

jimmylittle | resonate

Like Jimmy Little himself, his album 'Messenger' is a hard act to follow. Jimmy has come up with the perfect answer, the album 'Resonate' – another encounter between "that" voice and the songs of some of Australia's finest songwriters.

Two years ago, when his album 'Messenger' turned the then 62-year-old Jimmy Little into the coolest artist in Australian modern music, almost the only one not taken by surprise was Jimmy himself. The pioneering, versatile performer of more than forty five years just took it in his stride. He had been there before, inspiring different generations of young singers, songwriters and musicians including an aspiring young songwriter called Barry Gibb in 1963.

On 'Messenger' he might have been singing the songs of another generation – by The Church, Reels, Cruel Sea and others – but as a singer Jimmy was doing exactly what he's always done, poured his voice and soul into whatever song he chose to turn his attention to. The only thing new to Jimmy is the songs and the new music lovers he entertains along the way.

A chance meeting between Jimmy and Brendan Gallagher set the mood for a new path to be taken in Australian music. Songs by The Church, The Reels, Paul Kelly, The Cruel Sea and others were chosen by Jimmy and Brendan and the resulting album, lovingly arranged and produced by Brendan was pronounced an ARIA winner in 1999.

When the time came to think about the follow-up album Brendan's busy work schedule did not allow the time needed so Jimmy put his talent in the hands of other fresh ears, in particular Daniel Denholm, noted for his work as arranger/producer on Alex Lloyd's 'Black The Sun'. Richard Pleasance and Brendan Gallagher stepped in to also produce their personal contributions to Jimmy's latest album, 'Resonate'.

The new album is made up of songs from the same generation of songwriters as 'Messenger', but instead of Jimmy doing his own version of their already known songs, for the most part, these are new songs handed to Jimmy for his unique interpretation. 'Quasimodo's Dream' songwriter Dave Mason returns with 'Only You' a song which positively shines with romance in Jimmy's hands. He also applies himself to new songs from Stephen Cummings, Don Walker, Powderfinger's Bernard Fanning, Dave Graney, GANGgajang's Mark Callaghan and the aforementioned Richard Pleasance. He offers his version of the Triffids' classic 'Bury Me Deep In Love'. The album opens with a song Paul Kelly wrote to a poem by John Shaw Neilson. It closes with Jimmy Little's life put into song by Daniel Denholm and Jimmy's daughter Frances.

Family has played an important part in Jimmy Little's life. Both his parents were entertainers. Jimmy Little Jr sat in the audience as his parents sang and tap-danced their way through life. One of Jimmy's first singles, in 1956, was a song written by his father, provocatively called 'Give The Coloured Boy A Go'. Throughout his life Jimmy Little has been a model for both white and indigenous Australians. In November 1963 he enjoyed a national Top 10 hit with 'Royal Telephone'. From then on his future was assured. He continued travelling and performing up and down the country, much as his parents had done, but a star in his own right, with a unique and instantly recognizable style of his own.

At the end of the 70's Jimmy Little decided to take a break to devote himself to his family. He only meant to take one long enough to be able to return to his music refreshed and reinvigorated. He thought it might be a couple of years. It turned out to be many more. After winning the Aboriginal Of The Year award in 1989 for his work in both music and aboriginal education, Jimmy finally hit the comeback trail. He appeared in the Wim Wenders' film 'Until The End Of The World', and played a non-singing role in the aboriginal opera 'Black River'. He was inducted in the Tamworth Hall Of Fame in 1994. In 1995 Jimmy released his first album in 15 years, 'Yorta Yorta Man'. And then came 1999's 'Messenger'. He was never really away, but Jimmy Little was now back to stay forevermore.

With 'Resonate' he's delivered exactly what he set out to achieve, not another 'Messenger', not a competitor to 'Messenger' but a companion to that much-loved album. 'Resonate' takes Jimmy, his music and his audience on the next step in their journey together.

Jimmy Little was always 'different'. He was never a 'pop star'. When he began his recording career on August 11th 1956 he was a teenager. In the mid-fifties he was singing to adult audiences. Now that he's an adult, he finds his music and career revived by youth. As Jimmy describes it, "it's a wonderful cycle". Not just for Jimmy.

'Resonate' is everything 'Messenger' was and is – a celebration of Australian music – Australian music at its best.



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