

Foreigner – Feels Like The First Time (2011)

Written by bluesever

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CD1: 01 – Long, Long Way From Home (The Classics Unplugged) 02 – Cold As Ice (The Classics Unplugged) 03 – The Flame Still Burns (The Classics Unplugged) 04 – Double Vision (The Classics Unplugged) 05 – Fool For You Anyway (The Classics Unplugged) 06 – Say You Will (The Classics Unplugged) 07 – Starrider (The Classics Unplugged) 08 – Waiting For A Girl Like You (The Classics Unplugged) 09 – Feels Like The First Time (The Classics Unplugged) [play](#) 10 – Juke Box Hero (The Classics Unplugged) 11 – That's All Right (The Classics Unplugged) (Bonus Track) CD2: 01 – Save Me (Bonus Track) (New) 02 – Feels Like The First Time (2011 Recording) 03 – Cold As Ice (2011 Recording) 04 – Long, Long Way From Home (2011 Recording) [play](#) 05 – Hot Blooded (2011 Recording) 06 – Double Vision (2011 Recording) 07 – Head Games (2011 Recording) 08 – Dirty White Boy (2011 Recording) 09 – Urgent (2011 Recording) 10 – Waiting For A Girl Like You (2011 Recording) 11 – I Want To Know What Love Is (2011 Recording) 12 – Juke Box Hero (2011 Recording)

Stevie Blacke String Arrangements, Viola, Violin Michael Bluestein Clavinet, Keyboards, Organ, Piano, Synthesizer, Vocals (Background) Jason Bonham Drums Lisa Dondlinger Violin Dukedale Gil Ellis Choir Choir, Chorus Tom Gimbel Flute, Guitar, Guitar (Acoustic), Saxophone, Vocals (Background) Gilmar Gomes Percussion Kelly Hansen Percussion, Vocals Tita Hutchison Scat Jeff Jacobs Keyboards Mick Jones Executive Producer, Guitars, Organ, Piano (Electric), Synthesizer, Vocals Paul Mirkovich Keyboards Jeff Pilson Bass, Guitar, Guitar (12 String), Guitar (Acoustic), Vocals (Background) Mark Schulman Drums, Percussion Aaron Sterling Drums Jacob Szekely Cello Erika Walczak Violin

Wal-Mart exclusive releases are a funny thing: the concept alone is absurd. As successful as the nationwide mega-store is, releasing one's album solely through that outlet seems a strange way to sell a record. The album will no doubt sell; the store's low-price guarantee, after all, is just so darn hard to resist. Still, there are plenty of other stores that could sell the album just as well. It isn't as if the exclusivity of the Wal-Mart deal gives the album prestige of any sort – panache is a word that no one on earth would ascribe to the retailer. However, people still continue to do it. The most notable recent example would be the Eagles' most recent LP, 2007's Long Road Out of Eden. The album did end up moving over seven million copies (it seems that

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one Lebowski's vitriol toward the band is wasted on the public), so it seems that the deal was far from a failure, even though the album's exclusivity ended up giving way to having the album put on iTunes.

Maybe it's fate that the success of the Wal-Mart model and Foreigner's 35th anniversary align. The former is a symbol of how fiscal conservatism can move product; the latter is, in reality, a meaningless date that has no particular significance in the history of contemporary rock music. Nonetheless, fate's power would not relent, and as a result these two forces have teamed up and have given us Feels Like the First Time, a two-CD set comprised of acoustic covers of older material and digitally remastered tracks of, you guessed it, older material. Never has a title been such an apt summation of an entire double-disc record.

Indeed, it does feel very much like the "first time" Foreigner's music was released. The only substantive difference is the vocalist, and even that doesn't necessitate re-recording the material. New vocalist Kelly Hansen, while not a bad singer by any measure, isn't that far different from former singer Lou Gramm; at moments they're indistinguishable. Like most albums of its kind, Feels Like a First Time is a perfunctory re-release, something that Foreigner diehards would buy in a heartbeat, but for those non-fans it amounts to nothing more than yet another greatest hits compilation disguised as a re-envisioning. The album shows no shortage of the band's successes, but as time has gone on, it's the bands flaws that are more evident than anything ("Well I cried for you so long / My river of tears ran dry" — yep, still corny 35 years later).

The acoustic disc ("classily" titled "Acoustique") and the remastered disc (not-so-classily titled "Juke Box Heroes") are both deeply flawed, though both for different reasons. The acoustic disc succumbs to what many acoustic albums do: they do absolutely nothing to invigorate the original tracks. Instead, all of the songs here play just like the originals, only diverging sonically in timbre. Even on the tracks that sound pretty good in a stripped-down style, such as "Fool for You Anyway" and (oddly enough) "Double Vision," the instrumentation is basically note for note. If one is a fan of the originals, then she's likely to enjoy the stuff here. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the enjoyment of the songs is contingent on how good they were twenty or thirty years ago; a pleasant listen, perhaps, but one that's too predictable for its own good. (And as far as predictability is concerned, this is Foreigner we are talking about here).

The second disc is even worse off. As if the initial premise of Feels Like the First Time wasn't bad enough, it only gets worse on disc two. Thus far, Foreigner have released ten greatest hits LPs (that actually outnumber their studio output); with this album, make it eleven. Based on those numbers, it seems more as if the band isn't interested in releasing studio records, but are

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comfortable in merely revisiting all of its old material over and over again, making sure to take the time to call it something else. This trend might not exactly be revelatory (around greatest hits compilation number three this all probably started coming together), but it is nonetheless true for this record, and frustratingly so. The only real thing different on this remastered disc is that the production quality is slightly better; the extra garnishes of synthesizer on some of the tracks hardly amount to anything exciting. This means that while this is basically another Foreigner greatest hits compilation, it does have the benefit of ... being more polished. For people who were concerned about Foreigner's lack of said polish, this album is worth the time. Otherwise, the ten other greatest hits collections in Foreigner's repetitive oeuvre should suffice. ---Brice Ezell, popmatters.com

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