



Albums from the Lost and Found: Night Out / Spirit of St. Louis / Another Breath (Part 1)

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by Jeff Fiedler

Albums from the Lost & Found is a regular feature on thegreatalbums.com in which contributor Jeff Fiedler reviews and helps us rediscover great pop albums that seem to have been lost to time.

She may not have a Top 40 hit of her own to her name, but Ellen Foley certainly has one extraordinarily interesting resume for someone who never quite became the big star she always seemed on the verge of becoming, and the cast of talents she's worked with – both on record and on screen – reads like a who's-who of music and movie industry A-listers.

Foley remains best known to this day as the duet partner of then-boyfriend Meat Loaf ("Stop right there!") on the *Bat Out of Hell* singer's Top 40 classic "Paradise by the Dashboard Light." [Always an in-demand backing vocalist, Foley would also serve as part of the Phil Spector-sized choir of backing vocalists on the album's title cut, "All Revved Up with No Place to Go," and the Top 40 hit "You Took the Words Right Out of My Mouth."]



Foley would consequently end up getting a solo deal of her own (Karla DeVito taking her place on the promotional tour for *Bat Out of Hell*) with Meat Loaf's label, Cleveland International (a subsidiary of Epic) and would make her solo debut in 1979 with *Night Out*, produced by two of Foley's biggest supporters, former Mott the Hoople frontman Ian Hunter and former David Bowie guitarist Mick Ronson.



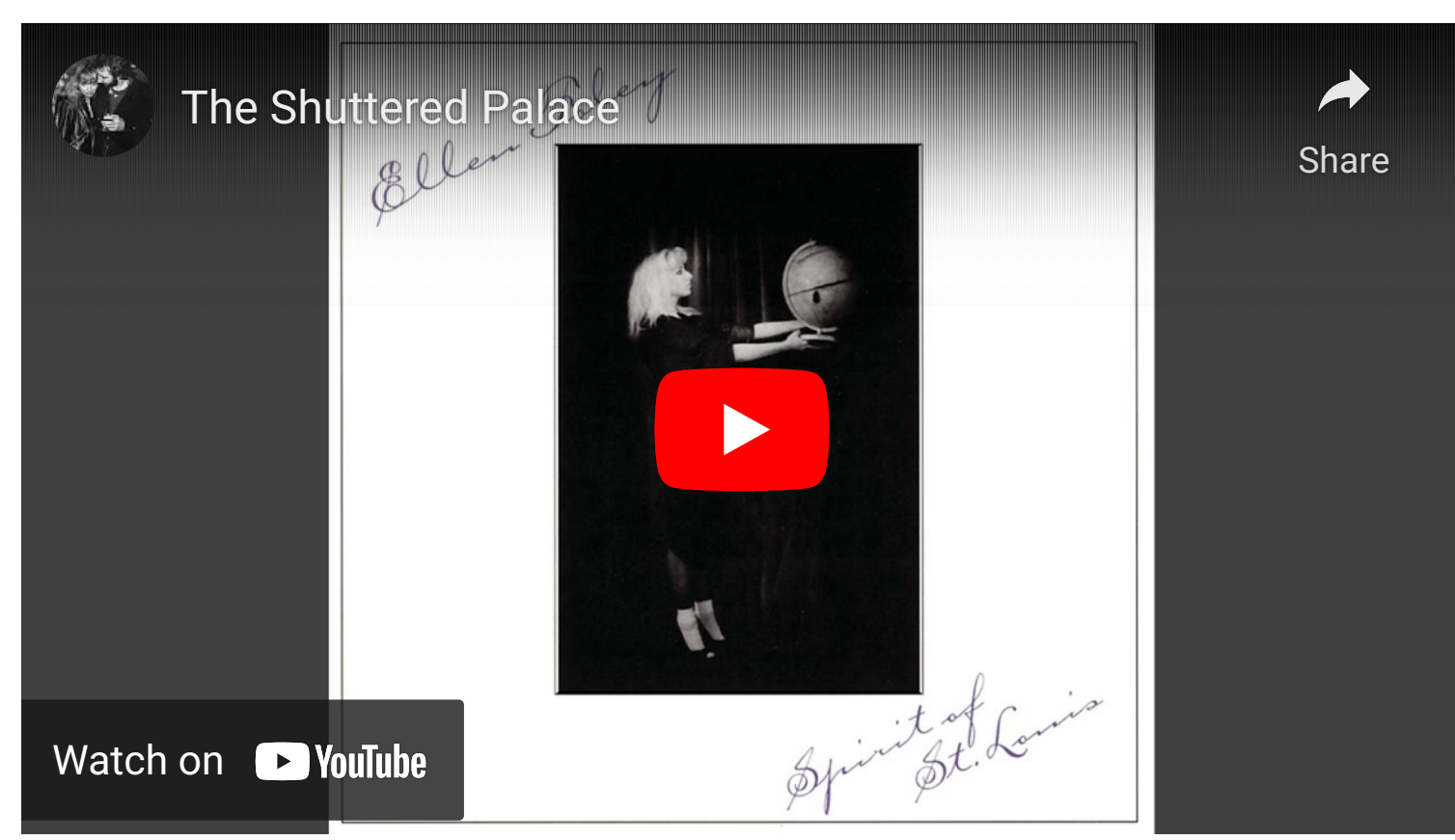
Hunter had already employed Foley as a backing vocalist on his underrated solo album *You're Never Alone with a Schizophrenic* and would continue to use her on his records for years to come, prominently featuring her as a sparring partner on the great *Welcome to the Club* cut "We Gotta Get Out of Here."



Since Foley is more a singer than a songwriter, her 1979 debut *Night Out* (the backing band on which not only features Hunter and Ronson but future solo star Martin Briley of "The Salt in My Tears" fame and Rory Dodd, best known for serving as Bonnie Tyler's duet partner on "Total Eclipse of the Heart") is largely devoted to covers (though Foley co-writes the delightful and thunderous opener "We Belong to the Night" and Hunter contributes the album-closing ballad "Don't Let Go"), but Foley proves herself to be a great interpreter on such cuts as "Sad Song" (originally done by obscure rocker Mark Middledler and covered by Rachel Sweet), Philip Rambow's "Young Lust," Timi Yuro's "What's a Matter Baby" (Foley's only Hot 100 entry on her own, peaking at #92), Graham Parker's underrated *Strick to Me* cut "Thunder and Lightning," and, best of all, the fiery pounding strut of the Rolling Stones' "Stupid Girl," which Foley makes all her own.



Foley's second solo outing, 1981's *Spirit of St. Louis*, intriguingly features the cryptic credit "Produced by my boyfriend," the then-boyfriend in question being none other than Clash guitarist/vocalist Mick Jones. [Indeed, Foley would play a notable role in the Clash's later years, providing backing vocals on several album cuts on *Sandinista!* and *Combat Rock*, even jointly singing lead with Jones on the *Sandinista!* single "Hitsville U.K." Foley is also reportedly the subject of the lyrics to the band's smash hit "Should I Stay or Should I Go."]



Not only did Foley get Jones to produce the disc, but the album is nearly a Clash affair in everything but name; all four Clash members – Jones, Joe Strummer, Paul Simonon, and Topper Headon – serve in Foley's backing band throughout the record, while Jones and Strummer are also responsible for penning most of the material, Clash sideman/violinist Tymon Dogg also penning three cuts.



Spirit of St. Louis only sporadically actually sounds like the Clash, however (although Jones duets with Foley on the marimba-laden art-pop of "Torchlight," and "M.P.H." and the Foley-penned "Phases of Travel" are fairly driving rockers), and it doesn't even sound remotely like *Night Out*, either, Foley having swapped out the rock bombast of that album for a completely different kind of sound, one heavily indebted to European pop and even cabaret.

Where the change in style came from is anyone's guess, but Foley seems to be enjoying getting to sink her teeth into such heavily theatrical – and even slightly avant-garde – material like the Euro-pop of "The Shattered Palace" and "Theatre of Cruelty," the French standard "My Legionnaire" (originally popularized by Edith Piaf), the Nancy Wilson cover "How Glad I Am," and the album-closing march "In the Killing Hour."



Best of all, though, is the lazy groove of Tymon Dogg's gorgeous "Beautiful Waste of Time"; it might be the most conventional song on here, but it's also the best (with the sole possible exception of "Torchlight"), and Foley delivers a low-key, playfully flirtatious vocal that fits the song perfectly.

In Lost & Found

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