

The Ultimate Jazz Archive Vol.161 – June Christy [1945-1947] [2005]

Written by bluesever

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01. I Never Thought I'd Sing The Blues 02. On The Sunny Side Of The Street 03. Easy Street 04. No Baby, Nobody But You 05. I Got The Sun In The Morning 06. Come Rain Or Come Shine 07. Tampico 08. Ride On 09. That's The Stuff You Gotta Watch 10. Are You Livin' Old Man 11. Shoo Fly Pie And Apple Pan Dowdy 12. Just A-Sittin' And A-Rockin' 13. It's Been A Long, Long Time 14. Ain't No Misery In Me 15. Willow Weep For Me 16. Across The Valley From The Alamo 17. I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart 18. If I Should Lose You 19. Day Dream 20. Little Grass Skirt 21. Skip Rope 22. I'll Bet You Do

Singer June Christy is often considered the epitome of the "cool" jazz vocal style popular during the 1950s. Known as the "Misty Miss Christy," her delivery quite clearly echoes the maturation of popular jazz music from the hot beats of the 1930s and 1940s to the playful sultriness of the 1950s and 1960s.

Born Shirley Luster, Christy's parents separated before she reached five years of age, leaving her mother to take care of both her and her older brother. Although her family had no musical background Christy's talent surfaced early, and at age 13 she made her professional debut with the Decatur-based Bill Oetzel Orchestra, with whom she remained for five years. After graduating from high school she headed to Chicago, where she landed a job with progressive jazz orchestra leader Boyd Raeburn and changed her name to Sharon Leslie.

Christy's road to stardom took a detour when she came down with scarlet fever and was unable to travel with the band when they left town. Soon after recovering from her illness, though, she learned that Stan Kenton's orchestra was in town and that vocalist Anita O'Day had just quit. She immediately went to Kenton's booking agent and auditioned. A week later she started with the band, under a new name, June Christy, which was given to her by Kenton.

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Although she resembled O'Day in both style and sound Christy quickly became a star on her own, performing on such hits as "Tampico" and "Shoo Fly Pie." While working with Kenton she met arranger Pete Rugolo, who would later work closely with her on her memorable recordings for Capitol during the 1950s. She also met her future husband, sax player Bob Cooper. The couple married in 1946, shortly after his joining Kenton, and remained together until her death.

In 1947 Christy recorded her first solo recording for Capitol. She left Kenton the following year to pursue her own career, briefly reuniting with the bandleader in 1950 when he formed his forty-piece Innovations in Modern Music Orchestra. Recording sporadically between 1949 and 1952 Christy found little chart success on her own until 1952 and the release of "My Heart Belongs to Only You." The song's success convinced Capitol to allow Christy and Rugolo to try something a little off-beat instead of the usual pop standards.

Building an album around the surreal jazz tune "Something Cool," Christy scored a big hit with both the public and the critics. From then on she was given the green light to record whatever she wanted. She went on to release a string of hit songs and albums before retiring in 1965. She returned to the studio only once more, for 1977's Impromptu. June Christy died in 1990 from kidney failure. --- parabrisas.com

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