

From the Mouths of Baebes: A Chat with the Mediæval Bæbes

By Kambriel

SENTIMENTALIST: Please introduce yourselves, mentioning your name, favourite flower, and favourite place to be.

KATHERINE: Katharine Blake, my favourite flower is the Arram Lily, and fave place is swimming in the sea at night by the light of the moon

AUDREY: Audrey Evans, wild poppy, and place is New York.

RACHEL: I am Rachel Van Asch. I don't have a favourite flower. My favourite place is in my leopard print bed, my temple of pleasure, kitch and comfort.

SENTIMENTALIST: How did the group form?

KATHERINE: I had just been performing in Berlin with Dorothy Carter (The MB multi instrumentalist) and had become inspired by her cranky old instruments to form an acoustic, mediaeval inspired band. On returning to London I got all my mates together and you know the rest. There were no auditions.

SENTIMENTALIST: What kind of research goes into composing your historically inspired musical creations?

KATHERINE: I research mediaeval poetry and set it to my own melody.

RACHEL: The main element of research is finding beautiful and inspiring poetry (primarily mediaeval) to set to music.

SENTIMENTALIST: Having sung in German, French, Latin, Italian, and a variety of middle-English languages, do you have a favourite language?

KATHERINE: Fave language is mediaeval Italian.

AUDREY: Italian.

RACHEL: Italian, because it is so sensual and warm sounding, and also Latin, because it has a kind of foreboding and ritualistic sound.

SENTIMENTALIST: You all seem to have such fun when performing, what gives you the most joy? Could this have anything to do with your talent for singing about (often times) bawdy or morbid topics, whilst accompanying them with sweet smiles and whimsical recorder melodies?

KATHERINE: The thing that brings the most joy in performance is when everyone is in tune and singing as one, that is when the performance becomes truly magical.

AUDREY: What gives me the most fun when performing is listening to all my friends on stage. Looking at them being beautiful and passionate and when the hard

work pays off it all makes sense.

RACHEL: Performing is great fun, mainly because, for me, it is just so weird to be there singing for people. I never thought that I would be a performer, so it amuses me that I found myself in this odd life.

SENTIMENTALIST: Are there any particularly humorous "Baebes on Tour" stories to tell?

KATHERINE: Funny stories...On the outskirts of Munich the bus driver attempted to drive our double decker bus under a bridge that was too low to accommodate it, therefore the bus got stuck and the roof came off amid infernal screeching. We then found ourselves backstage at the venue which was a renovated fun house specializing in the grotesque and macabre, so there we all were, surrounded by headless corpses and decomposing flesh, it was like we had actually died and gone to hell. It was so traumatic that the extremity of the situation forced us into hysteria...you had to be there.

AUDREY: Oh, too many shameful ones. Touring is just a big humorous trip!

RACHEL: There are loads of amusing baebes on tour stories...I wouldn't even know where to begin...how about the one where we dressed up in black bin liners for the fetish club in the back lounge of the tour bus, or the one when our drummer boys Hans and Trevor dressed up in our spare long white dresses with full make-up and came onstage with us on the Lilith fair to perform the closing number with Sarah Maclaughlin. Then there is the one about all the stunts we pulled on the last night of the support tour with Jools Holland. We went on stage with beards and moustaches in front of hundreds of people and of course the Jools Holland band didn't know we were going to do it so they could barely play their instruments for laughing so hard. God the list is endless.

SENTIMENTALIST: If given a choice, would you rather perform in a formal indoor concert hall, or under the moon in a clearing in the forest?

KATHERINE: I think you know the answer to this one.

AUDREY: Under the moon in a forest, dungeon, island, desert, or the foot of the Brooklyn bridge.

RACHEL: Given decent weather definitely outside...in fact the weather doesn't even need to be that good, we once sang in the witches circle on Hampstead Heath in London, in the middle of a storm, actually we bought the storm on. Singing in the Royal Albert Hall was a bit of a buzz though. I would love to perform in space, maybe on the moon perhaps.

SENTIMENTALIST: Do you have any beloved fairy tales, nursery rhymes, or fables?

KATHERINE: Snow White

AUDREY: Bluebeard. I am fascinated by the story and the character. It is loosely based on Gilles de Roi. I love the story of the Tinman...so tragic.

RACHEL: I love fairy tales, especially the darker Eastern European kind. Not quite the trite happy endings and obvious morality of more commonly known Western fairy stories, although I do also like them, but just not quite so much.

SENTIMENTALIST: The portrait photography and costuming in your CD booklets are always quite exotic and magical. Who comes up with the designs?

AUDREY: We come up with a certain vibe...and then the people who call themselves "artists" do the rest for better or worse.

RACHEL: Our CD booklets have been the result of a lot of input from many different people, but I do not think that the aesthetic of the band has ever really been quintessentially captured in these booklets. Sometimes it comes close (*Worlds Blyse*). I design and make the majority of costumes for stage and photo sessions, and for album artwork (not *Undrentide*). I think "Songs of the Flesh" (our new book) captures some of the darker, more sensual and surreal elements of the band.

SENTIMENTALIST: *The band has already branched out into new territory with the release of that aforementioned photography book "Songs of the Flesh". Do you have any current plans for other non-musical projects in the works?*

KATHERINE: Other non-musical projects include appearing as debauched nuns in a Ken Russell film.

SENTIMENTALIST: *Which aspects of the Medieval era attract you to it most?*

KATHERINE: Some aspects are the romance and the enigma of history and myth intertwined.

AUDREY: The harshness and extremeness of it. A lot of desperate people with very romantic ideals.

RACHEL: Most fascinating to me is that it was the last period in Western history that mythology and common reality went hand in hand. People still believed in Dragons! People believed in Brownies that would come and clean your house if you left food and milk out for them. Fantasy and reality were acceptable and undivided. And God...those clothes!

SENTIMENTALIST: *If suddenly you found yourselves in the actual Medieval era, what kind of reaction do you think you'd get from an audience of that time?*

KATHERINE: If I found myself suddenly in the mediaeval era, I would be put on a rack and stretched and stretched until I was the longest lady in history.

AUDREY: We'd be burnt at the stake!

RACHEL: If I found myself actually in the mediaeval times I am sure I, [too] would be burnt at the stake.

SENTIMENTALIST: *If you could make one thing in today's world different, what would it be?*

KATHERINE: I would make people telepathic.

AUDREY: I would eradicate slavery.

RACHEL: It would be a change in the human consciousness to bring about tolerance. A world where people wouldn't persecute others because of their differences, but would merely accept the inevitable fact that everyone is unique and getting on with their own thing as best they can.

SENTIMENTALIST:

When you perform pieces that were written in past ages, you are often singing from the viewpoint of other people who lived hundreds of years ago. What are your feelings and thoughts on reincarnation and past lives?

AUDREY: That not a lot in peoples' minds and interests

has changed.

RACHEL: I do believe in reincarnation. I mean, God knows, one life is too short to learn all the lessons of how to be human.

I am very reticent about postulating what those previous incarnations were because it doesn't really matter whether you were a peasant or a princess as, no doubt, you were there to learn the lessons you needed at that time.

SENTIMENTALIST: *Many people who would perhaps not otherwise be interested in period music are*

somehow drawn to yours, what do you find most rewarding about introducing people to the musical styles of different eras?

KATHERINE: The most rewarding thing is when children and young teenagers appreciate our music rather

than crappy girl/boy bands.

AUDREY: It is very rewarding that we can enchant people and take them to a special place where fantasy lives.

RACHEL: The thing I find rewarding about bringing this type of music to people that have never heard it before is quite difficult to explain...Different styles of music represent different moods or feelings, so our music creates another type of emotional state. People who may not have felt those things before or ever heard music that describes those abstract feelings, actually do have the feelings and emotions within themselves perfectly.

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Photo courtesy of Nettwerk