

the 54<sup>th</sup>  
**TOP HALF**  
**FOLK** *Festival*  
1-4 May 2026

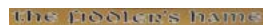
Connected      Grounded

# Program



Ross River Resort, Inteye-Arrkwe, NT  
One hour east of Mparntwe Alice Springs

## Thankyou to our Sponsors and Supporters



Tanami Tim



### Festival Director's Message

Running a festival is truly the most exciting, terrifying, exhausting and rewarding job! Our festival team is an eclectic and enthusiastic bunch, and we are constantly in awe of the skills and strengths of our members. It is our love for country, community and folk music which inspires us to build a better festival every time! This year's theme is Connected – Grounded. We invite you all to walk onto the ancient landscape of Inteye-Arrkwe/Ross River Resort on Eastern Arrende land with open hearts and minds. Connect with the incredible and diverse range of musicians, the land and each other. We invite you to step into the String Dome; be immersed and amazed by the many forms of string instruments and practices. We invite you to participate with the artists and become part of the festival performances; through the Festival Choir, orchestra, bush poetry, Blackboard sessions, workshops and bush dance. We invite you to remember Ted Egan, through song, stories, photos and raising a glass at our Festival Bar "A Drop of Rough Ted". Kids will be engaged and busy with craft workshops, First Fiddle Club, Wemu the Emu and a treasure hunt for pennies!

Thankyou for being a part of this rich and rewarding community festival.

Gleny Rae – Festival Director

### Festival Patron's Message

Hello! Welcome! When Gleny asked, "Will you be Patron?", I was happy to say "Yes, for this year". It seemed the natural thing to do. I have lived with music at the hearth and home for 86 years. I've enjoyed Folk Clubs and Folk Music festivals for over 50 years. I finally settled down with the best of humans-- singer, songwriter and storyteller Ted Egan. I'm heartened, thrilled, but not surprised to find he is remembered with love and esteem all over the place. Tributes to him are on-going. The best tribute however is that you should all love this festival, enjoy the friendships, the sounds, the innovations and the Traditions. Many, many people have devoted a lot of time to make sure that it's all here for you. All YOU have to do is to join in and have the best time or- sit/lie back and be spoiled rotten. Cheers! [as Ted would say].

xx Nerys



**Alcohol**

No BYO alcohol in the festival site or campgrounds. Head to our bar.

**Artist Services**

Green room and instrument lockup located at the Festival Hub.

**Bar**

Our "A Drop of Rough Ted" bar will operate from the verandah of the Festival Hub. The bar will run on a token system, available for purchase from the Festival Shop, and will not accept cash or card. We encourage you to BYO or reuse glasses for wine and our ever-popular hot toddies. Cups, including our festival pannikins will be available at the bar. Open Friday 6pm-12am, Sat/Sun 12pm-12am.

**Camping**

Weekend camping and powered sites are at the Festival Site. Camping will also be available near the Homestead, with vehicles access throughout the weekend.

**Emergency Evacuation**

Emergency Muster point is at the entrance to the Festival Site

**Festival Shop and Merch**

The Festival Shop, located in the Festival Hub, is your one stop shop for festival merch, artist merch and drinks tokens. Open Friday 12pm – 12am, Saturday and Sunday 8am – 12am and Monday 8am – 1pm.

**Fires**

Fire pits are set up around the festival site. No personal fires are allowed throughout the resort.

**First Aid**

St Johns First Aid will operate next to the Festival Hub, with a first aider on site 24 hours a day. In the event of an emergency present to the Festival Hub.

**Food & Drink**

See our vendors at the Festival Site. EFTPOS available. Breakfast and lunch will also sold from the Festival Bar, get your meal/drinks tokens from our Festival Shop.

**Gates**

Gates open 12pm – 9pm Friday, 8am – 9pm Saturday and Sunday, and 8am – 3pm Monday.

**Info**

There is a noticeboard outside the Festival Hub. Alternatively, chat to us at the Festival Shop.

**Lost & Found**

Lost & found is located at the Festival Shop.

**Parking**

Day parking is near the Homestead. No vehicle access in or out of the festival site between 5pm Friday and midday Monday. For accessible parking ask for assistance at the Ticket Office.

**Phone Service**

There is very little service at the resort. Please come prepared and see us at the Festival Shop in the event of an emergency.

**Ticket Office**

Collect wristbands or purchase door tickets at the Ticket Office at the entrance to the resort.

**Toilets & Showers**

Toilets are located around the Festival and Homestead sites. Showers are at the Festival Site. Please keep showering times to a minimum.

**Transport**

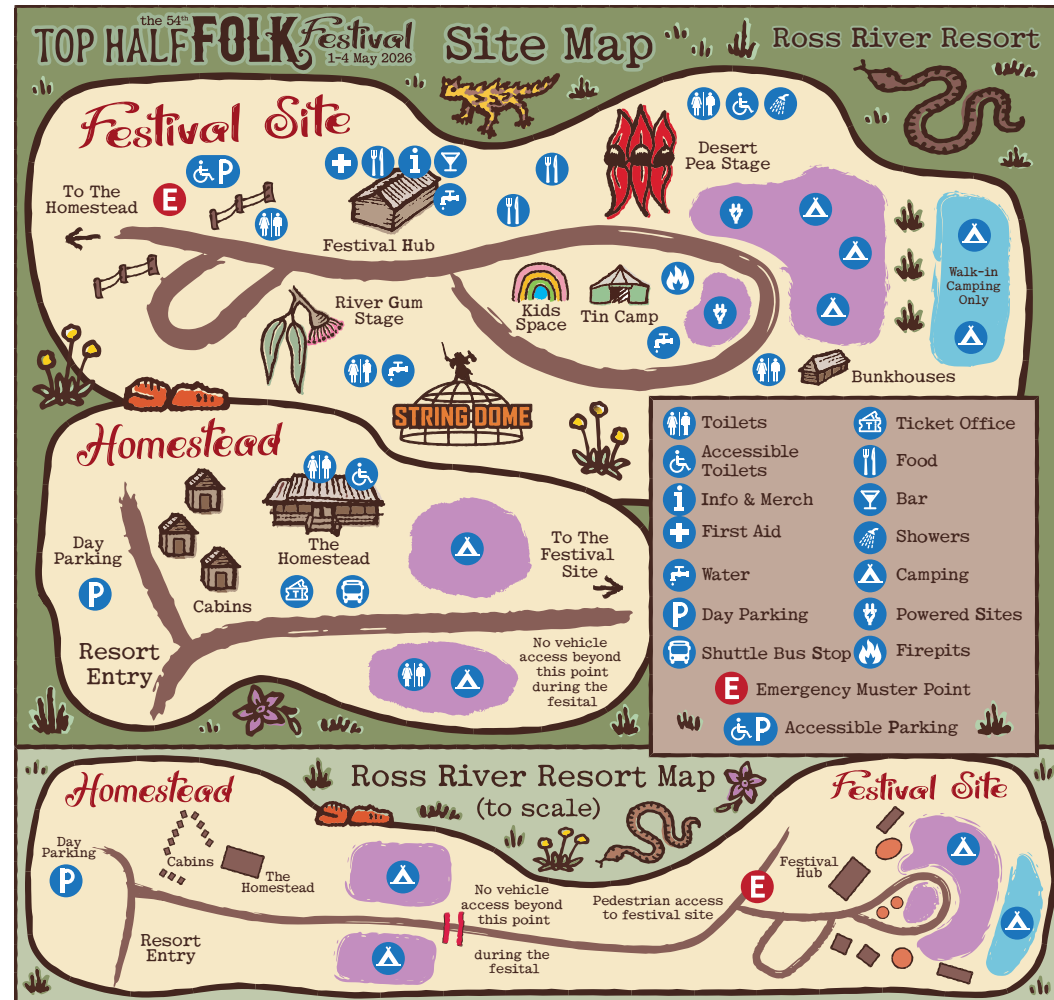
There is no public transport to the festival site. Our Festival Express shuttle bus will run in the morning and evening between Alice Springs and the Homestead on Saturday and Sunday. Please book your seat when you book your festival ticket.

**Volunteers**

Check in and out of your shift or get assistance at the Festival Shop

**Waste**

Help us move towards zero waste at our festival! There will be limited waste bins, as well as recycling for cans, around the festival site. Campers are required to take waste home with you. Need a garbage bag? See us at the Festival Shop.



**Getting around**

The Festival Site is a beautiful 500m walk from the entry to Ross River Resort, where the cabins, shuttle bus stop, ticket office, Homestead and Homestead campground are located. The ground is uneven. If you need assistance moving between the Homestead and Festival Site, please notify the Festival Shop on the Festival Site side or our volunteers working the gate on the Homestead side.

**Festival Site Camping**

There is plenty of space in the campground in the festival site. There is however, no vehicle access in or out between 5pm Friday and 12pm Monday. If you want to arrive or leave inside these times you are welcome to walk your gear into the site and leave your car in the Day Parking.

**Homestead Camping**

Vehicle accessible throughout the festival.

## Festival Hub

### Festival Shop

Artist and festival merch, drinks tickets, meal tickets for the Hub Kitchen (breakfast and lunch only). Instrument lockup. Volunteer check in.

### The Hub Kitchen

Serving breakfast and lunch. Please purchase meal tickets from the Festival Shop.

### Make your own Merch Workshop

Block print our 2026 festival graphics onto your own t-shirt or other fabric item.

**Time:** Saturday and Sunday, 11am

### Cost

Workshop only: \$5  
Workshop and blank tote: \$15



### Central Craft stall and Festival Blanket

Pop by the central craft stand to crochet or knit a square for the Central Craft community blanket. Supplies and assistance provided.

### Remembering Ted corner

In December 2025 we lost our beloved Ted Egan, Australian icon and patron of the 2024 Top Half Folk Festival. We remember and honour Ted with a tribute concert closing the festival on Monday and a memory corner in the Festival Hub. Please bring and share pictures, songs and memories of Ted as we keep his legacy alive.



## Tin Camp

A space to gather, share and participate, Tin Camp will be hosted and held by Yuwaalaraay man Warren Mason and Lutruwita born Donna Mason. From bush poetry to tall stories, giant emus and blackboard sessions, singing workshops and arid land discussions, old time and Irish sessions.

## String Dome

The String Dome is an immersive, magical space filled with string instruments of all kinds. The String Dome will host intimate performances and workshops by internationally renowned strings players, composers and instrument builders.

The String Dome will also host the Festival Orchestra, made up of the Alice Springs Chamber Orchestra, students from local schools and any strings players attending the THFF. The orchestra will perform original, new music composed by Liam King and Gleny Rae and directed by Liam King, inspired by the Inteye-Arrkwe landscape. Strings players of all ages and levels are welcome to join the Festival Orchestra. All rehearsals will be scheduled during the festival, all we ask is that you take a look at the compositions prior to the festival.

The String Dome is made possible with funding from Festivals Australia



## Kids Festival

Curated by early childhood educator and musical specialist Penny Elsley, the kid's festival offers a myriad of interactive and creative experiences. Play, make, paint, compose, perform, hunt, spin and parade through the daylight hours of Saturday and Sunday.

### Wemu the Emu

Wemu the Emu is looking for his chicks. Help by finding a chick and following as he takes you on a walk back to the nest.  
Sat 3pm and Sun 4pm

### Pennies from Heaven Treasure Hunt

Pennies are old. Really old! Coins from last century old! Professor Numerology has hidden 50 old coins in the Children's Festival area JUST FOR THE KIDS TO FIND! Four of these coins have SPECIAL SECRET MARKINGS! Find them and bring them to the Professor at 5pm to exchange for REAL MONEY! \$50!

Full Schedule can be found at the Kids Space.

## Bush Dance

Mparntwe String Band will join forces with Cat and Clint and The Cartwheels to launch the festival with a slightly raucous all ages bush dance! Shoes are highly recommended.

**Friday 7pm, River Gum Stage**



## Choir Bonanza

Mparntwe/Alice Springs has a strong reputation for excellent choirs, but a new challenger has ventured down from Darwin to join forces for this epic choir bonanza! Local lads The Shavings will open proceedings, followed by The Splinter Sisters, then The Key Changers from Darwin. The Bonanza will reach a climax when the three choirs come together for a dramatic finale!

**Saturday 6pm, River Gum Stage**



## Concert for Peace

A showcase concert of various festival artists, presenting their favourite song of peace.

**Saturday 7:30pm, Desert Pea Stage**

## Sunday Gospel featuring Inarma Choir

The ladies of Inarma Choir (Amoonguna and Titjikala) will sing gospel songs in Pitjantjara, with string band backing and guest appearances by Archer, Martha Spencer, Cat and Clint, The Cartwheels and more.

**Sunday 9am, River Gum Stage**



## Connected Concert

Tenzin Choegyal joins forces with the **Festival Orchestra** to present the premier of N'Dala Suite, a new work by Liam King and Gleny Rae. The music is inspired by the landscape, drawing you deep into the ancient stories and primordial pulse of country. Featuring emerging string players from Alice Springs Steiner School and festival participants. The **Festival Choir** will present songs taught at the festival choir workshops, lead by members of The Splinters Sisters, The Shavings and The Key Changers.

**Sunday 5:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**



## Ted Egan Tribute

Festival artists sing songs of Ted Egan and pay tribute to the late, great man. Recognised for his ability to listen and recall stories of all people and places, Ted Egan's legacy is embodied in these timeless songs.

**Monday 11am, River Gum Stage**

## Festival Patron Address

2026 Top Half Folk Festival patron Nerys Evans will deliver her address and open the Connected Concert.

## Festival Director Address

Gleny Rae to speak just before the Warren H Williams show.



## String Dome Workshops

### First Fiddle Club

Never played a violin before? This is your chance to experience the unique feeling and sound of playing a violin. Available to all ages, there will be a range of violins available for you to pick up and play, under the expert tutelage of string specialist Liam King.

### Festival Orchestra Rehearsal

From beginners to advanced players, all strings players welcome as we rehearse the new composition Ndala Suite in preparation for the Sunday evening world premier. Bring your own instrument.

### Cello Looping (interactive performance)

Local cellist and composer Xavia will demonstrate cello looping as an accompaniment to vocals and building musical textures.

### Double Bass Explained

Renowned composer Robert Davidson, world class improviser Luiz Gubeissi and country gentleman Dave Patterson will discuss and demonstrate a range of double bass styles and techniques. Get ready for triple double bass!

### Violin Bird Song

(interactive performance)  
Violinist/composer and ornithologist Hollis Taylor performs pied butcherbird songs on violin with her Central Australian field recordings, drawing on two decades of Red Centre research.

### Clawhammer Banjo

Banjo Princess Jenny Shimmin, old time enthusiast Cat Moser and banjo tune composer Peter Allsop present their collective knowledge of banjos and clawhammer playing.

### Fiddle and Dance

(interactive performance)  
Virginian born and bred Appalachian music specialist Martha Spencer demonstrates traditional flat footing and fiddling.

### Pedal Steel Explained

(interactive performance)  
Aden Mackay explains the mechanics of the pedal steel and demonstrates how it produces such syrupy sounds famous in country music.

### The Mandolin Family

The many shapes and sizes of the mandolin family will be played and explained by Emmy Ryan (mandolin and octave mandolin) and Liam King (bazouki)

### West African Ngoni (interactive performance)

Mparntwe based musician King Marong demonstrates the ngoni, a stringed gourd instrument considered the ancestor to the banjo.

### Guitar Accompaniment

The humble guitar is the most commonly used accompaniment instrument. Felicity Dowd, Clint O'Grady and Archer will demonstrate a range of guitar techniques and accompaniment styles.

### Harp on Earth (interactive performance)

Don't wait to get to the pearly gates, you can learn about the harp here on earth with local harpists Sally Westaway and Emma Ternordan.

## Tin Camp Workshops

### Looking after the Arid Lands

What work we can do together for environmental justice across the central deserts: discussion and action with the Arid Lands Environment Centre.

### Festival Choir Rehearsal

Sing your heart out and learn new songs to sing in harmony at the festival Connected Concert. Lead by Megan Atfield and Emma Trenordan.

## Festival Hub Workshops

### Make your own Merch

Block print our 2026 festival graphics onto your own t-shirt or other fabric item. Don't have something to print on? Calico tote bags can be provided.

Time: Saturday and Sunday, 11am

Cost:  
\$5 workshop only  
\$15 tote and workshop

## Artists

### Accordionista! (NT)

Sunday 2:45, Tin Camp

An Accordion and Bass Ukelele trip around the world with music from all styles and traditions. French cafe, Irish, Russian, Italian, South American, Klezmer, Jazz, Blues and more.

### Alecia and Madonna (NT)

Monday 9:00am, River Gum Stage

Madonna has been singing with groups and friends all her life and has recently stepped out onto the stage with her very own originals and well loved classics. Alecia is pretty much the same with some rock 'n' roll band experience, plenty of open mic hours and a history of running the once pumping Alice Springs Desert Music Club thrown in. Together the act is an experience of joy, heart on sleeve, easy listening and accessible to anyone who wants to join in.



### Alice Cotton (NT)

Saturday 4:30pm, River Gum Stage

Raised in Darwin, Alice Cotton's compelling live presence and distinctive songwriting 'hits you with the depth and breadth of her storytelling' (triple j). Fresh off a scholarship to the CMAA Senior Academy, a finalist nomination in the NT Music Awards and the release of her debut EP (produced by Nick Huggins), Alice Cotton is solidifying her place as one of Australia's exciting new voices. Her genre-crossing approach appeals to fans of Paul Kelly and Stella Donnelly, while her storytelling roots keep listeners coming back for more.

the 54<sup>th</sup> **TOP HALF FOLK Festival**  
1-4 May 2026

# RAFFLE

FIRST PRIZE	SECOND PRIZE	THIRD PRIZE
Full size violin, donated and set up by Bron's Workshop, decorated by a local First Nations artist	Painting donated by Warlukurlangu Artists art centre, Yuendumu	Sterling silver ring made locally by Tanami Tim

1 for	\$2
12 for	\$20
30 for	\$50

Tickets available from the Festival Shop



**Archer (NSW) and Martha Spencer (USA)**

**Friday 11:00pm, River Gum Stage**  
**Saturday 1:30pm, River Gum Stage**

Martha Spencer is a singer-songwriter, mountain musician and dancer from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. She grew up in a musical family and learned to play several instruments and flatfoot dance. She has performed across the US, AU, UK, CA, and EU. Martha's solo albums have been featured in articles in Rolling Stone Country, Americana Highways and she has been in articles in NY Times and Billboard.

As for Archer, born in North Carolina and raised in Australia, if you want to listen to music that touches your soul and takes you back to a time where there were no fences, fewer cars on the road and more beauty in your surroundings, you have to listen to Archer. First exposed to music as a young child, the gentle voiced sing-song man and writer says he continues performing music because he's hoping his music will inspire or create something special for people's souls. Archer has recordings on Pound Records, Skinny Fish labels, was featured on the documentary "I Am Wanita" and recorded at Sun Studios and Nashville recently. He also hosts "Cooking for Seamus". As a duo, Martha and Archer have performed in the US, Canada, and Australia.



**Bambadino (NT)**

**Sunday 4:30pm, River Gum Stage**

BAMBADINO consists of Cam Bambadino, Dave Crowe, Xavia and Edward Francis to bring you catchy tunes and big belly laughs. All members are talented songwriters in their own right, but come together to breathe Cam Bambadino's hilarious and heart-felt creations into its full harmonic life. Sounds like the story telling of Kimya Dawson with the sweet POC queerness of Joy Oladokun and the angst of Death Cab for Cutie.



**Cat & Clint (VIC)**

**Saturday 12:45pm, Desert Pea Stage**

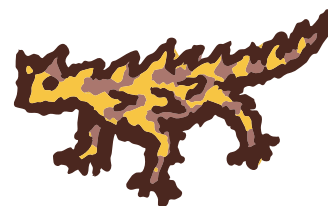
Cat & Clint have etched an indelible mark on the folk and roots scene in Australia and overseas, with their fresh interpretations of old-time music. With over 15 years' experience touring Australia and overseas, they are a well-oiled music machine. Drawing inspiration from 78 records, archival and contemporary music alike, they have built an eclectic repertoire that defies linear time and place. They honour the music of North America's old time and bluegrass, as well as Australia's vintage country and folk. Cat & Clint connect with audiences, inviting them on a soul journey, with plenty of fun and frivolity.



**Crocodile Country (NT)**

**Friday 6:00pm, River Gum Stage**

Crocodile Country perform home-grown Territory music with BITE! Crocodile Country is Kevin McCarthy (vocals, guitar), Lauris Hedenig (vocals, accordion, guitar), Wayne Wright (vocals, bass), and Noella Goveas (fiddle).



**Dave Crowe (NT)**

**Sunday 2:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Based in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, Dave Crowe is an award-winning singer-songwriter whose piano-driven indie folk weaves warm melodies with reflective lyrics inspired by landscape and place. Backed by a superb band of Central Australian musicians, his performances are both intimate and uplifting.



**Elsie Lange (VIC)**

**Friday 8:00pm, River Gum Stage**

Elsie Lange is an indie-folk-pop singer-songwriter who last year returned to Mparntwe/Alice Springs after a decade living and making music in Naarm/Melbourne. In mid-2025, Lange released her debut mini-album through Wing Sing Records, showcasing her most turbulent and direct song-writing yet. With her live band or solo, Lange promises a vulnerable and charming show of songs on the guitar and piano, full of storytelling about growing up, love, heartbreak and figuring it out.



**Emma Trenorden (NT)**

**Saturday 12:00pm, River Gum Stage**

Emma Trenorden first fell in love with singing as a child in PNG where singing in rich Islander harmonies was an ordinary part of life – whether it be in church, sitting under a stilt house with aunties and cousins, or in the back of a ute. She is a mparntwe-based poet and singer-songwriter, best known for singing with The Splinter Sisters.

		Saturday					Sunday					
	Desert Pea Stage	River Gum Stage	String Dome	Tin Camp	Desert Pea Stage	River Gum Stage	String Dome	Tin Camp	Desert Pea Stage	River Gum Stage	String Dome	Tin Camp
7:30				Bush Poet's Breakfast 7:30-9:00								
8:00												Tall Tales and Bush Yarns 8:00
8:30												8:30
9:00		Steph Harrison 9:00-9:45	First Fiddle Club 9:00-9:45			Sunday Gospel: Inarma Choir 9:00-9:45	First Fiddle Club 9:00-9:45					Looking after the Arid Lands 9:15-10:00
9:15												9:15
9:30												9:30
9:45	Stuart Joel Nuggett 9:45-10:30		Festival Orchestra Rehearsal 10:00-11:00	Festival Choir Rehearsal All Welcome 9:30-10:30	Kenny Joe Blake 9:45-10:30							9:45
10:00												10:00
10:15												10:15
10:30		Rosie MacDonald 10:30-11:15				Whisky Communion 10:30-11:15						10:30
10:45												10:45
11:00												11:00
11:15	Jon Rose and Hollis Taylor 11:15-12:00		Cello Looping 11:15-11:45	Old Time Tunes Session 11:00-12:00	Sirens 11:15-12:00		Pedal Steel 11:15-11:45					11:15
11:30												11:30
11:45												11:45
12:00		Emma Trenordan 12:00-12:45	Double Bass Explained 12:00-1:00	Sunny the Singing Fairy								12:00
12:15												12:15
12:30												12:30
12:45												12:45
1:00	Cat & Clint 12:45-1:30			Mparntwe Children's Choir 1:00-1:45	Tuckshop Ladies 12:45-1:30							1:00
1:15												1:15
1:30		Archer & Martha Spencer 1:30-2:15	Birdsong & Violin 1:15-1:45									1:30
1:45												1:45
2:00												2:00
2:15												2:15
2:30	Tenzin Choegyul 2:15-3:00		Clawhammer Banjo 2:00-3:00	Jaime Page and Friends 2:00-2:30	Dave Crowe 2:15-3:00							2:30
2:45												2:45
3:00		Emmy Ryan 3:00-3:45	Fiddle & Dance 3:15-3:45	Tin Camp Blackboard 2:30-4:00								3:00
3:15												3:15
3:30												3:30
3:45												3:45
4:00	Xavia 3:45-4:30											4:00
4:15												4:15
4:30		Alice Cotton 4:30-5:15	Bush Tunes Session 4:00-5:00	Kids Talent Show 4:00-5:00								4:30
4:45												4:45
5:00				Treasure Hunt Prizes								5:00
5:15												5:15
5:30	Jackie Marshall 5:15-6:00			5:30 to Late: Session/chill out space								5:30
5:45												5:45
6:00												6:00
6:15												6:15
6:30		Choir Bonanza 6:00-7:30										6:30
6:45												6:45
7:00												7:00
7:15												7:15
7:30	Concert for Peace 7:30-8:15											7:30
7:45												7:45
8:00												8:00
8:15												8:15
8:30	Jessie Monk 8:15-9:00											8:30
8:45												8:45
9:00												9:00
9:15												9:15
9:30												9:30
9:45												9:45
10:00	Glenny Rae's Country Ace Soul Band				Tracey Haskell 9:45-10:30							10:00
10:15												10:15
10:30												10:30
10:45												10:45
11:00		Enbarr 10:30-11:15										11:00
11:15												11:15
11:30	Katanga Junior 11:15-12:00											11:30
11:45												11:45

**Friday**

River Gum Stage	
5:00pm	Tin Camp Studios
6:00pm	Crocodile Country
7:00pm	Bush Dance
8:00pm	Elsie Lange
9:00pm	Katie Harder
10:00pm	Red Bird
11:00pm	Archer and Martha Spencer
<b>Monday</b>	
River Gum Stage	
9:00am	Alecia and Madonna
10:00am	Old Mates
11:00am	Fed Egan Tribute

**Key:**

Performance

Concert

Workshop

Interactive Performance

Blackboard

Session

Kids Program



**Emmy Ryan (NT/VIC)**

**Saturday 3:00pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Emmy Ryan wants to tell you a story. Her songs carry truth like a heartbeat — stories of love, loss, belonging, and the land that holds us. Following in the footsteps of troubadours like Joan Baez and Paul Kelly, Emmy sings with fierce tenderness about what it means to find home, to face history, and to stay open-hearted in a complicated world. With songs that have earned recognition in the International Songwriting Competition, the Listen Up Music Songwriting Prize, the Northern Territory Music Awards, and the Mountaingrass Songwriting Competition, Emmy invites you in — not just to listen, but to feel.



**Enbarr (NT)**

**Saturday 10:30pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Enbarr are a raucous 8-piece Celtic dance band featuring fiddles, whistles, flutes, drums, banjo, bouzouki and more in a celebration of all things Scottish and Irish folk. Bringing the energy of a pumping céili to the stage, their songs are a mash of traditional tunes, stories of life in the Top End and reimaginings of timeless classics from the Celtic cannon. This motley crew of Darwinites are guarantee of some good craic, bring a mate and get ready to get down.



**Felicity Dowd (NSW)**

**Sunday 1:30pm, River Gum Stage**

A modern-day troubadour and storyteller, Felicity Dowd, is Australia's most captivating emerging singer-songwriter! 2024 and 2025 Toyota Starmaker Grand Finalist, Youth Artist of the Year at the Australian Folk Music Awards (2023) and fresh off her 2025 AMERICANAFEST (USA) debut, Felicity is making waves throughout the Australian Americana music scene! She has become renowned for her award-winning songwriting, meaningful performances and incredible musicality. Having wowed audiences from main stages at Australia's most prestigious festivals, to support slots with music royalty, the Bushwackers, Neil Murray (Warumpi Band), Josh Cunningham (The Waifs), Felicity Urquhart, Ash Grunwald and Fanny Lumsden, Felicity is a must-see artist!

**ΦΡΙΞ (NT)**

**Saturday 10:30pm, Desert Pea Stage**

ΦΡΙΞ (pronounced "FREEKS") are a collective of Darwin-based musicians who share a love for the rich, melancholic sounds of traditional Greek rebetiko music. Equal parts mournful and joyous, they blend bouzouki and toubeleki with drums and bass to add a modern touch to an ancient art form. Come join them to share tales of sorrow, love and loss with a tropical touch.



**Jackie Marshall (QLD)**

**Saturday 5:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Jackie Marshall sings her new album "The Last of the Human Troubadours" with string quartet scoring by acclaimed composer Robert Davidson. The album explores themes of mortality, transcendence and liminality, celebrating human connection and life's precariousness. The quartet writing is diverse and intricate, embracing delicate contemporary classical nuances, frenetic energy, soul stylings and heartbreaking expressiveness. She will be joined by the Wonderland Strings - Gleny Rae, Jane Coleman, Anne Jaquiere, Chris Bird and Rob Davidson.

**Gleny Rae's Country Ace Soul Band (NT)**

**Saturday 9:45pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Drawing on calypso, country soul and reggae roots music, Gleny Rae brings together 8 of the finest musicians in Mparntwe/Alice Springs to create an instant party with a big thumping ever lovin' heart. Presenting locally inspired earthy songs from her latest release Momentum, alongside hip swingin' covers from the Caribbean to Memphis, the Country Ace Soul Band is guaranteed to get you grinding and sweating on the dance floor.



**Inarma Choir (NT)**

**First Nations Program**

**Sunday 9:00am, River Gum Stage**

Inarma Choir features women from the remote Communities of Pukatja, Mimili, Titjikala, and Alice Springs and Amoonguna. The ladies will present gospel songs in Pitjantjatjara and English, and combine with string players at the festival to lead songs of worship on Sunday morning.



**Jessie Monk (VIC)**

**Saturday 8:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Jessie Monk is an avant-folk artist based between Berlin and Naarm. Rooted in Celtic and Appalachian traditions, she weaves ancient myth and folk song into a richly layered sonic world, where intimate melodies meet jazz improvisation and experimental textures. Her work has been described by Rolling Stone as "boundless folk, about and against the grain," and her album Mis O' The Mountains—a finalist for AFMA's Contemporary Folk Album of the Year—explores the ancient Celtic myth of the goddess Mis. In performance, the band humbly share her profound, wild and familiar story through song and the fumbling art of conversation and together with their audiences, tend to it's timeless flame.



**Jon Rose and Hollis Taylor (NT)**

**Saturday 11:15am, Desert Pea Stage**

Violinist/composer and ornithologist Hollis Taylor performs pied butcherbird songs on violin with her Central Australian field recordings, drawing on two decades of Red Centre research. She is also a leading voice in American fiddling, author of six fiddle books, longtime columnist for Fiddler Magazine, former Oregon State Fiddle Champion, and a performer whose work spans jazz, folk, and contemporary composition across Australia, Europe, and the USA.

Violinist, improviser, composer, instrument inventor, and multimedia artist Jon Rose has spent more than five decades creating radical music and an alternative cultural context for the violin—its practice, history, and possibilities—across over 40 countries. The Music Board of The Australia Council honoured Jon Rose with its most prestigious award for lifetime achievement and contribution to Australian music, The Don Banks Prize 2012. He has curated the Corrugations series in Mparntwe since 2021.



**Katanga Junior (TNZ/NT)**

**Saturday 11:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Katanga Junior brings feel-good Afro-roots straight from Tanzania to Central Australia. Now based in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, his music blends soulful grooves, Swahili lyrics and infectious rhythms that make it VERY hard to stand still. His latest release, the Bongo EP, celebrates East African sounds and dancefloor energy, drawing on bongo flava, funk and blues influences. Known for joyful, generous live shows and deep musical connection, Katanga Junior turns every set into a shared moment - part party, part story, all heart.



**Kate West (NT)**

**Sunday 12:00pm, River Gum Stage**

This program celebrates the luminous voice and songwriting of Kate Rusby, one of the most beloved figures in contemporary English folk music. Drawing on her rich repertoire of traditional ballads and original songs, the tribute honours Rusby's gift for storytelling, emotional clarity, and deep connection to the folk tradition. From tender love songs to spirited narratives rooted in the English landscape, this performance reflects the quiet power and enduring beauty of her music, reimagined with respect and affection.



**Katie Harder (NT)**

**Friday 9:00pm, River Gum Stage**

Alice Springs-based singer-songwriter Katie Harder crafts heartfelt, soulful folk and alt-country music that resonates with warmth and authenticity. Katie's music explores life's complexities—love, motherhood, grief, growth and gardening—set against the vivid contrast of Australia's red centre and lush southern landscapes. Her 20-year career highlights include performing alongside Clare Bowditch and Warren H. Williams, supporting The Waifs, and collaborating on poignant NT projects like the Stuart Hwy Project. In 2025 she released her self-produced and engineered album 'Slow Walking' and cannot wait to continue to showcase these songs in 2026 – weaving sound, song and story in the most powerful and heartfelt of ways with her Trio.

**Kenny Joe Blake (VIC)**

**Sunday 9:45am, Desert Pea Stage**

Contemporary songs in rootsy country, blues, folky styles. Humorous anecdotal delivery. Kenny will also play with Mick Coates, and Lauren Lee Williams, who is as good as any songwriter around.

**Little Large (NT)**

**Sunday 12:50pm, Tin Camp**

Little Large writes songs about many things: friendships, camping adventures, social issues, traveling, nature, and more. Songwriting has proven to be a way to make sense of the world for Little Large. Telling stories of everyday life and subtle observations with catchy melodies and gentle rhythms, there is a song for everyone in the treasure chest of Little Large's song collection.

**Middle Fiddle (NT)**

**Sunday 7:30pm, River Gum Stage**

Little fiddle, big fiddle, middle fiddle, they are the fiddles from the middle. Gleny Rae, Liam King, Latecia Boddey and Billy Black.



**Moongaze (NT)**

**Sunday 6:45pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Moongaze is an acoustic singer-songwriter duo from Mparntwe/Alice Springs whose love-powered melodies are crafted in riverbeds for singing to friends under the wide desert skies. Grounded in folk tradition, yet inspired by contemporary artists such as the Indigo Girls and Ani DiFranco, their enchanting folk-pop sound is composed of fingerstyle guitar, upright bass, violin, hand percussion, and soaring vocal harmonies. As desert dwellers in a changing climate, Moongaze craft songs of love and protest designed to provoke thought and inspire change. Their heartfelt duets celebrate the beauty of the planet as well as the importance of fighting for its future.

**Old Mates (NT)****Monday 10:00am, River Gum Stage**

So this is a Folk Festival, right. So you've got two of the oldest folkies still standing. They'll sing the songs that took them from the very first Top Half Festival to the dizzying heights of international touring (and back down again). Bob Barford and Scott Balfour back together again for one more hurrah.

**Red Bird (NT)****Friday 10:00pm, River Gum Stage**

Red Bird is an indie folk trio from Mparntwe consisting of Tiff Lohs, Chris Bird, and Rosie Ballard. What began as casual jam sessions in their lounge room has grown into an engaging live show. With a blend of original songs and reimagined acoustic covers, they offer a sound that feels both familiar and unique. Featuring cello, guitar, and sweet vocal harmonies, Red Bird infuses humor into each performance. At the heart of their music is a blend of rich melodies and rhythmic layers, inviting listeners to connect through the stories they tell.

**Rosie McDonald and Friends (NSW)****Saturday 10:30am, River Gum Stage**

Rosie McDonald is an established singer/guitarist who brings the true spirit of folk music to the fore performing at with the groups Mothers of Intention, Folklore, Trippy Hippy band, RAPT, Folklore, Seanchas, McMolly and The Go Twos. With alternate tuned guitar and bouzouki playing, Rosie's rich alto verse as she leads into her original songs and stories from the Celtic folk, 1960's folk, trad and blues traditions. Rosie will be joined by Jenny Shimmin, renowned bluegrass banjo player for a collaboration that brings joy to her heart as she forges this new musical path after recently losing her life and music partner. She will launch their debut CD Kurrawarra.

**Sirens (NT)****Sunday 11:15am, Desert Pea Stage**

Don't be fooled by the dry desert sand. There are rivers-a-flowing beneath where you stand And guarding these waters from unwelcome foes Are Mparntwe Sirens whose story few know... Local musicians Alison Mapleson, Brooke O'Connell and now-Victorian-but-still-'local' Georgia Ivens bring you a hypnotic listening potion of originals, Celtic ballads and folk hits of decades past. Prepare to be lured in by their interweaving voices, guitars, a touch of fiddle, and a sprinkling of subliminal messaging.

**South of the Berrimah Line (NT)****Sunday 12:15am, Tin Camp**

South of the Berrimah Line originated in Katherine with band members now living all over Australia. The only criteria to be a part the band is to live South of the NT's Berrimah line, to love music and take on the challenge of long distance practices. Each year the size of the band changes, but in their 20th year, most who have performed over the years will perform a selection of songs and tunes from over the years along with some new songs from the Celtic and Old Timey traditions.

**Steph Harrison (NT)****Saturday 9:00am, River Gum Stage**

Steph Harrison is a long-time Alice Springs local and proud mother of three. Known for penning the NT Anthem, performing with iconic desert rock band Bat Hazzard, and a founding member of Brisbane all-girl cabaret 'Stop it I Love it!', Steph's musical roots run deep – tracking back to the days of the Radetzky March, which family legend has it was gifted to Strauss by her great great great grandfather. Blending jazz and classical influences with a splash of blues, Steph creates soundscapes of flute, guitar and voice to share stories of love, loss, longing and belonging.

**Stuart Joel Nuggett (NT)****First Nations Program****Saturday 9:45am, Desert Pea Stage**

Indigenous Australian Singer Songwriter from Elliott N.T. Stuart sings in Jingili, the language of his Tribe, also called Jingili.

**Super Raelene Harmonium Band (NT)****Sunday 6:00pm, River Gum Stage**

Killer Melody Rhythm and Harmony, Bass, Kick, and bittersweet Harmonium. Songs of Euphoria, Songs of Lament, Sucking your fingers and licking your teeth.

**Tenzin Choegyal (Tibet/SA)****Saturday 2:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Tenzin Choegyal is one of the world's finest musicians in the Tibetan tradition. As a son of Tibetan nomads, he feels a particular connection to the music of the high Himalayan plateau. In a career spanning 20+ years Tenzin has performed at festivals across Australia and curated numerous events and concerts including Brisbane's annual Festival of Tibet. Internationally he has performed in New Zealand, Japan, India, Germany, Bangladesh, Russia and USA, including performances at New York's Carnegie Hall. He has also opened many of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Public Talks in Australia, New Zealand and Japan with his musical offerings.

## Teresa Dixon (TAS)

**Sunday 3:45pm, Desert Pea Stage**

From one side of Bass Strait to the other, singer songwriter Teresa Dixon plays alt country and folk songs of love, loss and hope. With a warm and honest voice likened to 'gravel and honey', Dixon writes and performs with integrity and grit, bringing stories and songs from the deep south of Tasmania.



## The Cartwheels (VIC)

**Sunday 9:00pm, River Gum Stage**

The Cartwheels are duo Wendy Phypers and Dave Patterson who play original country/folk. The Cartwheels features Wendy's amazing voice, acoustic guitar and double bass perform songs. Wendy and Dave are both Australian Country Music Award's, Golden Guitar winners and Wendy is also a Tamworth Songwriters Award winner for Best Blues and Roots song. The Cartwheels show is heartwarming and funny with beautiful vocals and tasty playing.

## The Doctor's Wife (NSW)

**Sunday 3:00pm, River Gum Stage**

The Doctor's Wife is an acoustic-based musical duo featuring mainly original music along with covers of songs they wish they had written! Their sweet spot is playing small intimate shows, but they are equally happy on the big stage. Peter (singer & multi-instrumentalist) and Nicky (singer) will let you into their musical world and share their creative journey with you, connecting through well crafted songs and the stories behind them, nuanced instrumentation and well developed harmonies.

## The Key Changers (NT)

**Saturday 6:00pm, Desert Pea Stage**

The Key Changers are a community choir singing on Larrakia land in Darwin led by Megan Atfield. We sing mainly acapella songs and our singers range in age from their 20s to their 80s. They love to sing songs of beauty, joy and hope, as well as themes of justice, equality and the environment. The Key Changers often sing in languages other than English. They have sung at the Darwin Festival, The Seabreeze Festival, The Top Half Folk Festival, The Railway Club and many other community events in and around Darwin. This is the first time the choir has travelled together to perform, so they are very excited to be singing together on Arrernte country.



## The Reverend and Mrs Rowdy (SA)

**Sunday 10:30am, River Gum Stage**

The Reverend and Mrs Rowdy's Whisky Communion is a wild Sunday morning celebration of the sacred, the profane, and everything in between. "The Rowdies"—Jem Phillips (the Reverend), Trisha Dee (Mrs Rowdy), Anne Toner, Kate West, Jason Jones and Callum Lawrie—serve up classic (plus original) country tunes in three-part harmonies, with fiddle, double bass, and mandolin in a raucous, heartwarming ritual. Part music, part mischief, part communion, it's a gathering where laughter, song, and spirits flow freely. Join the sinners, raise your cup, and help move the spirit at this unforgettable festival tradition. BYO cup, BYO joy!



## The Shavings (NT)

**Saturday 6:00pm, Desert Pea Stage**

A-cappella male folk ensemble, from Mparntwe, singing with the strength of 12 harmonious men. Our vocal output ranges from somewhat raucous, to softly tender, with occasional sprinkles of serenity.



## The Splinter Sisters (NT)

**Saturday 6:00pm, Desert Pea Stage**

For The Splinter Sisters, Sunday arvos are for eating cake, sipping tea and singing together. Lean in to their thick harmonies, click and sway with their heartfelt tunes, and clap and stomp with their body percussion. This Mparntwe singing ensemble have been sharing their worldly folk songs at community events for over a decade now.



## Tiarnie (NT)

**Sunday 11:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Tiarnie enjoys connecting with an audience through telling stories of heartbreak and tragedy with self-deprecating humour. Performing solo and with a full band, Tiarnie has supported high profile artists including Kingswood, The Vanns, Ali Barter and The Rubens.

# TIN CAMP STUDIOS

## Tin Camp Studios - Warren & Donna Mason (TAS)

*First Nations Program*

**Friday 5:00pm, River Gum Stage**

Warren & Donna Mason - artists, cultural leaders and collaborators whose work is grounded in healing, connection and deep respect for Country. Their shared practice brings people together through story, music and care, reminding us that art can be a powerful force for belonging and community.

## Tracey Haskell (NT)

**Sunday 9:45pm, Desert Pea**

Guitar and a voice, listening or performing, Tracey has forever been moved by the combination. Music is her guide. Friends, family, destinations, all influenced by her commitment. Tracey crafts and sings her own songs from the life experience that has had her noticing old people, young people, buildings, workers, shopping, gardening, dementia, downsizing, driving, happiness, sadness and all the in between. Born in New Zealand, Tracey comes from the Tahora Hills of Taranaki, in the North Island.



## Warren H Williams (NT)

*First Nations Program*

**Sunday 8:15pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Fresh from two Golden Guitar nominations for songs in Arrendte, Warren H Williams brings together a band of young local musicians to perform songs from his new album Undar Wurma (Are You Listening?)



## Tuck Shop Ladies (VIC)

**Saturday 9:00pm, River Gum Stage**

**Sunday 12:45pm, Desert Pea Stage**

Armed with a pair of ukuleles and razor-sharp wit, Sam Lohs and Rosie Burgess turn life's everyday absurdities into hilarious, harmonious songs. After multiple sold-out seasons at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and two People's Choice Award nominations at the Australian Folk Music Awards, The Tuck Shop Ladies have firmly cemented their place as crowd favourites. Their live show is an uplifting ride through spontaneity and connection — part concert, part confessional, and entirely joyful. With heart and hilarity, The Tuck Shop Ladies remind you that life really does sound better in harmony.



## XAVIA (NT)

**Saturday 3:45pm, River Gum Stage**

XAVIA crafts immersive soundscapes that blend wonder and warmth into contemporary folk. Her music weaves layered harmonies and strings with textured beats, creating performances that bring audiences into deeply atmospheric worlds shaped by honesty and imagination. Thoughtful, heartfelt, and sonically rich, XAVIA invites listeners to slow down, lean in, and experience songs that resonate long after they end.



## Festival Committee

**Gleny Rae** - Festival Director

**Nerys Evans** - Festival Patron

**Chris Hills** - Logistics/Site Manager

**Latecia Boddey** - Graphic/Visual Design

**Vikky Wilson** - Volunteer Coordinator, Bar Manager

**Katie Harder** - Stage Coordination

**Anders Pfeiffer** - Stage Coordination

**Emmy Ryan** - Social Media Manager

**Madonna Tomes** - Secretary

## Other Essential Roles

**Robbie Long** - Audio Engineer

**Ross Muir** - Audio Engineer

**Alex Shaw** - 8CCC Technical Director

**Kallum Wilkinson** - Lighting

**Penny Esley** - Kids Space

**Lyn Wilkinson and Laura Piotrowski** - Hub Kitchen

**Kodi Twiner** - Grant Writing Consultant

To all our volunteers, this festival wouldn't be possible without your contribution.

Thank you for your time and effort!



The 2026 Top Half Folk Festival is presented by the Alice Springs Folk Club. Providing people of all ages and backgrounds the chance to come together, sharing and enjoying music, the Alice Springs Folk Club hosts events, workshops and other folkie activities throughout the year. Members and non-members are all welcome at our events. To get involved, check out our website:

[alicespringsfolkclub.com](http://alicespringsfolkclub.com)

**Coming in 2027...**



**30 July - 2 August 2027, Mt Bundy Station**

Join us under the stars by the banks of the mighty Adelaide River on Warrari Country for the 2027 Top Half Folk Festival. 4 days of music, dance, workshops, sessions, song and more.

Follow Top End Folk Club on socials or sign up to our mailing list to stay in the loop.