

I'm not a robot































Midnight Oil's 1987 hit "Beds Are Burning" might be one of the most authentically Australian songs to become a worldwide hit. The song is up there with "Land Down Under" by Men At Work. But while the band never expected it to become such a massive hit, they always intended it to be unapologetically Australian. But that also meant making it Australian from more than a colonialist perspective. The band, comprised of Peter Garrett (vocals, harmonica), Rob Hirst (drums), Jim Moginie (guitar, keyboard), and Martin Rotsey (guitar), wrote the song at the request of several Aboriginal Australians to commemorate a triumph for Australia's native peoples. It would become one of the most successful rallying cries for native rights in the history of Australian music. It also became Midnight Oil's most significant success and legacy. Diesel And Dust, the album on which it appeared, was voted No. 1 on the 2010 list of The 100 Best Australian Albums. It was also voted No. 3 on the list of Top 30 Australian Songs of The Past 75 Years by the Australasian Performing Right Association. The members of Midnight Oil took the legacy of "Beds Are Burning" seriously. It has remained the centrepiece of their extensive advocacy and protest activities, including the campaigning for the rights of indigenous Australians. Although the song was an international hit, not many people know the meaning of "Beds Are Burning." Moreover, most don't know how the story behind how a band of four white men from the desert became theingers of this influential song. Read on to learn the fascinating history behind Midnight Oil's "Beds Are Burning." In 1985, Midnight Oil was becoming widely known throughout Australia. That year, the Australian Government returned ownership of Uluru, formerly known as Ayers Rock, to the Pitjantjatjara people; it had been forcibly claimed by European settlers more than a hundred years earlier. The region later became a spot of native settlements, where Australian Aboriginal tribes were forced to live under colonial rule. However, the members of Midnight Oil were surprised when several people approached them to ask if they would write a song about the event. Rob Hirst told Songwriting Magazine that they initially hesitated, thinking it would be more appropriate for a First Nations band to write the track. "They came back and said, 'We want the message of the hand back to go to the big cities, and that's where Midnight Oil is from, so could you have a crack at it?'" said Hirst. "So Jim Moginie and I got to work." For the title, Hirst reflected on an art exhibition about the battle between Italian fascists and partisans in the Second World War. "The guy who put the exhibition on explained to me that there was an expression from Italy about the fightback from those partisans, 'How could you sleep when beds are burning?'" Hirst said. "I thought we could write a song about the same idea of an ancient Australian community who had so much thrown at it but was still joyfully dancing in the desert." The phrase fueled the concept as the band members worked on the song. To research further, they spent several months traveling through the Australian bush with a local guide. This helped them become familiar with the area and the aboriginal peoples about whom the song was written. "We got to see the best and the worst of the Australian desert in the 80s," Hirst said. "There were a lot of negatives, but there were also some of the most beautiful times we had. One of the best was along the Kintore Band, playing music in the open plains. People whose ancestors had paid there for us up to the 1970s. Peter Garrett said it was strange to see that song written about unknown people in a remote area. Four lyrics were placed and people hardly known outside the country had topped the charts. "Beds Are Burning" became known as a uniquely Australian song. This was intentional for the band, who were determined to keep their "Australians" in their music. It was also intentional to keep their lyrics unisex about the people and the region. Four wheels scare the cockatoos/From Kintore east to Yuendumu/The Western Desert lives and breathes/in forty-five degrees/Kintore is a region in Australia's Northern Territory; it is known for being where large communities of the Pintupi relocated after being displaced. Yuendumu is another region that also has a large native population. The mentioning of these places — one with a European name, the other with an Aboriginal name — ties into the repeated chorus of it belongs to them, let's give it back. The song also references other unique features of the Australian Outback, including bloodwood, desert oak trees, and the Broken River. "In retrospect, 'Beds' was the song we were born to record," Vocalist Peter Garrett told News. "It's got all the bits to make it work: strong rhythms, good melody, and the lyrics had some punch while being very Aussie. It took a while to stick. It's incredible how much it still gets played around the place. Who would have thought an Aboriginal land rights song would travel that far? Midnight Oil continued to use the song to protest issues around Australia for many years. "Beds Are Burning" peaked at No. 17 on the Billboard Hot 100 and topped charts worldwide. The Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame included it on its list of 500 Songs That Shaped Rock And Roll. It is an unexpected legacy — but one that the members of Midnight Oil seem honored to have.Photo by Steve Eichner/WireImage Midnight Oil's "Beds Are Burning" is a song which we can safely say first and foremost is encouraging social activism. More specifically, it is brought to us by an Australian band, and its sentimental foundation is in the plight of the people who are indigenous to that part of world. You see like many other native groups around the globe, Australian aborigines have suffered at the hands of European settlers. This includes being displaced from their lands, amongst other travesties. In other words, aboriginal activists have perpetually fought for rights such as economic independence and self-determination, and they have found vocal supporters in Midnight Oil. As such, most people probably understand the title, as it is used in the chorus, to actually mean something other than what it does. They interpret it as alluding to the callousness of the dominant class (i.e. those of European descent) in the face of the suffering of aborigines. But according to Rob Hirst (of Midnight Oil), who contributed to the writing of "Beds Are Burning", such is not actually the case. "How can we dance when our earth is turning?How do we sleep while our beds are burning?" According to Hirst, the title is actually meant to highlight the richness of the aboriginal spirit. It is basically trying to say that despite all of the challenges which have thus far been thrown their way, nothing has been able to decimate their happiness. As such, even while their "earth is turning" or "beds are burning", they are still able to respectively engage in productive or even joyous activities such as 'dancing' and 'sleeping'. So the purpose of this track is twofold. On one hand, it is definitely letting Australian citizens who have directly benefited from the mistreatment of the land's native inhabitants know that they are logically indebted to the welfare of the aborigines. But secondly it is also a celebration of the enduring spirit of the latter. The band pays tribute to them for not letting such intrusive and harrowing circumstances destroy them. "Beds Are Burning" was released during August of 1986. It was the second single from Midnight Oil's album entitled "Diesel and Dust". 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Beds Are BurningMidnight OilOut where the river broke/The bloodwood and the desert oak/Holden wrecks and boiling diesels/Steam in forty five degrees/The time has come to say "Fair's fair"/To pay the rent, to pay our share/The time has come, a fact's a fact/belongs to them/Let's give it back/How can we dance when our earth is turning?How do we sleep while our beds are burning?How do we sleep while our beds are burning?Full Lyrics In an era where music transcends mere entertainment to become a vessel for powerful social and political commentary, Midnight Oil's 'Beds Are Burning' emerges as a testament to this transformative power. Beyond its infectious beat and rousing vocals lies a profound narrative that demands attention—not just a toe-tapping tune but a clarion call to action. Diving deep into the layers of urgency and emotive storytelling, 'Beds Are Burning' carries a message that resonates as strongly today as it did when it first pulsated through the airwaves. This song is not merely a lyrical journey but an impassioned plea for equity and justice wrapped in a rock anthem's guise. The Pulse of Political Activism in Music Music has always had the avowed power to address issues that are otherwise often left in the dim corners of discussion. 'Beds Are Burning' becomes a specimen of Midnight Oil's staunch activism through their discography. The heartbeat of the drum and the fervor in the voice of lead singer Peter Garrett are not just for rhythm but reverberate with the vibration of change. The band uses its platform to spotlight a political struggle that, at the time, was overshadowed by the clamor of more 'global' issues. This song reiterates that the universal language of music can stir souls and awaken social consciousness, regardless of borders or ethnicities. A Spotlight on the Stolen Generations While many listeners may find themselves lost in the compelling beats, 'Beds Are Burning' is deeply rooted in Australia's history, specifically referencing the plight of the Pintupi, an Indigenous Australian group. The song encapsulates a moment of reckoning for a country confronting its own history of oppression and the enforced displacement of its Indigenous peoples. Midnight Oil succeeds in painting a vivid picture of a landscape both brutal and beautiful, juxtaposing the Australian desert's harsh reality against the enduring spirit of its native inhabitants. The lyrics are a poignant reminder that the land 'belongs to them,' making a compelling argument for Indigenous land rights and autonomy. Unearthing the Song's Hidden Meaning Although the chorus questions how we can dance amid crisis, the hidden message in 'Beds Are Burning' runs deeper. This is not just a commentary on political inertia; it's a mosaic of guilt, accountability, and redemption. The fiery beds become a metaphor for a conscience that cannot rest, an environment that cannot heal, and a culture that cannot celebrate while injustice endures. By extrapolating this song's hidden meaning, one finds a universal applicability that speaks to broader issues of human rights and environmental crises. It urges an awakening, not through fear but through the realization of complicity in maintaining the status quo. Lyrics That Echo Through Time Some of the most memorable lines of 'Beds Are Burning' are the repeated questioning of our ability to 'dance' and 'sleep' while ignoring the looming crises. These lyrics resonate beyond the initial environmental and political context, almost prophetically echoing today's challenges with climate change and social justice movements. The song captures the essence of time's essence in activism — "The time has come to say fair's fair." It is a timeless refrain that urges immediate action and shared responsibility, a call to acknowledge the debt owed to those who have been wronged and to rectify past and present injustices. Impact and Legacy: Beds Still Burning Today More than three decades have passed since 'Beds Are Burning' first called on listeners to take responsibility for the socio-political issues at hand. The song remains a resonant force, signifying the unyielding power of music to inspire change and hold a mirror up to society's shortcomings. Midnight Oil has succeeded in crafting a song that is both an earworm and a catalyst. 'Beds Are Burning' is firmly nestled in the canon of protest songs that have spurred both thought and action, proving that a song can indeed awaken the world, aligning heartbeats across the globe towards a common cause. 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The guy who put the exhibition on explained to me that there was an expression from Italy about the fightback from those partisans, 'How could you sleep when beds are burning?' and I thought we could write a song about the same idea of an ancient Australian community who had so much thrown at it but was still joyfully dancing in the desert, singing their songs and pushing back against the shocking things that had been visited upon their ever since Europeans had arrived in this country." In retrospect, "Beds Are Burning" was the song we were born to record. It's got all the bits to make it work: strong rhythms, good melody and the lyrics had some punch, while being very Aussie," he explained. "It took a while to stick. It's incredible how much it still gets played around the place... Who would have thought an Aboriginal land rights song would travel that far?," Peter Garrett by SMF AI - Published January 15, 2024 - Updated April 25, 2024 Article Contents: Lyrics Out where the river broke/The bloodwood and the desert oak/Holden wrecks and boiling diesels/Steam at forty-five degrees/The time has come to say "Fair's fair"/To pay the rent, to pay our share/The time has come, a fact's a fact/belongs to them, let's give it back/How can we dance when our earth is turning?How do we sleep while our beds are burning?How do we sleep while our beds are burning?Full Lyrics In an era where music transcends mere entertainment to become a vessel for powerful social and political commentary, Midnight Oil's 'Beds Are Burning' emerges as a testament to this transformative power. Beyond its infectious beat and rousing vocals lies a profound narrative that demands attention—not just a toe-tapping tune but a clarion call to action. 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'Beds Are Burning' is firmly nestled in the canon of protest songs that have spurred both thought and action, proving that a song can indeed awaken the world, aligning heartbeats across the globe towards a common cause. The lyrics of "Beds Are Burning" are a passionate call to action, highlighting the urgent need for change regarding the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia. The opening lines set a tone of urgency, suggesting that the time for complacency has passed. The metaphor of 'beds burning' symbolizes the dire situation that requires immediate attention and action. The repeated refrain emphasizes the necessity of awakening to the realities faced by Indigenous communities, urging listeners to recognize their struggles and the historical injustices that have led to their current state. As the song progresses, it delves deeper into themes of displacement and the loss of land, which are central to the Aboriginal experience. The lyrics reflect a sense of frustration and anger towards the systemic neglect and oppression that Aboriginal people have endured. The imagery used throughout the song paints a vivid picture of the cultural and spiritual disconnection that has resulted from colonization. The chorus serves as a rallying cry, calling for solidarity and support for Aboriginal rights. It emphasizes the need for a collective awakening, urging society to confront uncomfortable truths about its history and the ongoing impact of colonialism. The use of a driving rhythm and anthemic melodies further amplifies the song's message, making it not just a protest song but also a unifying anthem for social justice. In the latter verses, the lyrics continue to challenge listeners to take responsibility for their actions and to advocate for change. The song's insistence on the need for restitution and acknowledgment of past wrongs resonates with broader themes of reconciliation and healing. Midnight Oil's passionate delivery, combined with the song's infectious energy, creates a compelling argument for social change, making "Beds Are Burning" a timeless anthem for justice and equality. Diesel and Dust (2008 Remaster) Blue Sky Mining (Remastered) 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 (Remastered) Essential Oils (Remastered) Red Sails In the Sunset (Remastered)

