

TOMMY EMMANUEL

CRITICS' QUOTE SHEET (2020)



ALBUM REVIEWS

TOMMY EMMANUEL & JOHN KNOWLES 'Heart Songs' (2019) Critics' Quotes:

"Heart Songs...is a collection of melodic masterpieces, such as the Bee Gee's 'How Deep Is Your Love' and tearjerkers like Hank Williams' 'Cold, Cold Heart,' delivered with utmost respect for the composition. Throughout most of the affair, Emmanuel plays the lead role with lyrical grace accompanied with harmonic brilliance by Knowles."

--Jimmy Leslie, [Guitar Player](#), March 5, 2019

"Somewhere, (Chet) Atkins surely must be smiling over the gorgeous arrangements of two country classics on this album: Hank Williams' 'Cold, Cold Heart' and Don Gibson's 'I Can't Stop Loving You.' Whether Emmanuel or Knowles is engaging in intricate fingerpicking, delivering a subtle bass line or offering chiming coloration, each has the ability to highlight the melodic contours of whatever material he interprets. The diverse program here includes studio renditions of 'Somewhere' (from *West Side Story*), the Bee Gees' 'How Deep Is Your Love,' Billy Joel's 'Lullabye (Goodnight, My Angel)' and 'I Can't Make You Love Me' (popularized by Bonnie Raitt) before concluding with a couple of live tracks."

--Bobby Reed, [Downbeat Magazine](#), January 31, 2019

"What happens when two fantastic guitarists join forces to perform their favorite songs? Pure magic. Featuring the acoustic wizardry drenched in emotion, these two guitarists know how to take a classic ('How Deep Is Your Love') and deliver it with aplomb."

--Laura B. Whitmore, [Parade](#), December 13, 2018

"For decades, acoustic guitar virtuosos Tommy Emmanuel and John Knowles have dazzled with their skills, from intricate runs to coaxing unexpected sounds from their instruments. On their new instrumental album 'Heart Songs' (Thirty Tigers), though, the focus is on the melodies of the songs they have chosen and the gorgeous arrangements they have crafted to carry out these classics with just their two guitars... With its simple, poignant style, 'Heart Songs' offers a sweet, melody-driven oasis in the pounding pop world."

--Glenn Gamboa, [Newsday](#), January 10, 2019

"Emmanuel and Knowles trade delicate lead lines and rhythm duties in sparse, unhurried arrangements that evoke the sheer beauty of these songs."

--Greg Cahill, [The Absolute Sound](#), April 2019

"This is instrumental acoustic guitar work of the very highest caliber...These songs sound every bit as rich and complete as the original versions, owing to inspired arrangements that capture their sonic textures...Anyone who appreciates good guitar playing will love the rich, evocative *Heart Songs* of [Tommy Emmanuel](#) and John Knowles. A fine beginning to 2019."

--Mark Joseph Engleson, [Americana Highways](#), January 10, 2019

TOMMY EMMANUEL'S 'Accomplice One' (2018) Critics' Quotes:

"Guitarist Tommy Emmanuel is in collaborative mode for his forthcoming album Accomplice One...**On the new collection, Emmanuel...combines his staggering playing with an impressive cast of country and roots musicians including singer-songwriter Amanda Shires, with whom he reimagines Madonna's 'Borderline'...The danceable groove is time-shifted to a lilting waltz, with Shires' plaintive fiddle replacing the bubbly synthesizer hook. Shires' vocal performance, with harmonies from Emmanuel, adds a touch of vulnerability to the lyrics about a lover who goes from hot to cold, and the two square off for some dazzling instrumental work in the middle.**"

--Jon Freeman, [Rolling Stone Country](#), November 14, 2017

"The opening cover of Doc Watson's 'Deep River Blues' is a sheer back porch delight as Jason Isbell trades vocals with Emmanuel. Isbell's wife Amanda Shires lends her voice and fiddle to a surprisingly lovely and poignant re-arrangement of Madonna's 'Borderline' (as a waltz) that will make you hear the original dance song in an entirely different light... and ukulele expert Jake Shimabukuro adds warmth to a lovely instrumental 'Rachel's Lullaby...' He digs back to his jazz roots with a sweet cover of Django Reinhardt's 'Djangology' (recorded, like much of this, live in the studio) and a peppy, caffeinated Duke Ellington's 'C-Jam Blues,' the latter featuring Grisman doing his dawg music thing...All involved seem to be having a delightful time — some of the tunes are first takes, most are overdub free — and the musicianship is as superb as you'd expect. There's nothing wrong with trying to expand your audience

because Emmanuel remains true to his organic nature, exploring styles that have been a part of his oeuvre for decades. While serious stringed music students will devour every note here...**Accomplice One will also appeal to roots music lovers** who have never picked up a guitar.” **(4 out of 5 stars)**

--Hal Horowitz, [American Songwriter](#), January 16, 2018

“Raw and real-sounding, [Accomplice One] feels like a jam session between friends, mixing off-the-cuff solos and first-take performances with the virtuosity of an instrumentalist who’s been doing this for a long, long time...Emmanuel has remained true to the acoustic guitar. He’s the king of the unplugged. With appearances from 20 guests, **Accomplice One shows just how far the king’s empire extends...**Recorded in studios across the world, **these songs nod to the core ingredients of American roots music** — Emmanuel’s bread and butter — without losing their global perspective...**Accomplice One is filled with the sympathetic interplay of musicians who want to be there and that’s what elevates it above the usual catalog of guitar-heavy duets...the album is for guitar nerds and casual Americana fans, alike. It’s the sound of a roots music lifer who, a half-century into the game, is still swinging for the fences.**”

--Robert Crawford, [The Bluegrass Situation](#), January 3, 2018

“Today, Emmanuel has 30 albums of his own behind him, and while he’s certainly recorded numerous duets...**this new set allows Emmanuel to display his virtuosity and range more fully over 16 tracks of intimate collaborations.** The list of partners is rather impressive...there are several jaw-dropping surprises too: **You’ve never imagined Madonna’s ‘Borderline’ as an emotional roots ballad, but wait till you hear what Amanda Shires and Emmanuel do with it; and Hendrix’s ‘Purple Haze’ as a vehicle for lickety-split solos from Emmanuel and Jerry Douglas is truly wild.** Above all though, it’s the leader’s constant resourcefulness and sheer judiciousness that shines through: **Tommy Emmanuel can outplay just about anyone, yet he never needs to.** Give him a song, sit him behind the mic with like-minded folks, and good things just happen.”

--Jeff Tamarkin, [RELIX.com](#), February 15, 2018

“...finger-style genius pits his guitar acumen in a series of duets with some of the best in the biz...standouts include Amanda Shires’ acoustic take on Madonna’s ‘Borderline,’ Jerry Douglas’ bluegrass cover of Hendrix’s ‘Purple Haze’ and the loose jam between Emmanuel and Nashville axeman J.D. Simo on ‘(Sittin’ On) The Dock of the Bay.’” **(10 out of 10)**

--Eric A. Harabadian, [Music Connection](#), January 2018 issue

“Accomplice One [is] a testament to his musical diversity with songs that stretch from authentic country-blues to face-melting rock via tender and devastatingly pure guitar playing.”

--Tara Joan, [NoDepression.com](#), November 30, 2017

LIVE REVIEWS

"His guitar playing is a lot like his laughter, both of which come easy. Tommy Emmanuel is an instinctive performer, his repertoire untutored and emotive, a product of intuition, not training. His relationship with his instrument of choice results in a sound akin to a conversation between old friends"

--Jason Bracelin, [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#), 1/23/2014

"If you closed your eyes during the Tommy Emmanuel concert Sunday night in DeVos Performance Hall, you'd think that the multiplicity of sounds were coming from all over the auditorium... Emmanuel continues to amaze even listeners who think they know their way around the guitar."

--Terry DeBoer, [The Grand Rapids Press](#), 4/3/2019

"All the YouTube videos in the world don't do justice to the Australian player whose guitar roared, cooed, hissed and sang for a rapt audience at the Crouse Hinds Theater Tuesday night...With six strings, ten fingers and a whole lot of tricks, Emmanuel directs an orchestra of sound -- one man exploring the bounds of what a single instrument can do."

--Chris Baker, [The Post Standard](#) (Syracuse, NY), 3/22/2019

"Describing **Tommy's** performance is a daunting task. This man knows how to coax the most expressive melodies, rhythms and counterpoints out of his guitar. **Emmanuel** produces an array of sounds from his guitar that are not commonly experienced. He directs an orchestra of sounds: one man exploring the bounds of what a single instrument can do. Successfully blending genres such as jazz, blues, classical, latin rock, country and a hint of folk, he put forth a sound of his own. And he is also an unbelievably delightful, upbeat performer with a great sense of humor when interacting with the audience; he and beams with pure pleasure while playing."

--Joel Barrios, [SONIC PERSPECTIVES](#), 2/28/2020

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