
Festival First Night celebrates its 5th birthday as the jewel in Sydney's Summer Crown

The 2012 Sydney Festival opened tonight in sensational style with a city-wide celebration of amazing talent showcasing our beautiful city as thousands flocked to the CBD for the 5th annual Festival First Night.

Under a brilliant sunny sky, thousands flocked to Hyde Park in the afternoon to soak up the sunshine and take in some of the finest entertainment from around the globe.

The UK's Norman Jay's double decker bus really did get the good times rolling with a marathon 8-hour set that had crowds dancing away the afternoon and well into the night. There was plenty of entertainment to keep the kids fully engrossed with Polyglot Theatre's **Tangle** web of elastic, **Erth's** incredible puppetry and sing-alongs with **Caspar Baby pants** and local favourite **Holly Throsby**. Thousands danced the night away with **The Jolly Boys** and the return of last year's Sydney Festival hit, **Trocadero Dance Palace** in Elizabeth Street. In College Street, a huge audience marvelled at the acrobatics and visual mastery of **As The World Tipped**.

Meanwhile Brook Andrew's **Travelling Colony** entertained crowds along Macquarie Street and his projects lit up Hyde Park Barracks Museum and St Mary's Cathedral.

As expected, the stellar line-up in The Domain with Gurrumul, Washington and Manu Chao drew the biggest crowds and saw the site full to capacity mid-evening. Eager to see Manu Chao in his first Australian performance, fans starting arriving mid afternoon and the energetic Spanish maestro of funk and Latin reggae, did not disappoint.

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell joined in the celebrations and encouraged everyone to take part in Sydney Festival as it rolls out over the next three weeks until 29 January.

"The Sydney Festival is one of Australia's largest annual cultural events and I encourage everyone to make the most of this fantastic opportunity," said the Premier.

Sydney Festival Chair, Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP said, "This incredible celebration brought hundreds of thousands of people into our city with the streets reclaimed by people and performers, and our parks and public spaces were transformed into new places to mix and mingle."

Festival Director Lindy Hume, in her third and final Festival First Night as Director, was thrilled to see the event so wholeheartedly embraced. "Tonight was a glorious celebration - both of our global family and Sydney's love of a great party. I'm so proud and privileged to have been part of it all. Sydney was magnificent: happy crowds dancing, singing and playing. It's a night to remember! Thank you Sydney."

NSW Government agencies monitoring the event and in particular the police praised event-goers for an incident-free evening with no major incidents, traffic or transport related issues, despite the huge crowds.

The NSW Government through Arts NSW, Destination NSW and the City of Sydney are proud supporters of **Festival First Night**. Our world famous harbour, city streets, parks and beaches become the stage for major outdoor events including Festival First Night. An epic summer event that opens the Sydney Festival, a key festival highlighted on the 2012 NSW Events Calendar.

POST EVENT MEDIA CALL:

WHERE: The Famous Spiegeltent, Hyde Park North, corner College & Park Streets

WHEN: SUNDAY 8 JANUARY 2012

TIME: 10:00am

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