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Maplewood’s Storybook Sound Makes Audio Magic on The Feelies’ New Live Album

“Some Kinda Love: Performing the Music of The Velvet Underground” was released on October 13. Storybook Sound recorded the album at a White Eagle Hall concert in Jersey City in 2018.

Donny Levit October 15, 2023



When The Velvet Underground formed in 1964, a fusion of underground rock and roll and the downtown New York avant-garde challenged the boundaries of musical experimentation. John Cale, Sterling Morrison, Lou Reed, and Moe Tucker would be hired by Andy Warhol to be the house band at The Factory, the pop artist’s famed New York studio. “The first Velvet Underground album only sold 10,000 copies, but everyone who bought it formed a band” is a famous quote credited to composer and producer Brian Eno.

When The Feelies formed in 1976, the Haledon, NJ-based band brought a frenetic post-punk sensibility to Maxwell’s in Hoboken as well as the downtown New York indie scene. R.E.M. brought them on tour and cited them as a massive influence after they heard “Crazy Rhythms,” the Feelies 1980 debut album. New York Times music critic Jon Pareles described The Feelies as “the New York area’s best-loved underground rockers



since the late 1970s.” The long-time line-up includes Glenn Mercer, Bill Million, Brenda Sauter, Dave Weckerman, and Stan Demeski.



Album cover of The Feelies “Some Kinda Love – Performing the Music of The Velvet Underground.”

On October 13, 2018, the Feelies performed 18 Velvet Underground songs at White Eagle Hall in Jersey City as part of the celebrations for the opening week of [The Velvet Underground Experience exhibit in Manhattan](#). As is customary for Feelies shows, the packed venue included New Jersey and New York concertgoers as well as dedicated fans who traveled from throughout North America and Europe to get their Feelies fix.

The advertisement for Ethical Mattress Co. features a photograph of a family of four (a mother, a father, and two children) sleeping peacefully in a bed. In the top left corner of the ad, there is a blue diagonal banner with the text "#ShopLocal". The main headline reads "Natural & Healthy Sleep Awaits". Below the headline, the pricing is listed: "Twins from \$498 | Fulls from \$698" and "Queens from \$998 | Kings from \$1,298". At the bottom of the ad, the address "387 Millburn Ave | ethicalmattress.com | (973) 250-6104" is provided. On the right side, there is a circular logo for "the ethical mattress.co" with a globe icon in the background.

Hours before the Feelies’ performance, Maplewood resident Scott Anthony set up his sound recording equipment just off stage left. Anthony and his wife Rebecca T [^] er co-founded the state-of-the-art [Storybook Sound audio mastering studio](#) in Maplewood eight years ago. Having developed a decade-long relationship with the band, it only seemed natural for him to record their live show.



The Feelies performing their Velvet Underground set at White Eagle Hall in Jersey City. (Photo by Scott Anthony)

That concert resulted in The Feelies’ **“Some Kinda Love: Performing the Music of The Velvet Underground”** which was released on October 13, 2023. The long-awaited album was mixed and mastered by Anthony in Maplewood.

“Mastering is the process of making sure songs rest well together,” he says. “It’s the bridge between the creative and the very practical steps you take; making sure the recordings are up to the current standards of streaming, or that it’s going to press well on vinyl.” For Anthony, being on the side of the stage that evening gave him a special perspective. “I was able to hear the room and hear what they’re doing at the time, so when it came time to mix the record, I knew what it felt like to be there.”



Husband and wife Scott Anthony and Rebecca Turner, co-founders of Storybook Sound located in Maplewood. (Photo by Donny Levit)

(Read more about Storybook Sound in [this article from Matters Magazine.](#))

When Anthony got into the studio, he worked in an unusual way. “I did the mixing totally backwards,” he says. “Instead of bringing up all the instruments, I just brought up the three vocal mics on the front of the stage and mastered them. And I tried to make a live record out of just those three microphones. So, I got a clear vocal presentation that was going to print well. And the band loved it.”

The pandemic put the project on hold for years. “It was really hard to work on the record remotely,” says Anthony. The band didn’t particularly vibe with the process of receiving mp3 files and giving their feedback from different locations. But when Feelies co-founder, guitarist, and singer Bill Million traveled up to Maplewood from his Florida home, the project was able to take shape.

“I’m really proud that what happened on stage made it to the end album because that’s what makes a Feelies live performance special,” says Anthony. “People have always wanted a Feelies live record because they come out with a slow burn. Their sets start very intimate and then opens and blossoms like a lotus [...] And it’s perfectly captured on ‘Sunday Morning’ where they’re gently starting to present the tune and then open up to build this crescendo. And I love that it was preserved in the end result and nobody made me squash it into a modern streaming way. I feel like we got that flower opening up on a record.”

When Lou Reed took The Feelies on the road

Bassist and singer Brenda Sauter joined the Feelies as a full-time member when the band put out their sophomore album “The Good Earth” in 1986. And just a few years later, the band would open for and share the stage with one of their major influences.



Lou Reed [second from left] plays with The Feelies in 1989. (Courtesy of Brenda Sauter)

A serendipitous encounter in 1988 led to the Feelies performing with Lou Reed for a Long Island radio station. “We were just blown away by the fact that we were on this tiny stage with Lou Reed,” says Sauter, who has particularly warm

memories of performing his iconic song "Sweet Jane." Reed would bring the band on the road for his U.S. tour.

"The venues that he played in were beautiful, restored theaters, and he was extremely nice to us," recalls Sauter. "He had a reputation of kind of blowing people off, or being very matter of fact, or kind of cold. But he was very kind to us and then he actually played with us during our opening set. That really says a lot to his character. He really helped us to earn the audience's respect."



Lou Reed with Feelies bassist Brenda Sauter in 1989. (Courtesy of Brenda Sauter)

While the Feelies are known for their excellent cover song performances, performing covers of The Velvet Underground has its novel challenges. "It's very different learning somebody else's music, rather than an original that someone within the band has written," Sauter says. "Do we try to sound exactly like the Velvets or do we have our own interpretation? So [our covers] sound very similar and they're in the spirit of the band. But there are differences ... I think the Feelies tend to play a little bit faster. It's a big undertaking to do 18 songs that originally belonged to somebody else and try to do them justice."

From the live stage to Storybook Sound

Anthony is no stranger to getting behind the sound board for the Feelies. He's worked on five of their previous albums, as well as various spinoffs referred to as the "Feelies family bands."

"I love going back into these reissues with modern tools and techniques, because there's so much more that's now possible. You can really define the borders and vivify the colors in ways that just were really hard when you're doing analog board mixing," says Anthony.



The Feelies [L-R] Stan Demeski, Dave Weckerman, Brenda Sauter, Glenn Mercer, Bill Million. (Courtesy of Bar/None Records)

Anthony's work as a live sound engineer began when he started filling in at CBGBs. "I didn't come to that music before I started working with some of the characters from that scene."

He'd later work at Hoboken's famed Maxwell's where he once did sound for Moe Tucker, the drummer for the Velvet Underground. He brought his experience and enthusiasm to the band on this current project. "Having caught the tail end of the [Velvet Underground] activity, I felt ready to go ... ready to summarize the moment. Sometimes with a record, you have the strong desire to do it. But with this album, I felt like I had to do it," he said.

Brenda Sauter met Anthony when he was doing live sound at Rent Party shows in Maplewood. She was confident that Storybook would capture the feel of the live show. "I was expecting it to sound good. But as I was listening, I could feel the adrenaline rushing and my heart beating faster. Wow, we really pulled this off. And Scott worked a lot of magic," Sauter says.

It's been a collaborative year for Sauter and Storybook Sound. In April 2023, Sauter's band Wild Carnation released a reissue of "Tricycle," their 1994 album. "When 'Tricycle' was in the works, it just seemed like a no brainer. Let's just go get Scott," she said.

(Read more about Brenda Sauter and Wild Carnation in this [New Pulp City article.](#))

In addition to the Feelies live album and the "Tricycle" reissue, Wild Carnation's 2006 album "Superbus" received its first vinyl issue by Pine Hill Records and was released on October 6, 2023. "There have been years of nothing happening other than maybe the live shows. And now, for me personally, there are three vinyl releases in one year. It's nice to be that active," says Sauter.

Storybook Sound continues to be a hot bed of audio mastering for local, regional, and national musicians. Anthony is able to balance sophisticated technology with a Maplewood studio of comfort, calm, and offers deep respect for the musical songbook of our times.



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