother, every line of every verse — it's almost a co write between my mother and John and myself. I even culled some lines from text messages that I still have in my phone today from my mom just over the course of the last two months that she was with us," he added.

While poignant, "Slingshot" also features fun, upbeat songs and a cover of Bruce Springsteen's "Ain't Good Enough For You" to close out the album.

"I kinda wanted to complete the circle in a sense. I wanted to have the last song be kind of a dancing song. My mom was such a fun person to be around, she was all about having a good time, dancing like there was no tomorrow," Ohio said. "This album will forever remind me of my mom and some of those early childhood memories, those fond memories. That's the most treasured thing about this album to me."

Ohio is currently touring "Slingshot Kid" throughout California. More information on Lucas Ohio and upcoming shows can be found at lucasohiopattie.com. ■