

# 10 acts to see at Womadelaide 2016: Angélique Kidjo to Violent Femmes

De La Soul, Asha Bhosle, Ester Rada and Djuki Mala are also among the globe-spanning artists at Adelaide's festival of world music, dance and talks

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**T**he Australian incarnation of Peter Gabriel's World of Music, Arts and Dance, Womadelaide, celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, with more than 65 artists from over 20 countries playing across four nights and three days. As always, the festival will offer up a smorgasbord of genres, cultures and ideas: where else could you see Mongolian throat singers Tulegar on the same bill as Grammy award-winning hip-hop veterans De La Soul? Or Spanish flamenco great Diego el Cigala kicking back to the smooth sounds of French electro-jazz act St Germain? Or watch Angélique Kidjo cook her favourite dish and David Suzuki in conversation with Indira Naidoo, in between bouncing on Jeremy Deller's inflatable life-size Stonehenge jumping castle?

Here are just 10 of the dozens of acts we're looking forward to seeing - or discovering - this year.

## **De La Soul**

Throw your hands in the air, people! Saturday night, Womadelaide's gonna party like it's 1989. New York alternative hip-hop veterans De La Soul have had more than a quarter of a century's practice at spreading good vibes and good tunes. Expect the likes of Me, Myself and I off their sample-heavy 1989 debut 3 Feet High and Rising, 1991 hit Ring Ring Ring (Ha Ha Hey) and their 2005 Gorillaz collaboration, Feel Good Inc. We're also curious to hear songs from their first album in 12 years - the Kickstarter-funded And The Anonymous Nobody is set for an April release.

## **Angélique Kidjo**

"Africa is on the rise," declared Angélique Kidjo as she picked up her third Grammy award for world music last month. The magnetic Beninese singer, once crowned by Time magazine as "Africa's premier diva", is the cream of a very strong crop of African musicians performing at Womadelaide - a crop that includes Seun Kuti (Nigeria), AlSarah (Sudan), Ajak Kwai (Sudan), Lady Black Mambazo (South Africa), Sampa the Great (Zambia) and Songhoy Boys (Mali).

Now based in Paris and New York (Kidjo fled her homeland in 1983), the fearlessly

political, fiercely feminist Unicef goodwill ambassador will be making her Womadelaide debut accompanied by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. It's officially a seated event, but given Kidjo's live reputation, we doubt it'll remain seated for long.

## **Ibeyi**

Beyoncé's a fan; Angélique Kidjo a mentor; they're descended from musical royalty and signed to London's XL Records (Adele, MIA). But when French-Cuban twins Naomi and Lisa-Kaindé Díaz take to the stage, there's nothing propping them up except two tea-light candles. One candle represents their elder sister, Yanira, who passed away in 2013; the other their father, Cuban percussionist and former Buena Vista Social Club member Miguel "Anga" Diaz, who died 10 years ago when the twins were 11.

Death, ancestral spirits and Santería saints permeate the lyrics of their hypnotic, soulful songs, which they sing in both English and Yorùbá - the language brought to Cuba by their west African slave ancestors. Lisa-Kaindé, who rocks a sophisticated blues-diva vibe, is the main vocal force, while Naomi contributes hip-hop and cajón-thumping beats.

## **Asha Bhosle**

Performances by world-class octogenarians are becoming something of a Womadelaide tradition: last year Buena Vista Social Club songstress Omara Portuondo stole the show when she defied gravity (and doctor's orders) and let loose some Cuban-style twerking. This year it'll be India's 82-year-old "voice of Bollywood", Asha Bhosle - immortalised in the Cornershop hit Brimful of Asha.

Her stratospheric voice has soundtracked hundreds of Hindi films (she started her career as a playback singer at the age of 11) and she has dabbled in everything from traditional ghazals, bhajans and Indian pop songs to duets with Michael Stipe, Boy George and Australian cricket great Brett Lee. Bhosle is showing no signs of slowing down - in the past few years the passionate cook has expanded into the food business, opening 10 Indian restaurants in six countries.

## **Violent Femmes**

There's been a mixed reception to the recent release of the US alt-rockers' first full-length album in 15 years. And no doubt frontman Gordon Gano and bassist Brian Ritchie will be flogging *We Can Do Anything* to within an inch of its life. But it'll be songs from the band's 1983 self-titled debut that every former and current alienated, hormonal teenager will be elbowing their way into the moshpit to belt out their lungs to. *Blister in the Sun*, *Kiss Off*, *Gone Daddy Gone*, *Add It Up*: this is the stuff of music festival dreams.

## **The Planet Talks**

The Planet Talks series of live conversations and panel discussions about the environment is a chance to sit in the same tent as some of the world's leading thinkers and creatives. Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki, an ardent advocate for action on climate change and just a few weeks' shy of his 80th birthday, is this year's star guest, returning to Australia for the first time since his "prayers" were "answered" by Tony

Abbott's September toppling.

Meanwhile, Guardian Australia's Walkley-award-winning political editor, Lenore Taylor, will host a panel comprising Ross Garnaut, Tim Smit and John Hewson, in conversation about climate change and economic growth. In addition, Guardian Australia's beloved canine cartoonist First Dog on the Moon will be present in his rarely seen human form, joining a panel of communications gurus to chew the bone about the art of conveying complex environmental problems with maximum creative punch.

## **Djuki Mala**

They rose to YouTube stardom as the Chooky Dancers performing Zorba the Greek on a Darwin basketball court. Now going by their Yolgnu name Djuki Mala, this six-man Elcho Island troupe tell stories of their Arnhem Land home by fusing high-octane Indigenous dance with hip-hop, breakdance, clowning and Bollywood, performed to the music of Gene Kelly, Michael Jackson and other pop culture heavyweights. It's performance art, it's uproarious fun, and they've got enough costume changes to rival a Madonna show.

## **Ester Rada**

Lauded as "the Middle East's new soul diva", Israeli-born Ethiopian Ester Rada slips seamlessly between western and African influences. On the western front, Rada's English-language music blends blues, R&B, funk and reggae, channelling Nina Simone (she has covered four of her songs), Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston and Erykah Badu. Her African heritage comes through in her nod to Ethio-jazz as well as the Ethiopian songs she sings in Amharic. Asked by the UK's Jewish News whether she plans to use her position "to take a stance on Israel's political conflict", Rada replied: "Yes. I believe in love and unity. I don't believe in borders and definitions."

## **John Grant**

Iceland-based American singer-songwriter John Grant has a history of using music festivals as a giant confessional. In 2012, two years after his debut solo album *Queen of Denmark* was voted Mojo's album of the year, Grant announced on stage at London's Meltdown festival that he had been diagnosed as HIV positive.

These days Grant - who has kicked the booze, the substance abuse and the sex addiction - is loved up, quite content and riding high on the success of his latest album, *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure*. Instead, expect electro-lush ballads, black humour and a velvety baritone exhaled from within the overgrown environs of a Viking-esque beard.

## **All Our Exes Live in Texas**

Who'd have thunk four sweet-voiced women singing alt-country tunes in four-part harmony would have such a knack for stirring up controversy? From wading neck-deep into the Triple J Hottest 100 gender imbalance row, to infuriating boy-band fans when they were announced as last year's Backstreet Boys support act (they had only applied as a joke), Sydney singers-songwriters Elana Stone, Katie Wighton, Hannah Crofts and Georgia Mooney are happy to take risks and speak their minds. They've been steadily winning over Australian festival crowds (and, happily, Backstreet Boys fans) with their

witty banter, “anti-girl-band” indie charm, and their talent with a ukulele, mandolin and accordion.

*Womadelaide 2016 is on at Botanic Park, Adelaide from 11-14 March*

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