

# KINJA: Ron Murray & Sarah James

*When Ron Murray plays his didgeridoo, he wears a wreath of cockatoo feathers in his hair. At his side, Sarah James' hair flows wild and free as she plays fiddle and sings Celtic and Australian folk songs. Sarah and Ron are from different worlds. She's a city girl, of Scottish ancestry. He's a descendent of the Wamba Wamba people, whose traditional area was around Victoria's Swan Hill. However, both worked in Aboriginal Affairs, and a commitment to social justice and equity for Indigenous people brought them together. Now married, their haunting partnership of violin and didgeridoo transcends cultural differences. They perform under the name of 'Kinja': "Kinja means 'my home' in Wamba Wamba; it's about homelands and heritage," Sarah says. (Interview by Virginia Imhoff, Country Style Magazine, October 2006, p42)*



Ron and Sarah first started playing together on their honeymoon in early 1998 when travelling in the south west of Western Australia. Up until then, they had not thought of combining their instruments. Inspired by the beauty of Margaret River they started playing their music in the riverbed. "The spirit of the ancestors of that country felt very real and we really quite spontaneously began playing, as if to honour them ... we haven't stopped playing together ever since." ([www.kinja.com.au](http://www.kinja.com.au)).

The Kinja sound is an ethereal blend of Indigenous Australian and Celtic inspired moods. Sarah and Ron feel that Kinja's music unites their heritage. "People tend to be touched by hearing two musical cultures coming together and it seems to move people on that level ... If we do *Danny Boy* we often find people feel homesick, and that makes them think more about what it is to be Australian and about belonging in this country." (Country Style Magazine, October 2006)

Although based in central Victoria, a fair part of Kinja's year is spent travelling and performing at folk, world and arts festivals, in Aboriginal communities and in educational settings. For instance, a snapshot of Kinja performances in early 2015 include the opening of the Balranald Discovery Centre in outback NSW, reconciliation performances at Lord and Lady Somers Camp, the Globe to Globe World Music Festival, supporting Mike Brady at his CD launch 'Bloodlines' at QDOS Arts Centre in Lorne, and the White Night Festival.

Ron is also kept busy with his solo career. "I have had the opportunity to do two orchestral pieces - a Philip Glass piece and a Peter Sculthorpe piece - in the Melbourne Town Hall" (Country Style Magazine 2006), then in New York and in Jordan. He once played for Queen Elizabeth II and world boxing champion, Muhammad Ali. More recently he has played for Sir Bob Geldof and for Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens).

Kinja's debut album *My Home* was released in 2004 through Black Market Music. Ron and Sarah feel proud that *My Home* celebrates Ron's Wamba Wamba heritage, a tribute to the survival of Victorian Aboriginal culture. Also for Ron and Sarah, the album subtly ponders the question that "if cultures can come together in music, surely we can do it as people? In some ways it's our contribution to reconciliation." (Country Style Magazine, October 2006). As Indigenous singer-songwriter Archie Roach has said in his song *Liyarn Ngarn* "we've been too far apart".

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