

Tommy Emmanuel & John Knowles – Heart Songs (2019)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

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1 *Cold, Cold Heart* 4:21 2 *How Deep Is Your Love* 3:14 3 *I Can't Stop Loving You* 3:29 4 *Somewhere* 3:32 5 *I Can Let Go How* 3:09 6 *Lullabye (Goodnight, My Angel)* 3:45 7 *After Paris* 2:02 8 *Walkin' My Baby Back Home* 2:37 9 *I Can't Make You Love Me* 3:47 10 *Where Is Love* 3:10 11 *He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother* 3:48 12 *Eva Waits* 4:19 13 *Turning Home (Live) [Bonus Track]* 2:23 14 *How Deep Is Your Love (Live) [Bonus Track]* 3:45 Tommy Emmanuel, John Knowles - Guitar, Primary Artists

A sentimental journey with two masters.

Some guys just have the touch. Acoustic guitar aces Tommy Emmanuel and John Knowles have teamed up on *Heart Songs* to put fans in a mellow mood on this collection of 14 sentimental fingerstyle instrumentals (including a dozen studio and two live recordings). Both men are gifted jazz players, but they don't stray far from the melodies on such timeless romantic country and pop ballads as Hank Williams' woeful "Cold, Cold Heart" and the Bee Gees' touching "How Deep Is Your Love." Rather, the duo allows the natural resonance of wood and steel, as well as the ringing harmonics, to complement slow tempos and the warm embrace they give to these relaxing tunes.

Indeed, less is best as Emmanuel and Knowles trade delicate lead lines and rhythm duties in sparse, unhurried arrangements that accentuate the sheer beauty of these songs. As masters of their craft, these celebrated players possess a treasure trove of technique, but they never let it get in the way of the melodies. The '50s chestnut "Walking My Baby Back Home," a relatively spry track, showcases the pairs' light touch and nimble fingers. That's also evident on the Leonard Bernstein show tune "Somewhere," from *West Side Story*, and Billy Joel's calming "Lullabye (Goodnight, My Angel)," as well as on the folk-pop ballad "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother," which Emmanuel covered on his 2011 album *Little By Little*.

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Heart Songs also showcases three originals: Emmanuel's tender "Eva Waits" and Knowles' gorgeous "After Paris" and "Turning Home." ---Greg Cahill, acousticguitar.com

For those who might ask, What is the point of recording duets with two world class solo guitarists whose abilities go far beyond just supplying a complete performance of all the elements of music? I say, just because you think it's a bad idea doesn't mean it won't be a good time. With Heart Songs, anyone who is moved by the pure beautiful sounds guitars can produce will hear Tommy Emmanuel, cgp and John Knowles, cgp, (certified guitar players) providing far more than just a good time.

Right out of the chute, they hit you with Hank William's classic "Cold, Cold Heart" with a performance so moving that if Hank heard it coming through the radio of his Cadillac on his last ride, it just might have revived him, and the world would have a few more melodies to cry over.

The combination of these artists' sensibilities, their careful listening to each other, along with the complimentary tonalities of a steel string and classical guitar carry this set through a variety of affairs of not just the heart, but the mysteries that move it. The 14 cuts are comprised of new and old standards from a variety of genres and composers that range from Don Gibson to Billy Joel to Leonard Bernstein. No words are needed here, to even convey the meanings of their original compositions. Emmanuel's "Eva Waits" had me seeing scenes of longing and anxiety of a separated couple before I had read the title. With Knowles' "After Paris," anyone who has been fortunate to visit the city should feel the melancholy of the place. The rest should at least hear an accordion along the Left Bank of the Seine.

Those who come for the fire on the frets Mr. Emmanuel is so well known for might be slightly disappointed with this very laid-back offering of memorable melodies by great guitarists. Midway through, they get lighthearted with a swinging romp through the old standard "Walking My Baby Back Home." I know I would have liked another one for the road at that tempo, however their sheer artistry and choice of material wins the day. Heart Songs should leave you with an answer to "How Deep Is Your Love" and with this question, Gee, is it over already? ---Ken Spooner, elmoremagazine.com

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