

MELBOURNE
INTERNATIONAL
ARTS FESTIVAL
9-24 OCT 2009

AUSTRALIA

WORLD PREMIERE

THE BLACK ARM BAND

dirtsong

FEATURING TEXT BY ALEXIS WRIGHT

the Arts Centre, State Theatre

Fri 23 & Sat 24 Oct at 7.30pm

1hr 40min no interval

Warning: Haze effects

Presented by Melbourne International Arts Festival in association with Arts House and in collaboration with The Black Arm Band

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that audio and visual material included in this concert has been gathered from a range of sources and may contain voices of Indigenous people who have passed away and images of places that may cause sorrow.

dirtsong was developed with the support of City of Melbourne, the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board and the Music Board, VicHealth, Arts Victoria, Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust, AndyInc and APRA.

CDs available for sale from the Arts Centre foyer.

www.blackarmband.com.au
www.melbournefestival.com.au

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CREDITS

The Black Arm Band

Mark Atkins, Lou Bennett, Deline Briscoe, Emma Donovan, Kutcha Edwards, Dewayne Everettsmith, Leah Flanagan, Shane Howard, Ruby Hunter, Bunna Lawrie, Djolpa McKenzie, Lee Morgan, Shellie Morris, Archie Roach, Bart Willoughby with guests Jimmy Barnes and Paul Kelly

With

Eugene Ball	Trumpet
Stuart Byrne	Reeds
Ceridwen Davies	Viola
Iain Grandage	Cello
Anita Hustas	Double Bass
Arwen Johnston	Tuned Percussion
Andrea Keeble	Violin
Andrea Keller	Piano
Rory McDougall	Drums
Michael Meagher	Electric Bass
Jordan Murray	Trombone
Geoffrey Morris	Guitar
Greg Sheehan	Percussion
Sue Simpson	Violin
Julien Wilson	Saxophones

Original Text Alexis Wright

Patron of The Black Arm Band and Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy

Conception and Direction Steven Richardson

Producer Jude Gun

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Brett Sheehy, Vivia Hickman and staff of Melbourne International Arts Festival, Sue Beal, Kate Ben-Tovim, Kara Ward, Deanna Smart, Olivia Anderson, Tom Howie, Lexie Wood, Adrian Aderhold, Angela Calderwood, Brian Horder, Jim Stenson, Nathan Evers, Zoe Pepper,

Developed and Produced by Arts House

Associate Stage Director Marilyn Miller

Repertoire and Vocals Supervisor Lou Bennett

Musical Supervisor Iain Grandage

Cultural Consultant Sarah Jane Bond

Arrangements and Orchestrations

Eugene Ball, Iain Grandage, Kate Neal, Jocelyn Pook (UK), Julien Wilson with artists of The Black Arm Band

Additional Repertoire Research

Sian Prior, Paul Kelly, Urszula Dawkins

Linguistics Consultant Dr Julie Reid

Production Management and Sound

John O'Donnell

Stage Management Brock Brocklesby, PJ Rosas

Design Consultant Paula Levis

Lighting Designer Jennifer Hector

Screen Visuals Natasha Gadd, Rhys Graham, Daybreak Films

Program Images Andrew Curtis, Daybreak Films

Image Art Direction Famous Visual Services

The Black Arm Band has also featured

Andy Alberts, David Arden, Robbie Bundle, Aaron Burrarrawunga, GR Burrarrawunga, John Butler, Kev Carmody, Liz Cavanagh, Carole Fraser, Sally Dastey, Joe Geia, Jimmy Little, Jessie Lloyd, Rachael Maza Long, Della-Rae Morrison, Stephen Pigram, Peter Rotumah, Amy Saunders, Dan Sultan, Ursula Yovich, Bevan Gapanbulu Yunupingu and Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu.

Sarah Caufield, Sarah Ernst, Genine Romagnoli, Eleni Arbus, Jane Crawley, Morris Bellamy, Janina Harding, Siu Chan, Pip Campey, Genevieve Lacey, Sarah Whitteron, Ben Walker, Anna Howard, Annette Herschtal, Alison Edwards, Gemina Corpus, Mia Christopherson, Madeleine Bower, Stewart O'Connell, Djarla O'Connell, Teresa O'Brien, Marguerite Pepper, Kate Cashel,

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

STEVEN RICHARDSON

*dirt*song is the third major project of The Black Arm Band following *murundak* (2006) and *Hidden Republic* (2008).

Performed predominantly in Aboriginal languages, the project is presented in five episodes with songs and music inspired by the words of Alexis Wright. Many of the pieces are structured as musical “conversations” between the collaborating artists reflecting on *country*, conjuring not only a sense of geographical place but encounters, memories, obligations, community and nature.

Tonight’s performance is drawn from Aboriginal Australia mixing traditional approaches and contemporary songs, existing repertoire and newly commissioned music, performed in 13 Indigenous Australian languages.

While the inspiration for *dirt*song has been to awaken some sleeping Australian Indigenous languages and to work in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding, the project has required all involved to summon the courage to face many dilemmas.

Firstly, and most significantly, the deep pain of acknowledging why and how a language has been removed from use and the associated cultural, familial and community ramifications. For me, as an urban dwelling whitefella it is not such a huge empathetic leap to understand the dire social and political consequences wrought through the removal of language.

Vicki Gordon, Jill Shelton, Martine Delaney, Noeletta McKenzie, Helene Jedwab, Lisa Watts, Dominic Forde, Kent Johnston, John Paxinos, Deirdre O'Brien and staff of Auspicious Arts, Melanie Rice, Eloise Curry, Martel Ollerenshaw, Loretta Mannix-Fell, Geof Webb, Lydia Miller, Liz Gilles, Debbie Dadon, Julie Kantor, Jenni Begg, Richard Green, Alan James, Jan Leo,

Then, if words or phrases are missing, do you make up substitutes? Should you, and how do you modernise a language that was last widely spoken in the 1800s? And is this engineering of language right or wrong?

Like the polar ice caps it seems that the world’s languages are melting away. According to UNESCO, they disappear at a rate of one every two weeks. And if we don’t stop the decline, 90% of the world’s languages will be gone by the end of this century.

Aboriginal languages are part of Australia’s rich, deep cultural heritage. The inexorable march of English across the globe is partly to blame for the drying pool of language diversity. And this is nowhere more evident than in Australia. Since colonisation, we have the worst record of language extinction on the planet. Before the arrival of Europeans there were hundreds of languages spoken here but only around half of them are left and many of them are critically endangered.

I want to pay a special tribute to Alexis Wright and in turn Bill Neidjie for the generous use of their words which have inspired tonight’s performance. I encourage you to read them in full in this program.

We hope that you enjoy *dirt*song.

Jesse Alderson, Mandy Muir, Travis Vigona, Jessica Vigona, Tony Vigona, Micky Mundine, Aven Noah, Lily Shearer, Billy McPherson, Mandawuy Yunupingu, Aboriginal Housing Company, Redfern Community Centre, Elouera Tony Mundine Gym, Garma Festival of Traditional Culture, Torres Strait Islanders Media Association, Yothu Yindi Foundation.

THE SONGS

episode I – dirtsong

It comes from where we bin start off

Far Away Home
dirtsong
Coming up close now

episode II – Big Law

*I am country.
Listen to me!
I cannot be any other way*

First Contact
Big Law
Madha yidi
I am country
Waakoobawhan yannak

episode III – Heartbeat

Sing the stories back. Bring the country back.

Sunrise
Giidang
Yarian Mi Tji
Winnan akk Pupuup Kaleek
Giidang

episode IV – Side By Side

Side by side. Proper way for this country.

Chin Wag
This Land is Mine

episode V – Rainstorm

Bringing fish. Rainstorm.

Dron Wanga
milaythina nika / Rrawa
Rainstorm
Gungalaira

Far Away Home / Gungalaira

Featuring Archie Roach
Sung in English and Bundjalung
Musical arrangement Eugene Ball

Composed by Graham Tardif with lyrics by Rolf de Heer. Words and music from the award-winning film *The Tracker* directed by Rolf de Heer.

dirtsong

Featuring Lou Bennett
Sung in Yorta Yorta
Written Lou Bennett, Alexis Wright
Musical arrangement Iain Grandage

From the Echuca, Barmah region, the heartland of Yorta Yorta country, it is a song of the connection of people, song and country. 'Baiyan Woka' is Yorta Yorta for singing for country/land. This song comes from the depths of my knowing and understanding that we all have connection, we just have to learn 'Gulpa Ngarwal' (deep listening).

Coming up close now

Featuring Mark Atkins
Devised and arranged Mark Atkins,
Julien Wilson

In the spirit of the Wongi word *GrunGada* or 'gathering' from the Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie regions of Western Australia, this is an invitation for people, performers and storytellers to share experiences, songs and music – old and new.

Traditional Chant

Bunna Lawrie
Spoken in Mirning

Big Law

Featuring Leah Flanagan, Deline Briscoe
Sung in Alyawarre and Yalanji
Written Leah Flanagan, Deline Briscoe,
Alexis Wright
Musical arrangement Lou Bennett,
Iain Grandage

This piece features the vocal talents of Deline Briscoe and Leah Flanagan based on text by Alexis Wright.

Deline's language comes from Kuku Yalanji, the rainforest country of the Daintree.

Leah sings in the language of her Nana from east of Alice Springs. She was born Ivy Upurla-Dempsey but as part of the Stolen Generation her name was changed to Dorothea (Dempsey) Berto.

"All you People, Come and listen to this Spiritual connection to land"

Madha yidi

Featuring Kutcha Edwards
Sung in Mutti Mutti
Written Kutcha Edwards, Creedence Edwards
Musical arrangement Iain Grandage,
Kutcha Edwards
Linguist Dr Julie Reid

This song is in Mutti Mutti language from Mutti Mutti country. After all that has been denied of our people, language is the connection that brings us back home.

Madha yidi (I never)

Madha yidi ngenggadhin ngabuninalai,
I never sat with my grandfather
Madha yidi yarngadin kuingialiai,
I never talked to my beautiful grandmother
Madha yidi wiugadhin waripa
I never sang or danced in a cooroboree



I am country

Musical arrangement Greg Sheehan

Waakoobawhan yannak

Featuring Shane Howard, Jimmy Barnes
Sung in Peek Whurrong/Tjapwhurrong
Written Shane Howard
Musical arrangement Julien Wilson

In 1994 I was visiting Uncle Banjo Clarke, a Kirrae Whurrong elder, at his house on the high banks above the Hopkins River at Framlingham, South West Victoria. Uncle Ivan Couzens, a Gunditjmara elder, was visiting him at the time. They sat by the fire talking while I made cups of tea. At one point Uncle Ivan looked up at me and said, ‘You should write some songs in language from this country.’

It’s a challenge to delve into any language that you do not know. Peek Whurrong is the language of the area where I was born and raised and now live. This song represents my very basic attempts over the last fifteen years to try to bring the song to life.

Waakoobawhan yannak is an eel hunting song. The rains come, the lakes and rivers fill, the eels travel down the rivers, the people will travel to those places they know, they will take their eel spears. The song goes on to say that the singer looks up into the night sky, sees the great river, (the Milky Way) and sees the ancestors and acknowledges that the people will all follow the ancestors from this life on Earth.

Sunrise

Featuring Bart Willoughby, Jimmy Barnes
Written Bart Willoughby

This song is about a teenage boy waiting for his first love to come back home, but she never does and so he realises it’s the end.

Giidang

Featuring Emma Donovan
Sung in Gumbayngirr
Written Emma Donovan, Alexis Wright
Musical arrangement Lou Bennett,
Julien Wilson

Giidang is sung in the Gumbayngirr language which comes from the mid-north Coast of NSW.

Giidang means Heartbeat, and the song tells the story of my connection to jagun (country) how I am the country, how I’m keeping the heartbeat of my country going, I am asking you to ngarraanga (listen).

The other women in the song keep the heartbeat almost like a pulse, we always call our country our miminga (mother) and this song gives me a voice to calll out like the mother who we have always referred to as country too.

Yarian Mi Tji (What’s My Name)

Featuring Ruby Hunter
Sung in Ngarrindjeri
Written Ruby Hunter
Musical arrangement Ruby Hunter,
Jocelyn Pook (UK)

A song of questions looking for answers for your name, your story, your land. Ngarrindjeri language is from the Lower Murray River, South Australia

Winnan akk Pupuup Kaleek (My Own Family)

Featuring Archie Roach
Sung in Tjapwhurrong
Written Archie Roach
Musical arrangement Eugene Ball

A song about being a man with a woman and children singing the sunrise, hunting for food to eat with your family. Tjapwhurrong language is from Western Victoria.

Chin Wag

Featuring Mark Atkins
Musical arrangement and additional
musical material Eugene Ball
Vocal arrangement Lou Bennett

In the tradition of sitting down and having a chin wag, this is a musical conversation between the player, guitar and didgeridoo. The instruments and performer complement each other, speaking their own unique and universal language as one.

This Land is Mine

Featuring Dewayne Everettsmith, Paul Kelly
Written Paul Kelly, Kev Carmody
Musical arrangement Kate Neal

Written by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody for the film *One Night The Moon* directed by Rachel Perkins. Originally set on Andymathanha land in South Australia’s Flinders Ranges, *This Land is Mine* / *This Land is Me* reflects on possession and belonging.

Dron Wanga

Featuring Djolpa McKenzie
Sung in Gumatj
Written Neil Murray
Musical arrangement Eugene Ball

Performed with permission from the family of GR Burrarrawanga. This version is dedicated to GRB and sung in Gumatj from the Yolngu Matha languages of North East Arnhem Land.

milaythina nika / Rrawa

Featuring Dewayne Everettsmith,
Djolpa McKenzie
Sung in palawa kani and Burrarra
milaythina nika mana mapali written
Heather Sculthorpe, Dianne Cook, June
Sculthorpe, Chris Mansell, Roger Sculthorpe,
Theresa Sainty
Rrawa written CJ Maxwell
Musical arrangement Eugene Ball

milaythina nika mana mapali is about land and the special connection Aboriginal people have with it, sung in palawa kani, which translates as ‘blackfulla talk’, a contemporary composite language developed within the Tasmanian Aboriginal community since the 1990s. To maximise Aboriginal ownership it is currently only taught within that community with emphasis placed on developing language skills of *luwutina*, the children.

Written in the language of the un-burra clan, *Rrawa* is a song from the saltwater country of Western Arnhem Land. *Rrawa*, meaning home, sings of First Island, now a natural reserve at the mouth of the Liverpool River in Maningrida.

milaythina nika / *Rrawa* is two songs sung in two languages, performed by Dewayne Everettsmith and Djolpa McKenzie.

Rainstorm

Featuring Shellie Morris
Sung in Gundjeihmi
Written Shellie Morris, Mandy Muir,
Alexis Wright
Musical arrangement Jocelyn Pook (UK)

Rainstorm is sung in the language from the southern end of Kakadu National Park which is still spoken fluently all over the region. My sister Mandy Muir, with the help of her mother Jesse Alderson, a Traditional Owner in Kakadu, translated this piece for me as she is fluent in the language and helping me to regain some language in my life to feel like I belong and that I have a place.



WORDS BY ALEXIS WRIGHT

This is dirtsong – It comes from where we bin start off.
Comes from country line.
Long time singing song for country.
dirtsong coming up from where everything start off.

Coming up from ancient song for making country good – looking good all of the time.
Singing it up, singing it up, looking after it well.

Should be like that, very important for spinifex, gidgee, mulga,
Plenty good food, plant, water hole,
animal each country place,
Sky place,

Sea place – looking after em.
Keeping story alive for country, make it alive – singing the songs,
Living the stories,
Holding the knowledge,
Following the story,
That is the Aboriginal law belonging to us.
dirtsong – happening now!

Country!
Country for me! You listening?
Are you listening to me?
Coming up close now.
I am country. Listen to me!
I am your government – I am the land.
This country speaks proper way.
Law right up top.
It has to be above other laws.

That Canberra law underneath – any Australia law underneath – only little law.
Yeah, I reckon old Law is everywhere.
See it over there in the hill where the old spirits lives, inside rock, tree, wind, sky, all animals and these old ones are coming through the elders singing the country with all the knowledge for big law.
I cannot be any other way.
I am not your way.
Everyone must listen to the land to live strong.

Land strong with Law.
Indigenous law.
He is the right constitution for this country.
I am here.
Sitting down here.
My country, he's alright, very good.
I am happy now.
First time I am happy.
I like that country and go back and stay there.
It is desert country, all flat, and big range on side – that far – and all the sandhill going the other way.
We done ceremony – making corroboree, and all that for our own country.
I know everything: what Dreaming I got, law that my father lend me.

I am here.
Sitting down here.
Sitting where grandparents' grandparents lived.
Watching my country, watching story –

creation story, law story.
Growing up children.
Growing up country.
Looking after.
Side by side.
Proper way for this country.

I don't know what other people do to the country.
I cannot understand it.
It is a crying shame to see the country like this.
Yep! We have seen all the change.
There were a lot of good things right through this country – but memories now.
Still though, the Indigenous law for land stands strong, I don't know how, but it does.

We got to make the stories.
Sing the stories back.
Bring the country back.
Singing it up.
Bringing it back.
Bringing up feeling.
Feeling it in the heart.
Giving it back to the country.

Listen for the heartbeat.
The heartbeat now – with the pulse of the land,
The bird; The tree; The grass and the wind.
Bringing it up.

Dry country some places now
Too much
I don't know if we will get rain soon.
Who will make it rain?
I can't make it rain
Some of them old people passed away now,
you know, the rainmakers.

They been make it rain.
Make it rain and the country come back.
You got to look after the rainmakers.
People need to listen
Listen carefully
The wind blows strong
Through the tree it blows
Come visiting you
Spirit talking to you
It comes in dreams
You can hear it too
We are made the same, you and I
Hot wind bringing the goose
Bringing fish
Rain storm.

Alexis Wright's words written in recognition of the recorded voices of elders in the books *Take Power* and *Story About Feeling* by Bill Neidjie.

Alexis Wright is supported by The Writing and Society Research Group, College of Arts, University of Western Sydney and we acknowledge the generous support of Central Land Council.

SINGING ‘COUNTRY’ IN NEW WAYS – dirtsong

URSZULA DAWKINS

The Black Arm Band’s first show, *murundak* (2006), surveyed the depth and breadth of contemporary Aboriginal music to date, its second, *Hidden Republic* (2008), took a step towards the future in its expression of hope ‘post-apology’. Now *dirtsong* – performed predominantly in Indigenous languages from across Australia – brings past and future together and celebrates language restoration and cultural survival through songs that map the ‘countries’ of the band members.

Of the hundreds of Aboriginal languages that were spoken before 1788, many have been irretrievably lost or are at risk of disappearing when their remaining fluent speakers pass away. But some languages survive and are thriving, and many are being recovered, restored and learned anew by younger generations.

Remembered and passed on by the old people, or reconstructed with the help of early journals and ethnographic records, these recovered languages are helping redress the cultural dispossession suffered by Aboriginal Australia. They are also enabling the renewal of an oral tradition over 40,000 years old.

The languages in *dirtsong* come from across Australia, from the Northern Territory to Tasmania, and from east to west: Gumatj and Burrarra of Yolŋu Matha from Arnhem Land; palawa kani from Tasmania; Yorta Yorta and Mutti Mutti from southern Mungo region; Ngarrindjeri from the lower Murray River region in South Australia; Gumbayngirr, from north-coast New South Wales; Mirning, from the

western Great Australian Bight – and quite a few more. Each of The Black Arm Band artists has their own particular relationship to culture through language; whether it be long-standing and uninterrupted through generations of family, recently recovered, or severed through geographical displacement.

In this sense, *dirtsong* re-maps and strengthens these cultural relationships, feeding back into the larger project of language revival in this country. Many of the songs are newly commissioned – not just reinforcing or affirming culture, but actively *creating* it.

Black Arm Band artist and Yorta Yorta woman, Lou Bennett, sees *dirtsong* as being much more than a concert, and language as much more than ‘words’ for the artists in the band.

“*dirtsong* is about land, language and people,” says Bennett, “and the connection between the three is innate in us [Aboriginal people]. It’s something that’s always been there, always will be in humankind, but in our mob it’s very evident in our everyday life. Whether we’re from the cities or the country, we all come from that earth, we all go back to that earth.”

For many of the band’s members, the creation of *dirtsong* has been an intense personal experience – and particularly for those who are in the process of retrieving their language, or who are yet to hear their own language spoken.

“We have members within The Black Arm Band that have been dispossessed and removed from their countries,” says Bennett, “and also people who are still on their countries and

still speaking their language fluently – the whole gamut. And it is such an overwhelming emotional thing to go through that journey [of language recovery], even by yourself, with your family and community – let alone for a particular show.”

“Language is belonging,” she says. “It is tasting – it is feeling. When I speak and sing my language I feel at home. I feel a sense of belonging, and pride in my language. I also feel a sense of connection to the land where that language comes from.”

dirtsong is about telling a story, not only musically, but spiritually, about the meaning of country and the Indigenous relationship to the land through time. According to Director, Steven Richardson, it charts a new ‘territory’ encompassing the many landscapes, both physical and cultural, that make up this continent.

“The performance is in some senses a map of Australia,” says Richardson, “but not in the sense that we are trying to represent specific geographical locations. Each language is specific to a place, but the music perhaps renders a symbolic portrait of Australia embracing cultural and linguistic diversity.”

This idea of a ‘map’ also suggests the traditional Aboriginal concept of ‘songlines’. The concept of songlines is complex, but for Lou Bennett it represents “the connection between the past, the present and the future.”

For Bennett the creation of a songline does not depend on a traditional approach.

“Even if I’m using English, [if] I’m using a different type of melody, [if] I’m not necessarily using traditional instruments, it’s still a connection to my land, it’s still a connection to my belief system. It’s not just a pop song – it links me to that ancestral land.”

Songlines, says Bennett, relate not only to time but also to places, “like little veins that run through the country”.

“You know, some of those old men and women that travel through bushland, they sing the country; and when they sing the country they know where they are. It’s like a map to them, and that’s more of the depth of what songlines are to me.”

Transplanted to a contemporary setting, perhaps there is a relationship between the singing of the old people and the map that The Black Arm Band creates through this show. *dirtsong*’s title track, written by Bennett, acknowledges the depth of tradition while retaining a clear focus on the present.

“[The song, *dirtsong*,] is about the songs that come up from the country – that have been coming up from the country for a very long time. And if you listen to that country, you hear the songs, you hear that oldness, you ‘Gulpa Ngarwal’ – you start to listen deeply.”

“It’s not just about looking to the past and to the ancestors, it’s also happening now: we are still singing our country, but in other ways.”

THE ARTISTS

Mark Atkins

Mark Atkins is a descendant of the Yamijiti people of Western Australia and also of Irish-Australian heritage. He plays the didgeridoo and is also a storyteller, songwriter, drummer and visual artist. He has performed around the world, working with musicians including Donal Lunney, Peter Sculthorpe, James Morrison, Philip Glass, Ornette Coleman, John Williamson and members of Led Zeppelin. In 1996 he performed with the London Philharmonic at London's Festival Hall.

Lou Bennett

Known for her work in the group Tiddas, Australian Indigenous performer and songwriter Lou Bennett has performed to audiences worldwide. She has performed with numerous Australian and international musicians, including Christine Anu, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Bob Geldof, Arlo Guthrie, Weddings Parties Anything, Mark Seymour, Billy Bragg and Powderfinger, and has composed music and performed for film, television, theatre, and public events. She has also acted in theatre productions: *Magpie*, *Conversations with the Dead* and *Yanagai! Yanagai!*

Deline Briscoe

Deline Briscoe is a singer-songwriter hailing from Mossman, North Queensland who now calls Melbourne home. Her songs are a delightful mix of roots soul, gospel and tear-jerking ballads. Her former outfit The Briscoe Sisters performed across Australia, including at WOMAD and Big Day Out and released their debut EP *Check It Out*. The Briscoe Sisters were voted Most Promising New Talent at the Deadly Awards in 2004, and the following year received the Port Fairy Folk Festival award for Maton's Young Talent of the Year. In 2006 they recorded *Live @ The Tanks*, and went on to play before Jimmy Cliff at WOMADelaide. She has also collaborated with producer Airi Ingram (Drum Drum/Grrilla Step) for her latest album. This is Deline's debut with The Black Arm Band.

Emma Donovan

Hailing from Nambucca in Northern NSW, Emma Donovan has performed across the globe treating audiences to her rich soulful voice as a solo artist. Emma Donovan is an original member of the vocal trio Stiff Gins, and co-wrote the 12 track album *Origins* and the award winning single *Morning Star*. She has toured worldwide including performances in London, Paris, Athens, New Caledonia, Palau and New Zealand. With the inclusion of her traditional language Gumbayngirr in her songs, she is committed to educating the global community to understand more about the depth of Aboriginal culture and spirituality. Blending genres from country and gospel to soul and R&B, her capacity to connect with her audience continues to impact on both the Australian and International stage.

Kutchia Edwards

Kutchia Edwards is a Mutti Mutti man born in Balranald in New South Wales. He was 'stolen' at 18 months of age and denied his birthright to grow up with his family, to experience his culture and to live his identity. As a teenager he was reunited with his family and so his journey began to retrieve his identity and reclaim his family and his community. For many years he was the lead singer in Blackfire. He has since formed Kutchia Edwards and Band. He has travelled to China, Mexico and Japan.

Dewayne Everettsmith

Though proudly seeing himself as both Aboriginal and Australian, Dewayne Everettsmith's roots and musical heritage are very strongly connected to Aboriginal communities of Tasmania and southeast Victoria. His grandfather was born and raised in the Aboriginal community on remote Cape Barren Island in Bass Strait, birthplace of a unique form of folk music (a blend of many styles known simply as Cape Barren music). His grandmother was from the Gunai/Kurnai people of southeast Victoria. Adopted as a child, he was raised within a family descended from Fanny Cochrane-Smith, a Tasmanian

Aboriginal woman whose voice is heard on the oldest known recording in Australia, singing in her traditional dialect. His voice has taken him all over Australia to the United States and Samoa. *dirtsong* is Dewayne's Black Arm Band debut.

Leah Flanagan

A storyteller at heart and a multi-instrumentalist by nature, Leah Flanagan moves between guitar, ukulele and piano with a powerful, versatile voice, shifting effortlessly between jazz, folk, latino and country. Born and raised in Darwin she studied Opera at the Adelaide Conservatorium, graduating with a major in classical voice performance. She continues to impress with her natural talent and charm that emerges through her performances.

Shane Howard

Shane Howard is a treasured and influential Australian songwriter, both as a solo artist and from his early years as part of the band Goanna. His songs have been recorded by artists as diverse as Ireland's Mary Black and Australia's John Farnham and Troy Cassar-Daley. He has devoted much of his working life to working with Aboriginal musicians, as well as touring Ireland and forging Irish-Australian connections. He has worked as music producer for numerous artists, including the Pigram Brothers, Street Warriors, Mary Black and Archie Roach, as well as the Jimmy Chi musical *Corrugation Road*.

A recipient of an Australia Council Fellowship, Shane is also patron of the Spirit of Eureka Committee and a founding member of the Tarerer Gunditj Project Association, (a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people committed to cultural and environmental restoration in southwest Victoria).

Ruby Hunter

Ruby Hunter, a proud Ngarrindjeri woman, was born at a billabong near the banks of the Murray River in South Australia. When only eight years old, Ruby was forcibly removed from her family and grew up in foster homes and institutions, eventually living on the streets in Adelaide where she met Archie Roach. They are part of Australia's stolen generations. In 1990 Archie made his first recording *Charcoal Lane* and one of the album highlights was the song, *Down City Streets*, written by Ruby Hunter. In 1994 Ruby released her debut album, *Thoughts Within* and was the first indigenous woman to be signed to a major record label. A second album, *Feeling Good* followed in 2000. In 2004, Ruby and Archie collaborated with Paul Grabowsky and the Australian Art Orchestra to produce *Ruby's Story*, an intensely rich musical experience charting Ruby's search for identity and hope through love. *Ruby's Story* won the 2004 Deadly Award for *Excellence in Film and Theatrical Score*. Ruby's songs reflect her personal history. She is firmly established as a unique and powerful voice in Australian music.



Bunna Lawrie

Bunna Lawrie is the frontman of Coloured Stone, the band he co-founded in 1977 on the Kooniba Mission in Northern Territory. The band rose to prominence in 1984. Their music featured on Australian national radio and they toured extensively. In the 1990s the group slowed their recording and touring schedule but released a greatest hits compilation in 1997. In 1999 Bunna became the first Aboriginal Australian to receive the coveted Don Banks Music Award, a prize usually reserved for Australian classical musicians.

Djolpa McKenzie

Djolpa is an un-burra man from Western Arnhem Land and his music career began at the age of 13. His elder brother taught him to play on an acoustic guitar with only three strings. Djolpa began touring with his elder brothers in the Letter Stick band playing the rhythm guitar. He created and fronted Wild Water for the past 15 years as singer, main songwriter and rhythm guitarist. His haunting vocals are sung in both English and Burrara language. Djolpa's songs are about his life, his country, and strongly reflect who he is as an Indigenous person living between two worlds. After nearly 15 years of touring he returned home to Maningrida where he is the VET music teacher at Maningrida Community Education Centre, passing on his knowledge and music wisdom to the younger generations, continuing the mentoring role from his brothers. This is Djolpa's debut performance with The Black Arm Band.

Lee Morgan

Lee 'Sonnyboy' Morgan is from the Gunditjmarra Kirrae Whurrong clan from southwest Victoria, and he spent many years growing up on the Framlingham mission. His solo career and vivacious guitar-strung tunes embrace a new phase in soulful country rock music, and he has recently recorded his latest album, *Feed Me*. He has performed and appeared on many albums

with some of Australia's legendary musical talents including Jessica Mauboy, Dean Geyer and The Mary G Show. He continues the storytelling that was inspired by his indigenous grandfather, the great Banjo Clarke (Wisdom Man) that we all share the land we walk on as outlined on his anthemic track, *Reconciliation Song*. He has played across Australia's venues and festivals and this is his Black Arm Band debut.

Shellie Morris

Shellie Morris is a Darwin-based singer-songwriter. Adopted out to Ian and Dorothea Dixon at an early age, she has traced her roots back to a Wardaman (Katherine area) grandfather remembered for his skills with guitar and voice, and a Yanyuwa (Borrooloola area) grandmother who was taken from her family at eight years and brought up in Darwin's Kahlin compound. Her performance highlights include the Closing Ceremony of the Arafura Games in Darwin and the Adelaide Cabaret Festival, and she has shared the bill with many renowned Australian artists including Yothu Yindi, Grinspoon, Vicka and Linda Bull, You Am I and Magic Dirt. She was nominated for a Deadly Vibes Award in 2002. As an ambassador for The Fred Hollows Foundation, she works with Indigenous communities and youth throughout Australia, helping young people write music about their experiences.

Archie Roach

Once in a lifetime an artist with an extraordinary spirit comes along. Archie Roach, a philosopher and storyteller in the tradition of his ancestors, relays and retells intimate real life stories through song that has touched the hearts and souls of audiences around the world. Surviving a turbulent upbringing Archie has become a powerful voice for indigenous Australians. His song, *Took the Children Away* from his 1990 debut album *Charcoal Lane* produced by Paul Kelly and the late Steve Connolly tells of Archie's personal experience of being forcibly

removed from his family. The album won a Human Rights Award, the first time such an award has been given to a songwriter. Archie has toured extensively both in Australia and overseas and has gone on to release a further four albums. In 2009 Archie and his wife and musical collaborator, Ruby Hunter were awarded the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award for their exceptional contribution to Australia's cultural life through the performing arts.

Bart Willoughby

Bart Willoughby was the first Aboriginal artist to appear in and write lyrics for a docu-drama, the first to score a feature film and the first to sign a record deal. In 1978 he formed the band No Fixed Address and toured Australia and the UK. No Fixed Address are acknowledged as the tip of the spear of contemporary Aboriginal music and opened the door for many artists that followed, also starring in the film *Wrong Side of the Road*. He performed at the Edinburgh Festival with the band Coloured Stone before re-forming No Fixed Address and touring the USA with Yothu Yindi. In 1989 he formed Mixed Relations and toured extensively in Australia and overseas. Bart has also worked with artists Don Walker and Goanna, and continues to tour internationally.

Alexis Wright

Alexis Wright is a member of the Waanyi nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria. She is one of Australia's best-known Indigenous authors and in 2007 her novel *Carpentaria* won numerous national literary awards including the Miles Franklin Literary Award. For many years she has worked on campaigns for Aboriginal land rights, self-government and constitutional change in the Northern Territory. She currently holds the position of Distinguished Research Fellow at the University of Western Sydney where she is developing new literary works, a series of lectures and literary collaborations.

Steven Richardson

Initiator of The Black Arm Band in late 2004 Steven also directed *murundak* and *Hidden Republic*. He has a broad experience in the arts spanning twenty years in a variety of artistic, producing and programming roles. He holds a Fine Arts degree in visual arts and studied dance at Victorian College of the Arts. He is currently Artistic Director of Arts House – a City of Melbourne contemporary arts initiative where he has also conceived and developed Dance Massive, the inaugural Australian contemporary dance platform realised in 2009. He was Deputy Chair of the Dance Board of the Australia Council for the Arts from 2002 to 2007.

Jimmy Barnes

In the 1970s and 1980s Jimmy Barnes was known as the wildest, loudest and most popular rock and roll star in the country. In the 1990s Jimmy reached mega-stardom with consecutive #1 albums in both soul and rock genres. Then everything went out of control and he came close to losing everything. In recent years, after rehab and open heart surgery, he has climbed back to the top of the charts and the top of his form with two sell out Australian tours and a current number one album *The Rhythm and the Blues*. This is Jimmy's Black Arm Band debut.

Paul Kelly

Singer-songwriter Paul Kelly has recorded numerous albums with his own bands, written songs with and produced other artists, and written several film scores including *Lantana*, *One Night The Moon* and *Jindabyne*. His recent albums include the bluegrass-inspired *Foggy Highway*, the Tchad Blake-produced *Ways and Means*, and *Stolen Apples*.