

Julie Tippetts - Sunset Glow (1975)

Written by bluesever

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A1 Mind Of A Child 5:08 A2 Ocean And Sky (And Questions Why?) 5:16 A3 Sunset Glow 7:51 A4 Now If You Remember 1:55 B1 Lillies 5:43 B2 Shifting Still 4:21 B3 What Is Living 2:28 B4 Behind The Eyes 5:13 Alto Saxophone – Elton Dean Arranged By – Julie Tippetts Bass – Brian Belshaw, Harry Miller Cornet, Horn [Tenor] – Mark Charig Drums – Louis Moholo Electric Guitar – Brian Godding Piano, Harmonium – Keith Tippett Trombone – Nick Evans Voice, Piano, Acoustic Guitar, Drums [Clay], Tambourine – Julie

After leaving Brian Auger's band and becoming the musical and life partner of pianist/composer Keith Tippett, Julie Tippetts issued *Sunset Glow*, her first solo recording, in 1974 on the Polydor label. After her soul, pop, and R&B beginnings, Tippetts redeveloped her voice, taking it and her music in a different direction. She began to extend its reach in improvisation, breath control, and uncommon phrasing. She is one of the most compelling and original singers in recorded music's history. *Sunset Glow* is a curious recording, one that walks the razor's edge of composition and improvisation. Fans of Robert Wyatt's earlier solo records, *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard* and *Rock Bottom*, will appreciate its strange song structures, varying dynamics, and knockout lineup -- Tippetts sings, plays piano, acoustic guitar, and percussion, and she is backed by a host of luminaries from the Canterbury Scene: Brian Godding, guitars; Keith Tippett, piano, harmonium; Mark Charig, cornet, tenor horn; Elton Dean, alto saxophone; Nick Evans, trombone; Brian Belshaw, bass; Harry Miller, bass; as well as African drum master Louis Moholo.

The set begins innocently enough with "Mind of a Child," a fairly straight-ahead Baroque pop song with a lilting piano line accompanying Tippetts' plaintive singing. But even here, with the channel-shifting production and suspended chords, Keith Tippett's harmonium providing a baseboard for everything, and the slightly off-kilter horns winding in and out of the backdrop, this is anything but a pop song. From here on it's almost anything goes, as "Oceans and Sky" brings jazz, free improv, prog rock, and blues to bear in a dynamite soaring wail of a tune that was virtually unlike anything else at the time. She pierces the sky with her improvising, opening her voice up with the heaviness and swallowing it whole. Many have criticized the simple lyric

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lines Tippetts wrote for these songs, but this is philistinism; her lyrics fit these melodies better than anything else could. They adorn simply, speak plainly, and offer the heart of the matter in each case. In that sense, they are truly poetic. If the production styles sound rooted in the '70s, it's all for the better. It's hard to imagine anyone making a record like this today -- because this is a singular achievement in any era. The set ends with "Behind the Eyes (For a Friend, R)," which listeners can safely assume is about Robert Wyatt, whose accident took place a bit before the album was recorded. Its stark, simple, shimmering glissando piano walks a simple line under the moaning, imploring, almost chant-like voice of Tippetts. It's a moving track that closes as fine a debut as one is likely to hear. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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