

Louis Stewart & Jim Doherty - Tunes (2013)

Written by bluesever

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1. *It Could Happen To You* 05:00 2. *You Go To My Head* 06:11 3. *Broadway* 04:45 4. *I Remember You* 07:02 5. *Comme Ci, Comme Ca* 06:05 6. *This Can't Be Love* 04:57 7. *Button Up Your Overcoat* 05:45 8. *I Surrender Dear* 06:32 9. *I Wished On The Moon* 05:32 10. *What Is There To Say* 05:22 11. *My Heart Stood Still* 04:21 Louis Stewart - electric and acoustic guitar Jim Doherty - piano

It seemed like a good idea at the time. It was a good idea at the time. Ireland's best known jazz musicians, guitarist Louis Stewart and pianist Jim Doherty have played together since the days of the famous Irish show bands in the early 1960s and have recorded together on numerous projects, but the idea to record a duo album of the jazz standards they cherish has taken fifty years to move from seed to fruition. The simply titled *Tunes* also represents the debut release of Daire Winston's Beechpark Records label and was recorded mostly in single takes at Beechpark Studios, Dublin.

The twelve titles are lifted lovingly from *The Great American Songbook* and are played at a jaunty mid-tempo for the most part, save for "I Surrender Dear" and a gorgeous and tender interpretation of "Comme Ci Comme Ca," a tune recorded by both Frank Sinatra and Ahmad Jamal. Stylistically, there's little variation throughout the album, which is maybe understandable given the limitations of the format, but such is the natural empathy between the two and so joyful the playing that the somewhat repetitive tempos and style hardly seem to matter.

The arrangements are simple enough but subtle shifts in dynamics keep things interesting; Stewart and Doherty alternate solo intros and outros, weave in and out of unison lines and pass melodies back and forth in short bursts, besides the lengthier alternate solos that pepper each composition. On "You Go to My Head," "I Remember You" and a rhythmically dancing "I Wished on The Moon" Stewart switches to acoustic guitar. Whether plugged or unplugged, Stewart

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shows the sort of form that induced Downbeat to label him as "one of the instrument's world class players."

Everyone will have their favorite Stewart solo here—and there are more than a few corkers to choose from—but for emotive delivery it would be hard to beat the guitarist's solo on the Harry Barris/Gordon Clifford tune "I Surrender Dear." Doherty has been Ireland's in-house pianist for visiting musicians such as saxophonist Gerry Mulligan and singer/pianist Ray Charles for decades and brings all the years of experience to bear with his intuitive comping throughout the CD. The pianist solos beautifully as well, notably on "Button up Your Overcoat" and "What Is There to Say?." On the latter, Stewart and Doherty conjure a delightful ending to their waltzing interplay.

Tunes is a relaxed, highly enjoyable session that captures two of Ireland's great jazz musicians in fine form. Hats off to Winston for backing the recording in the first place and for delivering an appropriately historic debut for the new label. Stewart and Doherty should perhaps have made their first duo recording years ago, but then again these classy performances are the results of some fine tuning—about half a century's worth, no less. ---Ian Patterson, allaboutjazz.com

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