



# ROGER KNOX

## STRANGER IN MY LAND

RELEASE DATE: FEBURARY 2013

*"The best music is border music, the sound of cultures colliding. In the late 20th century Black Australians assimilated Country & Western, that whitest of American musical forms, to tell the story of their physical subjugation, spiritual stoicism and eventual political awakening." —Jon Langford, from the liner notes*

Roger Knox, aka the Koori King of Country or Black Elvis as he's known in his homeland, is an Aboriginal Australian Country & Western singer with a honeyed bear hug of a voice. Bloodshot artist **Jon Langford (Mekons, Waco Brothers)** met Knox on a visit to Australia several years ago. When he heard of Roger and the potentially-soon-to-be-lost subculture of this utterly unique cultural collision, Langford knew he had to be involved. *Stranger In My Land* is a collection of songs originally written by Aborigine artists who were Knox's peers and predecessors; some tunes previously recorded but difficult to find as well as several unrecorded, handed-down folk songs (which without this recording, could have been lost forever). It is powerful and moving material, heartbreaking and hilarious, downtrodden and uplifting, suffused with longing, alienation, resilience and hope; universal themes arising out of largely unexplored context. It possesses the urgency of a Alan Lomax field recording, but with a spirit that remains relevant in today's world.

Country music crossed the equator in the kitbag's of US servicemen in WWII and magically struck a chord with a voiceless and near invisible aboriginal population. Soon American cowboy songs and honky-tonk classics were retooled to describe rugged outback lifestyles and the migration from country to city. Turns out, you can't beat this music as a vehicle for telling tough tales and the Aboriginal Country & Western Songbook is peppered with drinking songs and prison songs; songs that yearn for justice and for home; songs of alienation and the loneliness of the outsider. Humor, resignation and outrage stalk a superficially familiar musical landscape that's been re-populated with stockmen, bandicoots, wallabies, porcupines,

grog-drinkers, pelicans and policemen.

*Stranger In My Land* features guest vocals and instrumental performances from **Bonnie Prince Billy, Kelly Hogan, Dave Alvin (X, Blasters), Sally Timms and Jon Langford (Mekons), the Sadies, Andre Williams, and perhaps the last known recording from Charlie Louvin of the Louvin Brothers.** All this star power is backed **The Pine Valley Cosmonauts**, a Chicago-based loosey-goosey musical collective piloted by Langford and manned by a core of crack musicians that convenes every few years to deliver unto the world records of vision, exploration, tribute and occasional unfettered revelry. Past projects for the PVC include tributes to Bob Wills (*Salute The Majesty of Bob Wills*, 1998), Johnny Cash (*Misery Loves Company*, 1995), a three volume set of songs about murder, mob law and mayhem (*The Executioner's Last Songs*, 2002, 2003), as well as a collaboration with Rosie Flores (*Girl of the Century*, 2009). Also included is magnificently detailed album book art by Langford that gives an apt history of the songs, artists, and people behind this fragile, yet empowering music.

This is an album about a man and a people's struggles in their own place of origin, and the experiences in a journey that such a complex life path can take. Knox is the conduit for these stories and these songs, but this isn't ancient history and these songs are not museum pieces. The place names and characters are different, but the humanity remains common. In making *Stranger In My Land*, Roger Knox closes the circle on a strange journey that takes the music and stories of his people all the way around the planet and back to America.

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