

Shirley Horn - May The Music Never End (2003)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Forget Me* [03:30] 2. *If You Go Away* [04:49] 3. *Yesterday* [04:14] 4. *Take Love Easy* [05:12] 5. *Never Let Me Go* [05:17] 6. *Watch What Happens* [03:29] 7. *I'll Wind* [07:09] 8. *Maybe September* [07:10] 9. *Everything Must Change* [05:01] 10. *This Is All I Ask* [06:43] 11. *May the Music Never End* [05:07] Musicians: Shirley Horn - vocals, piano Roy Hargrove - flugelhorn (4, 7) Ahmad Jamal - piano (8, 10) George Mesterhazy - piano Ed Howard - bass Steve 'Sycos Steve' Williams – drums

Remarkably, the most reluctant of jazz stars ranks among the most prolific. The seemingly indefatigable Shirley Horn remains notoriously press-shy and self-conscious around effusive fans. The music, she insists, is the star. It can speak for itself, as it has in album after glorious album for nearly half a century. Recent releases have followed a fairly consistent pattern, with Horn accompanying herself on gorgeous standards wrapped in delicate Johnny Mandel arrangements. With *May the Music Never End*, the pattern shifts slightly. Mandel, who previously doubled as producer, hands the reigns to Horn. She, in turn, relegates the 88s to George Mesterhazy, because of losing a foot to diabetes complications, and focuses exclusively on vocal duties. The results rank among her most shimmeringly transcendent.

Examining lost or fading love from 11 distinct perspectives, Horn travels from the wistful cloudiness of Jacques Brel and Rod McKuen's "If You Go Away" to the velvet-trimmed bluesiness of Ellington's "Take Love Easy" (as bracing as a twilight martini and beautifully embroidered by Roy Hargrove's richly muted trumpet, which also enriches a chilling "Ill Wind.") She blends pounding disappointment with jaded resignation on "Everything Must Change" then teams with Ahmad Jamal for a dusky meander through Gordon Jenkins' catalog of simple pleasures on "This Is All I Ask."

Typically, singers handle these songs like injured sparrows, filling them with aching despair. Ah,

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but Horn's too worldlywise, too staunchly self-sufficient for such neediness. Instead, there's a wry smile in her voice as she navigates a choppy subcurrent of surviving. Nowhere is this more masterfully evident than on Paul McCartney's "Yesterday." Taking what is likely the most overexposed pop song in history, Horn manages to make it freshly intriguing by transforming it from a despondent exercise in self-pity to a cherished life lesson. Her heartbreakingly fractured reading of the single word "love" says more than most singers can say in a dozen albums. ---
Christopher Loudon, jazztimes.com

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