



## PRODUCERS GUIDE - 2012

Welcome to this guide for those people looking to produce a show for the 2012 Melbourne Magic Festival.

I hope it answers any questions you might have and prepares you for an exciting and rewarding festival.

If you have any questions this guide doesn't answer, or any suggestions or ideas you feel should be added to it, please contact Festival Director Tim Ellis. [Tim@MagicUnlimited.com](mailto:Tim@MagicUnlimited.com)

### ***“What type of a show should I do?”***

Generally each performance should be at least 40 minutes long and up to 55 minutes, though some evening shows may run up to 80 minutes.

**Daytime shows** are generally for kids or families, and **evening shows** are for families or adults only.

We are encouraging performers to take risks by creating shows which use magic in unusual, theatrical, and inventive ways. Surveys have suggested people enjoy shows that are different to what they've seen before, shows with storylines, shows with meaning, or just shows that are visually exciting.

Shows can be close up, stage, illusions, balloonology, escapes, horror, animal magic... use your imagination – there's an audience for every style.

Not only can you produce a show, we are also open to workshops for kids, classes for adults, entrants for our Junior Magic Championships, and other ideas.

### **“How many performances are best?”**

Ideally, as you will be presenting a new show, the more performances you do of it the better it will get. However, the more sessions you run, the more audience members you'll need to attract. Thankfully, it doesn't take a lot of tickets to break even thanks to the MMF structure we've developed.

#### **EVENING SHOWS**

In general, we are looking for evening shows that will run 5 performances (Tue-Sat).

A 4 performance run is fine too (Wed-Sat).

If you only want to do one show, a Mon Sun night may be your only option.

**Showtimes** – Studio 1, 7.00pm or 9.00pm. Studio 2, 7.30pm or 8.30pm.

#### **DAYTIME SHOWS**

Here we prefer shows that will run either 6 shows (Mon-Sat)

Or 5 shows (Mon-Fri)

**Timing** – Studio 1, 11am or 2.00pm and Studio 2, 10.30, 12.00 or 1.30pm.

## **“Which theatre is best for me?”**

There are two theatres to choose from. Neither studio has restrictions on flashpaper, flame or smoke, but you must notify us in writing in advance:

### **Studio 1**

This studio seats 100 people comfortably in tiered seats (and another 20 on floor level if you squeeze them in)

It will be fitted with a black curtain which can be opened by a cord on stage right.

There will be a black velvet backdrop about 3-4m behind that curtain and two side wings.

You can cross from one side of the stage to the other behind the backdrop.

You get a full lighting rig, lighting board and operator. If you have any specific lighting requests, you must let us know on your application form and we'll try to arrange it for you.

This studio comes with a sound system which includes two speakers, a mixer, a CD player, and a corded microphone and stand.

You can bring your own radio mics, regular mics, iPods, laptops etc to patch into the sound desk.

We will also have Tim Ellis' video projector and screen set up in the studio. This is available to all producers for a small fee of \$20 per performance.

### **Studio 2**

This studio seats up to 80 people with about 40 on tiered seats. Though you can get up to 100 people but 60 will be on flat level so viewing conditions won't be great.

There will be a backdrop provided in this room.

You can store props behind and under the tiered seating.

You get a full lighting rig and lighting board. If you have any specific lighting requests, please let us know by March 2011 and we'll try to arrange it for you.

This studio does not come with a sound system. It doesn't need amplification for voice, but if you'd like to use music, a standard MiPro system is excellent. You can bring your own, or loan or hire one from a fellow AIMers.

We will also have Tim Ellis' small PA up in the studio. This is available to all producers free of charge.

**“How much does it cost?”**

Studio 1 - \$150 per performance (10% off for 5 or more shows)

Studio 2 - \$110 per performance (10% off for 5 or more shows)

**“What do I get for my money?”**

Use of the studio and its audio visual facilities

Use of the dressing room

Use of the merchandise table inside your studio.

Foyer co-ordinator to help supervise lines

Staff operating bar selling drinks and snacks before your show

Poster and flyer display space in the foyer and Town Hall windows

Use of the Northcote Ticketing system (at \$3 per ticket booking fee)

APRA payments for the rights to use copyright music in your show

Box Office staff selling tickets sales on the day

Inclusion in the MMF printed program (10,000 copies)

Assistance in promotion to the media through the MMF ad campaign

Promotion on the MMF website [www.MelbourneMagicFestival.com](http://www.MelbourneMagicFestival.com)

Promotion on the AIM and Northcote Town Hall websites

Use of and access to the Magic Festival producer (Tim Ellis)

**“How many helpers should I enlist?”**

**Technician** – Unless you are operating your show using a remote system like ShowTech, you may need someone to operate your lights and/or sound. This can be a friend, or an AIM member who has offered their services. (Brendan Croft and Nathan Earnest have done this in the past). We recommend paying a tech \$25 per performance.

**Ticket Collector** - It's very important that this person knows what your tickets look like and checks each one as some people ended up in the wrong shows last year. They also need to be aware of any 'comps' or 'guest lists'.

**Video Operator** – Consider placing a static video camera on a tripod to record each of your shows or, better still, have a friend man the camera and film your show.

**Director** – If possible, get someone in to help you create the show as an “outside eye”, then have them watch each performance and give notes. This is invaluable and will really improve your show quickly. Alternatively, review the video tape after each performance and make your own notes.

### **“How much should I charge?”**

In order to make things easier for MMF customers, we try to keep ticketing prices as similar as possible. Generally, the daytime shows are less expensive than the evening shows.

#### **In 2009, 2010 & 2011**

Daytime Shows - Tickets \$14, kids, \$16 Adults, \$45 Family of Four

Evening Shows - Tickets \$16, kids, \$20 Adults, \$50 Family of Four

We are recommending a small increase in prices for 2012. Whatever you feel the need to charge more is entirely up to you.

Some people prefer a “one price fits all” at \$10 or \$15 per person, though some customers will still argue that “kids should get in cheaper”.

Be aware that we use Northcote Town Hall’s Ticketing service and they charge around \$2.20 per ticket + 80c per ticket goes to the MMF, so for every \$15 ticket you sell, you get \$12.00, so budget accordingly.

Seating is not allocated. People line up at the studio door before the show and are admitted accordingly, though you can run a ‘VIP Line’ at the door if you wish to offer priority seating for certain ticket-holders.

Other options to consider:

#### **VIP TICKET OPTION**

Regular ticket \$15, VIP Ticket \$30 includes: Priority Seating, Goody bag including DVD, Magic Trick, Signed Poster. (Present ticket on entry for advance entry – then get coupon to present at Merchandise store after the show).

#### **WORKSHOP PACKAGE**

Regular Ticket \$15, Workshop \$12 - Show & Workshop Packages - \$19

#### **VIP DISCOUNT**

Submit a code word that people can use over the phone or online when buying tickets to get a special discounted price.

#### **GROUP RATE**

It’s often good to offer a significantly discounted rate for groups of ten or more.

### **“When do I start selling?”**

If you wish to sell to friends and family, you can start selling your tickets NOW! Just be extra careful in your record-keeping.

We recommend that, as any tickets you sell will not incur a booking fee, you reduce them to a special price to encourage people to buy early.

You may choose to approach a school group or social club with the prospect of a “night out”. Give them the entire show at only \$10 a ticket and they can resell the tickets as a fundraiser. Approach groups as far in advance as possible as they often plan their activities six months to a year ahead.

Another idea to encourage sales is to partner with a charity. Donate 20-50% of ticket sales to the charity in return for them selling or promoting sales through their members and supporters.

For these group sales, you can either create a door list or print your own special tickets (people will often be more willing to buy if they see a physical ticket).

**MOST IMPORTANT – You MUST notify the Festival Director (Tim Ellis [Tim@MagicUnlimited.com](mailto:Tim@MagicUnlimited.com)) BEFORE the MMF tickets go on sale. If you don't, your show may be cancelled and no refunds issued.**

### **“What are Comps?”**

The main aim of MMF is to develop new and better shows, so feel free to give away as many comps (free tickets) as you see fit. The best advertisement for a show is to turn people away because the house is full. (That's why it's important to heavily comp your first show, and have more than one performance).

It's also a good idea to seek out and comp **reviewers** and **booking agents**.

**You will need to notify Northcote Town Hall Box Office when you need comps to give away, because comps need to be removed from sale on the Northcote Town Hall ticket system and physically printed out at a cost of 50c per ticket.**

You can collect the comps yourself and distribute them, or they can be held at the Box Office for your guests to collect.

As a condition of participation in 2012, each show will donate 1 family pass (4 tickets) to be used as giveaways by MMF 2012 in promoting the festival as a whole.

### **“Can I sell merchandise?”**

We discovered the most effective way to sell is to have a sales table inside your studio. Be aware, you need someone at the table ready to sell immediately as people tend to leave the building as soon as the show finishes.

You can also enhance sales by drawing attention to the table during the show, or by giving away items to volunteers during the show and mentioning more will be on sale after the show, or simply mentioning you'll sign “it” after the show at the merchandise table in the foyer “so stick around”.

People tend to want to buy souvenirs impulsively, as a memento of the show they just saw, so you'll sell more products if they relate directly to your show.

**“How do I make a budget?”**

It's a lot easier than you think, but it is important to do.

Here's a sample to get you started:

EXPENSES –	
Room Hire 5 x 150	
(less 10% discount) =	\$675
Flyers x 5,000 =	\$350 (approx)
Costumes & Props =	\$380 (approx)
Tech 4 x \$25 =	\$100
Large Posters 5 x \$25 =	\$125
TOTAL EXPENSES =	\$1630

INCOME -

500 Potential ticket sales at minimum of \$10 = \$5000

(As you can see, you could still spend a few hundred dollars on advertising and still break even)

All prices include GST

After the festival you will receive a statement saying how much income you made through the Northcote Box Office, less the box office and credit card charges, and you will then need to invoice The Australian Institute of Magic for that amount. A cheque will be sent to you a week or so after your invoice is received.

If you are not GST registered, it gets really hard... please be GST registered!

### **“How do I promote my show?”**

There are many, many different ways to promote your show. Your aim is to sell X number of tickets. By breaking the number down and setting small sales goals along the way, you can monitor the success of your promotional activities and step them up where needed.

MMF will be approaching many media outlets to promote the festival as a whole, but generally the media will take interest in one specific show so make sure you supply MMF with press releases about your show, and great action photos that will reproduce well in newspapers or magazines. Also, let MMF know about any photo opportunities or magic tricks or stunts you can offer that the media might be interested in.

### **WEBSITES**

There are a lot of websites which can help promote your show. Seek them out and encourage them to link to your MMF page. You might also consider a Google Adwords campaign.

What's On sites are very effective, as parents especially are looking for holiday activities to take their kids to.

### **RADIO**

Radio is easy to get on to, if you can offer the show something exciting and different like performing magic on air. Target a station and a specific show that you think the listeners will be interested in your show and contact the producer. Be aware that many shows are pre-recorded and very few offer live calls from listeners.

You can sometimes be a more attractive guest if you offer a ticket giveaway for listeners, or even a special code that listeners can use when booking tickets to get a discount price (this must be arranged with Tim Ellis a week in advance).

Getting listeners to go online to your MMF page to see “the prediction” or some other climax to a trick is also very effective because once they are there, they will read more about your show and maybe even buy a ticket. Referring listeners to a specific site to see a preview clip of your show is good too.

Some radio stations will even add your clip to their website, or maybe even add a link to your MMF page.

### **PRESS**

It's easy to get a story in the local paper. All you need to do is to ring them up and ask. Offer them an exciting photo opportunity, or send them an action pic, to be more appealing.

However, local papers don't necessarily result in ticket sales. Again, to turn readers into buyers, offer them a special "discount" when booking if they use a certain code word or, maybe they can call you directly for discount tickets or the first ten to email you will receive free passes (the rest are offered discount tickets by return email).

With major newspapers you need to have an incredible picture, or a unique story angle to get their attention. Put yourself in the position of a reader. What would get your attention as you were flicking through the morning paper?

There are many different newspapers, local, state, national, specific ethnicity, specific occupations, seek them out.

Remember, it's not hard to get into the paper, but you must make the most of the opportunity.

## **MAGAZINES**

Magazines need around six months lead up time so prepare NOW. If you can get a story into an airline magazine, a kids magazine, or a general interest publication it will result in sales. But you need to approach them with an exciting angle with great photo ideas as soon as possible.

## **TELEVISION**

TV is hard to get onto, and results can be mixed. Some shows plan ahead, others decide on the day.

The best course of action is to choose which shows you want to be on now, approach the producers and talk to them about how you can fit into their show. Be open and blunt, let them know what you want and what you can offer, and listen to their ideas too.

Be aware though, you are just fodder for them so they may not give you the plug you agreed upon. Make sure your show gets plugged as often as possible and be ruthless about it. Once the segment is over, there's no point complaining as they've moved on to other things.

## **ADVERTISING**

Placing ads in publications like 'Melbourne's Child' or Gig Guides in The Herald Sun or The Age can be expensive, but pay off big time. Other options are to advertise in free listings with newspapers and radios. Lots of people are competing for the same space, so get in early!

## **POSTERS & FLYERS**

We recommend you provide us with two posters made in large A1 or A0 size through Styletimes, Xtremtc, or Officeworks. They cost about \$25 each. These will be displayed in the foyer and in the Town Hall windows.

Paper sizes - <http://www.papersizes.org/a-paper-sizes.htm>

We MUST receive them by mid-June. Anything arriving later than July 1 will not be put on display.

We recommend you create both A3 posters and A4 or B3 flyers to hand out at every opportunity, and get friends to distribute on your behalf. These can be very effective.

**“What do I do now?”**

**JANUARY 31** – Fill in the Application form and get it back to Tim Ellis NO LATER than January 31, 2012. After that date you will LOSE your spot and it will be handed on to another producer on our waiting list.

You must complete the Application form in full, include your deposit and a photo or image for the website. ***If we do not receive a photo or image, we will choose one for you.***

**APRIL 1** – You’ll need to provide poster artwork, show promo material, quality action pics and text for the MMF program must be received by April 1, 2012.

***BALANCE – Balance of your room hire MUST be paid by this date or you may forfeit your spot and lose your deposit!***

APRA - You’ll need to submit a page listing all of your music tracks, the artists, how long each track is used in the show for, and send them in to Tim Ellis by April 1, 2012. If this is not received by April 1, you will need to use Royalty Free music for your show.

Some sample sources of Royalty Free music:

- <http://incompetech.com/m/c/royalty-free/>
- <http://www.istockphoto.com/audio?lid=sRRtjMnx1&pcrid=8266441611&property=I&esource=google+Audio&kw=AU+royalty%20free%20music+Phrase>
- <http://www.royaltyfreemusic.com/>

**LATE APRIL** - Advance ticket sales commence late April. (Start promoting your show!)

**MID MAY** – General tickets go on sale mid May.

**JULY 2-14** – The Melbourne Magic Festival

**LATE AUGUST** - Invoices and cheques organised.

Finally, take a look at last year’s program online here

<http://melbournemagicfestival.com> for further ideas and inspiration.