

ON HER THIRD ALBUM, **FEIST** JOURNEYS TO A MAGICAL PLACE AND BRINGS HER GUITAR ALONG

text **LAURA MARCUS** photography **JORGE CAMAROTTI**

Some say that the old song and dance routine is a remnant of a musical past that we no longer live in. It's all about the glitz and glamour, the bright lights and make up that transform musicians into decadent, untouchable icons. But there's a Canadian songstress who is harkening back to what really matters. Her velvety voice pours out of her tiny frame effortlessly. She is honest, kind, hardworking and gifted and her name is Leslie Feist. Her new album "The Reminder" is peppered with lyrics that could stand on their own as poetry, and the melodies that rest behind them elevate the words to a magical place. It is in this magical place that Feist takes her listeners, but at the first moment when we begin to take her too seriously, she turns around and makes music videos that would make Gene Kelly proud. These aren't the typical video productions we've come to expect from pop sensations, they are more like what you would expect to see in a Broadway musical. There's something provocative in their simplicity, and that is something that Feist has been known for doing: creating powerful, memorable moments with just her voice and a few instruments.

After her critically acclaimed 2004 album *Let It Die* made waves in Europe and Canada, it was clear that Feist's solo career was worth watching. Until that point, she was mostly recognized for her work with Toronto rock collective Broken Social Scene. When she moved to Toronto in 1998, she found a solid base of supportive friends, many of them musicians themselves. It was natural for a certain amount of collaboration to develop, and it was in this way that Feist began to develop herself as a solo artist. "Nobody lives in a vacuum," she says, cradling a glass of water at New York's Hotel on Rivington. "People can't succeed without their friends watching their back."

In 2000, Feist left Canada for Berlin, and subsequently became roommates with electro-vixen, Peaches. Moving to Europe made her heart grow fonder for her circle of friends back home. "I very rarely got to see my buddies because I was away all the time, but I still felt this web that we were all connected by," she says. With so many friends sharing the same career and aspirations was there ever any competition? "If your friends want to see you fail, then they aren't really friends are they?" she says. "When something would happen for anyone while I was away in Europe, I would feel a little vibration, like spidey senses style. I'd feel like I was still linked to them all and anything good that happened would resonate for all of us."

What Feist is creating in her music and aesthetic appeal is wholly new, but there is something familiar and comforting about it. Her smooth voice and classic look, nod at benevolent friends of the past. A dash of Dinah

Washington, and a hint of Audrey Hepburn may be palpable, but it is difficult to say as even Feist herself has a hard time discussing her influences. She brushes back a few stray hairs and clears her throat, "I think that we're all sponges," she says. "There is so much to take in and we're such a media-based culture, that we are all made up of pieces from the outside. It's a struggle to make sure that there is a piece of you there, [and] that you aren't just made up of Lego pieces from the outside; that there is an internal self in there somewhere."

"So since we're all sponges, you never really know what your squeezing out that will come out in a song. I listen a lot, read, interact with people and I think that all of that has equal bearing on what you end up squeezing out in the end."

Her latest album, *The Reminder* came about after years of touring and recording. Making it reminded her of when she first moved to Toronto and was living in her father's basement, she says. With no distractions, she wrote feverishly and in hindsight considers that one of her most creative and productive times. When it came time to record *The Reminder*, friends flew in from all over the world to lend a hand and take part in what would surely be a fantastic follow-up to *Let It Die*. In the outskirts of Paris, her newest songs took form. From the upbeat melody of "My Moon, My Man" to the slow uncoiling of "How My Heart Behaves", Feist found herself content and hopeful.

One might think that with all the recent praise she's been receiving, there may be room for an ego to bloom, but that never seems to be the case with Leslie Feist. "There was never a more poignant recognition of my own nerdiness, than when I was in Paris and totally unable to play the couth, shrugging, cool game," she says. "Being cool is no fun!" So why has she remained so grounded? "I'm an enormous nerd, to the point where I know I could never have any kind of documentary film crew following me. Puppet shows, nature documentaries the whole thing. We [Broken Social Scene] just always jackass around. When we first started touring we used to call ourselves the Canadian jackass crew. The one thing we had in common was that we were all so unsavvy."

So don't expect to find Feist clutching a Balenciaga bag any time soon, as her hands will be surely be wrapped tightly around a twelve sided die. "I've made some of my best friends in being a nerd and recognizing the nerd in them. I'm reclaiming nerdiness, and I'm not really interested in the pursuit of cool. I've tried and I can't win at that game, so I might as well play my own game, maybe some Dungeons & Dragons in the back."



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