

Yothu Yindi - Treaty

Yothu Yindi were best known for the song 'Treaty' about the Hawke government's broken promise to Indigenous people. Here are the lyrics, with translations.

"Treaty" was composed by Yothu Yindi in collaboration with Paul Kelly and Midnight Oil to protest against the failure of the Australian Government to honour the Prime Minister's promise to Indigenous Australians.

Dr M Yunupingu's comments about this song:

"This song was written after Bob Hawke, in his famous response to the Barunga Statement (1988), said there would be a Treaty between Indigenous Australians and the Australian Government by 1990. The intention of this song was to raise public awareness about this so that the government would be encouraged hold to his promise. The song became a number-one hit, the first ever to be sung in a Yolu language, and caught the public's imagination. Though it borrows from rock 'n' roll, the whole structure of "Treaty" is driven by the beat of the djatpangarri that I've incorporated in it. It was an old recording of this historic djatpangarri that triggered the song's composition. The man who originally created it was my gurru (maternal great-grandmother's husband) and he passed away a long time ago in 1978. He was a real master of the djatpangarri style."

LYRICS to "Treaty" (courtesy of the Yothu Yindi website):

Well I heard it on the radio
And I saw it on the television
Back in 1988, all those talking politicians

Words are easy, words are cheap
Much cheaper than our priceless land
But promises can disappear
Just like writing in the sand

Treaty yeah treaty now treaty yeah treaty now

Nhima djatpangarri nhima walangwalang (You dance djatpangarri, that's better)
Nhe djatpayatpa nhima gaya' dhe marrtjini yakarray (You're dancing, you improvise, you keep going, wow)
Nhe djatpa dhe walang gumurrt jararrk gutjuk (You dance djatpangarri, that's good my dear paternal grandson)

This land was never given up
This land was never bought and sold
The planting of the union jack
Never changed our law at all
Now two river run their course
Separated for so long
I'm dreaming of a brighter day
When the waters will be one

Treaty yeah, treaty now, treaty yeah, treaty now

Nhima gayakaya dhe gaya' dhe (You improvise, you improvise)
Nhe gaya' dhe marrtjini walangwalang dhe ya (You improvise, you keep going, you're better)

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Nhima djatpa nhe walang (You dance djatpangarri, that's good)
Gumurr-djararrk yawirriny' (My dear young men)
Nhe gaya' nhe marrtjini gaya' nhe marrtjini (You improvise, you keep improvising,
you keep going)
Gayakaya nhe gaya' nhe marrtjini walangwalang (Improvise, you improvise, you
keep going, that's better)
Nhima djatpa nhe walang (You dance djatpangarri, that's good)
Gumurr-djararrk nhe yã, e i, e i, e i i i, i i i, i i i, i i (You dear things)

Treaty ma' (Treaty now)

Promises disappear - priceless land - destiny
Well I heard it on the radio
And I saw it on the television
But promises can be broken
Just like writing in the sand

Treaty yeah treaty now treaty yeah treaty now
Treaty yeah treaty now treaty yeah treaty now
Treaty yeah treaty ma treaty yeah treaty ma
Treaty yeah treaty ma treaty yeah treaty ma