

= The Shirelles =

The Shirelles were an American girl group that achieved popularity in the early 1960s . They consisted of schoolmates Shirley Owens ( later Shirley Alston Reeves ) , Doris Coley ( later Doris Kenner @-@ Jackson ) , Addie " Micki " Harris ( later Addie Harris McFadden ) , and Beverly Lee .

Founded in 1957 for a talent show at their high school , they were signed by Florence Greenberg of Tiara Records . Their first single , " I Met Him on a Sunday " , was released by Tiara and licensed by Decca Records in 1958 . After a brief and unsuccessful period with Decca , they went with Greenberg to her newly formed company , Scepter Records . Working with Luther Dixon , the group rose to fame with " Tonight 's the Night " . After a successful period of collaboration with Dixon and promotion by Scepter , with seven top 20 hits , the Shirelles left Scepter in 1966 . Afterwards , they were unable to maintain their previous popularity .

The Shirelles have been described as having a " naive schoolgirl sound " that contrasted with the sexual themes of many of their songs . Several of their hits used strings and baião @-@ style music . They have been credited with launching the girl group genre , with much of their music reflecting the genre 's essence . Their acceptance by both white and black audiences , predating that of the Motown acts , has been noted as reflecting the early success of the African @-@ American Civil Rights Movement . They have received numerous honors , including the Pioneer Award from the Rhythm and Blues Foundation , as well as being accepted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996 , and named one of the 100 best acts of all time by Rolling Stone in 2004 . Two of their songs , " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " and " Tonight 's the Night " , were selected by Rolling Stone on its list of the greatest songs of all time .

= = Initial career and success = =

The group that later became the Shirelles was formed in 1957 by four teenage girls from Passaic , New Jersey , under the name the Poquellos ( or Pequellos ) . The founding members , Shirley Owens ( born June 10 , 1941 ) , Doris Coley ( August 2 , 1941 ? February 4 , 2000 ) , Addie " Micki " Harris ( January 22 , 1940 ? June 10 , 1982 ) , and Beverly Lee ( born August 3 , 1941 ) , entered a talent show at Passaic High School at the suggestion of a teacher . After hearing them sing " I Met Him on a Sunday " , a song they had written for the show , their classmate Mary Jane Greenberg convinced the reluctant Poquellos to meet with her mother , Florence , the owner of Tiara Records . After several months of avoiding Greenberg and telling her that they were not interested in singing professionally , they were booked to Tiara . By the end of the year they had changed their name to the Shirelles , a combination of the first syllable of Owens ' given name and -el , reminiscent of then @-@ popular group the Chantels , after briefly using the name the Honeytunes . That year , they released their first song , " I Met Him on a Sunday " ; after local success , it was licensed to Decca Records for national broadcast and charted at # 50 . The song was influenced by doo @-@ wop , but infused with pop melodies .

Tiara Records , along with the Shirelles ' contract , was sold to Decca Records in 1959 for \$ 4 @,@ 000 ; Greenberg stayed as the manager , securing performances for the group , including one at the Howard Theatre in Washington D.C. After two singles did poorly , including their first release ? with Coley as lead vocalist ? of " Dedicated to the One I Love " , a cover of the " 5 " Royales song of the same name , Decca returned them to Greenberg and gave up on them , considering them a one @-@ hit act . On Greenberg 's new label , Scepter Records , they rereleased " Dedicated to the One I Love " as a single , which peaked at # 89 ; Wayne Wadhams , David Nathan , and Susan Lindsay in Inside the Hits attribute the low rating to poor distribution . In order to better promote the group , Greenberg asked songwriter Luther Dixon , who had previously worked with Perry Como , Nat King Cole , and Pat Boone and co @-@ written the 1959 hit " 16 Candles " , to write for and produce songs for them . Dixon accepted .

Their first single produced with Dixon , " Tonight 's the Night " , was released in 1960 and peaked at # 39 . The success of " Tonight 's the Night " led to the girls being booked to perform with several major artists , such as Etta James and Little Richard , and facilitated Scepter 's move to a larger

office . It was followed by " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " , written by husband @-@ wife songwriting team Gerry Goffin and Carole King ; the song went on to become the first Billboard number @-@ one hit by an African @-@ American girl group , possibly the first by any girl group . " Tonight 's the Night " was later used as the title song for the 1961 album Tonight 's the Night , which also included " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " and " Dedicated to the One I Love " .

After the success of their singles , the Shirelles became frequent guests of Murray the K , who hosted them on his " All Star Rock Shows " on the New York radio station WINS . During this same period they reissued " Dedicated to the One I Love " , which peaked at # 3 , followed by " Mama Said " , then " Baby It 's You " , written by Burt Bacharach , Luther Dixon , and Mack David , " Soldier Boy " , and " Boys " , with saxophonist King Curtis .

In 1963 Dixon left Scepter , which presaged a tailing @-@ off of the number of the Shirelles ' singles to chart . However , they carried on performing and recording . Dionne Warwick replaced Owens and Coley , who took leave to marry their fiancés , in concerts and the group continued to record material . That year , their song " Foolish Little Girl " reached the pop / R & B Top 10 , and they had a cameo in the film It 's a Mad , Mad , Mad , Mad World . However , later in 1963 they learned that the trust , holding their royalties , that they were supposed to receive from Scepter on their 21st birthdays , did not exist . In response , they left the label , and later filed a breach of contract suit against the company . Scepter met this with a countersuit for quitting ; both suits were withdrawn in 1965 , after an agreement was reached . Knowing that Scepter had lied about the trust disappointed the Shirelles , who felt deceived . In a 1981 interview with Bruce Pollock , Owens said that Greenberg had put on a " mother routine " , which the girls had " fall [ en ] for ... completely " .

= = Later career = =

In later years , the Shirelles declined in popularity due to pressure from the British Invasion and the heavy competition from other girl groups , including the Chiffons , the Dixie Cups , the Ronettes , the Supremes , and the Crystals . During this period , Warwick often replaced Coley due to the latter 's family commitments . The Shirelles were still bound to Scepter and thus unable to record for another company until the end of their contract in 1966 . Their last single to chart was 1967 's " Last Minute Miracle " , which peaked at # 99 .

After the commercial failure of their most recent releases , Coley left the group in 1968 to attend to her family . The remaining three Shirelles recorded songs for several labels , including Bell Records , RCA , and United Artists until 1971 . Afterwards , they toured singing their older songs , and participated in the filming of the 1973 documentary Let the Good Times Roll , recording two songs for it . Coley returned as lead singer in 1975 , replacing Owens , who left that year to pursue a solo career . In 1982 Harris died of a heart attack in the Hyatt Regency after two performances in Atlanta , Georgia , with the group . The following year , the remaining three original members performed " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " with Warwick on her album How Many Times Can We Say Goodbye .

= = Current versions of the group = =

Today , the original members tour in different , separate , groups , although the trademark to the Shirelles name was eventually acquired by Lee . Shirley Owens performed on the Doo Wop 51 PBS special in 2000 , and continues to tour under the name ' Shirley Alston Reeves and her Shirelles ' . Lee currently tours with new members , billed as " The Shirelles " . Coley died in Sacramento , California , on February 4 , 2000 , of breast cancer .

= = Style = =

Wadhams , Nathan , and Lindsay describe the style of the Shirelles early work as " tight , almost doo @-@ wop harmony " . Owens ' vocals , described by rock n ' roll writer Alwyn W. Turner as being " wonderfully expressive " , were capable of sounding " almost , but not quite " out of tune ,

which in his opinion led to Owens ' sounding innocent in her songs ; music critic Albin Zak describes her vocals as being able to intone desire and vulnerability . The other members , singing backup , also convey what Michael Campbell , a professor of music at Western Illinois University , calls a " naive schoolgirl sound " . The lyrics sung by the Shirelles tended to be fairly simple and " barely " concealed the subtexts of the songs . The songs were implicitly directed at female listeners , with the male subjects of songs being referred to as " he " instead of " you " ; this was a change from previous female @-@ written songs , which tended to be more gender neutral , and helped pave the way for the " confessional " songs of 70s singers like Joni Mitchell and Carole King .

Musically , their works with Dixon were influenced by Brazilian baião and featured numerous instances of syncopation .

= = Influences = =

Steve Huey of AllMusic notes that the Shirelles defined " the so @-@ called girl group sound with their soft , sweet harmonies and yearning innocence " , with their songs predating Motown in their widespread crossing of racial demographics , both in the US and in Britain . He also notes that they spawned " legions of imitators " , and laid a blueprint for future female pop stars to follow . Turner writes that the Shirelles " launched [ the girl group ] genre " , noting that their early work already included " the essence " of the genre ; Alwyn Zak expands on the statement , noting that the influx of female groups started after the success of " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " .

Michael Campbell notes that the Shirelles ' success reflected the African @-@ American Civil Rights Movement . He indicates that works such as " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " , written by a white couple , produced by an African @-@ American man , with vocals by young African @-@ American women and strings sounding like they were targeted at a white audience , conveyed a " color @-@ blind " message on top of its more obvious sexual one .

= = Accolades = =

In 1994 , the Shirelles were honored by the Rhythm and Blues Foundation with the Pioneer Award for their contributions to music . The award was accepted by Owens , Lee , and Kenner . As Coley was accepting her award , she said " This is dedicated to the one I love " , and sang an impromptu rendition of " Soldier Boy " together with Owens and Lee . Two years later they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame , together with Gladys Knight and the Pips . At the ceremony in the Waldorf @-@ Astoria Hotel in New York , the three surviving members sang a medley of songs after being presented the awards by Merry Clayton , Marianne Faithfull , and Darlene Love . In 2002 , they were inducted into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame . Lee and Owens accepted the award .

In 2004 , Rolling Stone ranked them # 76 on their list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time . Paul Shaffer , who did the write @-@ up , wrote that the girl @-@ group sound , originated by them , was " everything to [ him ] " ; he also described their impromptu performance of " Soldier Boy " as inspiring . They also included two of the Shirelles ' songs , " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " and " Tonight 's the Night " , on their list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time . In the 2010 edition , " Will You Love Me Tomorrow " was ranked 126th , while " Tonight 's the Night " was ranked 409th .

In September 2008 , the Shirelles ' hometown of Passaic honored the group by renaming a section of Paulison Avenue between Passaic and Pennington Avenues ( the section where Passaic High School is located ) " Shirelles Boulevard " . The dedication ceremony was attended by both surviving Shirelles . Owens said that it was different than when they were inducted into the Hall of Fame , as it was their home town . She noted that " the people who loves [ sic ] us and we loved are right here . "

= = Stage musical = =

The Shirelles ' story was shown in Baby It 's You ! , a musical revue written by Floyd Mutrux and Colin Escott , which follows the story of Greenberg and Scepter Records . The revue played on

Broadway for 148 performances , opening at the Broadhurst Theatre on April 27 , 2011 and closing on September 4 of the same year.The use of their likenesses without permission led to Lee , as well as the estates of Coley and Harris , to sue Warner Bros.

= = Discography = =

= = = Albums = = =

= = = Compilation Albums = = =

= = = Singles = = =

| \* no RnB Charts printed by Billboard during these chart runs