



CD REVIEWS

Gary Shearston, *The Great Australian Groove*

RRR57, Rouseabout Records, 2012; www.undercovermusic.com.au, garyshearston.com

Australian singer Goyte has recently won a Grammy award for his pleasant but unremarkable global pop song hit. At the same time, Australian singer songwriter John Williamson rightly complained about the influence of the Nashville type music scene here. In contrast, this album of 18 songs looks deeply and at times wittily at personal and political issues in our culture.

As with his three other albums of original songs released this century, Gary Shearston covers the meaning of love/solidarity and the need for equality and a vision for our society. On the former issue, songs like, *What Is Love?* and *Need Me Some Love* stand out, with *Phantoms of the Night* a penetrating song about dreaming. Moreover, the complexity of relationships in his own family background is explored in *From Goodness Knows Where*, which even on a second or third listening retains its dramatic tension.

At the societal level, songs like such *Frost Across the Tableland*, *Strangers* and *In All Humility* call for values such as optimism, altruism, sharing the fruits of the land and peace in strong lyrics as against the evils of narcissism, racism, greed and extreme nationalism. Shearston is a fine exponent of the historical ballad and this is borne out in *When Push Comes To Shove*, about the Sydney Push of the late fifties and sixties, of which he was a participant. Here he calls out for a new vision for Australia and is really talking about the need for a values revolution.

While there are no instant solutions, Shearston sees hope in some Australians' ability and determination to the tackle big and small issues of life they find before them in the title track, *The Great Australian Groove*.

