

**Media Release:**

**03.07.2008**

## **Territory Talent Shines at Gala Opening of Message Sticks Festival**

Yarning Up Films and the Chooky Dancers are showing at the red carpet opening of the Message Sticks film festival.

The Chooky Dancers and the Director of the documentary about them will be at the Sydney Opera House to perform at the Message Sticks Film Festival this Friday 4 July and Saturday 5 July 2008.

The Message Stick Film Festival returns to Sydney Opera House this week with a snapshot of Indigenous life in a post-apology world and celebrates our country's unique culture.

*Yolgnu Guya Djamamirr* directed by Frank Djirrimbilpilwuy and Tom E. Lewis's film *One River, All Rivers* are two out of the four films from the *Yarning Up* series that have been selected for the prestigious festival.

The Yarning Up series is an initiative of the Northern Territory Government's Northern Territory Film Office (NTFO), which contributed \$53,000 towards the series and a further \$20,000 for the production contributed by the Department of Employment, Education and Training.

The series is an association with the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA), the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the Australian Film Commission and the National Indigenous Television Service.

NTFO Director Penelope McDonald said that the screenings at the Sydney Opera House are a terrific opportunity to showcase the films and stories from the Territory.

"Territorians all love a good yarn and the rest of Australia will enjoy seeing these stories," Ms McDonald said.

"The initiative has provided emerging documentary makers with employment opportunities for Territorians in remote communities."

"When the Chooky Dancers' performance of Zorba the Greek - Yolgnu style - was uploaded onto YouTube, it has become an overnight sensation," Ms McDonald said.

"So Frank set about making the film which describes the story behind the dance."

Tom E. Lewis's *One River, All Rivers* shows Arnhemland lawman Roy Ahsley Moyngumbi receiving a message from the crow spirit to stop the destruction and drainage of the local river system.

With time against him he creates a Message Stick and hangs it as a prayer on the tree in the hope it will be found.

Penny Smallacombe, the Producer of the Yarning Up series, is also taking the four films to screen on July 10 at the Australian Mission to the United Nations National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) screenings.

For more information on the Message Stick Film Festival visit [www.sydneyoperahouse.com](http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com) or contact Penelope McDonald on 0410 695 272.

Ends

**Media Note – for more information contact Penelope McDonald on 0410 695 272.**

**Image Credit - 1. Director, Tom E. Lewis  
2. Director, Frank Djirrimbilpilwuy**

**Courtesy of Collin Richard, Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA)**

**Issued: 2.30pm Thursday, 3 July 2008**