

# The Old Ceremony

The Old Ceremony draws their water from a deep well of music ranging from the Beatles to Beck, Leadbelly to Led Zeppelin. Unorthodox instrumentation meets superb songwriting to create a unique interpretation of brooding, orchestral rock'n'roll. After two highly acclaimed albums and four years of touring, the Chapel Hill, NC band has built a large and loyal following both in their hometown and in major cities across the eastern US from NYC to Atlanta to DC to Nashville. Their live show is an incendiary experience that leaves concertgoers with a smile on their faces and a renewed belief in the power of rock music. TOC has performed with CAKE, Squirrel Nut Zippers, Chuck Berry, Polyphonic Spree, Mountain Goats, and Avett Brothers, and was included in PASTE Magazine's "Top 100 Albums of 2006." In 2008 they won the *Best Band* award in the *Independent Weekly Reader's Poll*, which is no small triumph in an area renowned for its bustling music scene. TOC is fronted by songwriter/singer/guitarist Django Haskins, and includes bassist Matt Brandau, drummer Dan Hall, vibraphonist/organist Mark Simonsen, and violinist/keyboardist Gabriele Pelli.

The Old Ceremony's third album, *Walk on Thin Air*, to be released February 2009, is a major leap forward musically in a progression that has always been surprising and unique. Whereas their self-titled debut record explored the dark corners of orchestral pop arrangements, with touchstones veering from Astor Piazzola to Alfred Hitchcock, their 2006 follow-up, *Our One Mistake*, leaned more to the Brit-invasion songcraft and melodic adventurousness for which songwriter Django Haskins has always been known. *Walk on Thin Air* witnesses a band that has truly come into its own after years of touring and recording together. The hooks are still unmistakable, but the arrangements are denser and the overall mood is darker and more complex. Songs bleed into each other and create a unified listening experience rarely heard in these days of individual downloads and iPod shuffles that harkens back to the days when albums were a miniature world, not just a collection of singles.

The album touches on several recurring themes, chief among them the struggle to deal with large forces beyond our control, as most clearly evidenced by "Plate Tectonics," "Ready to Go" (the harrowing story of a car crash from multiple perspectives) and "Walk on Thin Air." The response to these forces forms the counter-theme: defiance, despair, and finally, letting go. As the character in "The Disappear" intones "Show me how to disappear/Tell me how it goes/Cause I'm ready to become a stranger in my clothes" just before trying to escape the overwhelming forces of his life. But it is the title track that lays out the true challenge, "You gotta decide before it goes by/You can try not to care/Or walk on thin air." The Old Ceremony has made the choice to take the leap, and the reward for their daring is evident in the musical assurance and maturity of their new record.