

Neil Murray's "Bring Thunder & Rain"

At 57 years a man knows what clothes suit him best. So goes the eleven songs on Neil Murray's latest album "Bring Thunder & Rain" – they deliver the quality assuredness we've come to expect from a song man with a three-decade plus career. Teamed with producer Craig Pilkington, "Bring Thunder & Rain" is his 12th solo release and draws on musical styles Murray has absorbed since the 1960's.



Neil Murray is not a household name. Much of his journey has taken him beyond the reach of commercial interest, but nonetheless his influence is as undeniable and pervasive as many much more higher profiled artists. As far as singer songwriters go - among his peers and devotees, he is right up there with the very best, and he is one of our most courageous.

It is well known he was a founding member of the pioneering 1980's indigenous group The Warumpi Band, that he wrote " My Island Home" (for which he received an APRA song of the year award in 1995) for the Warumpi's lead singer George Rurrumbu that went on to be recorded by Christine Anu and featured at the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Apart from the enduring legacy of "Blackfella Whitefella" and other classic Warumpi Band songs he helped create, Neil Murray has continued to churn out remarkable work with a solo career that commenced in 1989. "Good Light in Broome", "Native Born", "Long Grass Band" and "Lights of Hay" are just a few of the standouts that are treasured by his astute and ever growing legion of followers.

The new album "Bring Thunder & Rain" is no exception - from the opening rocker "Get Up" (which he concedes might have been a Warumpi song) to "Whispering Casuarina", to "Kidman Way" to "Nothing I did" show he easily commands anything in the roots/rock/folk/country idiom. The difference is these familiar vehicles drive lyrics that are fresh, insightful and compelling. Surprise excursions are the gospel whoop of "Wait for thee" - with its infectious

call and response chorus ably supported by backing singers Emma Donovan and Deline Briscoe and the historical sea shanty/indigenous narrative "It was Told"

Unsurprisingly, Neil Murray has a deep connection to Aboriginal Australia. His first ever released recording was 1983's "Jailanguru Pakarnu" (Out From Jail) - a co-write with fellow Warumpi Band guitarist Sammy Butcher—it is sung in the western desert language of Luritja— and is now credited as the first rock/pop single in an indigenous language. Murray maintains that link with the offering "Malamia" (Long Ago) this time sung in Tjapwurrung- the native language from his home country in Western Victoria which is sadly no longer spoken, and which – like many indigenous languages - is subject to ongoing research and retrieval.

Long time friend and musical supporter - ex Midnight Oil guitarist, Jim Moginie adds his exquisite instrumental touch to "Is that what you heard?" and the title track- two superb and finely drawn ballads that invoke a spiritual cosmology that is universal in reach but is identifiably Australian in origin - which pretty much sums up Neil Murray's art.



"Neil Murray sings from the heart of the country"
Jim Moginie - founding member of Midnight Oil.