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# THE FEELIES

Terse and expansive, clear and mysterious describing **THE FEELIES** brings to mind such opposite attributes. For well over a decade, this New Jersey band has created challenging, high individual music within a sparse sharp-ly-focused framework. The Feelies are as impervious to analysis as they are easy to enjoy, and therein lies their fascination and charm.

**TIME FOR A WITNESS**. The Feelies' latest A&M album may well be the most accurate representation yet of their eoc-ative, in-vigorating sound. Produced by founding members Bill Million and Glenn Mercer with Gary Smith (Pixies, Throwing Muses, The Chills, etc.), **TIME FOR A WITNESS** captures the subtlety and visceral force of the band as a live entity. This strong collection of new compositions displays The Feelies' patented blend of lyric brevity and melodic grace which is both an excellent introduction to the band's music as well as a reaffirmation for long-time Feelies devotees.

"This record is a kind of return to our roots," says Mercer. "Bill and I are getting back to the way we used to play together --- he's playing more lead guitar again." Adds Million: "In the past, if we weren't sure of a song's feel, we might try to improve through overdubs or in the mix. This time, we made sure the songs sounded right in their most basic state. The tracks had a good feel to them from the start."

"*Sooner Or Later*," the album's first single, is a twin-guitar driven number that simultaneously uplifts and unsettles. "*Doin It Again*" and "*Invitation*" are lean, direct rockers. From the brooding "*Find A Way*" to the slithery "*What She Said*," the band draws upon an array of sonic shadings. With their dead-on cover of the Stooges' classic "*Real Cool Time*," harkens back to their early musical inspirations.

The Feelies made their debut at Manchester High School in their hometown of Haledon, New Jersey in 1977. Their first incarnation included current members Mercer and Million (songwriters, guitarists and vocalists) and drummer Dave Weckerman. In '78, Anton Fier (later with The Golden Palominos, and an active producer, joined as drummer and Weckerman worked as a percussionist live.

By October 1978, The Feelies found themselves on the cover of the Village Voice in a feature headline "The Best Underground Band In New York," and went on to say: One recovers from their shows with a head full of empty, like coming off too much speed, staring at the television long after the station has signed off."

The band's growing reputation on the East coast led to the release of their first album, **CRAZY RHYTHMS**, on Stiff Records in 1980. Regrettably, label hassles and other factors helped to make the album an undiscovered gem at the time, until recently when Rolling Stone magazine placed **CRAZY RHYTHMS** at #49 in it's list of the Top 100 LP's of the last decade. Long out-of-print in the U.S., the album was finally rel-released by A&M in 1990, with a new recording of the Rolling Stones classic, "*Paint It Black*."

As an alternative outlet between Feelies commitments, Mercer and Million composed music for

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Susan Seidelman's first major film feature, "Smithereens." They were also involved with at least three bands concurrently. The Willises (solely instrumental), Yung Wu (fronted by Weckerman and still active) and an existing group, The Trypes, with which Feelies members joined forces.

From The Willises evolved the current incarnation of The Feelies --- Mercer and Million on guitars, Weckerman on percussion, Brenda Sauter on bass and Stanley Demeski on drums. In '84 The Feelies toured the U.S. for the first time, and in '86 recorded their first album in six years, **THE GOOD EARTH** (the band enjoys taking their own time ), produced by Mercer, Million and R.E.M.'s Peter Buck. Two years later came their A&M Debut, **ONLY LIFE**. The track "*Too Far Gone*" was included on the soundtrack to the Jonathan Demme film "Married To The Mob." Demme, a noted Feelies fanatic directed the band's video, "Away," (a track also taken from the that album), after working with the band in the film "Something Wild," where they played "I'm A Believer" in a high school reunion scene.

**ONLY LIFE**'s release was followed by extensive U.S. and European touring. The summer of '89 was spent recuperating and recalibrating. "When fall came around we were itching to play again," says Million. "We started jamming and seeing where the band was at, and songs began to develop."

When it came time to record **TIME FOR A WITNESS** a year later, The Feelies selected Gary Smith to co-produce with Million and Mercer. "We had casually known Gary for a while," Million recalls. "We were looking for a third ear, someone to help us get the right guitar sounds and generally make things easier, and he did that." The recording process itself was a rewarding experience: "We cut the basic tracks in the rafters of this huge barn (at Long View Farm, North Brookfield, MA). They had built a studio and soundstage there for a Rolling Stones tour rehearsal in the early '80's. The place had a warm feeling to it and that helped to get everyone in the right mood."

**TIME FOR A WITNESS** is both a continuation of The Feelies' previous accomplishments and a departure into uncharted and intriguing new territory. As powerful and paradoxical as ever, they remain a band that defies description and invites acclaim.