

Honk if you're going to Illawarra Folk Festival

By JOSHUA BUTLER May 28, 2014, 9:08 p.m.



Tuning in to next year's festival: Lotte Latukefu and Nyrie Davis-Ralss (back), with Miles Rooney and Sally Wilson who will be participating in the Illawarra Folk Festival, which will run next year from January 15-18 at Bulli Showground. Picture: CHRISTOPHER CHAN

The Illawarra Folk Festival may be more than six months away, but preparations are in full swing for the local music institution's 30th year and pearl anniversary.

The festival will return to Bulli Showground from January 15-18, but the biggest news is next year will mark the debut of Honk, a fringe event of the festival that will take over the streets of Wollongong CBD on the preceding weekend.

"It's a big street festival," festival artistic director David De Santi said. "It's based around the New Orleans street march music, a series of gatherings all through town."

Venues including the Arts Precinct, Crown Street Mall and the Botanic Garden will host free music from January 9 to 11, swelling the festival from a five-day event into a 10-day musical feast.

"It's about getting a festive start to the week. We'll also have concerts from artists who have played over the 30 years, even some from the very first festival," Mr De Santi said.

Artist applications to play at the festival are flying in ahead of Friday's cut-off, with more than 300 received already. More than 500 are expected in total, and organisers will whittle those down to about 150 acts – half locals, half interstate and internationals – who will be invited to play in January.

"We've got applications from Finland, Mozambique, Canada, Scotland, Austria – all over the place. We don't usually have to chase anybody, they all come to us now," Mr De Santi said.

"But we never lost focus of keeping as much local content as we can. We want to be a festival for all, that's the philosophy we've always had."

Other changes include a special anniversary ball, one new venue at Slacky Flat, and a shift in scheduling for the Folk School. Tickets are on sale now. See illawarrafolkfestival.com.au for more information.