

NICOLA GUNN



AT THE SANS HOTEL

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**ARTS
VICTORIA**

Victoria
The Place To Be

THEATRE WORKS:
St Kilda

LA MAMA

This project was previously supported by the Theatre Works Selected Works programme, Arts Victoria and La Mama Theatre.

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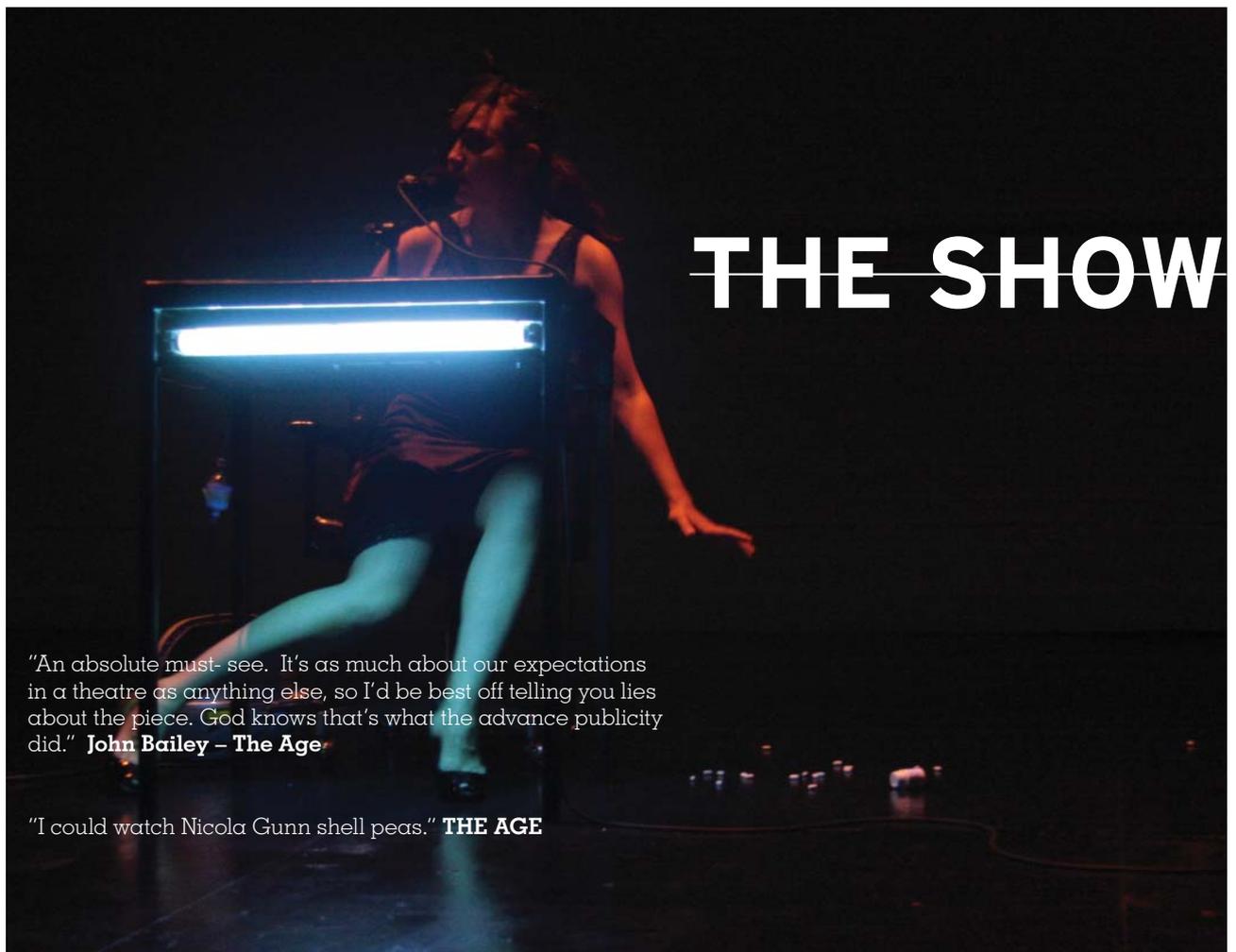
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AT THE SANS HOTEL

"...Monumentally original work... 'Clever' gives the impression of a mannered, consciously, impressive sort of piece and 'intelligent' sounds worthy and well-researched – this play is so much more: different, really funny, authentic and astute, and honestly, honestly, marvellous."

Liza Dezfouli, AUSTRALIAN STAGE



THE SHOW

"An absolute must-see. It's as much about our expectations in a theatre as anything else, so I'd be best off telling you lies about the piece. God knows that's what the advance publicity did." **John Bailey – The Age**

"I could watch Nicola Gunn shell peas." **THE AGE**

An emotionally evocative and intricate psychological detective story. Loosely about, yet having nothing to do with a schizophrenic German woman who arrived at a hotel in the middle of the desert, AT THE SANS HOTEL is an investigation into indecision and loneliness, presence and absence.

In a new work, Nicola Gunn has taken inspiration from the Cornelia Rau affair, a woman wrongly incarcerated in an Australian detention centre as an illegal immigrant. The interrogation of the German woman in Gunn's story is a remarkable and indescribable character study that pulls together threads of narrative, seen and unseen, into an intimate and moving performance.

AT THE SANS HOTEL is actually cancelled.

The work begins with giant floor to ceiling photographs of people, one after the other, holding signs that read "see me." A woman sits in the far corner of the frame almost unnoticed. The woman begins to talk. She tells the audience that her name is Sophie and that she is French. She suggests they get to know each other a little, have a little conversation. To break the ice, she tells them a story from her childhood about how she used to masturbate in the classroom in front of all the other students and the teacher and because nobody looked at her (in fact they all made a concerted effort to avoid looking at her altogether), she thought nobody could see her. This story is to make the audience feel comfortable. Or uncomfortable.

The woman talks. Finally, she reveals that Nicola Gunn is not here and that in fact, AT THE SANS HOTEL is cancelled. And yet, she tells the audience, they are all still here. The audience are invited to get drunk, but the wine is non-alcoholic. She is plunged into the desert and the audience follow.

This work has been praised for its originality in Melbourne and Toronto and now it comes to the Edinburgh Fringe.



NICOLA GUNN / SANS HOTEL

Nicola Gunn is a Melbourne-based performance artist and theatremaker. She is best known for her solo work that blends performance, art and anthropology to explore the fragility of the human condition with subversive humour. Nicola draws from autobiography to make urgent and relevant work: *An Elephant Club*, *Tyrannous Rex*, *An Unfortunate Woman* (directed by Pajama Men's Mark Chavez), *The Lost Property Office* and *My Friend Schadenfreude*. Since 2001, she has toured her work nationally around Australia and internationally to New Zealand, Canada, the US and Berlin. She has been nominated for Green Room Awards for Best Performer in *An Unfortunate Woman* and *At The Sans Hotel*, won a Centaur Award in Montreal for best play for *The Elephant Club* and was nominated for a U.K. Stage Award at the Edinburgh Fringe for Best Solo Performance (*At The Sans Hotel*).

Originally from New Zealand, **Gwen Holmberg-Gilchrist** is a freelance lighting designer and Technical Director at Dancehouse in Melbourne. She has designed over 100 works and most recently, Shaun Mcleod's *The weight of the thing left its mark* during Dance Massive 2011.

Rebecca Ethell is a freelance lighting and set designer, as well as lighting technician, production, stage and tour manager. She was the stage manager, tour manager and set designer for comedian Ross Noble for many years, touring throughout Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand and is presently House co-Manager at La Mama Theatre in Melbourne

Luke Paulding is a composer and musician from the Victorian College of the Arts' Practical Composition programme. He has worked and studied with many Australian music figures including Mark Pollard, Peter Neville, Donna Coleman, Anthony Pateras, David Shea and Gordon Kerry. He is presently writing an opera in collaboration with Chamber Made.

Michael Fikaris is a visual artist and draws comic books.

SUMMARY

Artist/Company:	Nicola Gunn / Sans Hotel
Production Title:	At the Sans Hotel
Genre/Form:	Theatre / Contemporary Performance
Director/Writer/Performer:	Nicola Gunn
Designers:	Nicola Gunn, Gwen Holmberg-Gilchrist and Rebecca Etchell
Lighting Designer:	Gwen Holmberg-Gilchrist
Sound Designer:	Luke Paulding
Video :	Daniel Agdag
Stage Manager:	Rebecca Etchell

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

At the Sans Hotel is an emotionally evocative and intimate psychological detective story. Loosely inspired by, and yet having nothing to do with the story of a schizophrenic German-speaking woman who arrived at a hotel in the middle of the Australian desert, At the Sans Hotel is a "monumentally original" (The Australian Stage) investigation into indecision and loneliness, presence and absence.

PREVIOUS SEASONS:

16 - 26 March 2010 Theatre Works, Melbourne, Australia; 12 - 13 November 2010 Performance Space, Sydney, Australia; 5 - 15 January 2011 Factory Theatre Mainspace, Toronto, Canada; 21 - 23 January 2011 Metro Theatre, Victoria, Canada; 4 - 28 August 2011 Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh Fringe Festival; 15 September - 2 October 2011 La Mama Courthouse, Melbourne, Australia.

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Duration: 75mins

Venue: Adaptable to any pro-stage, black box, industrial or exhibition venue with light-coloured floor-to-ceiling back projection surface.

Space: Minimum stage dimensions 6000mm L x 6000mm W and 5000mm H

Capacity: 50-200

Personnel: 4 (Performer, Stage Manager, Lighting Designer/Operator/AV Operator, Sound Designer/Operator)

Bump-in: 1.5 Days

Video Weblink: www.vimeo.com/nicolagunn

Website: www.nicolagunn.com

Contact Details

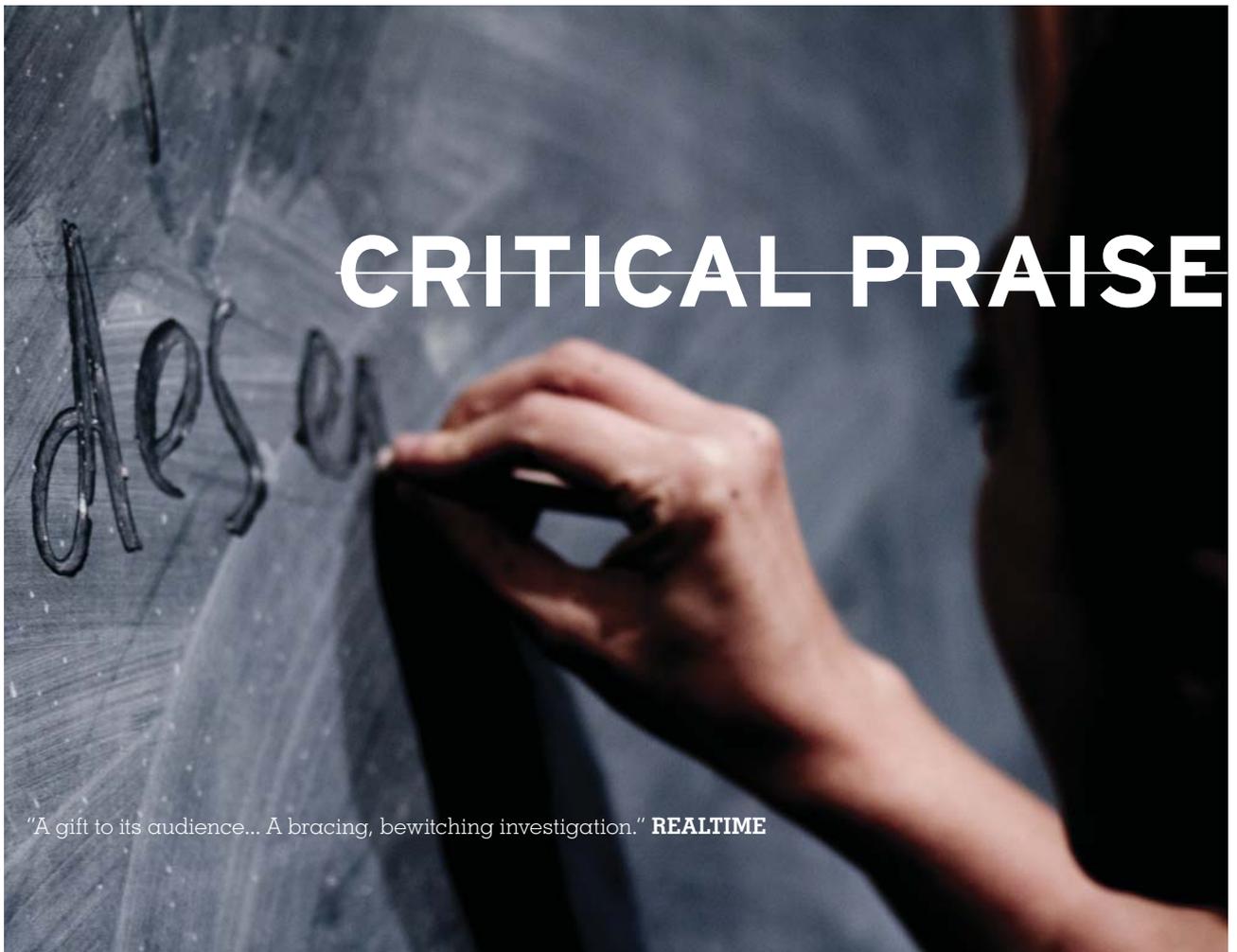
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A woman with dark hair, wearing a floral dress with a black lace neckline, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The background is dark and out of focus, with some colorful light spots. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

"Don't really want to say too much about this one, but it's an absolute must-see. It's as much about our expectations in a theatre as anything else, so I'd be best off telling you lies about the piece. God knows that's what the advance publicity did, which is brilliant strategy in my book. If it helps, though, it's reminiscent of Forced Entertainment's more successful work and has the generous charm and accessibility of last year's exquisite Floating by Hoipolloi." **A CAPITAL IDEA**



"A gift to its audience... A bracing, bewitching investigation." **REALTIME**

"Gunn - and I was never even sure if this was Gunn we were watching - is a brilliantly likeable performer who effortlessly wins over her onlookers within minutes... It's this charm that makes *At the Sans Hotel* such a success. Like UK company Hoipolloi's exquisite *Floating* of last year, and with hints of *Forced Entertainment's* more accessible work, this is a gift to its audience rather than a challenge. It's not a navel-gazing exercise into meta-theatre but a bracing, bewitching investigation into presence and absence... there is so much more for each viewer to discover for themselves."

John Bailey, REALTIME

"About as comprehensible as a David Lynch film, with stunning sound design and an eerily beautiful sense of disquiet to match, Nicola Gunn's *At the Sans Hotel* is decidedly not for everyone. For a start, many theatre-goers don't like it when the play they're watching is smarter than they are. Myself, I tend to enjoy being in the hands of someone who knows what they're doing. Add to this the fact that the performer / director / collaborator's vision is so singularly uncompromising and intelligent, her subject matter so incredibly brave, and that her performance - in what is essentially a one-woman show - is simply from another planet, and I'm prepared to say this is the theatre event thus far of 2010.

Tony McMahon, INPRESS

"...Incredibly weird, intensely cerebral and not for those seeking straightforward narratives.

With nods to Pirandello and Beckett, Gunn slyly crafts a complex, unreliable and intellectually delectable meta-narrative... deliver[ing] haunting, breathtaking moments in return." **Jordan Bimm, Toronto NOW**

"If you want something completely out of the ordinary, this is the ticket."
Toronto Sun



NOMINATED FOR UK STAGE AWARD FOR BEST SOLO PERFORMER!

"What happens in between is some fresh kind of madness, but it's an insanity which hangs together in a Lynchian way, leaving a holistic stain on those who braved it all the way through...If this sounds pretentious the genius of *At the Sans Hotel* is that it isn't at all....There are no easy answers, but the way in which Gunn has played with form and identity is a constant source of rich contemplation for days after."

Honour Bayes, TOTAL THEATRE

"At *The Sans Hotel* is not going to be for everyone. Filing out of the performance, the faces of tonight's audience are a perfect picture of bafflement and confusion. This is a production that has absolutely no respect for theatrical convention... Indeed, [Gunn] is a performer of quite exceptional charisma without whom it is doubtful that the play would work at all. That it does is entirely down to the warmth and vulnerability Gunn captures."

FEST MAG, Edinburgh

★★★★★ This disturbing, off-kilter monologue is delivered brilliantly by Nicola Gunn, as her performance gleefully jumps the line between genius and madness...It's an acquired taste, but a real delight for the discerning, and so good that you might walk out." **THREEWEEKS, Edinburgh**

★★★★ Australian performer Nicola Gunn's performance is rich in imagination, emotional honesty and playful impenetrability...the applause for one of the Fringe's most quietly bravura finales is warm and genuine." **The Scotsman**

"What ever it is, there is nothing I can say to prepare you for Gunn's fascinating event which will, if you stay as close to the end as you can, leave you with the inkling that perhaps she is the audience and you are the performer. Fascinating, challenging theatre which defies any kind of criticism." Thom Dibdin, *The Stage*

"A sophisticated exploration, very intelligent and thoroughly self-reflexive." **The List**

TECHNICAL RIDER

VENUE / STAGE

A traditional or non-traditional theatre. The work can be adapted to pro-stage, black box, alternative or industrial style space, best suited to an exhibition space. Audience seating can be raked or flat, arranged in scattered seating. Cream is optimal colour for the walls of the venue, but any light colour or projectable surface is OK. No black curtains or tabs required. There must be access to the audience via the stage.

Min. Dimensions:	6000mm L x 6000mm W
Ceiling Height:	5000mm
Entrances and Exits:	Downstage and Upstage
Floor:	Black (optimal finish is high gloss, matte OK)
Walls:	Cream

SET

Projection Scrim/Screen or Cyc

Min Dimensions:	5000mm L x 5000mm H
Colour:	White, cream, off-white
Purpose:	Floor to ceiling AV projection

Table

Dimensions:	1800mm L x 760mm W x 880mm H (front legs) and 830mm H (back legs)
Colour:	Black
Detail:	The downstage (front) legs must be longer making the table slant upwards towards the audience, so the action beneath the table is visible. A 600mm (2') fluorescent batten is fitted beneath the table downstage side. The table legs are mounted on lockable casters.

Office Chair

Dimensions:	Variable (at least 510mm from floor to base of chair)
Colour:	Black
Detail:	Swivel chair with arms and casters

Freestanding Blackboard

Dimensions:	2120mm H x 1600mm L (approx. dimensions of a freestanding whiteboard). The board itself approx 1200mm H x 1500mm L
Colour:	Black blackboard / Cream or wood (raw or stained) frame.
Detail:	Casters; The board must be raised to torso / shoulder height and the space beneath it, empty.
Purpose:	Rolls centre stage easily and sits off to the side; When you stand behind it, you can see the lower half of your body.

Chairs

Quantity:	2
Style:	Plain wooden preferred
Colour:	Cream, white or wooden

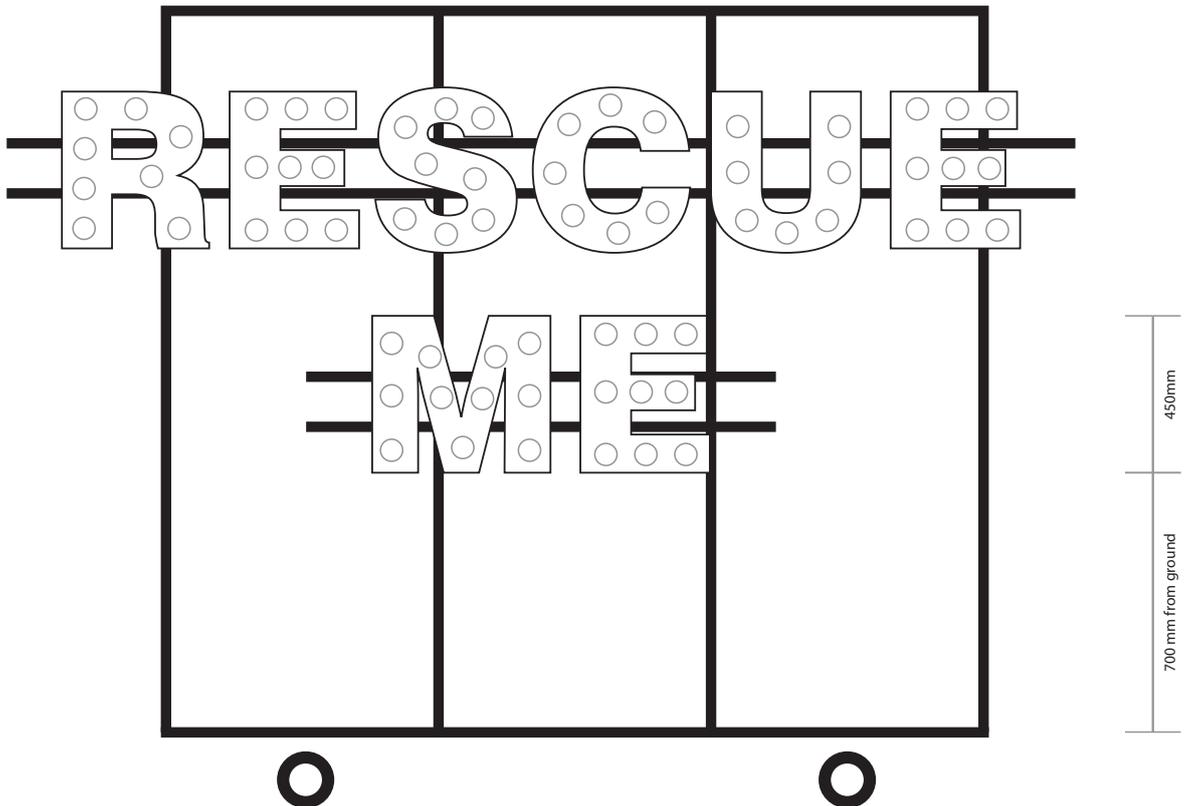
Rescue Me Billboard

The billboard consists of 8 3-D letters and festooning made up of 68 lightbulbs mounted on a frame. The billboard is pushed onstage from downstage by the SM and exits upstage.

Individual Letter Dimensions: 8 letters @ approx. 400mm L x 200mm W x 450mm H

Material:	5mm art foam board
Frame:	Wood mounted on trolley base with 2 or 4 vertical uprights
Colour:	Black
Total Billboard Dimensions:	Approx. 2400mm L x 600mm W x 1800mm H

Detail: The festooning needs a strong frame to support it. The letters will be supplied and drilled to the frame. The frame is then mounted on a trolley (or clothes rack with casters) to its vertical uprights as two separate pieces.



TECHNICAL
Festooning

Length:	70-80 lightbulbs, spaced 300mm apart.
Colour:	Black cord
Detail:	Standard bayonette fitting, 4-5 lengths spread over 2 channels
Purpose:	Creates Rescue Me billboard effect

Fluorescent / Fixture

Length:	600mm (2')
Colour:	White OK
Detail:	Must have plug/portable fitting

Portable CD Player / Ghetto Blaster

Dimensions:	approx. 400mm L x 250mm W x 150mm H (measurements variable)
Colour:	Black or silver
Detail:	Must be battery operable by performer
Purpose:	Self-operated

Mic Stand 1

Style:	Boom
Colour:	Black

Microphone Leads

Quantity:	Variable
Colour:	Black or White
Detail:	Long – sound desk to upstage

VGA Cables

Quantity:	1
Detail:	Long

Smoke Machine

Quantity:	1
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PROPS + CONSUMABLES

Batteries: Assorted for ghetto blaster and radio mic
 Cake: 1 per performance
 Whipped Cream: 1 per 3 performances
 Chalk: White
 Cloth: Regular kitchen cloth
 Non-Alcoholic or Alcoholic Wine (venue permitting):
 3 bottles per performance

Lightbulbs

Quantity:	approx. 80
Colour:	Frosted or clear
Style:	40W Fancy Rounds – standard bayonette (check festooning) - or "golf ball" bulbs.

Fluorescent Tube

Length:	To fit 600mm (2') fixture
Colour:	Blue blacklight (specific to reptile enclosures)
Detail:	NEC 20 Watt, Blacklight T10, Model FL20SBL, Made in Japan

Desk Light

Style:	Work lamp
Dimensions:	Approx. 800mm tall
Colour:	Black or white
Purpose:	Self-operated from the table
Detail:	Hinged

Mic Stand 2

Style:	Table stand
Colour:	Black

Microphones

Quantity:	2
Style:	No. 1 Regular Vocal Mic and No. 2 wireless hand held Radio Mic
Purpose:	No. 2 situated at table upstage, No. 1 in boom stand

Video Projectors

Quantity:	1 x 4000 lumen projectors
Detail:	No.1 rigged in the lighting grid focussed on back wall – must have shutter (or dowsers) operated via remote from Tech Box.

Plastic Cups: Goblet style, 40 per performance
 Pencils: 20 per performance
 Glass
 Dental Floss: 1 per 10 performances
 Rotary Telephone
 2 Trays
 Marshmallows: 1 packet per show



RESCUE
ME

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