

Sarah McLachlan - Shine On (2014)

Written by bluelover

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01. In Your Shoes 02. Flesh And Blood 03. Monsters 04. Broken Heart 05. Surrender And Certainty 06. Song For My Father 07. Turn The Lights Down Low 08. Love Beside Me 09. Brink Of Destruction 10. Beautiful Girl 11. The Sound That Love Makes 12. What's It Gonna Take 13. Little B

Paul Bushnell - Bass, Vocals Matt Chamberlain - Percussion Kevin Dean - Trumpet Luke Doucet - Guitar, Vocals Jamie Edwards - Keyboards Emmanuel Ethier - Guitar Bill Gossage - Bass David Grott - Trombone Christine Jensen - Horn Arrangements, Sax (Alto) Ingrid Jensen - Trumpet Vincent Jones - Bass, Drum Programming, Guitar, Hammond B3, Keyboards Abe Laboriel, Jr. - Drums Pierre Marchand - Bass, Drums, Keyboards, Piano Melissa McClelland - Vocals Philippe Melanson - Drums, Percussion Joel Miller - Sax (Tenor) Jamie Muhoberac - Keyboards, Vocals Chris Potter - Bass Joel Shearer - Guitar, Vocals Ashwin Sood - Drums Lyle Workman - Guitar, Vocals

Plagued by increasingly middling album sales, Sarah McLachlan is in a position to take the kind of risks she was probably wise to eschew in the wake of her blockbuster 1997 album *Surfacing*. Though longtime collaborator Pierre Marchand is on board for most of the songs, *Shine On* marks the first time since her 1988 debut that the singer-songwriter has worked on an album with producers other than him. It's also her first effort since her departure from Arista Records. Unfortunately, aside from the use of horns here and there (an apt choice for her debut on venerable jazz label Verve Records), neither of these moves appear to have moved McLachlan to make any substantive changes to her sound, which, since her commercial peak in the late '90s, has inched decidedly away from the alt-rock of her early work in favor of middle-of-the-road adult contemporary.

Best known for his work with such disparate acts as Metallica and Michael Buble, Bob Rock's production on the standout "Flesh and Blood" and the comparatively hard-edged "Love Beside Me" plugs a bit of figurative and literal electricity into the proceedings. The former showcases the exquisite breaks in McLachlan's voice and a percussive undercurrent reminiscent of tracks from the singer's 1993 album *Fumbling Toward Ecstasy*. The rest, however, is largely

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forgettable, with songs like "Brink of Destruction" that rarely live up to their typically melodramatic titles. The album's lead single, the string-laden "In Your Shoes," is a so-called empowerment anthem inspired by 16-year-old Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai filled with platitudes like "live your truth."

When McLachlan fully embraces the smooth-jazz path she's been threatening to go down for over a decade, as she does on "Surrender and Certainty" and "Song for My Father," which is surprisingly less saccharine than you might expect, it at least starts to feel like she's evolving as an artist. But those moments are few and far between on an album that feels longer than it is, which, I guess, is a desirable quality for what is basically glorified background music. ---Sal Cinquemani, slantmagazine.com

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