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AUGUST 27, 2014

Streaming Audio: <https://soundcloud.com/sonyashell/blue-skies-single/s-m4c4v>

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THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Atlanta-Based Country Music Artist Sonya Shell Releases New Single "Blue Skies"

Sonya Shell, the Atlanta-based country music singer-songwriter whose 2002 debut CD "Still in Love" won her a loyal fan base, has emerged from a long hiatus with her eagerly anticipated follow-up single "Blue Skies." The rock-tinged country track – available now for purchase on iTunes, Amazon, CD Baby and other digital distribution outlets, as well as via streaming services – is Shell's optimistic ode to new beginnings.

"Writing and performing make me feel alive, and while I have been away from writing, I still have had so many opportunities over these last years to perform." The City of Hope Gala in Chicago, known for Cancer Research, is one of the most important performances that stand out for Shell, since she lost her own mother to lung cancer in 2012.

"For me, 'Blue Skies' is about beginning again in many ways, including after losing my mom, who was one of my biggest fans of my music. And so the question came to mind, 'What is your blue sky?' When I or anyone is in a situation where you feel stuck or uninspired in your life, what's that thing that makes you feel hopeful about the road ahead or inspires you to step out of your comfort zone and risk a new beginning?"

For Shell, the first step toward that new beginning meant dusting off her songwriter's pen. Citing strong women artists like Mary Chapin-Carpenter, Shania Twain and Dolly Parton as primary creative influences, Shell crafted in "Blue Skies" a driving, upbeat sing-along anthem that is as much about a defiant spirit of independence and empowerment as it is about fresh starts. She channeled those themes into an old-school country story-song whose heroine leaves an unfulfilling relationship behind, hops in the car with the top down, and hits the road in search of exciting new adventures.

"It's the classic break-up song," Shell said. "My songwriting is definitely in the 'keep it simple' theme, and I love telling these kinds of stories we can all relate to. The message of the song transcends to what the 'break-up' could be, other than the obvious."

To record the single, Shell looked no further than her longtime friend and previous collaborator Brian Stephens, owner and producer/engineer at Atlanta's BonzoTunes Studio. "He's just so incredibly talented. His creative abilities in taking the initial demo, creating a great arrangement and getting a fabulous final product are what make Brian an amazing producer. We wanted to make sure we had a song that could commercially stand up to what's out on country radio today while keeping the true spirit of the song."

Shell noted that Stephens has built relationships over the years with A-list talent across numerous genres. For "Blue Skies," he brought in Nashville musicians Wendell Cox, lead guitarist (the Travis Tritt Band); Shannon Wickline, keyboards (the Charlie Daniels Band); Atlanta vocalist Joy W. Fowler; and Marshall Coats, freelance bassist/producer, of Atlanta. The track was mastered by Richard Dodd, well known for working with country artists including Miranda Lambert, Lady Antebellum, Jason Aldean, and more.

Now that "Blue Skies" has been released, it's already garnered a fan in Nashville, Tenn., award-winning choreographer Jamie Marshall, who has written a line dance tailored expressly for the song. It will debut in September at one of her line dance workshops in Knoxville, Tenn., when a video is recorded featuring Shell performing and a full complement of dancers.

Shell is currently fine-tuning the rest of the material for the "Blue Skies" project and will return to the studio with Stephens and the band to lay down more tracks she's written, either for an EP or a full-length album.

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(Single cover photo by Shawna Herring Photography, Atlanta)