

STEPHEN INGLIS – LEARNING YOU BY HEART ALBUM REVIEW

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Stephen Inglis is fingerstyle guitarist from Honolulu, Hawaii who specialises in the Hawaiian slack key style of playing. To date he has released 9 albums, worked with artists such as jazz duo Tuck and Patti, Grateful Dead drummer Bill Kreutzmann and Hawaiian musician Dennis Kamakahi. His most recent studio effort, “Learning You By Heart” was released on June 21st and will see him going on a tour covering a large chunk of the US as well as to the Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival in Tokyo, Japan.

“Blind With Haste” is the opening number and it opens with acoustic guitar before being shortly followed by vocals. The song really comes into it’s own when the rest of the band, which features another guitar, keyboards, backing vocals, drums and bass, joins in, as they add an extra dimension to the song.

The title track is the second song and it’s a much more laid back number. The dreamy acoustic guitars vaguely remind me of Jimi Hendrix’s acoustic work in places though Inglis’ track has a distinct country/folk sort of feel.

“Maria Luisa” is probably the song on the album that I felt sounded the most Hawaiian. The verses have a country feel, but the acoustic guitars smattered throughout change things up a bit. The chorus is definitely the highlight, the simple backing vocals work so well you could close your eyes and almost picture yourself in Hawaii.

The sixth track on the album features legendary jazz duo Tuck and Patti, who both give a knockout performance, with Tuck Providing guitar and Patti providing vocals. The slow paced track is a good choice for a collaboration.

“Cold Sunday” is a stripped back bluesy number, with little more than guitar, bass and harmonica backing Inglis. It’s a cool tune and it definitely sticks out as one of the standout numbers on the album.

The third last track, “Wildfire” features some beautiful fingerstyle acoustic guitar. Once again, the keyboards add a new dimension to the music, giving things a rock n’ roll ballad sort of feel, the guitar solo towards the end is also very cool.

“The Long Run” is the albums final track, beginning with finger picked guitar and vocals and joined by harmonica later on. The stripped back nature of the tune makes a perfect closer for the album. It’s great to hear Inglis play these sort of arrangements as well as full band tracks, as it really shows off his songwriting skills.

All in all, “Learning You By Heart” doesn’t sound like I expected it to sound, I was anticipating something much more like traditional Hawaiian music. Though there are

elements of that style here, I do think the album has a sort of country feel to it. Despite not being what I expected, the album still features very listenable and enjoyable music.