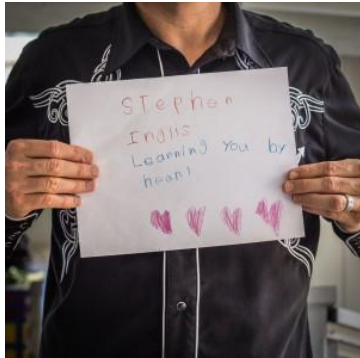


PF Wilson 10.2015



When “Blind with Haste,” the lead-off track from Stephen Inglis’ album *Learning You by Heart*, starts off the listener might be reminded of the late John Denver. However, the Hawaiian-born and raised Inglis quickly establishes his own sound. Known for performing the music from his home state, this first salvo is Continental U.S. all the way.

The 50th State flavor starts on the title track which bats second. It’s still solidly Americana though, with lyrics about trains and kissing in the moonlight. Of course, Hawaii is part of America (despite what Donald Trump and a bunch of knuckleheads think), so it’s traditional music is indeed part of the Americana genre.

“Lay Your Dagger Down” brings out a bit of the blues, complete with organ though it’s a bit peppy for that style of music. In “Maria Luisa,” Inglis echoes another tropical bard, Jimmy Buffet. Not a party jam, but it’s still darn catchy.

The only problem is, the album never goes beyond just a dash of Hawaiian influence. Inglis has won many awards for his Hawaiian slack guitar playing, so perhaps he wanted to do something different here. Exploring other rock and acoustic styles is understandable in that case. The listener here though is denied Inglis’ acumen for performing his trademark style. And it’s not like it hasn’t been done effectively. Poi Dog Pondering, for example, a Hawaiian band that moved to Austin, and then Chicago, managed to island it up here and there, while still bringing in other influences.

The 13 songs on *Learning You by Heart* are equally appealing, even if there isn’t stand-out track. It’s versatile enough to be played on a Sunday morning, or while having your mates over for a grill out.