

Al Green – Let's Stay Together (1972)

Written by bluelover

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1 Let's Stay Together 3:15 2 La-La For You 3:29 3 So You're Leaving 2:53 4 What Is This Feeling 3:40 5 Old Time Lovin' 3:17 6 I've Never Found A Girl 3:37 7 How Can You Mend A Broken Heart 6:21 8 Judy 3:44 9 It Ain't No Fun To Me 3:27 + 10 Eli's Game 4:56 11 Listen To Me 2:30 Arranged By [Strings] – Charles Chalmers, James Mitchell Backing Vocals – Rhodes, Chalmers And Rhodes Baritone Saxophone – James Mitchell Bass – James Mitchell, Leroy Hodges Drums – Al Jackson, Howard Grimes Guitar – Tennie Hodges Organ, Piano – Charles Hodges Tenor Saxophone – Andrew Love, Ed Logan Trombone – Jack Hale Trumpet – Wayne Jackson

Prior to this album, Al Green never had a number one song. The title track, "Let's Stay Together," achieved that status and held it for nine consecutive weeks. Green's ingenuity produced one of the all-time classics, which has the bounce of a dance cut and the passion of a ballad. The dynamic soul singer's whispers, animated cries, and riffing enhance his already stirring delivery. This album was sold on the strength of the title track as there were no other selections to grace the Billboard charts. However, this album includes the timeless gem "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart" and lesser-known beauties like the exulting "Judy," the cookin' testimonial "I Never Found a Girl," and the soothing blues effort "It Ain't No Fun to Me." The Arkansas native and his creative partner Willie Mitchell season these selections with lucid rhythm arrangements complemented by the faint strums of a guitar and brawn, unchiding horns. ---Craig Lytle, AllMusic Review

Few artists have the effortless grace of Al Green. Born the son of a sharecropper and raised in the Baptist church, his voice is simply unmistakable. Economic, passion-filled and authentic, he can convey more emotion in a simple phrase than other singers, overworking and over-

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wringing, can strive for across their entire careers.

Let's Stay Together, his fourth studio album, marked a high-watermark of Green's collaboration with Hi Records and producer Willie Mitchell. Their paring is one of the greatest in soul music – they've left a body of work that is so identifiable that it's up there with Holland-Dozier-Holland's recordings with The Supremes or Jerry Wexler's with Aretha Franklin.

The gospel-influenced title-track is one of the best-known love songs ever recorded. Perfectly yet not clinically played and sung very much from the heart, it's as if every scrap of Green's life and love depended upon it. A number one in the States and a sizeable hit over here, the song was later to revive Tina Turner's career in 1983 – but her version is like cava to Green's Moët. The zenith of Mitchell and Green's partnership, it has all the trademarks of their relationship – close microphoned instruments, swooningly soulful brass performed by the Memphis Horns underpinned by Charles Hodges' Hammond.

Few artists have exhibited such mastery of their material. On So You're Leaving, when Green breaks into scat, the pathos is writ larger than, say, Marvin Gaye's; you feel you are overhearing a man in desperation. However, amid all the self-penned material, it is a cover that comes and steals the show – How Can You Mend a Broken Heart, the 1971 Bee Gees hit, is turned into a tour de force, supported by astonishing musicianship. Green wrests every scrap of emotion out of the lyric, yet not once overdoes it. It is with good reason Q magazine described it as taking "the soul ballad to new levels of artistry and refinement".

Green left secular music at the height of his fame in the mid-70s to become a minister at the Full Tabernacle Church in Memphis, and has since returned to pop-soul sporadically, memorably turning in a spectacular Glastonbury Sunday afternoon performance in his white suit in 1999. Let's Stay Together is a fabulous reminder of him at the apex of his career. ---Daryl Easlea, BBC Review

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