

DAVID BAERWALD

"You're lying awake at night, something's going on, these ideas skitter around in your head, they keep you awake and they keep getting worse. When idle thoughts turn into rats in your brain--it's that kind of bedtime story."

--David Baerwald

As forceful and disquieting as it is invigoratingly musical, **Bedtime Stories** – the much anticipated A&M solo debut of David Baerwald, vocalist, guitarist, and lyricist of David + David – is among the most striking and startling pop achievements in recent years.

Bedtime Stories is a thematic and stylistic continuation of David + David's 1986 album *Boomtown*, a commercial breakthrough and critical favorite that included the potent top 40 single "Boomtown." Like that record, the Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter's new album is a caustic yet elegantly fashioned look at mores and *amours* in a contemporary society that often teeters on the brink of abyss.

The album encompasses a diversity of musical directions, held together by Baerwald's lyrics and his deep commitment to classic pop form. Story-songs like "All For You," "Young Anymore," and "Sirens In the City," introspective observations like "Good Times" and "The Best Inside You," lacerating love songs like "Hello Mary," "Walk Through Fire," "Colette," and "In the Morning" and knife-edged broadsides like "Liberty Lies" and "Stranger" – all are sung with the electrifying fervor that typified David + David.

The songs, which reflect a multiplicity of literary influences that Baerwald says range from Raymond Chandler and Tennessee Williams to Paul Bowles and Edmond Rostand, are sculpted in the studio with a keen attention to pop music detail.

"When I first started playing music semi-professionally, it was the mid-70's, and the whole idea was to be as amateurish as possible," says Baerwald, a veteran of punk-styled bands of the period. "That's a lot of fun when you're 17. But music is an environment, it's a science. It may be a problem for some people that my music is well-made, well-produced, but I think that if a thought is clear, it should be presented clearly.

"I like pop music. I like structure. Listen to the stuff that's lionized now" The Motown records, they were state-of-the-art. The Stax music, the Booker T. and the M. G.'s stuff. Al Green's stuff on Hi – that to me is the best American pop music ever made. Just beautifully produced, beautifully presented, beautifully sung slices of life."

Baerwald cites such rock 'n' rollers as the Band, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Janis Joplin and the Doors, and such highly musical, jam-oriented bands as Little Feat and the Allman Brothers as influences. He also notes that a background in classical music had an impact on his work, his mother was a piano teacher, his sister a classical pianist and his father a violinist.

Baerwald also admits that he admires songwriters who use a rigorously structured pop format to present some often subversive thoughts. He cites Randy Newman's perversely comic yet highly controlled **12 Songs** as a personal favorite.

All of these influences came into play in 1986 when Baerwald and partner David Ricketts –

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who met in 1979, when Baerwald was playing in the Los Angeles band Sensible Shoes == joined forces to make **Boomtown**. A sleekly produced, stiletto-pointed song cycle about the underside of L.A. life, the album announced the arrival of something new under the pop music sun.

Bedtime Stories took a long time in the telling – nearly three years, to be precise.

David + David planned to make a follow-up to **Boomtown** in 1987, but Ricketts' involvement, with the production of Toni Childs' A&M debut **Union** ultimately sidetracked the project. Baerwald then began recording with Steve Berlin (Los Lobos' saxophonist and a noted producer whose work includes Tish Hinojosa's A&M debut) and Matt Wallace (whose album with the Replacements, **Don't Tell a Soul**, garnered raves in 1989). An album's worth of songs was completed, but Baerwald chose not to release them.

"We had a great time," Baerwald recalls. "Basically what I needed to do was let off some steam. I needed to scream and play the guitar loud and do whatever I felt like doing. What it had was this total savagery, What it didn't have was control – it was out of control. In a sense, it was a kind of short-term, intense Janovian therapy. But it was too literal an approach to what was happening inside the songs. It was just too crazy, it was too unmusical, and it was too personal. I couldn't let that out."

Four of the songs from those sessions – "All For You," "Colette," "Hello Mary," and "Stranger" – appear on **Bedtime Stories**, with additional production by Larry Klein, who cut the remainder of the tracks.

"I met Larry a year ago at a dinner party," Baerwald says. "He was looking for somebody to write with. I'd heard the record he'd produced with (A&M recording artist) Indio, and I could tell from that that Larry was something really special. I went back and listened to the Joni Mitchell records he'd produced, and I could tell he was somebody with a lot of ideas, a real musician,"

Klein, who co-authored six of **Bedtime Stories**' 12 songs, also played bass, keyboards, and some guitar on the album. Other players included the Tower of Power horn section, jazz and studio drummer Vinnie Colaiuta; organist Steve Lindsay; and singer Maxine Waters, of the Waters family gospel group. Musicians based on the Berlin/Wallace tracks include Greg Leisa, k.g. lang's pedal steel guitarist; drummer Mike Urbano, a veteran of Todd Rundgren's group, and violist Gene Elders of George Strait's band.

Baerwald expresses satisfaction with the polished yet soulful sound of **Bedtime Stories**, noting that its accessible pop surface gives the listener a door into some potentially disturbing thoughts and themes.

"For music to be effective, it's got to be relatable. It can't be somebody screaming in a corner, because that's a drag and doesn't do anybody a damn bit of good. You need to provide a framework for suffering. You need to have containment of these feelings, otherwise they will kill you. That's why I think having melodies and good arrangements and grooves is so important to what I do."

Compelling and tuneful, melodic yet unsettling, made up of equal quotients of darkness and light, **Bedtime Stories** is a piece of contemporary pop classicism that will invade your dreams. Sleep tight.