

You Play My Heart - John Arthur Martinez

Album Review by: Cheryl Harvey Hill, Sr. Staff Journalist



There was much to like on this album and it dispenses some sound advice for surviving life like “Dare To Dream Out Loud” and “Learn To Sing In The Rain”, but John Arthur Martinez definitely demonstrated what a great story teller he is on “Emmylou's Guitar”. This is one of the three songs on the album written solely by him and it clearly illustrates why he remains so popular, not just in the United States, but around the world. This is an eloquently written ballad with wonderful musical accompaniment. Lovely. Be sure to read the back-story on this one, it was a stand out track for me.

Martinez had a hand in writing on eleven of the twelve songs, plus he wrote “**Toca Mi Corazon**”, the special bonus track, sung completely in Spanish, and it's absolutely beautiful. I already knew from experience that you don't have to understand the language to get caught up in the music of a good song but the lyrics on this track were as contagious as the music. Truth be told, by the third time I hit replay, I was actually singing along, in my own mind, of course: “Aye, Aye, Aye, note-a pournote-a...” then something about playing a mandolin and then some more “Aye, Aye, Aye's...” and I think it's about a romantic melody, you understand I'm just guessing here but I, “phonetically”, sang along anyhow. Regardless, who cares! It doesn't matter because I loved every bit of it.

Track number twelve, “**Cajita Milagros**”, also sung in Spanish, has a most interesting back-story that you will want to be sure to read and Martinez says “**Lonliest Star in Texas**” is an ode to Western Swing music. It definitely has that **Bob Wills** feel to it and the fiddle playing on this cut is simply superb. It was another of my favorite tracks. I also liked the cleverly written waltz, “**Tennessee Left Texas**”.

The title track, “**You Play My Heart**” is lyrically visual and the music is beautifully sensual, definitely a good pairing for a hit tune and if it seems like I liked a lot of tracks on this album, well, that's because there was a lot to like.

If you can't find this album in your local music store yet, you can order it directly from the official website at: www.johnarthurmartinez.net.

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I'm always curious about the birth of a song and JAM was kind enough to give us a little back-story on each track. **You Play My Heart** – *Cut by cut:*

1 - You Don't Mean To Hurt Me is the story of one of my devoted fans and friends who I met at a Luckenbach, TX Harley Rally and concert, just north of San Antonio. He only told a little of his story so I used poetic license to create the rest. When he heard the song he told me every word of it really happened to him.

2 - The Open Road begins with a man in our tough economy losing his job at the factory, which leads to his fiancée losing faith in him and how he deals with it all.

3 - You Play My Heart is a Latin-flavored song about the passion a man feels when he's in the arms of his lover using instruments of music in metaphors for his reaction to her touch.

4 - Sing Me Back Home of course is one of **Merle Haggard's** signature songs, but consistent with what I've been doing at my live shows throughout my career, I take the second verse and second chorus into Spanish with **Mike Blakely** providing the harmony vocals in a blend of country and bolero grooves.

5 - It's What I Do was born on the motorways between Switzerland and France. Our Peugeot bus broke down and in the lonely down time in a small French village with no cell service or internet I wrote this "missing you" song for my wife Yvonna, who understands that my work often takes me away from her arms, but who also knows that she's always in my thoughts and therefore in my creative works.

6 - Emmylou's Guitar is about a surreal morning at the Mansion on O Street in D.C. where I awoke and began my quest for coffee then spotted a beautiful blonde guitar made of maple atop one of the antique desks overlooking O Street near Dupont Circle. It turns out the guitar was handmade by **Gibson** for **Emmylou Harris** and that she had signed it and given it as a gift to the owners of this incredible mansion, a place filled with secret passageways, hidden corridors, and bedroom suites, like mine, that opened up seemingly out of nowhere behind door sized mirrors or bookcases

7 - Dare to Dream Out Loud I dedicate this song to strong Americans, like **Leo Manzano** from my hometown high school in Marble Falls, who overcame humble circumstances, like lack of adequate shoes, to pursue his passion of running, leading to state championships, a scholarship to the University of Texas, and eventually a Silver Medal at the **2012 London Olympics**. The first verse is about single mom's like my sister and wife (before she met me) who overcome adversities to achieve success in their careers.

8 - Learn to Dance in the Rain came to me and my co-writer **Jan Landry** after seeing the phrase repeatedly on **Facebook** and realizing that she and I both tried to find joy in even the most difficult situations. If it seems the rain keeps coming down, rather than hiding behind the living room curtains, step outside and learn to dance in the rain.

9 - Tennessee Left Texas is not just an attempt to pander to my fellow Texans and Tennessee fans, it's a true story about a beautiful 4 year old girl my co-writer **Rick Bussey** and I met in Bertram, Texas' Crazy Gals Cafe, where we both performed. Her mother left the Tennessee's father to take a job out west taking the brown-eyed girl Tennessee out of the state of Texas.

10 - Loneliest Star in Texas is an ode to the Western Swing band **Asleep at the Wheel** and their forefathers **Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys**. Picture a drive late into the night where the bandleader, me, is half-*Asleep at the Wheel*, and confronted by a torrential West Texas rain which exposes the flaws in the used van's poorly installed sunroof, who then pulls into a convenience store to buy an umbrella so that he can drive the rest of the way home. Of course, the band is in the back sleeping off the night of over consumption.

11 - I Know How To Fall is co-written with **Wake Eastman**, an Austin area songwriter, who had just persuaded former **Lonestar** fiddler **Kurt Baumer** to move to Texas. During one of Kurt's first gigs with me in the poorly lit light behind our stage area at a local club, Kurt tripped down the stairs carrying my Mackie mixer. Concerned about this Wake and I rush to see if he's okay and he responds, "The mixer's alright. It didn't hit the ground. I know how to fall." Wake and I began writing the song in our heads right on the spot!

12 - Cajita Milagros is about a distant relative, my dad's brother's wife's mother, a *Mexican curandera*, who cured the country folks in the farmlands northeast of Austin, with herbal remedies and prayer, using plants like peppermint, chamomile, aloe vera, etc. My wife loves this because she's a modern day curandera who's encouraged me to use herbal and homeopathic cures to relieve my serious allergy issues. Because of this I'm no longer dependent on my old routine of anti-histamines, allergy shots, antibiotics and steroids. Grammy winners **Joel Guzman** and **Sarah Fox** handle the background vocal duties as Joel adds his signature accordion, young gun **Caleb Rojas** adds a Santana-like guitar, and **Kurt Baumer** plays the haunting fiddle lines.

(Bonus track) – **Toca Mi Corazon**