



REVIEW: DJUKI MALA AT MAGIC MIRRORS SPIEGELTENT (SYDNEY FESTIVAL)

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Credit: Sean Young Photography

The boys of Djuki Mala perform with pure joy.

Their energy is infectious and it encourages the audience to give back, filling the Magic Mirrors Spiegeltent with whooping, clapping and cheering. As the dancers give their take on cultural and contemporary dance styles, they perform everything from the traditional dancing of the Elcho Island community in East Arnhem Land, to hip rolling and booty shaking that would make Missy Elliot proud.

It's a cultural exchange that trades on Djuki Mala's dynamic and earnest presentation. The dancing is broken up by video segments from members of the community discussing what the Chooky Dancers (as they were formally called) mean to them.

There is an understanding that culture is fluid: that while the group holds on to their traditional and spiritual links to country, Michael Jackson and MC Hammer have as much influence on the boys' identities and dance styles. As one of the elders says, "We are always learning culture". For a group that has been able to tour as the result of a viral YouTube clip, this couldn't be more true.

By no means are Djuki Mala the most polished dance troupe of all time, but that's exactly what makes them so engaging. Sitting through the documentary-style clips and watching each of the boys dance in their unique way, one might pull a face or throw a hip that makes you feel like you know them, as if you could very well be one of the Elcho Island kids who flock the

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streets when the Chucky Dance party on
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Their inclusive attitudes make you feel like one of their community, and make it a pleasure to watch them perform.

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Abdul Abdullah is the sharp, critical and on-point voice of many marginalised members of society. Check out his latest work at the MCA's Primavera 2015, opening September 22.

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