



Drums beating for Womad

30th birthday lineup 'brilliant'

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The drummers who inspired the first Womad festival 30 years ago are heading to New Zealand for next year's event.

At the launch of the annual festival at Parliament last night, artistic director Drew James said it was apt to mark the 30th birthday of Womad internationally by bringing the Master Drummers of Burundi to Taranaki.

The drummers' performance encompasses 20 hand-carved drums played in complex rhythms. The group began touring internationally in the 1960s.

Alongside them, another 15 countries are represented, as well as several Kiwi groups.

"Once again, we have managed to secure a brilliant lineup for Wo-

omad New Zealand, with a particularly strong African contingent headed by the drummers, along with one of the greatest stories of triumph over hardship, Staff Benda Bilili; and the up-and-coming livewire Dobet Gnahore," Mr James said.

Womad New Zealand 2012 takes place at Brooklands Park and TSB Bowl of Brooklands from March 16 to 18.

The programme was launched last night by Arts Minister Chris Finlayson before a crowd of about 200 in Wellington.

Mr Finlayson talked of the value of the arts in the community and said, year after year, Womad attracted people to this "beautiful province".

"The festival programme seems to attract a particularly happy and law-abiding audience," he said.

Others to speak were New Plymouth MP Jonathan Young, New Plymouth Mayor Harry Duynhoven and representatives from Shell New Zealand, Todd Energy and TSB Bank. Paul Moore, from

Todd Energy, and Shona Geary, from Shell, said each of their companies invested \$1 million into the festival annually.

Kevin Murphy, of TSB Bank, said Womad attracted people from all walks of life. "Men of suit by day seem to be transformed into laid-back festival groupies – it just seems to be that sort of atmosphere," he said.

Other big names at next year's festival include Gurrumul, once described by *Rolling Stone* magazine as Australia's most important voice, globetrotting French band Lo'Jo and India's master santoor player Shivkumar Sharma.

The Kiwi music lineup features one of the newest music projects in the country, the Pajama Club, led by Neil and Sharon Finn. Other home-grown talent includes the Black Seeds, Adam Page and Riki Gooch in Band of Thousand, and ukulele trio The Nukes.

Mr James said more artists would be announced in January.

Early-bird tickets are on sale until November 11