

## MEDIA RELEASE

4 September 2018

### SALTWATER RETURNS TO THE DESERT ONE DECADE ON

*Saltwater Band return to the central desert to once again headline the Sand Tracks tour, ten years after it all began.*

Two decades after forming, Galiwin'ku's Saltwater Band are preparing to headline the Sand Tracks 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour supported by West Arnhem's incredible up and coming Black Rock Band.

One of the Northern Territory's most loved bands, Saltwater Band have sold over 30,000 albums, been awarded the prestigious Deadly's "Album of the Year", been nominated for an ARIA and toured extensively across Australia, performing at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games and for the Queen in Sydney. Lead singer Manuel Ngulupani Dhurrkay headlined the first Sand Tracks cross-border tour and is leading the legendary Saltwater Band for this very special anniversary tour.

Manuel says "I am very proud to have been chosen to tour with Sand Tracks. We are looking forward to playing across the desert communities again, mah."

With 20 years of songwriting and performing experience, Saltwater Band will mentor dynamic, young rockers, Black Rock Band throughout the tour – both bands having played the Barunga Festival in June.

Black Rock Band hail from the West Arnhem region in the Northern Territory's Top End. They draw on a deep musical family history to incorporate both traditional and contemporary sounds. Singing in Kunwinjku and English about their celebration of culture, connection to country, the fight for social justice and the future they want to create for the next generation.

Black Rock Band lead singer Richie Guymala says "The music that I sing about, I think of it as a message and a reminder for people, what's happening in the real world. Not only about the rich and famous, it's about the poor too."

Country Arts WA Executive Director Paul MacPhail says "Sand Tracks this year is celebrating ten years of connecting successful musicians with remote Aboriginal communities throughout the central desert. We are proud that this initiative has gained national and international exposure. The 2018 bands represent both the legendary acts of the past and exciting, fresh sounds from new talent. They are certain to be a huge hit in the communities they are about to tour."

Sand Tracks is presented by Country Arts WA and Healthway promoting the Mentally Healthy WA campaign message, Act-Belong-Commit.

Healthway Chief Executive Officer Susan Hunt says "Healthway is delighted to support the Sand Tracks tour for 2018. It demonstrates the Act-Belong-Commit message by providing an opportunity for people living in remote communities to share in and enjoy exciting live music performances. Through this year's tour, Healthway and Country Arts WA are working together to promote healthy living in remote communities throughout Western Australia."

Sand Tracks begins on 16 September at Bush Bands Bash in Alice Springs, through its partnership with MusicNT and will then travel over three weeks to five remote Aboriginal communities across three states; Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, with the final performance in Kiwirrkurra – one of Australia's most remote communities, more than 2000km drive from Perth.

More info can be found at [www.countryartswa.asn.au/2018sandtracks](http://www.countryartswa.asn.au/2018sandtracks)

End

### Media Contact

Weng-Si Cheang – Communications Director, Country Arts WA

Phone: 08 9200 6202 | Regional Freecall 1800 811 883 | Email: [wcheang@countryartswa.asn.au](mailto:wcheang@countryartswa.asn.au)



## SUPPORT MATERIAL

### Country Arts WA

Country Arts WA is the only Western Australian arts body with a purely regional focus. Established in 1994, we are an independent, membership-based, not-for-profit organisation supported by State and Federal Government funding. Our purpose is to build the creativity, connection and capacity of regional communities to further develop WA's regional arts sector around key outcomes of diversity, sustainability, relevance, and celebration.

We work with the regional arts sector by focusing on arts' investment and project advice opportunities, strategies to encourage development and growth, communication of strong, positive stories and the networking of regional hubs and leadership programs across the State.

More can be found here: [www.countryartswa.asn.au](http://www.countryartswa.asn.au)

### Sand Tracks

The Sand Tracks program coordinated by Country Arts WA profiles and develops Aboriginal artists, connects and engages remote audiences and builds community capacity through partnering and delivering workshops, performances and music. Sand Tracks teams a renowned Aboriginal headline act with a young Aboriginal band from central Australia as the support act. The two bands tour through Australia's remote central desert region delivering live performances alongside music and culture workshops.

Each year Country Arts WA creates a list of bands for communities to vote on. The top-voted band is then invited to headline the Sand Tracks tour. This is the ninth year that the program will travel across state borders, touring from Alice Springs through the Anangu Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra Lands. More information is available on the Country Arts WA website:

[www.countryartswa.asn.au/our-services/touring/sand-tracks/](http://www.countryartswa.asn.au/our-services/touring/sand-tracks/)

### MusicNT's Bush Bands relationship with Sand Tracks

MusicNT's Bush Bands Program brings together two of Central Australia's premier music industry events - Bush Bands Bash and Bush Bands Business (BBBiz). BBBiz is a skills and industry development camp for the bands selected to play at the annual Bush Bands Bash in Alice Springs. The camp connects close to 50 Aboriginal musicians from central Australia with music industry mentors for three days of workshops, rehearsals and discussions.

Each year the headline artist on the Sand Tracks tour mentors the bands at BBBiz; providing invaluable support and advice about their musical experiences. All bands participating in the Bush Bands Program are then considered for touring as the support act on the Sand Tracks tour in the following year; creating a tangible connection between these strong Aboriginal music programs.

### Sand Tracks 2018 Tour Information

1. *Bush Bands Bash*, Telegraph Station, Alice Springs, NT – Sunday 16 September  
*Locally presented by Music NT – 08 8952 0322*
2. Amata Basketball Court, SA – Wednesday 19 September  
*Locally presented by Amata Community Council – 08 8956 7962*
3. Irrunytju (Wingellina) Community Hall, WA – Saturday 22 September  
*Locally presented by NG Media – 08 8956 7712*
4. Mirlirrtjarra (Warburton) Oval, WA – Wednesday 26 September  
*Locally presented by Wilurrara Creative and the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku – 08 8954 0125*

5. Warakurna Community Hall, WA – Friday 28 September  
*Locally presented by Warakurna Community – 08 8954 7366*
6. Kiwirrkurra Community Hall, WA – Monday 1 October  
*Locally presented by Kiwirrkurra Community – 08 8956 4975*

## **Band Biographies**

### **Saltwater Band**

For years Saltwater Band have been the most popular band in the NT and have sold an unprecedented 30,000 albums which combine contemporary and traditional songs (such as 'Gopuru' and 'Mala Rrakala'), songs over 10,000 years old re-made to feel new, as well as new contemporary pop songs such as the reggae/ska influenced 'Saltwater Music' and the beautiful 'Gurumul History'.

In 1999, the release of the band's first album "Gapu Damarrung" reached unprecedented heights in sales across Northern Australia. "Gapu Damarrung" set the benchmark for future albums.

Their second release, "Djarridjarri/Blue Flag" was nominated for an ARIA and won Album of the Year at the 2004 DEADLY awards. Their third album "Malk" (2010) was very successful, immediately generating media attention and national airplay. Since then the band have lost one of their lead singers, Dr G Yunupingu, but are pressing on with another new album.

### **Black Rock Band**

Black Rock Band hail from the West Arnhem region in the Northern Territory's Top End. Drawing on deep musical family history they incorporate traditional and contemporary sounds with a steady rock style, singing in both Kunwinjku and English.

With songs like Struggle, Learning on Country and their first recording Bininj Kunborrk, literally translating to 'traditional song and dance, the band sing about their families' cultural richness as well as contemporary social and political issues that reflect their experience as First Nations people. Their songs are a celebration of culture, connection to country, the fight for social justice and the future they want to create for the next generation.

In 2016, Andy Baldwin (Rola Pola Studios, USA) witnessed the band's performance at Barunga Festival (NT) and was so impressed he offered to record Bininj Kunborrk. The single spread like wildfire through the communities of Arnhem Land and has since been included on the Bush Bands 2017 compilation, featured on Triple J Unearthed, ICTV and played on radio stations across the country.

Since their inclusion in the Music NT Bush Bands program in 2017, Black Rock Band's body of work has continued to grow, with 2018 hailing the release of their first two singles and accompanying film clips. In May 2018, the band released their debut album entitled Struggle through David Bridie's Wantok Musik Foundation, launching the album to live crowds in Sydney and a sold out show Melbourne. The album was recorded with Andy Baldwin at Subsonic Studios in Darwin and at Kapalga Outstation (Kakadu National Park), and was mastered by Joe LaPorta (Sterling Sound, USA), who mastered the late David Bowie's final album.

Black Rock Band are making waves in the Australian music scene, having recently appeared in performances at Nannup and Barunga Festivals and MONA FOMA in Tasmania.