

Kev Carmody

Soul man

A tribute to one of our greatest songwriters is keeping the spirit alive.

Music can be many things to many people. For Kev Carmody, one of our most accomplished musicians, music is identity – his own, and that of his people. His songs speak of a culture that may have been oppressed, and may still be, but will never die.

With each song that he has written and recorded, he has created a new page in an oral history that is there for everyone to learn. A celebration of culture, a mourning of past wrongs, a reverence for this land and, perhaps most importantly, a dream of healing for the future.

To commemorate his achievements, some of Australia's finest singers and songwriters have banded together to record a tribute album that pays homage to the man and his music. The result is *Cannot Buy My Soul – The Songs of Kev Carmody*, released last month by major record label EMI.

This gifted and utterly charming bloke certainly deserves all the accolades he can get. Since his first album release, *Pillars o*

Society in 1989, Kev has built a reputation for creating powerful, at times anthemic music that addresses the issues of identity, history, racism and spirituality – without pulling any punches.

But beneath the jovial exterior is a deeply proud and spiritual man; a man who is passionate about his culture and his people; from the tragedy of recent history to the

beauty and mystery of the ancient past.

"That's what blackfella music is about," Kev says. "It's all of us together, and we talk about real things. Mainstream music isn't about that. It's about what I call the three Es: Economics, Ego and Entertainment. It's all just one big piece of advertising or corporate consumerism now.

"We don't do it like that. That's what I love about this album – we're turning it all the other way around. We'll black out the bastards!"

Cannot Buy My Soul is a collection of some of Kev's most important work – songs that have had an impact on the political, social and creative scene in Australia over the past two decades.

The album was put together by Kev's good friend, fellow musician Paul Kelly. Kev and Paul met in the 1980s during the Land Rights gigs, where artists such as Yothu Yindi and Midnight Oil performed to promote Aboriginal music and highlight Indigenous issues. In 2001 the two also worked together on a soundtrack for Rachel Perkins' film *One Night the Moon*, winning an AFI for Best Original Score in the process.

"Paul mentioned putting together a tribute album a few years back, but I didn't really think that much of it at the time," Kev says. "Then all of a sudden we're doing it!"

Paul has long been an admirer of Kev. He first heard Kev's music 20 years ago, and says he was "drawn straight away to his blending of politics and prayer, poetry, anger and pride". As soon as he managed to secure funding for the album, he put the wheels in motion, calling on some of Australia's most high-calibre musicians to take part.

"Paul sent me through this incredible list of artists that were interested in being a part of it," Kev says of the album. "I thought that most of them would have to drop

out because of other commitments, but within two or three weeks pretty much every single one of them said they were going to do it!"

Artists featured on the album include Troy Cassar-Daley, Archie Roach, John Butler and Missy Higgins. Each artist was sent a selection of songs they could choose from to record; their choices, as well as the final product both surprised and delighted Kev.

"I just loved the way they all put their own mark on the song they chose," Kev says. "I'd have been disappointed if they just did straight covers. Instead they turned it into something brand-spanking new.





PREPARATION BEFORE READING

This report profiles Kev Carmody - one of Australia's most accomplished musicians. To acknowledge his achievements, some of Australia's best singers and songwriters have recorded the tribute album *Cannot Buy My Soul* – the songs of Kev Carmody.

Cannot Buy My Soul is a collection of some of Kev's most important work, where the songs address issues of identity, history, racism and spirituality.

The album was put together by Kev's good friend, fellow musician Paul Kelly.

Artists featured on the double CD include Troy Cassar-Daly, Archie Roach, Bernard Fanning, Tex Perkins, Augie March and Missy Higgins.

Disc 2 features the original songs performed by Kev himself.

ACTIVITY 1: READ KEV CARMODY SOUL MAN PAGES 6-7

Scanning for specific information

1. What does music mean to Kev Carmody?

2. What was the name of the first album that Kev Carmody released?

3. List 5 words that were used to describe Kev Carmody in this report.

4. Kev met Paul Kelly in the 1980s during the Land rights gigs that highlighted Indigenous issues.

TRUE

FALSE

5. What is the main purpose for writing this report?

ACTIVITY 3: MORE ABOUT KEV CARMODY

Kev Carmody grew up on a cattle station near Goranba, 70km west of Dalby in the Darling Downs area of south eastern Queensland. His early childhood was simple but happy. He saw few children until the age of seven, mixing mostly with stockmen. The family lived largely off the land growing vegetables near the house and hunting and catching everything from kangaroos to fish.

In 1956, when he was ten, Carmody was taken from his parents and sent to a "Christian school" which he has described as "little more than an orphanage". Although he often talks about the school it has rarely entered his songwriting.

After school Kev returned to his rural roots working for seventeen years as a back country labourer doing everything from bag lumping to wool pressing. When he was 33 he got the opportunity to go to University where he studied history eventually progressing to work on a PhD. His thesis topic, not surprisingly, was the history of the Darling Downs between 1830 - 1860. His career in music started while he was at University.

Carmody's initial inspiration came from a truly rural, oral tradition. Both his Irish father and Murri mother came from powerful oral traditions. Carmody still talks about the stories and songs he was told and taught by his Murri grandparents and his extended Murri family of uncles, aunts and cousins.

Today Kev Carmody regularly tours Australian jails where he plays to the Aboriginal inmates. He has worked with street kids as part of a community education program at Logan City on the Gold Coast. He has been involved with Feral Arts in Brisbane, an organisation which provides underprivileged kids with videos, games and electronic music designed "to encourage the kids to come up with artistic ideas, find their spirit, and, most importantly, their self-esteem." You will often find him at a Greenpeace rally or fundraiser, a world music celebration, an Aboriginal musical festival, on a university campus, or playing at regular concert venues.

www.kevcarmody.com.au





Fill in the timeline below to summarise the important events in Kev Carmody's life.

Dates	What happened
1946	Born
	Grew up on a cattle station near Goranba, 70km west of Dalby in the Darling Downs area of south eastern Queensland.
1956 –age 10	
	Worked as a country labourer
1979 – age 33	
Today	

ACTIVITY 4: SONG LYRICS

FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

This song was written by Kev Carmody and Paul Kelly to tell the story of the Gurindji people of the Northern Territory, employed on the Wave Hill cattle station owned by Britain's Lord Vestey, who staged a landmark struggle for Aboriginal justice in the 1960s and 1970s. They were protesting against pay and work conditions and they also wanted recognition of their traditional lands, which they called Dargaragu.

The campaign was Australia's first successful Aboriginal land claim, but it took nine years before the Gurindji people won the fight for the return of the ownership of their traditional lands. It eventually led to the Federal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976. This walk-off and nine-year struggle was a significant turning point in Australian history.

FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW



P. Kelly/K. Carmody

Gather round people let me tell you're a story

An eight year long story of power and pride

British Lord Vestey and Vincent Lingiari

Were opposite men on opposite sides

Vestey was fat with money and muscle

Beef was his business, broad was his door

Vincent was lean and spoke very little

He had no bank balance, hard dirt was his floor

From little things big things grow

From little things big things grow

Gurindji were working for nothing but rations

Where once they had gathered the wealth of the land

Daily the pressure got tighter and tighter

Gurindju decided they must make a stand

They picked up their swags and started off walking

At Wattie Creek they sat themselves down

Now it don't sound like much but it sure got tongues talking

Back at the homestead and then in the town

From little things big things grow

From little things big things grow...

www.paulkelly.com.au

Read through the information about the Wave Hill strike and the song lyrics.

In your own words, tell the first part of the story.

To find our more about Vincent Lingiari and the Wave Hill Walkout, head to

www.freedomday.info/history.html