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Fiddle show winners

The youthful string quartette from Bundaberg, Quatro, who won the hearts of the 2011 Golden Fiddle show audience with their choreographed performance, today won the hearts of the Golden Fiddle judges. Last year, they were highly commended in the Youth Achievement category, but today, they won it outright against stiff competition.

The four girls in Quatro, Amity Brand, Claudia Vogel, Vanessa Smith and Radha Shukla, average age 15, just managed to escape the Bundaberg floods to appear in Tamworth in 2011, and then spent most of their spare time raising money to take home to help their local townsfolk. They have since appeared on radio and television, have cut their first album and are in demand for corporate gigs.

A young fiddler who began playing at age four, and grew up on stage in the family band 'Fiddlesticks' was today named as 2012's best fiddle player as a soloist. George Jackson is a fourth generation fiddle player who received scholarships to America in 2006 and 2008 to study fiddle and went on to win the Australian Fiddle and Banjo Championships in 2010 along with the Young Folk Musician of Australia Award.

The northern New South Wales band, the Round Mountain Girls, and in particular their resident fiddler Paul Rabbit Robinson, were top scorers in the 2012 Golden Fiddle Awards.

Rabbit was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to fiddle playing and teaching. In a rare acknowledgement, he was honoured at the same time by winning the category for best fiddle teacher. As well as being an active member of the Round Mountain Girls (in which there are no girls), Rabbit teaches violin in three schools and has produced a first class training program which is now selling in five countries.

Not to be left out, Rabbit's fellow band members joined him on stage when they were named the best band featuring a fiddler. The band has produced two albums, with a third on the way.

Another band which scored well at the 2012 Golden Fiddle Awards was The String Contingent, a trio of acoustic string players comprising Australians Chris Stone (violin) and Holly Downes (double bass) with Scotsman Graham McLeod (guitar). They took out the Award for best CD by an ensemble. Their bassist Holly Downes beat rival bids from fellow bandsman Graham McLeod and last year's Lifetime Achievers, Leaping Lizards, to win the best fiddle composition award.

The award for best CD by a fiddler as a soloist went to Emma Nixon, who shared a Golden Fiddle Award last year as best fiddle teacher.

Awards chairman Mark Mitchell said 2011 was probably the worst year in history for professional fiddle players who were caught up in the cost cutting in the entertainment and corporate events industries. Despite that, new material was still being produced, and there was no shortage of competitors with huge talent for the 2012 awards.

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