

SPOTLIGHT



Chris Freeman, Robert McDowell, Jonathan Corley, Kevin Devine, Andy Hull, Ben Homola

BAD BOOKS

Indie rockers Kevin Devine and Andy Hull join forces and get a little freaky

ASKED TO DESCRIBE BAD BOOKS, the new joint side project between indie troubadour Kevin Devine and Manchester Orchestra frontman Andy Hull, the twosome will point to one song in particular on their self-titled debut. The grungy "Baby Shoes" was inspired by a six-word short story often (and probably wrongly) attributed to Ernest Hemingway: "For sale: baby shoes. Never worn."

Hull filled out that scenario with a song about a couple that loses a young daughter, asks Satan to bring her back, then faces the consequences: a demonic child bent on murdering her parents. Hull jokes he wrote the exceedingly dark song "because I'm a freak. I wanted to write something wacky, and I wanted it to have this Pixies vibe, like slow-burning acoustic guitar with weird electric stuff."

Hull and Devine each wrote five songs for the album, and helped to shape and color one another's compositions along with members of Hull's Atlanta-based Manchester Orchestra. "One thing that impresses me a lot about Andy is his melodic capability," Devine says. "He's strong with harmony and a strong singer, and can really build out some impressive stuff around the structure of a song." For his part, Devine took

the opportunity to lay back and focus on his guitar work. "Putting on my [Pixies guitarist] Joey Santiago hat is something I love being able to do," he says. "But you don't always get to do it live, when you're focused on being in front and singing your own material. Sometimes it's tough to be the frontman and the sideman at the same time."

Its gnarly centerpiece song aside, *Bad Books* actually makes for quite pleasant listening. Devine's "The Easy Mark and the Old Maid" is a gentle pop ballad, while his "You Wouldn't Have to Ask" is a Weezer-style rock song penned in 10 minutes. Devine says that he doesn't generally work so quickly, but that spontaneity is crucial to the chemistry of *Bad Books*. Now Devine and Hull are laying plans to continue pushing one another in new directions for at least a couple more albums together. (Never fear, fans of Manchester Orchestra and Devine's solo work—each has a new individual album on the way in the coming months.) "It's great to have another outlet for songs and collaborating," Hull says. "There's a cool element of trusting people and letting go and letting them do whatever they're going to do, just because they're talented and you have a similar vision."

—Kenneth Partridge

