

Album review: Black Crow – Nigel Wearne

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With *Black Crow*, Nigel Wearne has created a remarkable album in terms of lyrical depth, riveting playing and genuine dedication to craft at every level.

With recruits like Kat Mear (fiddle and backing vocals), Daniel Watkins (mandolin and backing vocals) and Andrew Scott (double bass), The Cast Iron Promises, as they are known, form a world class unit to back Nigel's conceptually intricate songs.



Nigel Wearne himself has played roughly 90 shows in the last year, mostly solo, using the Martin OOO style guitar he built with his own hands. Maybe it's growing up on a farm in Western Victoria that's given him such a feel for the tactile skills. And the application of care and the resourcefulness described in the gleaners and ramblers that inhabit his songs evidently informs his whole philosophy. Skills have to be honed if you're going to deliver something special and in Nigel's case there's been no shortage of honing.

In band mode, Nigel's country-folk songs have become more vigorous and downright swinging on songs like '[Stealth](#)', 'Black Crow' and 'She's Doing Time'. It's not surprising considering Wearne met Kat and Dan at Gerry Hale's Monday Night Bluegrass Sessions at The Old Bar. One of the great things about it is the way the exhilarating live sound was captured by Mick Wordley (Jordie Lane, Jeff Lang) with minimal overdubs.

Many of the songs delve into history as a way of reflecting on the present day, but never more powerfully than on the song '[Pemuluy](#)' about the legendary resistance leader of the Bidjigal people who fought a 12 year-long guerilla campaign against Sydney's British colonial occupiers. It's not mentioned directly in the song, but Pemuluy's own totem was a [black crow](#) and part of the legend involves him being able to shapeshift into the bird to escape his enemies. Wearne's sympathetic bush balladeer delivery gives the song a sense of timelessness that can hopefully carry the story forward to many who don't know it.

Between that regard for the importance of history and attention to detail of writing, playing and production, *Black Crow* presents a strong case against the idea that short attention spans need to be pandered to. It's great to have an album that can let the listener exercise their own mind over time. Nigel Wearne should earn great credit for that alone.