

NIGEL WEARNE
BLACK CROW
INDEPENDENT

Nigel Wearne's new album launches in a decidedly bluegrass direction with 'Stealth', the sting band accompaniment of his band The Cast Iron Promises featuring prominently. It's an eruption of energy, rhythm and melody that immediately compels you to venture further. And 'Montreal' delivers on the opening track's promise, vocal harmonies leading to a slower waltz, still firmly in old-time string band fashion. Pleasingly, *Black Crow* stops short of replicating authentic old-time bluegrass, blending sounds of Celtic folk and though Wearne is tempted to stray into old-timey vocal affectations now and then, he does not stray from his native Australian accent. And he drives the point home on 'Montreal' by singing about Melbourne town and convicts.

The strange mixture of the timeless and the modern and the international and Australian makes for something of surprising power and character.

The album was recorded pretty much live by Mick Wordley, who is a specialist in that area and Wearne and his trio contribute all instrumentation, Wearne capable on guitar, Dobro, Wesseinborn slide (used to great effect on the title track), banjo and harmonica! And he has plenty to say, the 12 original songs lyrically generous with stories and observations.

Martin Jones