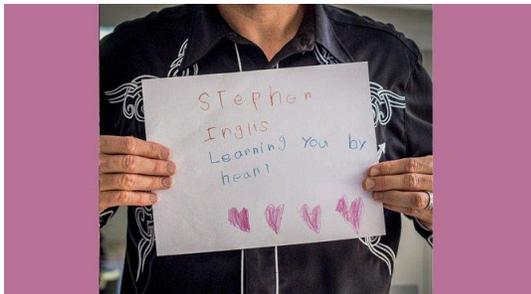


Stephen Inglis - Learning You By Heart Album Review

By [Randy Radic](#) on 02 October 2015

Review of Learning You By Heart Album by Stephen Inglis

Stephen Inglis, who hails from Honolulu, Hawaii, just released his ninth album, '**Learning You By Heart**'. Inglis, who is a fingerstyle guitarist, plays slack-key guitar, a genre of music that had its provenance in Hawaii. For those that don't know, fingerstyle guitarists pluck the strings of the guitar with their fingertips, finger-picks or fingernails. Fingerstyle guitarists don't utilize a flatpick, also known as a plectrum. Fingerstyle defines a technique more than a style.



Slack-key refers to open tuning, which is where the strings of the guitar are loosened or "slacked", resulting in the six strings forming a single chord, usually G major. According to tradition, Mexican cowboys, called paniolo, introduced the style to Hawaiian

musicians in the late 1900s.

Inglis does both: uses open tuning (slack-key) and plucks the strings with his fingertips. Joining Inglis on the album are: Jon Hawes, on upright and electric bass; Tom Piranha Gierman, on drums; Michael Piranha McGraw, on electric bass and harmonica; Eric Petersen, who handles the keyboards; Kilin Reese, on mandolin; Chris Lau, also on upright bass; Paul Sato, on banjo; and Erika Elona, who provides harmony vocals.

'Learning You By Heart' comprises a baker's dozen, thirteen tracks. The first track is '*Blind With Haste*'. After a preliminary solo acoustic guitar, vocals join in; then the band kicks in and the song takes off. It's a great way to begin the album. The next number is the title track, a casual, chilled tune with country-pop nuances.

A definite traditional Hawaiian flavor saturates '*Maria Luisa*', which somehow manages to include a bit of country twang. And the combination of the oh-so-right chorus and the stellar backing vocals provides pure listening pleasure.

'*Don't Postpone Joy*' may be the prize on the album. Featuring Tuck and Patti, the jazz duo, the tune is slow and gooey. '*Cold Sunday*' is another track that deserves a mention. It's heavy with blues nuances and is probably the coolest and most contemporary of the tracks on the album.

'*Wildfire*' displays what fingerstyle is all about, as Inglis struts his stuff on what can only be described as a rock and roll folksong, with a majestic guitar solo tacked on the end. '*The Long Run*' is a minimalist tune, featuring Inglis on guitar, along with a harmonica. For such a simple song, it's quite passionate.

When advised that Inglis plays Hawaiian slack-key music, they usually expect native Hawaiian folk music, grass skirts and lots of heavy drums and maybe some coconuts. That's not what Inglis writes or plays. His music has a Southern California, country rock feel to it. So it might not be what some listeners bargained for. But it is good music and worth listening to.