

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu

Who was Gurrumul?

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu was a talented Indigenous musician who sang in his native language, the Yolngu of the Gumatj clan. Gurrumul was born on 22nd January 1971, in Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) off the coast of Arnhem Land, north-east Australia. He was born blind. Although Gurrumul performed in front of large crowds, including many famous people, Gurrumul was said to be quite a shy person. Sadly, Gurrumul died on 25th July 2017



Gurrumul played a right-handed guitar with his left hand.

Gurrumul played the guitar, drums, keyboard and didgeridoo but it was his singing voice that he was known for. His high tenor voice has been described as powerful and emotive (expressing a person's feelings or influencing emotions). Gurrumul sang about identity, spirit, connection with the land and the stories of his people in both English and the native languages: Gälpu, Gumatj or Djambarrpuynu, all Yolnu Matha.

Gurrumul played with famous Indigenous bands Yothu Yindi and Saltwater Band.

Gurrumul performed for royalty and many famous people, including the Queen of England; Crown Prince Frederik and Princess Mary of Denmark, and the US president, Barack Obama. Sir Elton John and Sting are fans.



Did You Know...?

- Although Gurrumul was blind he never learned to read Braille (writing that can be read through touch), and did not use a walking cane or a guide dog.
- Gurrumul started his own foundation, the Gurrumul Yunupingu Foundation, which supports young Indigenous people and creates opportunities for those in remote areas.

Questions

1. Where did Gurrumul come from?

2. What was Gurrumul's date of birth?

3. How old was Gurrumul when he died? (You will need to do some mathematics to work out the answer)

4. What instruments could Gurrumul play?

5. What are Gurrumul's songs about?

6. What are the names of the bands Gurrumul played with?

7. Which famous people did Gurrumul perform for?

8. How difficult do you think it would be to learn to play instruments with no eyesight? Give reasons to support your answer.

Answers

1. Where did Gurrumul come from?
He came from Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) off the coast of Arnhem land, north-east Australia.
2. What is Gurrumul's date of birth?
His date of birth is 22nd January 1971.
3. How old was Gurrumul when he died? (You will need to do some mathematics to work out the answer).
Gurrumul was 46 years old when he died.
4. What instruments could Gurrumul play?
He could play the guitar, keyboard, drums and didgeridoo.
5. What are Gurrumul's songs about?
They are about identity, spirit, connection with the land and the stories of his people.
6. What are the names of the bands Gurrumul played with?
He played with Yothu Yindi and Saltwater Band.
7. Which famous people did Gurrumul perform for?
He performed for the Queen of England, Crown Prince Frederik and Princess Mary of Denmark, and US president Barack Obama.
8. How difficult do you think it would be to learn to play instruments with no eyesight? Give reasons to support your answer.
Open discussion.

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu

Who was Gurrumul?

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu was an accomplished Indigenous musician who sang in his native language, the Yolngu of the Gumatj clan. Gurrumul was born on 22nd January 1971, in Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) off the coast of Arnhem Land, north-east Australia. He was born blind. Although Gurrumul performed in front of large crowds, including many famous people, Gurrumul had a reputation as quite a reserved person. Sadly,



Gurrumul died on 25th July 2017.



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Gurrumul played the guitar, drums, keyboard and didgeridoo but it was his singing voice that he was known for. His high tenor voice has been described as powerful and emotive. Gurrumul sang about identity, spirit, connection with the land and the stories of his people, in both English and the native languages: Gälpu, Gumatj or Djambarrpuynu, all Yolnu Matha.

Gurrumul played with famous Indigenous bands Yothu Yindi and Saltwater Band.

He also performed for royalty and famous people including the Queen of England; Crown Prince Frederik and Princess Mary of Denmark, and the US president, Barack Obama. Sir Elton John and Sting are amongst his many famous fans.



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1. Where did Gurrumul come from?

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3. What instruments could Gurrumul play?

4. What are Gurrumul's songs about?

5. Which famous people did Gurrumul perform for?

6. What words could you use to describe Gurrumul's voice?

7. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of the word 'emotive'.

8. How difficult do you think it would be to learn to play instruments with no eyesight? Give reasons to support your answer.

9. Why do you think Gurrumul sang about his connection to the land and the stories of his people?

10. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of the word 'accomplished'. Describe how Gurrumul was an accomplished musician. Give reasons to support your answer.

Answers

1. Where did Gurrumul come from?
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5. Which famous people did Gurrumul perform for?
He performed for the Queen of England, Crown Prince Frederik and Princess Mary of Denmark, and US president Barack Obama.
6. What words could you use to describe Gurrumul's voice?
You could use the words emotive, powerful, high tenor, or haunting.
7. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of the word 'emotive'.
Emotive - arousing or being able to arouse feelings and emotions in others.
8. How difficult do you think it would be to learn to play instruments with no eyesight? Give reasons to support your answer.
Open discussion.
9. Why do you think Gurrumul sang about his connection to the land and the stories of his people?
Open discussion.
10. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of the word 'accomplished'. Describe how Gurrumul was an accomplished musician. Give reasons to support your answer.
Accomplished - being highly trained or skilled in something.
Open discussion.