

Introduction to Phil Monsour's The Empire's New Clothes CD

What do you do when it hurts beyond reason, when you're drowning without hope? You can listen to stories of survival. You can scribe and sing. You can bring to life in music, a lost humanity.

In *The Empire's New Clothes* Phil Monsour creates a breathing space [*nafas*]...inside a specific sense of 'Arabness' in Australia. It's about our experience. It's about our memory. It's about our identity and all the contradictions in between. It's about the politics of love.

After generations we forget what it is to sing our songs - whether they're traditional, contemporary or lullaby. But, there is a certain kind of something, about singing in your own 'voice'. It unlocks memory. It expresses personal worlds of meaning. The social. The political. The historical. The cultural. Song as it is here, bridges these worlds - striking a chord, a deeper 'resonance' - physically, politically and spiritually. This is a language never lost.

For many generations in Australia, stories / histories / herstories of Lebanon, of Palestine, of Iraq, have always been insistently part of our conscious and subconscious lives. *Al Nakba* [The Catastrophe] continues in Palestine today, as do catastrophes in Lebanon and Iraq. And meanwhile, despite apologies, the White Colonial Project continues in Australia.

For Phil, this album is the product of many wars. The birthed child of invasions and occupations. The imprint of many a colonial 'adventure'. It is a journey of families and identities, growing up when Lebanon was not just 'the old country' - it was on the news each night.

Here are the prophecies born from loss and pain. Here are the anthems of hope for justice. Here is where we meet with Eastern hearts and minds, in Western streets and suburbs. In the face of our cynicism and anger, we welcome you to 'Popular' music - [*shaa3bi*] - more like how we want the word 'popular' to feel - for you, for your mother, for your brother, for your soul. For us.

This is Phil's hand, his voice, his guitar. Here is Phil Monsour's hope.

Alissar Chidiac March 2008