

And the Rainforest Beat Goes On

By DAVID BOWDEN

Sarawak's Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF) has been voted for the fourth consecutive year, as one of the '25 Best International Festivals' by renowned world music magazine, Songlines. This is good news for those who are planning to attend this year's festival to be staged at the Sarawak Cultural Village in Damai from June 28-30.

The RWMF is positioned alongside other renowned festivals like Australia's WOMAD-delaide and South Korea's Ulsan World Music Festival. According to Songlines the selection of festivals in their top list is based on the quality and scope of the music presented.

Now in its 16th year, the RWMF has helped to put Sarawak on the world music map. It brings dazzling performances from across the globe and attracts more than 20,000 international and local festival-goers to Borneo for three days of daytime workshops and evening concerts.

MUSIC WITHOUT BORDERS

For a world that is increasingly influenced by modern Western music, the sound of indigenous music is being slowly silenced.

The three-day musical event with its magical setting in the rainforest at the base of Mount Santubong towering 800m overhead is helping change the way people appreciate lesser known genres of music. Visitor numbers are capped to ensure a quality event with an emphasis on crowd comfort. This is usually tested a little on Saturday evenings when



RWMF 2103 Native Chanting



RWMF night time picnic

the crowd peaks as they clamber to witness the liveliest of the festival's acts. The final act on the last night is reserved for the most upbeat performers who usually whip the crowd into a frenzied state.

The festival has always set out to entertain and challenge the audiences and it's probably fair to say that not all the music is for all the people. However, you have to admire the festival's skilful artistic direction and the high calibre of musicians who perform.

The other admirable quality is that the festival supports the continuation of the music and culture of Sarawak's various unique ethnic communities. This year's festival will see eight local groups, mostly from Sarawak, perform alongside the international acts.

On each afternoon of the festival, musicians jam freely with representatives of other groups while members of the enthusiastic audience are also encouraged to join in. Musicians exchange licks with each other while those watching join in for a little dancing, singing and musical appreciation. These workshops are especially popular with children who get a chance to learn more about some of the unusual instruments being played as well as to participate in

the many hands-on activities. Workshops are participatory with most people getting up to dance along with the music. The roof of the Iban longhouse in the cultural village is often raised as concertgoers twist and twirl to the lively music.

The festival is a Sarawak Tourism initiative to help promote the state as a tourist destination as well as to provide a platform for the locals and an ever-growing number of international tourists to have fun together its magical rainforest setting. It provides the opportunity for the rhythm and beat of local Sarawakian music to combine harmoniously with leading musicians from around the world. World music is indeed a style that has a past but is an integral part of the future.

From this year's line up it's easy to appreciate that there are no geographical boundaries to world music. Regular concertgoers agree that it really doesn't matter who is performing, as the artistes are all very musically talented and often the best of their musical genre.

This year concertgoers can look forward to the following international bands – Mohsen Sharifian and the Lian Band (Iran), Nunukul Yuggera (Australia), Habadekuk (Denmark), Dizu Plaatzies and the Ibuyambo



RWMF stage at night



Spiritual Seasons folk band from Ukraine

Ensemble (South Africa), Spiritual Seasons (Ukraine), Pine Leaf Boys (USA), Chet Nuneta (France), Rey Vallenato Beto Jamaica (Colombia), Rafly Wa Saja (Indonesia), Kries (Croatia), Kila (Ireland), Alp Bora (Austria) and Palsandae (Korea).

WORLD EXPO

For the first time ever, the Sarawak Tourism Board is convening the Borneo World Music Expo, from June 24 to 26, 2013 in Kuching. The hope is to position Sarawak as a potential destination for art, culture and music.

The expo is specifically designed to expose Asian and ethnic musicians to an international market. Activities will integrate a trade fair, musical showcase, conferences, exhibitions and networking sessions which will promote the culture and music.

Organised by the Sarawak Tourism Board, this year's event will be staged from June 28-30, 2013.

Tickets to the festival can now be bought online. For more information and updates log on to www.rwmf.net

