

Song Exploder
Deradoorian - A Beautiful Woman
Episode 52

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.

Hrishikesh: For six years, Angel Deradoorian was a member of the critically acclaimed band Dirty Projectors. She performed on national TV, recorded with Björk, and played sold-out shows around the world, but she left the group to pursue her own music.

Angel: I was in Dirty Projectors from 2006 to 2012. It was when we announced me taking a break. It's hard to let go of something that you've worked so hard for, and then put faith into yourself that you're going to be able to come out with something.

Angel: My name is Angel Deradoorian, and I play as Deradoorian.

("A Beautiful Woman" by DERADOORIAN)

Hrishikesh: Deradoorian's debut solo album was released in August 2015. In this episode, Angel breaks down the track "A Beautiful Woman," and how the decision to lead her own musical project affected her and inspired the creation of this song.

("A Beautiful Woman" by DERADOORIAN)

(Music fades)

Angel: This trek into making my own record was part of me moving into, like, a leadership position, and being in charge of everything.

Hrishikesh: Was that scary at all?

Angel: Fuck yeah [laughter], it's scary [laughter]. Oh yeah. Because there's so many things you have to put to the side. It's like, you can't take a real job, you can't hang out with your friends whenever you feel like it. You have to have some self-discipline, and you have to have faith that it'll work out, because I wasn't

saving any money in this time, I was cleaning houses and then working when I could.

Cleaning houses allots you alone time. Can listen to music, don't have to interact with people so much. So you're not expending your energy in conversation with people all day, and then trying to go and work on your music later. Gave me the freedom to think about what I wanted to make, and then be able to go back and do it. The song is, like, really kind of sad to me. I mean, it's about myself and the transformational process, kind of like the future self and the ideal self. I wanted to connect with people, and I think part of what that was also was being vulnerable, and kind of showing people a part of myself that maybe I wouldn't. The two things that I think are important for "accessible music" that was in air quotes [laughter] is a really strong melodic line for the vocal part, and a really strong beat for the drum parts. So I started with writing the beat.

(Beat)

Angel: My brother's a drummer, so I grew up listening to someone play the drums every day. My family are musicians and very into, like, soul, R&B, any kind of music with a really strong beat. So I was just always listening to that. And then, I've always just had instruments around me to access, so I've always played things here and there. And drums are definitely the most difficult, but I still love playing them because it always just comes out super weird because I don't know any [laughter] drum techniques or, like, playing techniques, so it's just whatever I hear.

(Beat)

(Beat ends)

Angel: The guitar part [sings guitar part], I just, like, couldn't do it smoothly at all.

(Guitar)

Angel: [laughter] Just like playing it so shitty [laughter], and keeping it that way [laughter]. I love imperfection in music. I don't respond so much to perfect playing, although I really respect that a lot.

(Guitar)

Angel: I think the tone of this guitar is very fragile, but I put [laughter] a lot of overdrive distortion on it and reverb to get it to sustain because it doesn't sustain, but it's just like, "buh." But the guitar tone came out good, so it didn't seem necessary to redo it. The bassline, which is,

(Bass)

Angel: It's both rhythmic and melodic.

(Bass)

(Bass ends)

Angel: But I left a lot of room for the vocals for this song, so I could allot myself a lot of melodic room, and to be able to fit more [laughter] words into my melodies.

(Vocals: "When I sunk / Into the sea / When you saw / What I did to me / Like I could fall to my knees / And worry about everything")

Angel: I had a hard time relocating to Los Angeles. It was a really big move, and it was, you know, all the way from the East Coast where all my musical peers were. And so, I just had a really hard time when I got here trying to find work, and trying to settle and be creative, and that's what I'm talking about.

(Vocals: "When I sunk / Into the sea")

Angel: "When I sunk into the sea," it was kind of like when I was just going into this, kind of, depression.

(Vocals: "When you saw / What I did to me")

Angel: And "When you saw what I did to me," it was like, I know I don't have to feel this way, but it feels so hard right now. When you also, you know, when you're creating, you make a lot of shit sometimes, and that was happening. And then, I was like, "I suck. What? Why am I doing this?" Needing to overcome a lot of self-deprecation. I think everybody has that, but that's another thing I've had to really work on, just like not being so hard on myself, but also we're still working hard.

(Vocals: "But I'll be / On my way to better things")

Angel: "But I'll be on my way to better things," like having to go through it, but knowing that after every kind of dark phase, there's a light phase that follows it. So keeping that knowledge through all the darker times. And this song is, like, really kind of sad song to me.

(Synth)

Angel: I also just think that when you are a creative type of person making art, music, film, whatever it is, you're more likely to hate yourself because you have to take so much time to learn who you are when you want to make a piece of work to show other people. Because that's where, like, the honesty comes from; it comes from sensitivity to society and the world where there's just, like, constant comparison. What is good? What is bad? And again, yeah, from that guilt and shame of, like, feeling like you could do so much more, many more hours. I could be just much more devoted to the writing process or just being in the studio.

(Synth ends)

Angel: But you won't really succeed if you keep putting yourself down or doubting your work. So I think I've gotten better in that regard.

(Vocals: "A beautiful woman / Beautiful woman / You're the one I wanna be / A beautiful woman / Beautiful woman / You're the one I wanna see / Well you're a beautiful woman / A beautiful woman / The one with ruby seams / Beautiful woman, beautiful woman / Beautiful woman")

Angel: So the person I want to be is me.

(Hocket)

Angel: Okay, so that's my sister and Niki singing that part. Niki Randa, she's a really amazing singer. She sings on a lot of Flying Lotus records.

(Hocketing)

Angel: It's a vocal hocket. It's two people singing the opposite, the one and three,

(Hocketing)

Angel: and the two and the four.

(Hocketing)

Angel: It's called hocketing, H-O-C-K-E-T-I-N-G. This hocketing part in the weird, delayed jungle cry in the beginning [laughter],

(Hocketing)

Angel: more textual psychedelic additions. That's like the hook to me.

(Vocals: "Shore")

Angel: This part is in the bridge, and this, we all sang together. Me, Arlene, and Niki. Arlene's my sister. And it's just like this cry, you know, so I felt it would be more powerful if we all sang it together. I wanted them in there for textural difference and power that sometimes you can't create on your own. This is a strong, feminine energy kind of song, so it felt like, I'll bring my ladies in with me [laughter], the ladies I love [laughter].

(Vocals)

(Vocals end)

Angel: I feel like I've been lucky. I understand struggling with your work, but I also know that your mind is a very powerful thing, and that you'll get there, if that's what you want, you'll get there, and it'll work out just how you thought of it.

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "A Beautiful Woman," by Deradoorian, in its entirety.

("A Beautiful Woman" by DERADOORIAN)

Hrishikesh: For more information on Deradoorian, including a link to buy this song, visit songexploder.net.

Next time on Song Exploder, composer Harry Gregson-Williams, breaks down the score for the film *The Martian*.

("The Martian" by HARRY GREGSON-WILLIAMS)

Hrishikesh: You can follow Song Exploder on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and subscribe to all the episodes on iTunes or wherever you download podcasts. You can also find the show at radiotopia.fm, home of all the shows on the Radiotopia podcast network from PRX. Special thanks to Christian Koons and Mickey Carter. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway, thanks for listening.

("The Martian" by HARRY GREGSON-WILLIAMS)

(Music fades)

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