

George Shearing - Black Satin (1956)

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1 *The Folks Who Live On The Hill* 4:32 2 *If I Should Lose You* 2:38 3 *Starlight Souvenirs* 3:27 4 *What Is There To Say* 2:45 5 *Black Satin* 2:37 6 *You Don't Know What Love Is* 2:57 7 *Nothing Ever Changes My Love For You* 4:35 8 *One Morning In May* 2:31 9 *Moon Song* 2:38 10 *Medley: As Long As I Live - Let's Live Again* 3:56 + 11 *Sleepy Manhattan* 2:58 12 *If I Had You* 2:48 George Shearing – piano Billy May – arranger

The author of *Black Satin's* original liner notes would have one believe the album was recorded for the sole purpose of aiding swinging bachelors in their quest to seduce women (ranging from "the girl in blue gingham to the lady in luxurious black satin"). Astute jazz lovers know, however, that even the poppiest George Shearing records are far more than simple cocktail lounge dreck. It's mellow music for sure, and heavily orchestrated, but there is a level of harmonic sophistication and brilliant arranging here that qualifies *Black Satin* for classic status. George Shearing's sublimely elegant tone, touch, and phrasing are perhaps never better and more simply displayed than on this album. Plus, the record in some ways serves as a primer to his style, as he manages to add subtle shadings of Latin music, bebop, and barrelhouse throughout (sometimes all in the same tune). As the title suggests, this isn't an album full of ferocious up-tempo jazz chops, but rather mood music in the best possible sense of that term. Often sounding like a soundtrack to a non-existent film noir classic or a concept album in the vein of Frank Sinatra's *In the Wee Small Hours*, it's by turns mysterious, jovial, exotic, romantic, melancholy, and wistful. *Black Satin* owes a good part of its success to the strings (co-arranged by Billy May, who also worked with Sinatra), which are perfectly mated to the quintet in a manner that recalls the best work of George Martin with the Beatles. Though often lumped in with the lounge genre, *Black Satin* is by no means simply background music. Best listened to as a continuous piece, the album (which is available on CD with its sister disc, *White Satin*) reveals deeper and deeper subtleties upon repeated listening. ---Pemberton Roach, AllMusic Review

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