

Bill Bruford – Feels Good To Me (1978)

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A1 Beelzebub 3:16 A2 Back To The Beginning 7:09 A3 Seems Like A Lifetime Ago (Part One) 2:30 A4 Seems Like A Lifetime Ago (Part Two) 4:25 A5 Sample And Hold 5:12 B1 Feels Good To Me 3:49 B2 Either End Of August 5:27 B3 If You Can't Stand The Heat... 3:20 B4 Springtime In Siberia 2:43 B5 Adios A La Pasada (Goodbye To The Past) 7:56
Bill Bruford - drums, percussion Dave Stewart - keyboards Allan Holdsworth - guitar Annette Peacock - vocal Jeff Berlin - bass with Kenny Wheeler – flugelhorn

This is the first solo date by drummer Bill Bruford after the first demise of King Crimson. *Feels Good to Me* goes far beyond the usual prog rock conceits of its time, and enters fully into the compositional structures and improvisational dynamics of jazz. Here he surrounds himself with various mates from the Canterbury scene -- guitarists Allan Holdsworth (Soft Machine and Tony Williams' Lifetime) and John Goodsall (Brand X), bassist Jeff Berlin, keyboardist Dave Stewart, and ECM flügelhorn stalwart Kenny Wheeler. He also enlisted the enigmatic vocal prowess of poet, singer, and songwriter Annette Peacock.

The opener, "Beelzebub," is a furious staccato workout. Holdsworth trades eights with Bruford and Berlin executes loping basslines as Stewart waxes painterly with both organ and synthesizer. It's knotty and stops on a dime before charging into a beautiful solo by Holdsworth and resolving itself with the ensemble restating the theme. "Back to the Beginning" has one of four vocal performances by Peacock. It's a jazz tune -- funky, syncopated, and heavily and wildly lyrical both in groove and meter. It's a song about addictions and, given Peacock's sultry treatment, it's hard to tell if they are chemical, material, or sexual. The band works hard staying behind the singer but can't help but overshadow her.

On the two-part "Seems Like a Lifetime Ago," musical schizophrenia sets in. After a colorful pastoral intro, Peacock glides beautifully through Bruford's lyric of forlorn reverie accompanied

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by a gorgeous Wheeler solo. Then "Part Two" begins with her growling out the refrain and the band taking off for parts unknown. Hard funky rhythms call Holdsworth's lead guitar to move flat up against Bruford's frenetic drumming. They challenge each other dynamically as the rest of the rhythm section nervously dances around them. Holdsworth finally grabs the lead and plays a solo that is nothing short of breathtaking, giving way to a restatement of the theme and Bruford opening up the harmonic structure before bringing it to a transcendent close two minutes later. The album's six instrumentals are tight: they hold improvisational breaks to the limits of compositional dictation rather than vice versa. The most beautiful, "Either End of August," features Stewart and Wheeler playing unusual yet melodic solos that entwine with each other as the rest of the band struggles to keep the drama out of the music. They don't succeed entirely and the track is all the better for it.

The set closes with "Adios a la Pasada (Goodbye to the Past)," a collaboration between Peacock and Bruford. It's on Peacock's favorite theme: to emerge from love scraped and beaten, yet resolved to keep an open heart. The opening is spare and strange, coated with whispering keyboards and bass haunting the artist's every word. Then Bruford majestically leads the band, soaring into the heart of her lyric, "What it is/Is this/Is what it is/Forgive yourselves/Release yourselves from the past." The music opens up an entirely new sonic dimension, as if history, both musical and emotional, was being rewritten. And it was. Bruford has yet to issue a solo recording as powerful as Feels Good to Me. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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