

BABY DEE

A short autobiographical something written on the occasion
of the completion of the album *Safe Inside the Day* for Drag City.

I was born in Cleveland Ohio. This album is very much about the street I grew up on.

Where The Earlie King ruled without mercy. And Bobby Slot and Freddy Weiss invented the Dance of Diminishing Possibilities.

And Kent Lang learned about "General Principles" from a father who was a lot like The Earlie King in that nobody ever saw him except for the day he beat up Bobby Slot but we could see the results of his labors in the behavior of Kent who at the age of five had one reply for every situation.

"Fuck You," which like aloha served both as a greeting and a farewell, was the beginning middle and end of every sentence.

Kent would walk down the street stopping to urinate on every tree until he picked just the right one. Then to our horror and delight he'd climb it and once he got up there he'd defecate.

There is no mention of Kent in any of the lyrics and the song "General Principles" has yet to be written. I like to mention an unfinished song because it makes me feel like I've got a future. If "General Principles" ever does get written I'll dedicate it to Kent Lang and the chorus will be this:

*Plenty of nails to go around
Bend 'em over, boys
And pound 'em down.*

The one good thing about Mr. Lang was that he made us all moderate in the way we judged our own fathers. And thereby, he kept me from becoming a true father hater. And looking back, next to the "Dance of Diminishing Possibilities," that was probably the best thing I got out of childhood.

I left for New York in 1972 and eventually became a musician. I was good at the sacred and I was good at the profane but I could never get the hang of anything in between and I went from the

street to the church to the street again and then I stopped.

Then thirty years later I found myself back in Cleveland and began to write songs.

And then I stopped writing songs. I thought I had said everything I had to say and there was nothing left to say so I stopped.

And then I remembered Bobby Slot and Freddy Weiss and my own father and all the little ghosts that lived with us and I realized that there was something left to say after all.

Now of course the music should speak for itself but Drag City asked me to write and here I am writing. And writing, I realize that the songs will probably fall short of what I'd like them to say so I'll say it plainly.

If there's a message here and if the message is the message I'd like it to be it's simply this.

The inside is bigger than the outside, more important, and less destructible.

"Many mansions" and all that.

Kingdom of god.

I love everybody.

But most especially Matt Sweeney and Will Oldham who helped me make this album.

They should figure big in anything about this particular record.

And David Tibet figured big in the story too.

Antony and I were friends back in the 90's. We knew the same people, went to the same places, worked in the same nightclubs and when he started recording the first album I was around and helped out and played the harp.

Some years later when I left all my crazy traveling hermaphrodite shit behind in Ghent hand painted concert harp, costumes, high rise tricycle,



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organ with Leslie speaker... and ended up getting stuck in Cleveland I started writing my first songs.

I recorded them as I wrote them and I'd send each one to Ant thinking maybe he might want to cover one. He in turn sent them to David Tibet who offered to put out an album on his label Durtro. That was *Little Window*. Then came *Love's Small Song*.

Years later, another friend of David's, Will Oldham came through Cleveland touring the *Superwolf* album with Matt Sweeney and he asked me to open for him. This was a godsend to me because some months earlier I had dropped a tree on a house I had a business taking down big trees and that put me out of business and into debt and deep shit so I needed to find a new way to make a living.

I'll never forget. Will gave me 250 dollars which was the only money I'd made in months and I was kind of desperate. Anyway, I had begun playing my songs on the harp and singing them just a few weeks before this so that gig with Will and Matt was the first time I ever played the harp and sang. And it was a mess but a beginning.

We went out for dinner beforehand and I was talking with Matt and thought that "since my music clearly belongs nowhere then I ought to be able to play it anywhere." And I guess that turned out to be true because apart from about six months climbing trees for other tree companies I've been getting along doing shows.

And as to how the record came to be. It had everything to do with that first meeting with Will and Matt. And eventually Matt's willingness to produce the record and Will's amazing goodness in the way he thinks and decides things. Will is the most wonderfully decisive person I've ever met and I'm probably the least.

Originally this album was going to be a reworking of something I did some years back called *A Book of Songs for Anne Marie* which also came out on Durtro not as a CD but as a pretty little book with my recording of the songs presented almost as an afterthought.

For reasons better understood by the lunatic that was me at that time I had wanted the recording to be very bare bones. Except for one song I recorded the whole thing in one sitting and sent it off to David without even listening to it once.

Now, I had wanted this album for Drag City to be a more fleshed out version of that *Book of Songs*. My friends were all trying to get me to do new work but I felt bad about my new work. I didn't like where it was leading me. I wanted to go someplace good but each step would lead me back around to the bad place. The place I didn't want to go.

Anyway, I wrote to Will about it and he encouraged me to do the new stuff even though it felt like it was taking me to a very ugly place. And it was such a wonderful letter that it actually worked. He changed my mind in a big way. So I decided to go face first into the ugliness and I wrote back to Will:

"You're not the first person to nudge me towards the new but before it always felt like they were asking me to do something I just don't got it in me to do. Now all of a sudden this is feeling possible, open ended the good kind of scary."

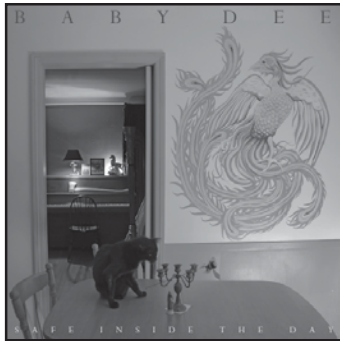
And this is what Will wrote back.

"I feel like part of the point of recording, of making records, is to put in us what we don't have in us to do!"

Which I think is the best thing anybody ever said about recording.

Anyway it makes me happy that Matt and Will produced this album for me. It feels like full circle.





BABY DEE

SAFE INSIDE THE DAY

DC351 ▶▶ LP/CD

Songs:

SAFE INSIDE THE DAY

THE EARLIE KING

A COMPASS OF THE LIGHT

THE ONLY BONES THAT SHOW

FRESH OUT OF CANDLES

BIG TITTY BEE GIRL (FROM DINO TOWN)

A CHRISTMAS JIG FOR
A THREE-LEGGED CAT

FLOWERS ON THE TRACKS

THE DANCE OF DIMINISHING
POSSIBILITIES

BAD KIDNEYS

YOU'LL FIND YOUR FOOTING

A SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SOMETHING WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMPLETION OF THE ALBUM **SAFE INSIDE THE DAY** FOR DRAG CITY.

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– Dee

POINTS OF INTEREST

- ▶▶ **Baby Dee** is an internationally traveled singer, songwriter and performer. **SAFE INSIDE THE DAY** is her third album.
- ▶▶ **SAFE INSIDE THE DAY** was produced by **Matt Sweeney** and **Bonnie 'Prince' Billy**, who also played on the record, along with **Andrew WK**, **Robbie Lee**, **Max Moston**, **William Breeze**, **John Contreras**, **James Lo** and **Lia Kessel**, all of whom bring extra fullness to Dee's old-world pop sensibilities.
- ▶▶ **Baby Dee** intends to play shows around the world in support of **SAFE INSIDE THE DAY**.
- ▶▶ The cult of **BABY DEE** is growing! She's a favorite of a number of celebrities, all of whom we're too humble to actually name in this space.
- ▶▶ From elaborate and ornate, to sparse and hushed – **Baby Dee's** musical storytelling gives a jolt of life to any who are privileged to listen.



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