

Inpress Magazine Review - Emma Merrigan

WARUMPI BAND

Dan O'Connell Hotel, Melbourne, 14th January 2000

The rest of the band weaved through the throng to the stage, picked up their gear and started to play. For George Rrurrambu, the crowd parted, mesmerised already by his presence. . . and his truly awesome afro - as light and fluffy as a freshly made stick of fairy floss. He made it to the stage, pulled his first rock pose for the evening and the "mob of spunks" was complete.

Launching into Koori Man, the crowd was immediately enthralled with the combination of the Warumpi Band's beautiful cheesy '80s rock, and George Rrurrambu's incredible display of showmanship. As far as Australia's, and indeed the world's, frontmen go, there is no more charismatic, entertaining, talented and piss funny than George.

"You'll be satisfied when you home in bed tonight," he promised. Early in the piece, *Joining My Life* infused the crowd with a reggae bop feel good mentality. Shortly thereafter things began to go apeshit. *From The Bush*, a punter yelled. "Not yet," George replied, then thought better of it and started to belt it out. "Listen to me, I'm from the bush. Talkin' to you. From the bush. You've got all you need. Can't you understand? We've got to have our land."

The apeshitness increased exponentially with each song from *Waru, No Fear, Stompin' Ground* to *Fitzroy Crossing*, reaching a crescendo at *Black Fella, White Fella*. This song has enjoyed a renaissance and increased audience through its recording by Jimmy Little. Hearing it live was a reminder of its strength and grittiness. Staff at the Dano delighted the packed-in sweaty crowd with intermittent sprays of cold water, in time with George's changing rock poses and appeals to the crowd. "Shh! Shush! I'm talkin' now! You understand?" "Yes," the punters roared back, eager to cop an earful of George's unique turn of phrase and its message.

He stands with legs and arms outstretched so we can appreciate his glorious stature. I'm 43 . . . with two grandkids! Certainly, Oil Of Olay (nee Ulan) would be wise to snap him up for an endorsement deal. Special mention goes to the bass player, with his guitar held nice and high, one man boob drooping nicely over the strap and jiggling in time to the beat. "My Island Home" was the band's much anticipated encore. Legend has it that this song goes for at least 15 minutes when played in the Aboriginal communities up North. The crowd is always reluctant to let them go because they're never sure that they'll see the Warumpis again.

I would have liked to quote Warumpi founder Neil Murray, when he wrote in his book "Sing For Me Countryman", that the band has a reputation as some rarely seen beast. But since some bastard borrowed my copy and never gave it back I can't, suffice to say that Murray's book is also a rarely seen beast. Thankfully Neil has released a new title, "One Man Tribe". So, I can say instead that the Warumpi Band proved George's theory true on Friday night. "Rock 'n' roll is a mad bastard."