

ARTS

Baerwald is barren

by Jason Nolan

David Baerwald
Bedtime Stories
A&M Records

The new release by David Baerwald entitled *Bedtime Stories* gives a fair taste of what the mainstream music industry thinks whitebread North America, in culture if not genetic makeup, is prepared to listen to in the 90s. It's angry, it's meaty, it's full of those intellectual twists and conundrums just right for those who have finally understood how to run their VCRs.

Who knows? David Baerwald may indeed be a man of the 90s; time will tell. But, if he is, I'm not.

Baerwald, or whoever is pulling the strings, is living proof that, though our world hangs by ecological and political threads, some folks can still reminisce about the ignorance and stupidity which made them what they are. For example, on the tune "Good Times" he sings,

I'm as guilty as afraid
About decisions that I've made
Ideas that I've left behind
Friends that I've betrayed . . .
And these are the good times.

Where does this leave us? Perhaps this credit card nihilism is an attempt to equal "we educated and disaffected youth of academia" in indulgence, ignoring the troubled world around us.

A&M's obvious targeting of the pseudo-intellectual in us all with this packaged product betrays the industry's own decay, not ours. The fact that almost all the tunes on this 'product' were published in 1990 suggests nothing less than the superficial arrangements, lyrics and presentation deliver. With the backing of ex-Zappaite Vinnie Colaiuta on drums, Alejandro Acuna on per-



cussion, Steve Berlin and even Joni Mitchell (they must have caught her sleeping), Baerwald has the flash of corporate cash.

When Joni sings "Liberty Lies," an unfocused triad/fable about conflict, a feeling arises that she was brought in to sing the line "cause baby I've been crawling," totally unaware of the context of the song. She merely gives it a real anti-Vietnam feeling, just like Tom Cruise in *Born on the Fourth of July*. In this tune (or should we call it "product?"), Baerwald's own vocalizations waver between obvious Bob Dylan and Sass Jordan impersonations.

Want more? The publishing company responsible for this work is called Zen of Iniquity. I think that someone has spent too many hours in record company offices and at industry functions for their own sanity to remain intact.

Music, shall we talk about music? Baerwald's a competent vocalist. Perhaps his forte and fame may be found in beer commercials. There are overtones of any singer you care not to think of.

Quality and listenability, however, depend on the aesthetics of an extensive layering of digital

keyboard tracks and fills with some upfront processed guitar work, a bass following charts, and so on. This is tied together with some good ol' boy posturings of the Steve Earle variety (not to denigrate him) and a couple of E-Street shuffles.

One of the perks of reviewing music is that it gets you a lot of free music for a little work. In this case, let's call it a public service announcement. In fact, anyone who would still want this tape should see Ira at the *Excal* office — he'll be happy to let you take it off his hands.



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