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#CINEMAFORTHESENSES Byron Bay Film Festival 6-15 October

Westwind: Djalu's Legacy Pop culture enlisted to preserve Aboriginal legacy

The burning question about who will carry the traditional tribal knowledge as Aboriginal elders age and die is addressed in a documentary screening at the **Byron Bay Film Festival** in October.

Westwind: Djalu's Legacy tells the story of **Djalu Gurruwiwi**, an ageing Yolgnu elder who is running out of time to pass on the Yidaki (didgeridoo) Songlines entrusted to him – his clan's knowledge, culture and country.

Djalu is respected and feared in Indigenous circles across the Top End, because he is a wise man. He is also the spiritual custodian of an ancient dreaming that has preserved and enriched his tribal homeland, generation by generation, for millennia.

But now Djalu faces a dilemma.

The precious songline that he "sings" on his didgeridoo is in danger of disappearing as younger generations are distracted by new technologies, pop music and the ways of the West. Even his own two sons are consumed by the modern world: one blinded by the light, the other by depression.

Djalu fears that they and the community, struggling to come to terms with the consequences of colonisation, are lost. He is prepared to do anything to save what must be sung to ensure the health of his country and the survival of his people.

When he breaks with his 60,000 year long tradition to try and save it, his plan shocks everyone. It involves the making of a film, and a trip to London hobnobbing with the glitterati of contemporary pop music. Along the way Djalu steps outside the normal paradigms of indigenous story. Before our eyes the wise custodian becomes the international jetsetter and the flamboyant showman who charms his way across Europe.

The outcome of Djalú's journey is equally surprising. When it seems he has lost the way or that he could even sell his precious legacy cheaply to outsiders, something happens, and he proves himself as the wise old man that he always was.

World famous musician **Gotye** becomes an unexpected assistant, helping to heal Djalú's sons and amplify his songs to the world.

Director **Ben Strunin** spent more than five years documenting Djalú's journey, which manifests as one of his oldest Creation stories – the Witiitj Songline that tells of two different serpents speaking together to maintain balance in the cycle of life.

The film showcases this meeting of two worlds, where Western pop and Indigenous sacred songs become a common language used to transcend barriers.

The film was the result of a determination by Yolngu Elders, lead by Djalú, to tackle the problem of intergenerational cultural maintenance by engaging with the Balanda (non-Indigenous) world in new and transformative ways. As such the first audience for this film are Yolngu communities, especially young people, and in turn Indigenous people more broadly.

This film will have a very real impact on Yolngu culture and community, and on the region of Arnhem Land where some of Australia's most intact Indigenous cultures live on after 200 years of invasion and colonisation. It will also have an impact on the maintenance and practice of ancient rites and songlines, as a means to preserve and celebrate them.

Westwind celebrates cross-cultural engagement, where art and music act as a shared medium to transcend historical and political divisions. It amplifies Djalú's message of reconciliation and unity through proper understanding of the traditional cultures of Australia, and their place in maintaining healthy communities.

This film is a chance for Indigenous people everywhere to learn and be inspired by Djalú's example, a leader of his people, who has shown how to honour and pass on traditional culture by understanding and becoming celebrated by global culture.

For non-indigenous Australians, it's a message of inclusion and brotherhood.

Westwind: Djalú's Legacy screens at the Byron Community Centre on Thursday, 12 October at 7.30pm.

Tickets on sale now at BBFF.com.au

THE FESTIVAL

The **Byron Bay Film Festival** is illuminated with two dazzling red carpet gala events in the heart of town. Opening Night offers a chance for industry networking and a taste of the flavour of the festival to come, and features a highlight film screening. The culminating celebration event is an exciting night of recognition for filmmakers,

the festival, Byron Bay, and the international film industry, and not to be missed. Early ticket purchases are recommended to avoid disappointment to these two popular events.

The 11th Annual Byron Bay Film Festival is held on Friday 6 – Sunday 15 October 2017 in multiple venues throughout Byron Bay and surrounding suburbs.

Program is OUT NOW.

Tickets are on sale now via www.bbff.com.au

End.

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