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Djuku Mala review: YouTube sensations the Chooky Dancers fuse traditional and modern music and moves

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COMEDY FESTIVAL

DJUKI MALA [3.5 stars]

Playhouse, Arts Centre Melbourne

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Once upon a time, before the internet, we might never have heard of a group of young Yolngu dancers from the remote regions of Elcho Island. But in 2007, the dancers juxtaposed traditional cultural dance and costume with a Greek party song. Their YouTube clip of the Chooky Dancers performing to *Zorba the Greek* struck a pop culture nerve, and gave this group (known now by their Yolngu name, Djuki Mala) a chance to tour the world.

Although it begins with traditional cultural dance in front of aerial video footage of Elcho Island, the Djuki Mala dancers quickly shift gear into their famous *Zorba*. Later, a dancer dons a sparkly glove and tipped fedora for his moon-walking Michael Jackson impression, setting the tone for this amalgamation of the contemporary and cultural in dance and song.

YouTube has been crucial here, offering a platform for Djuki Mala to showcase their work. At times, it even feels as though we are seeing a series of video clips being performed on stage. Drawing on the formula that worked so well with *Zorba*, Djuki Mala dance to a Motown medley, '90s pop hits, Bollywood, and Gene Kelly. They are fun to watch, and their enthusiasm is infectious.

The dances are interspersed with video which highlights the history of Djuki Mala and indigenous causes such as high rates of youth suicide and displacement from family and country. There are real challenges here, but, as Djuki Mala suggests, dance can be a creative outlet for young people leading to health, happiness, and connection to traditional culture.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/comedy/djuku-mala-review-youtube-sensations-the-chooky-dancers-fuse-traditional-and-modern-music-and-moves-20150417-1mn65c.html>