



London-born Julien Temple is a terrifically inventive documentarian and creator of rock videos that matter. It's possible that Temple's greatest contribution to the cinema ultimately will prove to be his daughter, Juno, but, right now, his films are well worth the effort to find. Unlike "The Filth & the Fury" and "The Future Is Unwritten," about the Sex Pistols and Joe Strummer respectively, his completely engaging rockumentary, **"Oil City Confidential,"** found almost no traction in the U.S. That's almost certainly because the '70s pub-rock band on which his camera focuses, Feelgood, had no impact here in terms of record sales, concert tours or T-shirt revenues. In England, though, Feelgood is a band remembered fondly by Baby Boomer audiences who still consider it to be the missing link between the Pistols and Clash. Highly theatrical, extremely loud and angry as hell, Feelgood emerged from tiny Canvey Island, a weekend retreat for Londoners and their "caravans," and home to much of the country's petrochemical industry. It was nearly washed out to sea in the great North Sea Flood of 1953, but proved too tough to die. In telling the band's story, Temple mixes imaginative montages and other graphic devices, with the testimony of band members, fans and journalists. There's also plenty of footage shot at concerts. The person who comes off the best in the film is the same one whose drunken revelry and drugged antics nearly killed the band in 1975, just as it was about to attempt an American tour. Even today, guitarist Wilko Johnson looks and sounds as if he's got a million things on his mind and only 10 minutes to spit them all out. His candid reminiscences of band life are hilarious, as are his recollections about growing on Canvey Island, which sits at sea level and looks as if it could sink if one too many tourists cross the bridge over the Thames estuary. Released on DVD only a couple of weeks apart from Richard England's similarly rousing "East End Babylon," Temple's documentary goes a long way toward explaining what real bands look like before they're seduced, signed and scrubbed to within an inch of their being by record-company weasels. - Gary Dretzka

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