

**Song Exploder**  
**Shania Twain - You're Still The One**  
**Episode 270**

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

*("You're Still The One" by SHANIA TWAIN)*

Shania Twain is a singer and songwriter from Ontario, Canada. She's the only female artist to have had three consecutive Diamond albums — albums that have sold over ten million copies. Actually, her 1997 album *Come On Over* is the best-selling album by a female solo artist of all time. One of the most iconic songs from that iconic album is "You're Still the One." It was co-written and produced by Mutt Lange, who had previously produced some other classic albums, like *Back in Black* by AC/DC and *Pyromania* by Def Leppard. He had previously produced Shania Twain's second album, *The Woman in Me*, from 1995. For this episode, Shania told me the story of writing "You're Still the One." She told me about what the song meant to her when she was making it, over 25 years ago, and what it means to her now.

*("You're Still The One" by SHANIA TWAIN)*

*(Vocals: "(Still the one) / You're still the one I run to / The one that I belong to / You're still the one I want for life / (Still the one) / You're still the one that I love / The only one I dream of / You're still the one I kiss good night")*

Shania: My name is Shania Twain.

*(music fades out)*

"You're Still The One" was written when I was married to Mutt Lange. We had met and married within six months.

He was quite a few years older than me. And we were from very, very different worlds. Mutt had a very British and South African accent, which was quite strong. I was born in Ontario, Canada. So the combination of us was a real contrast.

But, musically, we were *not* from such different worlds, Mutt being a *very*, *very* big country music fan. And rock was a staple in all of my upbringing in Canada. Much of it being what Mutt had written and produced. I knew the Def Leppard albums, the Foreigner albums, The Cars albums, and of course AC/DC.

*("You Shook Me All Night Long" by AC/DC)*

So I felt like I had already known him for so long, inside out, because Mutt Lange was those records, on many levels.

It was just so obvious that we needed to be together, which was difficult for other people to believe, on the outside. There was a lot of skepticism about whether our relationship would last.

In interviews, I would be asked questions like, *What is your role in this music relationship?* Questions that insinuated that I was a product being shaped and formed and developed. Questioning my ability, 'cause I was the newbie and Mutt was already so accomplished.

So "You're Still The One" was definitely written with me feeling like I needed to say, we're gonna make it. We're gonna get through all the skepticism. And years from now, everybody will see that you're still going to be the one for me.

*(humming verse melody)*

The day of writing "You're Still The One" is so clear in my head. I start humming a melody around in the kitchen, which is very common for me.

*(humming verse melody)*

The lyric "Looks like we made it" comes out.

*(Vocals: "Looks like we made it")*

I thought "Mmm... I'm onto something here." But we're not *that* far into our marriage. I could be getting ahead of myself. I know we still have a long way to go together. So I'm just gonna put it out there. And I'm gonna say it in this song.

*(guitar in)*

I picked up my guitar. And the melody came really fast.

*(acoustic guitar and vocals)*

*(Vocals: "Looks like we made it / Look how far we've come, my baby / We mighta took the long way/ We knew we'd get there someday")*

And then the chorus lyrics came together. That was the next thing I did.

*(acoustic guitar and vocals)*

*(Vocals: "You're still the one I run to / The one that I belong to / You're still the one I want for life")*

And Mutt came in. He just sat across from me. I played him what I was doing, and he said, "Okay, well, let's just roll the chorus over a few times."

So I played and sang and played and sang and, you know, he would just say, "Do it again," and "do it again," and "do it again." And I could see his mind coming up with something.

And then he just started singing:

*("You're still the one")*

And that was the hook to me. I'm just like, that's the hook! That is the hook.

*(Vocals: "(Still the one) / You're still the one that I love / The only one I dream of / You're still the one I kiss good night")*

The way Mutt and I heard the music together, it wasn't gonna sound like any other country record, on purpose. Our first album together, *The Woman in Me*, just rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. I got a lot of criticism questioning my authenticity as a country artist. And I was foreign. I wasn't even American; never mind I wasn't Southern. So I was offensive to some of them. And they made it pretty clear.

But I knew I belonged there, because those were my roots. I mean, I'd been singing in bars from the age of eight years old. Writing my own music from the age of 10.

And my repertoire as a little girl was Dolly Parton, Tammy Wynette, it was George Jones. And that is in me. But I wanted to be my own artist.

And the music was gonna be a hybrid of all of my various influences, stylistically: R&B, Rock, Folk. And, of course, Country.

And so the song was recorded in Nashville. Because there's a different feel to the country music player. So, for example, it affects the groove entirely.

*(all drums)*

If you bring a country drummer into a session, he's gonna give a song a very different feel than if you bring in a rock drummer, or if you bring in an R&B drummer.

And the session for "You're Still The One" was particularly, for me, about the drums.

*(drums - brushes on snare)*

So, see that patter? It's brushes on the snare. It's like, you exhale, and you're in a slow dance. It's a sway. It's a very romantic, soulful groove.

*(all drums with guitar)*

We needed to get the tempo right. So I remember working a long time on that. I was there, singing along, so we could set that tempo for the drummer, Paul Leim.

*(Vocals: "They said, "I bet they'll never make it" / But just look at us holding on / We're still together, still goin' strong")*

It wasn't a challenge for me vocally. It was very, very natural. I tend to sing lazy that way and so the delivery of the song stayed very true and pure to the way I wrote it, right down to the backing vocals.

*(Vocals: "You're still the one I run to / The one that I belong to / You're still the one I want for life")*

Mutt did backing vocals. And he gives a style to things, has like a signature sound to his vocals, for sure. You know that's Mutt Lange backing vocals.

*(Backing vocals: "The one I want for life")*

And it was a great contrast to my very solitary storytelling.

*(Vocals: "(Still the one) / You're still the one that I love / The only one I dream of / You're still the one I kiss goodnight")*

Mutt wanted to add the sensuality to the intro of the song. You know, he wanted to milk the romance. And I... I never enjoyed that part. I'm almost, I'm like, ugh, this is so corny.

Hrishikesh: Do you mind if we listen to it?

Shania: [Laughs] See, it makes me laugh, even thinking about listening to it!

*(Spoken word intro: "When I first saw you, I saw love")*

I'm in there and I'm just giving him a bunch of, like, different takes.

*(Spoken word intro: "And the first time you touched me")*

I would've liked to listen to the outtakes. 'Cause I'm sure I was laughing between some of them, thinking oh my God, I'm really, you know, pouring it on here.

*(Spoken word intro: "And after all this time / You're still the one I love")*

John Hobbs is on the organ.

*(organ into steel guitar)*

The steel guitar, I would say, most particularly, was, in the control room, a very "wow" moment. It was a very, [Gasp] – "That's magic."

Bruce Bouton was the steel guitar player on "You're Still the One," and he was just the perfect stylist on that instrument, for this song. This is an instrument that works in waves. It's waves and attack. Waves and attack.

*(steel guitar)*

Mutt is also riding that performance in the mix, to exaggerate the swells. 'Cause he wants the instrument to disappear and then come back, and then disappear and come back.

*(steel guitar solo)*

It's a haunting instrument. It makes you reflect from a distance.

*(steel guitar into end of song)*

*(Vocals: "Yeah / You're still the one I run to / The one that I belong to / You're still the one I want for life")*

It ends very alone. It's just my voice. So there's no more beat at that point, which I think is very appropriate.

It's just the way I sing it.

*(Vocals: "I'm so glad we made it / Look how far we've come, my baby")*

"You're Still the One" has gone through its own evolution and meaning and purpose. When I wrote the song, I wrote it from my perspective. About my relationship, and about feeling so good and satisfied that we made it.

When we got divorced, I knew I couldn't go on stage without doing this song. 'Cause it had become one of my biggest songs.

And it was very hard. I was choking down the tears. It made me very sad to sing it.

But forcing myself through that wall, through that, *Oh, I can't believe I have to sing this song again, 'cause it's not true anymore.* And, you know, I was kind of in this emotional space with it. Because I'm looking at the people and they're going, well, "She's singing about something that's no longer true."

I didn't know if that would make everybody sad, how would they would feel about that. But I soon realized that it wasn't about me.

People had adopted the song as *their* song. They weren't thinking "Shania doesn't mean this song anymore." They were thinking, "This is *my* song."

"This is *our* song." "This is my wedding song." "This is our anniversary song." And then I started celebrating that myself. I'm like, wow, this song has way surpassed why I wrote it. It's so much more than that. It's not about me. And I let go of that. I let go of my own attachment to the reason I wrote it.

And of course, in all the years that we were together, I meant every, I meant it. I was singing it for myself more than anything.

And then all of a sudden, I was singing it for everybody else.

Hrishikesh: Coming up, you'll hear how all of these ideas and elements came together in the final song.

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And now, here's "You're Still The One," by Shania Twain, in its entirety.

*("You're Still The One" by SHANIA TWAIN)*

To learn more, visit [songexploder.net](http://songexploder.net). You can find links to buy or stream "You're Still The One," and you can watch the music video.

Shania Twain will be in residency in Las Vegas starting in May 2024. And you can get tickets for that on her website, [ShaniaTwain.com](http://ShaniaTwain.com).

This episode was produced by Craig Eley, Theo Balcomb, Kathleen Smith, Mary Dolan and myself. The episode artwork is by Carlos Lerma, and I made the show's theme music and logo.

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I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Thanks for listening.