

Laid-back energy shines through Stephen Inglis's folk album 'Learning You by Heart'

Jake Sorich / September 28, 2015

Even if you haven't heard of him before, one listen to Grammy-nominated folk artist Stephen Inglis, one of Hawaii's greatest musicians of his generation, and you'll discover why it's worth familiarizing yourself with his latest album, "Learning You by Heart."

Inglis also performs in Montana next month. He'll be at Symes Hot Springs Hotel in Hot Springs on Oct. 9. For more information on that show, check out www.symeshotsprings.com/music.

This Hawaiian Slack key guitarist plays in the same vein as Jerry Garcia, Townes Van Zandt and Gram Parsons. His vocals have an ever-so-subtle nod to Tom Petty in them, as well, which is more apparent on some songs on the album than others.

The real power of Inglis's talent, though, comes from the way he puts you at ease with his music. Go ahead, try to listen to this album from start to finish with clenched fists, tight shoulders and a growl on your face. Unless you're not really listening, there's no way you can do it.



The first track on the album, "Blind with Haste," sets the bar high with a message that nearly anyone can relate with.

In a video of him performing the song live, Inglis explains the song, saying, "This is a song where I was at a little period in one of those spaces *gesturing toward his head* where you start thinking there's not enough hours in the day and you just want to be with the ones you love and breathe and just chill but you can't fit that in somehow."

The song's chorus hits all the right buttons, especially, with Inglis singing "And the ticking of the clock beats in my ear. On this moonlight I was wishing you were here. There's so much that need not lay to waaaste time and time again, but we're blind with haste."

That's the thing with the entire album. There's poetry found in the words if you just spend the time to discover them. For example, here's the start from "Maria Luisa" where Inglis sings, "Weekend party came and went like a flicker in a fire. everybody gettin' down also getting higher. The hottest time had by all, the coolest dude was me. Nonchalantly laying back to see what I could see. I saw her dancing honey beat. Maria Luisa, wow, catch your breath."

He's got a solid simile, some opposite imagery with the high and low, hot and cold phrases, before settling on the subject of the song, the woman who caught his eye, Maria Luisa.

Inglis uses the song "Troubador" to show off his guitar skills, including a stellar electric riff along with the steady acoustic playing. It's a formula that's proven to work and Inglis traverses the style in a way that doesn't separate itself much from the pack, but it's a fun, easy-going song nonetheless.

He changes it up again on the song "Cold Sunday" with a funky harmonica in the middle. It's a nice bit of contrast, and shows that Inglis understands how to create songs that sound different from one another while keeping a similar feel to them.

Listening to the album, it's evident why over the years Inglis has won multiple awards for his music. In addition to the Grammy nomination in 2009, he's won the 2011 Hawaii Music Award for folk album of the year, the 2012 Nā Hōkū Hanohano Award (Hawaii's version of Grammys) for Slack Key Album of the Year, and the 2013 Nā Hoku Hanohano Award for Hip Hop Album of the year, interestingly enough.

In conclusion, if you're a fan of American folk music or bands like the Grateful Dead, you'll love Stephen Inglis. While some people might think that his sound is a little heavy with nostalgia, you could also argue that it still works for him so there's no real reason to fix what isn't broken.

For more on Inglis, check out his [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Soundcloud](#) pages.

EDITOR'S RATING

Stephen Inglis puts out a strong showing with "Learning You by Heart" featuring easy-going Hawaiian folk songs.



0 User ratings

- 9.0

PROS

The lyrics are well written and Inglis adds enough different elements in each song to make them feel a bit different from one another without straying too far from the same laid-back tone that's evident on every track.

CONS

One might say the songs here aren't modern enough, although you can argue that they don't need to be.