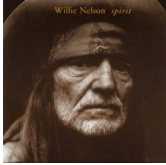


Willie Nelson - Spirit (1996)

Written by bluelover

Sunday, 25 July 2010 16:06 - Last Updated Sunday, 10 September 2017 09:25

Willie Nelson - Spirit (1996)



- 01 Matador
- 02 She Is Gone
- 03 Your Memory Won't Die In My Grave
- 04 I'm Not Trying To Forget You Anymore
- 05 Too Sick To Pray
- 06 Mariachi
- 07 I'm Waiting Forever
- 08 We Don't Run
- 09 I Guess I've Come To Live Here In Your Eyes
- 10 It's A Dream Come True
- 11 I Thought About You, Lord
- 12 Spirit Of E9
- 13 Matador

Fiddle – Johnny Gimble Lead Guitar, Vocals – Willie Nelson Piano – Bobbie Nelson Rhythm Guitar, Vocals – Jody Payne

Of all the records Willie Nelson made in the 1990s and since that time, none is more misunderstood or ignored than *Spirit*. Coming as it did so quietly and unobtrusively in 1996, a year and a half before the celebrated *Teatro*, *Spirit* is Willie's most focused album of that decade. Self-produced and featuring the sparest of instrumental settings -- Willie and Jody Payne play guitars, Bobbie Nelson plays piano, and Johnny Gimble plays fiddle on certain tracks -- Nelson weaves a tapestry, a song cycle about brokenness, loneliness, heartbreak, spiritual destitution, and emerging on the other side. The set begins with the instrumental "Matador," which seems to usher in the atmospheric texture for this album. "She's Gone" tells its heartbreak story with as much lilt and pastoral grace as is possible without being sentimental. Willie's guitar soloing is gorgeous; he's deep in the groove of the washes of Bobbie's chords. Hearing a steel-string guitar play rhythm and a nylon-string guitar play lead is an interesting twist as well. But Nelson digs the notion of "She's Gone" deeper into the listener's consciousness with "Your Memory Won't Die in My Grave": "Been feelin' kinda free/But I'd

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rather feel your arms around me/Because you're takin' away/Everything I ever wanted..../It's a memory today, it'll be a memory tomorrow/I hope you're happy someday/"Your memory won't die in my grave...." And when Nelson moves to the full acceptance issue as he does on "I'm Not Trying to Forget You," the music is slightly off-kilter in the intro, as if the singer cannot come to grips with the song. Payne plays just behind Willie, stretching time, making it slip and shimmer all the way into "Too Sick to Pray," the most devastating country waltz to be recorded since Johnny Paycheck's Little Darlin' albums. On "I'm Waiting Forever" and "We Don't Run," the sun begins to rise out of the heart's bleak night and comes to the dawn of a new day in the life of love and spiritual connection. This is Nelson writing conceptually as he did early on with Phases and Stages and Red Headed Stranger, but he is at his understated best here, moving deeply into the skeleton of the song itself and what it chooses to reveal through the singer. And while Spirit is quiet, it's a tough, big record that makes you confront the roar of silence in your own heart. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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