



News Release

Golden Fiddle Awards to showcase Australian/New Zealand talent

Australasian fiddlers are about to be recognised and encouraged, with the first national Golden Fiddle Awards.

The brainchild of some of Australia's top fiddlers with the support of the makers of the country's own home grown instrument, the Epoch Violin, the first of the Golden Fiddle Awards will be made at the Tamworth 2005 Festival.

Fiddlers of all ages and styles, composers, teachers and groups, will be invited to contest seven categories.

The leading fiddlers behind the Awards, Marcus Holden and Andrew Clermont, say Australia is undergoing a quiet revolution in fiddle playing.

"In an age where more hawkish pursuits demand media attention, a group of dedicated fiddle fanatics has decided to set up an awards system focused on nurturing, supporting and rewarding the wealth of talent that exists in Australia and New Zealand," said Marcus Holden.

"We want to embrace all musical styles and in so doing we will endeavour to unite fiddlers of all persuasions in one great common bond," he added.

The growing popularity of violin playing in Australasia is in keeping with an international trend, which has not gone unnoticed by Managing Director of Epoch Violins, Mark Mitchell.

"We designed and manufactured our colour range of instruments about five years ago, and they have really taken off since we introduced our electric range to the Tamworth audience," recalls Mark.

"The five-string Epoch professional is now being played on stage by many of the country's leading performers and this is helping to drive many young people towards the sheer fun of fiddling, with instruments which are easier to play than the traditional violin, and which make an individual fashion statement at the same time.

"We've been involved in the No Holds Barred Fiddle Contest in Tamworth for several years and are now delighted to join forces with these great fiddlers to do something inspiring for Australian music," Mark added.

Entry forms will be made available soon through music websites, select music stores and venues in Tamworth and entries close on 31 December.

The first Golden Fiddle Awards will be announced at the Tamworth Diggers RSL between 3pm and 5pm on Wednesday 19 January 2005, during the Fiddlers Festival Concert.

The categories are:

Best fiddler (as a soloist) – for performances during 2004 within Australia or New Zealand

Best band, group, ensemble or orchestra featuring a fiddler – for performances during 2004 within Australia or New Zealand

Best CD by a fiddler as soloist – released during 2004 within Australia or New Zealand

Best CD by a band, group, ensemble or orchestra featuring a fiddler – released during 2004 within Australia or New Zealand

Lifetime achievement award for excellence as a fiddler/contributor to the furthering of fiddle playing/teaching within Australia and New Zealand

Best fiddle teacher in 2004 within Australia and New Zealand

Best fiddle composition - open to all musical styles where the essential element of fiddling as described in the rules is embraced

All but the last two categories will be judged by a special committee. The best fiddle teacher and the best composition will be chosen by popular vote.

Marcus Holden stressed that the awards would not be confined to “folk” or “country” players, but would embrace all styles of music.

In this way, a student in a school orchestra has as much chance of winning this prestigious award as a professional folk fiddler.

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**Backgrounder
Marcus Holden**

Marcus began playing the violin at the age of eight. He was a founding member of the Canberra Youth Orchestra touring Australia and Europe. In his late teens and early twenties he began writing and performing with rock, blues and jazz bands while furthering his jazz studies at the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, which he completed in 1980.

He has toured Japan, Singapore, Guam, Thailand and Hong Kong and has been constantly employed as a session musician, composer, arranger and producer by many of Australia's top rock, film and country performers and writers including Jimmy Barnes, Mick Conway and Diesel.

He has been a consultant for the development of the Jazz Studies Course at the Canberra School of Music, a lecturer in jazz violin at the Riverina Summer School of Strings and the Hawkesbury National Fiddle Festival and has performed as a composer soloist with the Queensland Youth Orchestra and more recently formed the **Fiddlers Festival**, bringing together the cream of Australia's fiddlers from all musical backgrounds. He runs his own recording studio, producing CDs for a variety of artists in many genres of music.