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Jiir - Pigram Brothers

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Music Reviews

Jiir - Pigram Brothers

The Pigram Brothers are back! Hailing from Broome in Western Australia, The Pigram Brothers have presented us with another fine album "Jiir".

For those of you not familiar with this group, they have been active members in the industry for over fifteen years and acknowledge The Dingoes as one of their early musical influences. Brothers Alan, Stephen and Phillip were founders of the guitar driven group Scrap Metal (circa 1983-1995). While in this group, they recorded four albums and toured with Midnight Oil on their Diesel and Dust Tour (1987).

1996 saw the birth of The Pigram Brothers, with their hugely successful debut album Saltwater Country won the group a Deadly for *Best Debut Album* in 1998. Saltwater Country, even now, seems to have remained on high rotation of many of the Indigenous radio stations around the country. This album was produced by Shane Howard of Goanna fame, who has been instrumental in developing some of this country's Indigenous bands and helped pushed Indigenous music to the forefront.

Producer duties on Jiir were given to Kerry Tolhurst (The Dingoes) who recently produced Russell Crowe's album in the United States and has become an integral member of the band.

The opening track *Johnny Walker's Shoes* is a beautifully written song that encompasses all the facets of great song writing and composition. Although the first track remains true to the sound of the Pigram Brothers, this album does tend to steer away from the country music element we've all come to classify the band under. Like all Pigram Brother albums, it wouldn't be the same if there wasn't one song on the album that had a feeling of "okay, let's sing all together now!" This honour goes to *Dry River Bed* which has the anthemish chorus of "So take me away' cross the spinifex plains, where the true mirage never ends. And the smell of the rain is a long way away, lay me down on a dry river bed." This track reminds me a lot of their song Saltwater Cowboy off the last album.

One of the tracks, *My Land* has an interesting perspective as it was written from the point of view of an osprey (a large hawk). This is probably where Indigenous music has one over those with a mainstream approach (ignoring of course New Order's, Blue Monday which was written from a dog's point of view). The Pigram Brothers and their compositions are known for the images they conjure up and the way they incorporate tradition dreamings into a modern context. They are also brilliant at utilising traditional languages and on this track there is use of the Yawuru language. This is of course only one of many examples on Jiir and the bass line in particular reminds me of Bruce Springsteen's *Fire*.

Other tracks on the album sway from reggae influences (Rosita) through to instrumentals, which hint at the multicultural society of Broome with a taste of hula sounds hidden in amongst acoustic and steel guitars (Villaret). One of my favourite tracks would have to be Wrong World which I find just very quirky with the same essence of another one of their songs Going Back Home (off Saltwater Country). Overall it's another well-produced album that transports you to the surroundings of Broome and The Kimberleys. I'm also glad that they recognise in the album credits their typist!

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