REVIEW · SOUL

Golden | Jill Scott

Not every love song needs two people.

SJB SELECTION · OCTOBER 2026



Jill Scott at Jazz in the Gardens, 2012. Photo: Alphonse Photography, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Not every love song needs two people.

Sometimes all it takes is one person who, after spending too long seeing herself through other people's eyes, finally decides to take herself back.

That's where *Golden* lives.

Jill Scott released it in 2004, as the first single from *Beautifully Human: Words and Sounds Vol. 2*. She wrote it with Anthony Bell, who also produced the track.

But calling it simply neo-soul is like calling the sun a light bulb: technically, something checks out, but we miss almost everything.

Because here, the point isn't the genre.

The point is freedom.

Freedom from what?

Jill Scott never quite says. And that's the beauty of it.

The chains she sings about have no name and no padlock. They could be a love that got too tight, the fear of getting it wrong, other people's judgment, the expectations that cling to you like clothes someone else picked out.

So *Golden* does something curious: it takes something as heavy as a chain... and puts it inside music that weighs as much as air.

The groove walks. The voice smiles. Soul blends with gospel, R&B with spoken word.

Jill Scott doesn't sound like she's singing against someone.

She sounds like she's walking away from something.

And that's a huge difference.

Her voice doesn't pound on the door. It opens it.

But is it a love song?

Yes. Only this time, the lover is life itself.

No serious source ties *Golden* to a partner or a specific relationship. Those who have listened closely hear something else: self-acceptance, knowing your own worth.

So maybe the real question in this song isn't: who will love me?

It's a far more uncomfortable one.

How much of my life am I really living as myself?

And that's why the title works so well.

Gold is usually something you buy, guard, lock in a safe.

Not here.

Here, gold isn't something you own.

It's something you become.

Musically, everything feeds that feeling. Anthony Bell's production is warm, elastic, bright. It doesn't build a monument around the singer: it builds her a road.

And Jill Scott walks down it with that voice halfway between singer, poet and preacher: she speaks, sings, insists, caresses the words, until the personal message becomes a shared one.

This is where *Golden* stops being just a beautiful soul song.

It becomes almost a small ceremony.

First you listen to Jill Scott talk about her own freedom.

Then, without noticing, you start thinking about yours.

And that's probably its most powerful insight: not telling us what the chains are.

Because if they had a name, they'd only be hers.

Left nameless, they become ours too.

And so *Golden*, beneath that sunny surface, hides a thought far less innocent than it seems.

We can spend a whole life inside a cage without noticing, especially when the cage is comfortable.

Jill Scott doesn't tell us to tear it down.

She does something more elegant.

She opens the door, lets the sun in, and starts walking.

> ***Gold isn't something you own. It's something you become.***

LISTEN

Golden is in our playlist Soulful R&B & Gospel.

Jill Scott, *Beautifully Human: Words and Sounds Vol. 2* (2004). Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.

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