



Media release

Multicultural Arts Victoria's 25th Birthday

Melbourne International Arts Festival Opening (the Birthday Party)

The year 2008 marks two significant occasions, the 25th anniversary of the unique cultural organisation Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) and the opening of 23rd Melbourne International Arts Festival.

As part of the 25th anniversary, Multicultural Arts Victoria and the Melbourne International Arts Festival have combined forces to present, a massive free concert at **Federation Square on Thursday October 9th from 6pm.**

You will be able to check out some of the most exciting talents from Melbourne's multicultural arts scene who will be mixing up beats, cultures, eras and vibes from indigenous beats, middle eastern grooves, latin sounds, old school funk, reggae, dub, lost soul, hiphop, funk, afrobeat and loads more.

The line up of extraordinary local artists opening the Festival includes, **The Public Opinion Afro Orchestra, Unified Gecko, Nicky Bomba and the Melbourne Ska Orchestra, with guests Diafrix, Jali Buba Kuyateh, Yung Warriors, Little G, Nadee, King Marong, Lamine Sonko, Sista Selekt, Meltemi, Underbelly Tumbarumba and other surprise guests.**

The Public Opinion Afro Orchestra is a hot new mammoth ensemble of fifteen musicians hand-picked from Melbourne's African, jazz & hip-hop scenes. Inspired by the infectious afro-beat music of Nigeria and its neighbours, The Public Opinion Afro Orchestra delivers a contemporary blend of hip hop and African funk to the dancefloor. The all-star lineup features past and present members of Musiki Manjaro, LABJACD, Illzilla, Mista Savona, Diafrix, Blue King Brown, 1200 Techniques and Grilla Step. The sound of this mighty band is a force to be reckoned with.

A Middle Eastern vibe will be created by **Unified Gecko**. The band is led by singer / songwriter Murat Yucel who brought with him from Turkey the passion to preserve the traditional music by transforming it. With this in mind, he sought out Melbourne musicians from diverse cultural and musical backgrounds and created the unique sound of Unified Gecko. The music is strongly rhythmic and richly textured and includes an extensive repertoire of songs traditional, contemporary and original with a twist of reggae, ska, funk, jazz, ciftetelli and dancehall. This is a band that sees no race and is dedicated to bringing people of all classes, cultures and creeds together for a great time. Unified Gecko's music will be enhanced by the stunning performance of one of Melbourne's finest Middle Eastern dance ensembles **Underbelly** who specialise in contemporary adaptations of ancient artforms including tribal dance and percussion.

They will be joined on stage by **Meltemi** a newly formed local band comprising of both Greek and Turkish members who have joined together and created a musical fusion of both cultures. Their music comprises of original instrumental compositions using bouzouki, guitar, kanun (Middle Eastern plucked dulcimer/harp) darrabukas and various other percussion instruments. Their imagination, experience and skill has given rise to their distinct characteristic sound and has set them apart from the conventional.

The birthday party will continue with the amazing **Melbourne Ska Orchestra** that is a huge Ska/Reggae summit of biblical proportions. This ambitious musical venture, is led by Melbourne's irrepressible master of groove, **Nicky Bomba** and features a veritable who's who of local Jazz, Reggae and Ska talent including members of Skazz, the Trojan Horns, The Moonhops, The Pachuco Playboys, Bomba and the Ska Vendors. This much anticipated performance will see them join with some of the hottest local African, Indigenous and Caribbean artists including Diafrix MCs Azmarino and Momo, Haitian born soul songstress Nadee, Senegambian griot musician Jali Buba Kuyateh and indigenous hiphop MC's.

Diafrix represent the motherland of Africa and refugees from all corners of the globe. Diafrix represent what they see with their own eyes. Diafrix will team up with indigenous MCs Yung Warriors as well as Little G to create a vibrant cross-cultural experience which speaks of the differences and commonalities between Indigenous and African youth culture.

Following in the footsteps of Brazilian percussion organisations, like the world famous Olodum who fused Samba and Reggae, **Tumbarumba** combine a wealth of Brazilian musical material with the inevitable influences of the multicultural experience, lending new sounds and flavours to the genre. Tumbarumba, who are the core of an ever-evolving Melbourne based samba school, will join the ska orchestra for a massive close to MAV's birthday party.

Sista Selekta, Namila Benson will be the party's resident DJ who will keep the cultural vibe happening between sets. Radio listeners will know her current soul, Hip Hop and global show, *Cocoa Butter* on RRR and her global music segment on ABC Radio Australia, *Benson on Edge*. Namila's DJ'ing will be the icing on the cake for this very special birthday party for Multicultural Arts Victoria.

The party will continue at the famous Speigel Tent, the Arts Centre, Forecourt, on the Sat 18th October 7pm where **Black Jesus Experience** a nine piece Afro-Jazz-hip hop ensemble will play. Black Jesus Experience is led by composer and multi instrumentalist Peter Harper who has created an exciting blend of contemporary and traditional Ethiopian song. The band members include three singer song writers from Ethiopia, Namibia and Burundi with a rhythm and horn section from Australia including master musician and keyboard player Danny Atlaw from Ethiopia. Tickets: Full \$30 Groups (8+) \$27 Conc \$22.50 MF-Y \$25 (student/under 30 discount package)

All the artists are helping Multicultural Arts Victoria celebrate our birthday and the very significant role we have played over the past 25 years nurturing and supporting what makes Melbourne very special – our diversity.

**For Media enquiries please call Prue Bassett 9652 8641 P.Bassett@melbournefestival.com.au
MAV 94176777 & Jill Morgan Executive Director 0425776522 & Stefan Romaniw Chair
0419531255**

www.multiculturalarts.com.au www.melbournefestival.com.au

Multicultural Arts Victoria's 25th Birthday (The Background)

"Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) has made an enormous contribution to the arts and more broadly to the development of Australia's diversity since its establishment in 1983." states Stefan Romaniw OAM, MAV Chair.

"Multicultural Arts Victoria has served communities and artists in Victoria and Australia well over that period. One needs only look at the lists of members over that time, the events and activities organised, facilitated and supported to see that MAV has justified its existence and has been a leader. This Anniversary Year has also given the Board and staff of MAV an opportunity to reflect on work to date and plans for the future, to contact former Chairpersons and Board members to get a better insight of its history. The journey continues as MAV entrenches itself as the Victoria's peak body for multicultural arts in Victoria." Romaniw said.

Multicultural Arts Victoria evolved from the Festival of All Nations, which was established 10 years earlier in 1973. "Multicultural Arts Victoria emerged in 1983 from its parent organisation the Festival of All Nations. Its first objectives were to widen the concept of Australian Culture by ensuring contemporary Australian culture, and in particular the artistic expression of the community reflects the diversity of different heritage and traditions "(Dellal 1990)

"Multicultural Arts Victoria is the successor to the Festival of All Nations- a celebration of world culture. The Festival of All Nations created a cultural revolution in the conservative Australia of the early 1970's and set the scene for the establishment of Spoleto, the predecessor to the Melbourne International Arts Festival (MIAF), and the Fringe Festival". Mike Zafiroopoulos, President of the former Festival of All Nations Committee.

"The Festival of All Nations contributed to the acceptance of the then newly emerging policy of multiculturalism, by promoting harmony and interaction between cultural groups and by nurturing and celebrating their rich cultural traditions for the benefit of Australian society as a whole. MAV in 2008 continues to reflect the diversity of our community through the Arts and supports emerging as well as established artists through its professional arts program" Jill Morgan, Executive Officer MAV.

"Multicultural Arts Victoria, following on from the original mission of the Festival of All Nations, continues to openly welcome diversity of culture, ethnic tradition and respect of heritage alongside contemporary practice in all disciplines of the arts in today's multicultural Australia."

"The cultural activity driven by the ethnic communities over this period of time has shaped the cultural landscape of Melbourne and is still thankfully doing so" stated Morgan.

"MAV artists being programmed to open the 23rd Melbourne International Arts Festival is a significant milestone for the arts in Victoria. This opportunity is unique and is a sensational way to profile the extraordinary talent we have locally in the multicultural arts community.

It is a fantastic to be able celebrate our 25th birthday with all of Melbourne and we would like say a huge thank you to Kristy Edmunds in her last festival, for supporting our local culturally diverse artists. This collaboration reflects MAV's leadership role in the arts in the State and our role in developing artistic exchange and intercultural dialogue through the arts" said Jill Morgan

MAV will continue to be a leader and raise awareness of agendas driving multicultural arts policies in Victoria and nationally. The future success of our community is very much dependent on our diversity and our social cohesiveness. The Arts are a very powerful tool to bring people together, increase community pride and bring about greater understanding.

We encourage everyone to join us in the celebration of 25 years of Multicultural Arts Victoria by attending our huge birthday party, the free opening concert of the Melbourne International Arts Festival at Federation Square on October 9th @ 6.00pm and then continuing the party at the famous Speigel Tent, the Arts Centre, Forecourt, on the Sat 18th October @ 7pm.

Info - Jill Morgan eo@multiculturalarts.com.au