

Song Exploder
Angel Olsen - Shut Up Kiss Me
Episode 90

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

Hrishikesh: This episode contains explicit language.

("Shut Up Kiss Me" by ANGEL OLSEN)

Hrishikesh: Angel Olsen released her third album, *My Woman*, in September 2016. It's been critically acclaimed, including Pitchfork's Best New Music, and NME's Best Albums of the Year. In this episode, Angel Olsen takes apart the song "Shut Up Kiss Me." Coming up, she breaks down how she recorded it live in the studio with her band, and how she tried things with her voice that she'd never done before.

("Shut Up Kiss Me" by ANGEL OLSEN)

Angel: Hi, I'm Angel Olsen.

(Music fades)

Angel: This was the first song in a long time that I had spent a lot of time trying to write, just like simple guitar part for.

(Guitar)

Angel: When I first envisioned it, I thought of it as like more 50s and relaxed. For a long time, I would practice it, and kind of reflect on it as a much more ballad kind of song. But I wrote the words, and then I thought, *Oh, this could go in a totally different direction and be something really kind of tongue-in-cheek, a little bit more, have a little bit more energy to it.* I don't know what it is, I just sang it differently one day.

(Vocals with guitar: "Shut up, kiss me, hold me tight / Shut up, kiss me, hold me tight")

Angel: It's sort of tongue-in-cheek, and kind of mean, kind of yelly, but also like, "Hey, I care about you [laughter]." Angel is funny when you're not in it, but [laughter]

sometimes you just get in the heat of it, and sometimes things come out. And I sort of just tried to riff on like what I would say next to the person that I was mad at. Like, “even if you walk around as though you think you're right.”

(Vocals: “Even if you walk around as though you think you're right”)

Angel: And I feel like I've said that to friends, you know, and people in my life, and people have said that to me like, “Stop being that way, come on.” There's a line in the second verse where I'm like, “Stop pretending I'm not there when it's clear, I'm not going anywhere.”

(Vocals: “Stop pretending I'm not there / When it's clear I'm not going anywhere / If I'm out of sight then take another look around / I'm still out there hoping to be found”)

Angel: “Even if I'm out of sight, take another look around.” I don't know, yeah, I'm gone a lot, so [laughter] it seems pretty accurate to my life. I'm not afraid to say that my writing is me, but I will say like, “Yeah, not every time I'm in a video, am I being myself?” But there are elements of myself in it.

(Guitar)

Angel: I thought, *I want to make something that's live*. Because I'd been working with my band for quite a long time, and I want to make something that captures us getting lost in playing. So we rehearsed six to eight hours a day. It was insane.

(Guitar ends)

Angel: We rehearsed so much that I injured my arm [laughter] playing guitar, and realized my doctor was telling me that I've been playing guitar the wrong way. So [laughter] I had to wear a brace and like really take it easy, instead of like strumming extremely hard, sometimes I'm just like, I just take it easy.

(Guitar)

Angel: But it wasn't loud enough, so we had to record over it. And so, there's a little mix of both me and Stewart. We played it live. So I'm in a room with an acoustic-electric. There's a big room with a glass window, and I can see everyone. Stewart is to the right, and he's playing sort of solo riff guitar.

(Guitar)

Angel: And then, Seth is playing on the left.

(Guitar)

Angel: And then Emily's playing bass.

(Bass)

Angel: And Josh is playing drums.

(Drums)

Angel: He's sort of the band leader in a lot of ways. Like if I have trouble describing something that I want, and I can't find the right words for it, you know, he has this way of sort of taking over, and being like, "I think what she means is this." And then, we'll talk about it.

(Drums)

Angel: The drums were staying the same for the most part throughout the whole song. And we were all thinking maybe it would be nice to mix up the drum parts. So for parts of the end of this song, we added this new beat.

(Drums)

Angel: He's very good at adding stuff, minimally, you know, and still showing his sense of taste.

(Drums)

Angel: So it was really important for me to go over parts with him first, because he would be creating a backbone for the songs. And, you know, we butt heads a lot, we have different ideas and different aesthetics for certain things, but I liked the rhythm of that.

(Drums end)

(Guitar)

Angel: That's Stewart. He uses slide a lot. And he's got really, really great tone, which people underestimate all the time.

(Guitar fades)

Angel: So that part at the end [laughter],

(Guitar)

Angel: so I wrote the line, and I shared it with the band, and I was like, I don't know if I'm allowed to say "shit solo," but I was like, "Here's my shit solo [laughter]."

(Guitar)

(Guitar ends)

Angel: And they laughed at me, and they were like, "Yeah, I mean, it's a cool line. You should just go with it." And I was like, "It's a little ratty." And then, Stewart was like, "No, I kind of like it. I think it's kind of like rock and roll, you know?" And I was like, "Okay, well," but we ended up playing together. He would start off playing it with me.

(Guitars)

Angel: And then, do a different riff sort of circling around it.

(Guitars)

Angel: And the piano,

(Piano)

Angel: in the recording, a lot of people don't hear it, but it adds this like extra percussive texture to it, you know?

(Piano)

Angel: That was a nod to Bowie.

("Changes" by DAVID BOWIE)

(Music ends)

Angel: He had just passed away. And, for me, recording is a magical thing that encapsulates a time. For this record, I wanted to sing more and use my voice in different ways. I was like, “Oh, man, I need to figure out how to just let go, just sing out more like wordless singing.”

(Vocals)

Angel: Because words matter so much to me and my music, I feel like in some ways it's kept me from letting go and singing out more, when I know that I can. And so, that was sort of my attempt to show that I could, or to show myself that I could.

(Vocals)

Angel: It's definitely like a, “Okay, I'm defeated now. I'm just yelling [laughter].” Kind of like theatrical in a way.

(Vocals)

Angel: I think it was a big step for me to make, to just sort of be myself, and to be okay with changing, and allowing my voice to open up, and being okay if it's a little out of tune in some parts, and then, to use my voice as an instrument in different ways. I have this attitude when we're in the studio that if I can perform it well on tape or in a recording studio, then what's the point of trying to like overthink it?

(Guitar)

Angel: When I look back at the lyrics, I have to laugh at myself a little bit. It is kind of a funny song. It could be a love song. I mean, the people you love the most will make you the most angry. They just know how to, they're really good at it [laughter].

(Guitar)

(Guitar ends)

Hrishikesh: And now, here's “Shut Up Kiss Me,” by Angel Olsen, in its entirety.

("Shut Up Kiss Me" by ANGEL OLSEN)

Hrishikesh: Visit songexploder.net for more info on Angel Olsen, and to watch the video for "Shut Up Kiss Me."
Next time on Song Exploder, DJ Shadow.

("Mutual Slump" by DJ Shadow)

Hrishikesh: You can find all the past and future episodes of Song Exploder at songexploder.net or wherever you download podcasts. Follow this show @SongExploder on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia, from PRX, a curated network of extraordinary, cutting edge shows made possible by the Knight Foundation, MailChimp, and listeners like you. Learn more at radiotopia.fm. This episode was produced by Christian Koons and me. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway, thanks for listening.

("Mutual Slump" by DJ Shadow)

(Music fades)

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