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Trance dance Bushmen tour Scotland in bid to save traditions

Members of the San Community from Namibia - indigenous people whose music is the origin of trance dance - are to perform at the Edinburgh Mela Festival in a bid to help save their musical culture and traditional way of life. (1)

The !Gubi Family (sic) are a family of six San or Bushmen musicians from Namibia, ranging in age from 18 to 80. The San are the originators of trance dance and their music is specifically designed to evoke an altered state of consciousness through rhythm and beats, enabling the musician to enter a trance and perform healing on both individuals and the tribe. (2)

The family are performing at the Mela on Tuesday 26 August as part of a UK tour aimed at raising awareness of the threat to their culture and tradition. This hunter/gatherer nomadic tribe has been assigned land in the Kalahari Desert which is poor in natural resources. They share the land with other tribes, leading to tribal conflict and competition for resources, and are no longer allowed to move from place to place.

Their Mela performance next week will include a short film introducing their family and village. The San are not seeking aid but hope to raise funds through the tour to set up a much-needed sustainable development project for the community back in Namibia.

Debbie Rivett of Indigenous People, the non-profit company organising the tour, said:

"Music is incredibly powerful as a universal language in evoking human emotion and communicating between different people. The !Gubi Family's performance at the Mela will be entertaining and enthralling, and it will also remind us of the importance of keeping traditional cultures from around the world alive – cultures that add real colour to festivals such as those here in Edinburgh."

Edinburgh Mela Festival Director Liam Sinclair, said:

"Scotland is traditionally a place that gives those in need a very warm welcome - we're hoping that the Mela Festival will provide just that and help raise awareness of this cause. Not only will the !Gubi Family enchant the crowds with their infectious music, they will also help promote understanding of different cultures – something that the Mela always strives for. We wish them the very best for their UK tour and beyond."

Tickets for the !Gubi Family are available at www.edinburgh-mela.co.uk or phone 0131 473 2000.

-ENDS-

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Hi-res picture available here: <http://www.edinburgh-mela.co.uk/mediawebgallery/>

Notes to Editors

1. Mela key facts:
 - The Edinburgh Mela Festival was founded in 1995 by the city's minority ethnic communities with the aim of celebrating Scotland's cultural diversity.
 - It now features acts from around the world, and this year will stage the world premiere of musical collaboration Yatra//Journey featuring Scottish and South Asian musicians and Japanese drummers.
 - Having outgrown Pilrig Park (visitor numbers were 40,000 in 2006, 60,000 in 2007) this year it has moved to beside Ocean Terminal, Leith, and expanded from a weekend to a week
 - 2008 is the debut of the first full-time director, Liam Sinclair. Aged 29, he is the youngest ever director of an Edinburgh Festival
 - The Mela is funded by the City of Edinburgh Council, the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Government. Its major sponsor is Forth Ports plc with additional sponsorship from Lothian and Borders Police, NHS Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland, Unison and Lothian Buses.
2. With over 10,000 years of ancestry and knowledge, the San of the Kalahari represent one of the oldest surviving indigenous cultures in the world. Shaped by the sands and wildlife of the desert, the San, or 'bushmen', have maintained a traditional hunter gathering culture through their intimate relationship with nature. This has continued a unique knowledge of planet-medicine, healing, hunting and living into the 21st century.
Their trip is sponsored by Air Namibia.
UK tour dates and more info here:
http://www.indigenouspeople.org.uk//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=51&Itemid=85
For more information: info@indigenouspeople.org or www.indigenouspeople.org.uk
3. Forth Ports PLC owns and operates the Ports of Grangemouth, Leith, Rosyth, Methil and Burntisland on the River Forth, the Port of Dundee on the River Tay and Port of Tilbury on the River Thames. Forth Ports PLC is also a significant landowner with extensive property interests and a number of high profile developments. These include the Scottish Government offices and Ocean Terminal shopping centre – home to the former Royal Yacht Britannia - at Leith, the Western Harbour, Granton Harbour and Leith Docks developments on Edinburgh's waterfront, and the City Quay development at Dundee.