

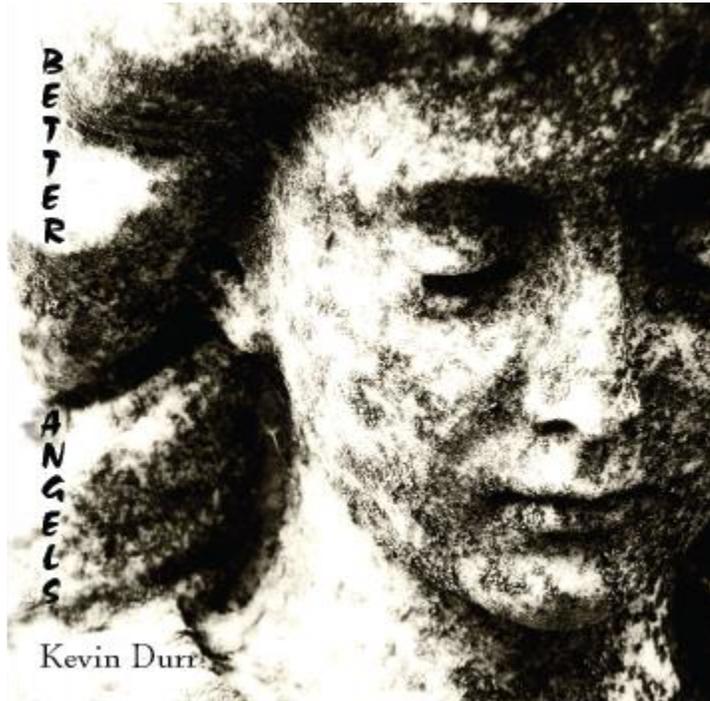
[Band Blurb](#)

<http://www.bandblurb.com/kevin-durr-better-angels/>



- [Home](#)
- [Popular Music](#)
- [Indie Music Reviews](#)
- [Submit Your Music](#)

Kevin Durr – Better Angels



Kevin Durr's new collection *Better Angels* is a twelve song studio offering from one of Chicago's finest singer/songwriters. His musical reach isn't confined to some neo-folky musical vision, however, and it's as clear here as his earlier releases that Durr is perfectly at home crafting material that has a bit of commercial appeal. He's four albums now into a recording career beginning in 2003 and, rather than standing pat, his songwriting has undergone an exponential sea change since those early days, gaining power and economy along the way, until now he stands as one of the best singer/songwriters working on the indie scene today. He has a message behind much of what he does, but the material says as much about him as a person as it does his politics or personal beliefs without ever coming off in a strident or hammy fashion. This is a thoroughly enjoyable and intelligent release.

There's been great care taken with the songwriting, production, and individual performances at each turn in the recording. The first song "I'm Not Sleeping Anymore" is a particularly memorable outing for Durr and his collaborators and the backing vocals (Flannery Devine) seconding him here add immeasurably to the performance. The album's second tune "Here We Go" has much of the same musical pedigree we hear from the opener and other album tunes, a solid acoustic track with some confident pop stride and idiosyncratic textures spicing things up. There is a rousing quality, however, to this particular performance thanks to a strong chorus and the song is, in general, an excellent invocation of the style behind much of Durr's songwriting. He reaches for new heights of sensitivity with "The Writing on the Wall" (Frosty Baylor) and scores magnificently with a nearly crystalline rendition that will produce goose bumps for some listeners. Everything is in balance here with one of Better Angels' more glittering gems.

"Beyond and Above" is one of the album's more ambitious musical pieces, shifting gears in the song's second half from a relaxed pace into a much more assertive and uptempo instrumental attack, and the vocal performance from both singers (Abigail Tieck) is impressive from first line to last. He scores with another exquisite outing via the song "In the Now" thanks in large part to the near hypnotic, lyrical sway of the violin playing. It's another in a long line of lovely, slightly elegiac numbers on Better Angels, but even the lightly melancholic strands heard in many of the arrangements never undercut the affirmative spirit in the heart of these recordings. The album's penultimate cut "Didn't We?" begins with occasional cymbal flourishes and straight ahead folk guitar accompanied by nothing but vocals before shifting into a steady mid-tempo march. It's one of the album's finest and most personal lyrics and comes at an excellent place in the running order. This is a deeply affecting release with something to offer any serious fan of songwriting craftsmanship and it's a small marvel how Better Angels proves Kevin Durr continues to expand on his artistic reach with every new release.

Jamie Morse