

Last Easter, over 1,000

The aim was to create an Indigenous people of all ages from music and cultural festival that was all corners of the land inclusive and representative of converged on **Dubbo** to Aboriginal people from all nations and sing, dance, tell yarns territories. Guests and performers and rekindle past travelled from as far afield as Perth, acquaintances at the Melbourne and Alice Springs to be part inaugural **Red Ochre Music Festival**. of what many saw as an historic event.

BY STEVE HODDER



"NOTHING QUITE LIKE THIS HAD EVER BEEN ATTEMPTED BEFORE and the people who came thoroughly enjoyed it," said *Red Ochre* co-chairman Peter Gibbs.

There were stories of hardships, past and present, but they were put aside for three days of happiness and high spirits as young and old paraded, stood tall and sang to the heavens.

Little Nellie Dargin, 10, caught the bus from Sydney with her grandmother so she could sing with her idol Roger Knox. The veteran crooner took young Nellie under his wing and presented her to an appreciative crowd whose vigorous applause lifted her performance to new heights. Other young performers to thrill the crowd were the highly talented Menindee band Born Rattlers – brothers Toviko Williams, 19, Tim Williams, 14, and their cousin Javaro Williams, 21. They picked up several paying gigs after the festival, which was one of the aims of the event.

"These young fellows have little chance of finding work at Menindee but the exposure they have gained at this festival could be the catalyst that launches their career," said Mr Gibbs.

Dubbo Senior College drama students performed the highly evocative *Outside the Square*, which touched on the treatment of Australia's Indigenous people since the arrival of Cook.

Apart from being highly entertained by young people at the festival audiences were also thrilled by performances by the elders.

"The Elders Tent was one of the most popular venues throughout the three days of the festival," Mr Gibbs said. Special guests including Dempsey Knight, Moonie Atkinson, Bill Orcher, John Hill, Robert Young, Roger Knox and Lionel Rose who thrilled audiences with renditions of many old favourites. On the last day of the festival Lionel Rose suggested getting all the elders up on stage together for a group performance.

"It was a very moving experience appreciated by everyone in attendance, who understood the significance of bringing these people together on one stage for the first and possibly the only time," said Mr Gibbs. "One thing we know for sure is that people want this festival," he added. "They want somewhere they can come to get re-acquainted, have a good time without alcohol and share their music. It's pretty simple stuff really – it's about getting to know the people you share this country with."

The next Red Ochre music festival is scheduled for Easter 2004. ■

Red Ochre Music Festival



Dancer Tjamera Talbot
Photo: Dubbo Daily Liberal

Dance group Baiyai Badin Bangayarra Wagagi-ga performed at Red Ochre on all three nights. The group comprises 20 young people aged 6–16 from the Dubbo and Wellington communities who had never learnt traditional dance before. Their performances were the result of six weeks workshops at the Dubbo PCYC coordinated by dancer Cedric Talbot and Diane McNaboe with the assistance of the Wellington Aboriginal Health Service.



Biyai Badin Bangayarra Wagagi-ga (which means two groups coming together for their grandmothers to reconcile & dance) came about as part of the Stories of Central West Project managed by Arts OutWest with funding from the Commonwealth Government's Regional Arts Fund.

June

17 - 21 June

🎭 *Hamlet*, the picture of modern youth - challenging authority and questioning social norms. By the Bell Shakespeare Company, at the **WAGGA WAGGA** Civic Theatre, . Bookings Tel 02 6926 9688 Website www.bellshakespeare.com.au

20 - 21 June

🎭 The Murwillumbah Theatre Company presents *Icing on the Cake*, theatre restaurant comedy, bigger and more riotous than *Dimboola*. Written and directed by Sue Jenssen-Clare. At Greenhills on Tweed, **MURWILLUMBAH**. Contact Bryanne Tel 02 6672 5554

20 June - 27 July

👁️ *In Enemy Hands* — Australian Prisoners of War. An Australian War Memorial Travelling Exhibition, plus painter Simeon Stoyev. Manning Regional Art Gallery, Macquarie Street, **TAREE**. Contact Sue Mitchell 6592 5455

20 June - 3 July

👁️ *In House*, group show artists from Spiral Gallery **BEGA** Tel 02 6492 5322