

**CASTLEMAINE
STATE FESTIVAL**
MARCH 13-22
2015

MEDIA RELEASE

Castlemaine State Festival goes off with a Big Bang

16th March 2015

Audiences from near and far flocked to Castlemaine this weekend for the first weekend of the 20th Castlemaine State Festival. The Festival launched Friday 13th March with a **Big Bang** celebration at the Western Reserve - a massive carnivale of food, dance, music and spectacle. Among the fun, **El Son Entero**, one of the world's finest traditional Cuban dance bands and travelling outside Cuba for the first time, was a huge hit with the crowds.

Festival Director Martin Paten said "We feel very proud about the opening of the Festival – I mean where else can you find such an amazing selection of local artists and community coming together to celebrate with national and international artists in a regional setting... The opening event was created as a gift to our audience, supporters, community and artists, to celebrate the 40 year history of the Festival, and show the gifts we have on offer in the region and beyond."

The fun continued all weekend with sold-out performances from **Simon Tedeschi**, **Deborah Cheetham**, and **Queen Cannibali and the Skull Island Orchestra** among others. Newly commissioned theatre works, **Going Through** by **John Romeril** starring **Jack Charles**, and **Purgatorio** by **Ariel Dorfman** performed by **The Red Room Theatre** premiered to overwhelmingly positive acclaim. Superb reviews are also coming in for the new commissioned dance work **Kekkai**; a collaboration between South Korea's **Nottle Theatre** and Melbourne's **Tony Yap Company**, and **In Plan**; acclaimed choreographer and performer, **Michelle Heaven's** new work.

"With great attendance numbers of an estimated 10,000 people for the opening weekend and many of our Castlemaine Created shows premiering to full houses, it has been a great start to the Festival. The program has something for everyone and showcases extraordinary locations and the region's cultural abundance," Paten continued.

For the next seven days until the 22nd March, audiences can expect a spectacular program of free and ticketed events spanning contemporary, classical and world music, theatre, dance, visual arts and more.

For families visiting the shire for the festival there is something to take kids of all ages. In a rare chance to experience theatre as a newborn the Festival presents **Rain**, an immersive, intimate experience that has been created specifically for babies and their carers. Curious young minds will love **Erth's Dinosaur Zoo** where they'll get to meet awesome prehistoric creatures, from cute baby dinos to some of the largest carnivores and herbivores that have ever walked the planet. The final weekend's activities include Carnival of Community and the Garden Party – free public events for everyone to come and enjoy!

For more information & bookings please visit castlemainefestival.com.au