



History's other soundtrack



ARTS

BRENDAN FOSTER

SOME of the most significant names in indigenous music will appear as The Black Arm Band at the Fremantle Arts Centre for one night only to celebrate history, resilience and identity.

For singer and songwriter Kutcha Edwards, who was wrenched from his family at 18-months-old, the evening takes on extra significance given the Rudd government's much-anticipated apology to the Stolen Generation is only days away on February 13.

"We need to right the wrong of what happened and erase the last 11 years of ignorance," he said, referring to the *Bringing Them Home* report that highlighted the tragedy behind the Stolen Generation and recommended an apology, and the former Howard Government's refusal to offer one.

Apology

"I will be heading up next Wednesday [to Canberra] with my brothers and sisters and individually I'll accept the apology on behalf of my mother and father, my uncles, aunties and my cousins.

"Non-indigenous people need to swallow their pride, so as a nation we can take a spiritual step forward."

Edwards, who became quite emotional during the interview, was looking forward to playing with the 32-piece 'super-band' of Indigenous artists and belting out tunes from their songbook *Murundak* (meaning alive).

The band take its name from phrase 'black armband of history' which has been used pejoratively by conservatives to dismiss modern revisions of history as a disgraceful game of shame and blame.

"It's going to be great," said Edwards, who will also share the stage with a 15-piece ensemble of Melbourne's top jazz musos.

"It goes back to 20 years ago when we had concerts to rock

against racism and it's great to performing with blokes like Bart Willoughby who opened so many doors for us."

Against a backdrop of lyrical and provocative film and photographic images, the band will present an alternative soundtrack to Australia's history when it performs as part of the Perth International Arts Festival at the arts centre on February 23.

Edwards' soft voice and deeply personal songs have made him a legend in the Aboriginal community.

He says there is a lot of misconception about "what is indigenous music".

"A writer in Sydney said because we don't sing in our language then it's not contemporary indigenous music," he said

"Any music created from Aboriginal people is indigenous music.

"I'm 43-years-old, which doesn't mean my songs are that old - they are about my lineage and the history of my Mutti Mutti people."



• A 32-piece super group of indigenous singers will be heading to the Fremantle Arts Centre on February 23.

Photos by John Sones Photography



Kutcha Edwards was part of the Stolen Generation