THE REST IS UP TO YOU

MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL

1982-2062

THE REST IS UP TO YOU

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1982-2062

EDITED BY SIMON ABRAHAMS AND KATE RHODES

CONTENTS

7–8 FOREWORD SIMON ABRAHAMS

9 FOREWORD PAUL DULDIG

23–38
THE LURE OF CHAOS:
A DIALOGUE ON THE MAKING OF 'THE REST IS UP
TO YOU: MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL 1982-2062'
SIMON ABRAHAMS AND KATE RHODES

163–239 NOT AN IMPARTIAL HISTORY OF MELBOURNE FRINGE JOHN BAILEY

10, 27, 42, 57, 81, 90, 109, 122, 139, 157, 169, 196, 224, 240, 261, 280, 294, 309, 320, 353, 362, 375, 387, 404, 419, 428, 459 AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE JOHN BAILEY

FOREWORD SIMON ABRAHAMS

Melbourne Fringe supports this city to express itself. It's a responsibility we don't take lightly. For 40 years Melbourne Fringe has democratised the arts, reflecting the work of this city's artists back at themselves, and amplifying their work for the people of Melbourne.

Melbourne Fringe has always been about discovery – it's about discovering new artists and new things about artmaking, it's about discovering our city, and ultimately, it's about discovering new things about ourselves. Over four decades, we've gone from something scrappy and chaotic and important to become something meticulous and chaotic and important. I'm not sure we've grown up to be what our founders imagined we would be – most of us don't become what we thought we would be when we grew up – but I hope they're proud of this influential and adventurous thing we are today. We've always punched above our weight, making seemingly impossible things happen, creating something incredible from passion and sweat and a lot of collective action.

There is no documented history of Melbourne Fringe and right from the beginning, we knew it was impossible to create one. That's why we've created many histories – through our Storybank which invited the people of Fringe to record their own stories for posterity, through our enormous exhibition of multiple perspectives, through our extended podcast and now, through this publication. Even with all of these, we've barely scratched the surface of the Fringe, of what it means, or of its broader contribution. The records are sometimes sketchy, and memories can be vague. But we've created a series of histories, so far, in a project that we anticipate will go for another 40 years.

Thanks to our partners at State Library Victoria for saying "yes" (eventually) to a wild, bold idea. Thanks to the artists of Fringe for giving your creativity, your energy, your art and all too frequently your money to the people of Melbourne.

Here's to the next 40 years. The rest is up to you.

SIMON ABRAHAMS Creative Director and CEO Melbourne Fringe 9

FOREWORD PAUL DULDIG

On the surface, State Library Victoria and Melbourne Fringe might seem like odd partners. A historic cultural institution meets Melbourne's beating heart of non-mainstream arts and culture. But Fringe and the Library have much in common: we are both open, welcoming, safe spaces for all, and we both want people to participate – not just observe.

Over its 40-year history, Fringe has remained an open-access festival, giving artists the platform to tell their stories. As the custodian of our social history, State Library Victoria provides open access to 5 million+ collection items, and the platform for everyone in our community to bring them to life in any way they choose. We both nurture storytellers.

In celebration of its 40-year birthday, we honour the transformative role Fringe has had in opening up access to and participation in arts and culture in Melbourne. And what better way to do this than through collaborative storytelling?

The Rest Is Up To You exhibition captures the very essence of Fringe – it is a sensory immersion into the past. Fringe and the Library have collaborated to draw on the extensive archive of memorabilia in the State Collection to bring four decades of stories to life. Of course, participation is a part of it. You are encouraged to record and share your own stories of Fringe. These stories will join the Library's collection, so that 40 years from now they can be brought to life again.

I hope you enjoy the exhibition. The rest is up to you.

PAUL DULDIG is Chief Executive Officer, State Library Victoria

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1982

A ragtag group of independent Melbourne artists band together to create the Fringe Network, and invite anyone interested to come build it with them. In August a two day mini-festival is held, with a full day pass allowing access to every event for just \$2.00.





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What was the Impetus for the Melbourne Fringe Arts Festival? "At last year's Adelaide Festival people discovered that more than half the groups in the fringe festival came from Melbourne. We thought, this is absurd. Livingroom conversations became meetings at the parish hall in Acland Street. St Kilda and Fringe Network was formed."

Since those meetings last July, Pringe Network has received total grants of \$23,000 from the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council, the Victorian Ministry of the Arts and the Australian Film Commission, held a mini-fest, organised several benefits (including an arts bingo night) and its ninth newsletter has just been sent to over 1000 people and organisations, almost half of which are subscribers.

It is primed to stage a festival involving more than 150 visual artists, about 35 productions (including youth performance), 70 groups or individual musicians, 30 publishers, 100 writers and about 100 film and video makers.



Arpad Mihaly: arts f grass roots.

The aim of the festival the work of fringe art public and to each other ingle each other is as imitaking fringe arts to a wence and breaking down lic's preconceptions of as inaccessible, ralamateurish.

The festival will be through the inner suburt roy. Footscray, Debaisouth Melbourne, Richmethorn, Carlton and the cimany events are free which are on at mainstrues, cost up to \$12, but mis will be put on cheaply a festival showings. Most mances are under \$2 and Mihaly, says, those who festival programme will f good portion of the festivated free.

(See Weekender today ing details)

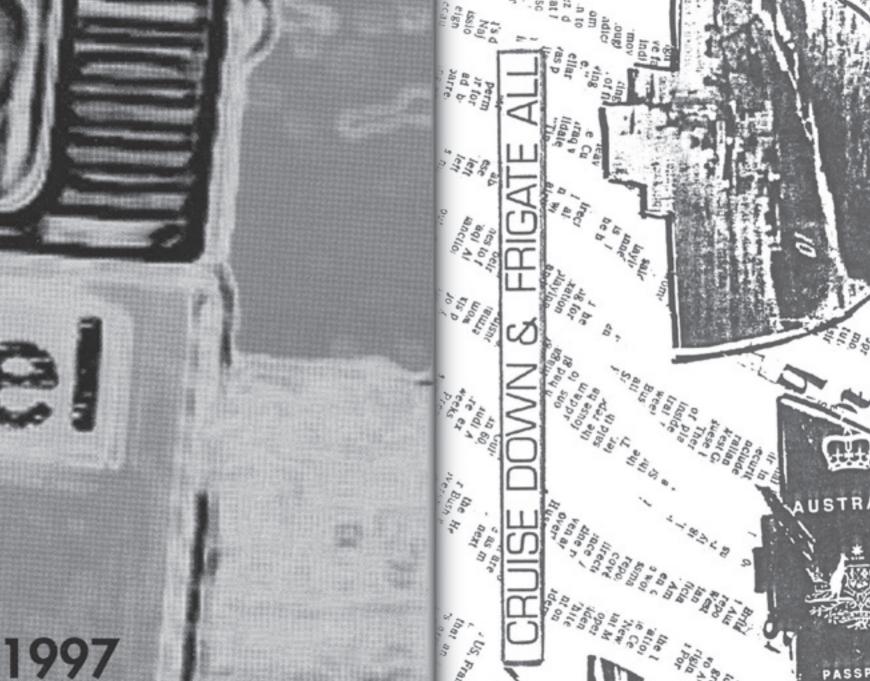
5730 8273 (w) 347 AUGUST TUESDAY Sue McCauley 341 RELEASE Enquiries: PRESS

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SEPTEMBER OCTOBER, 1998 990 MELBOURNE FRINGE ARTS FESTIVAL ARADE AND STREET PARTY

HE GREAT WAITERS RACE

UNNING ORDER

JUDGES MEET AT 380 BRUNSWICK STREE .15PM

RACE CALLER, DENISE SCOTT, BEGINS TO

CROWD, CLEAR THE STREET, ETC.

2.25PM JUDGES ARE SEATED.

2.30PM RACE BEGINS!

.40PM JUDGING AND PRIZE PRESENTATION.

WHEN COMPLETE-IUDGES THROW GOOD!

THEN MOVE INTO THE FITZROY T.A.B. FO

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UDGING GUIDELINES:

THE WINNING TEAM IS CHOSEN FROM THE FIRST FIVE W CROSS THE LINE.

THE WINNING TEAM WILL BE THAT TEAM WHICH HAS OUANTITY OF COFFEE REMAINING IN THEIR GLASS.

IF THERE IS NO CLEAR COFFEE MARGIN, THEN THE FIRST MEMBER TO CROSS THE LINE WITH THE MOST COFFEE IS





THE LURE OF CHAOS

A DIALOGUE ON THE MAKING OF 'THE REST IS UP TO YOU: MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL 1982-2062'

SIMON ABRAHAMS AND KATE RHODES

KATE RHODES: Well, here we are, talking to each other about a project we've made together. And since conversation and interviews and voices are at the heart of this exhibition...

SIMON ABRAHAMS: ...it felt like the only way we could introduce this exhibition.

KR: Absolutely. And this conversation mirrors our dialogue over the last 18 months making this exhibition and bringing our two institutions together. We've talked in person, over the phone, by text, by email, by zoom. I'm certain we've also telepathically communicated about it. We usually – uncannily – seem to end up with largely the same opinion about most things.

SA: Which is pretty wild for two very different humans.

KR: It is, but it also makes sense when you have a shared idea of what you want to achieve. Can you describe what we're doing here?

SA: Well, Melbourne Fringe and State Library Victoria have collaborated to create an exhibition. An installation.

An artwork! And so much more. It's the collective

THE LURE OF CHAOS
SIMON ABRAHAMS AND KATE RHODES

history-making and narrative-building that celebrates 40 years of Melbourne Fringe. We're calling it *The Rest Is Up To You: Melbourne Fringe Festival 1982–2062.*And we're capturing forty years in the past and forty years into the future.

KR: Yes, part time machine and part time capsule. Simon, you've been at the festival for eight years or so. Why do you think it's important to acknowledge this particular milestone and assemble a history of the Festival?

SA: A history of the Melbourne Fringe is not just a history of an organisation or a festival. It's a history of the independent arts in Victoria. And that captures demographic change, social change, geographic change. What venues were people making work in? What kind of work were they making? How have they done that? How has that shifted and changed as Melbourne has gentrified, as suburbs have changed, as political statements people wanted to make evolved over time? We want to look back and capture that, and also imagine what that could be in the future.

KR: And an important reason for staging the exhibition at the Library is that we care for the first twenty years of the Festival archive. We preserve all the program guides, letters, petitions, newsletters, flyers, job applications, financial records, grants, reports and photographs, amongst other things, produced by and for Fringe. Like Fringe, the Library is also a place for telling stories and we do this mostly through our exhibitions. As co-curator, one of my roles has been to go through the 57 Fringe archive boxes at the Library, and the 103 boxes with you at Trades Hall, as well as some of your vast digital archive. It has been a huge and fascinating undertaking with many moments of laughter and surprise, and many moving moments too. For example, there's a clutch of rejection letters from famous Australian art world figures all saying "no", for various reasons, to speak at the launch of the Fringe Network in 1982. But the letters are all kind and engaged with the idea of the Network, one even includes a cheque. In fact, the archive is full of "no" letters, usually for funding or various project applications, or for meetings with politicians. They have all been, indefatigably, kept. The auto-archiving impulse of Fringe's early founders is remarkable, they seem to have retained everything, and lucky us today.

The archive is administrative, strategic and stumbling, but it captures the highs and lows of Fringe's open access attitude too. It shows how a festival can also be a community. The archive is a story of changing graphics and technologies: photographs, videos, film footage and TV news reports show acts of provocation and defiance, moments of fun and bravery, scenes of risk and experimentation. Failure is an option at Fringe. Public creation and participation are the point.

SA: 100%. And it's so interesting to see how those things were archivable in the first 20 years, but these days everything is digital and it's hard to collect in the same way.

Our selections for the final display are only a fraction KR: of the complete archive. It's been important to retain all the signs of the archive's sweaty, messy making, and that our presentation doesn't stifle its chaotic abundance. Curatorially we've wanted to show the archive as close to its 'living' state as we can. We're keeping the manila folders that house all the material, with their dog ears and rusty staples, the hand-written notes in the margins of documents, the tears and the stains. What's important is a sense of the overwhelming abundance of material because the archive is a record of so many thousands of events, their production, as well as the running of a now very large festival. We've talked about how wary we are of making this exhibition feel too polished or static, or museum-y. We have agreed some order is useful. So, we've presented the archive in chronological order, following the

- basic logic of our two organisations and their storage systems, so that the institutional, artistic and aesthetic developments are visible.
- SA: Yes! The Fringe is chaotic so there has to be some order amongst the chaos. The order and structure of the Library and the chaos of Fringe is a beautiful artistic partnership. We've revisited the archive and the installation and made sure these early parts of Fringe history can be seen again. But it was also vital to have recent things in there and to reflect the full 40 years.

KR: Yes, it's very much a 'people archive' constructed out of voices and archival traces.

SA: Absolutely. It's not an exhibition of beautiful things. It has been an opportunity to capture our history, because it doesn't exist. Our story hasn't been written anywhere. And Fringe is, by its nature, multi-generational. But its multiple narratives are happening simultaneously and it's impossible to capture that in a single narrative.

The idea has been to record and preserve as many different stories as we can and we've worked with independent, award-winning podcast producer, musician, writer and artist Jon Tjhia to create an oral history. The Rest Is Up To You, looks at 40 years in the past and 40 years into the future and captures that history through individual stories. We've invited, through a public call out, anyone who has been touched or engaged by Melbourne Fringe, to share their most vivid memories, and create a Storybank. That means we can capture those stories in the archives and share them in the exhibition. It's really a project by and for the people.

KR: Yes, the stories explore how and why Fringe was established, the context and conditions for its emergence, what it offers artists, what the experience of performing as

THE REST IS UP TO YOU
MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL 1982–2062

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1983

The Fringe holds its first festival in March, presenting the work of more than 120 artists across six artform categories.

- part of Fringe is like, why it matters now and why it should continue to matter. When you listened to the recordings what stood out to you?
- SA: There's a quote from Arpad Milhaly the founder of Fringe who says that the vision for Fringe right from the start was "to not say no to anyone". We've put it on a giant banner on the wall of the exhibition. I love that quote because it speaks to the ethos of the festival now, and I hope into the future. When I think about the Fringe's many and vast changes, one thing has stayed the same: our job is to enable and facilitate the artistic vision of anyone who wants to contribute. Our job is to make that happen and to not say no to anyone. Our job is to help Melbourne express itself, to help Melbourne to be whatever it wants to be.

KR: I also love that quote from Arpad and the complexity that comes with that position because when you don't say "no" to anyone, you are also saying "yes" to some things that not everybody agrees with. It's a noble idea but it's a complex position too.

Shall we talk about how sound designer Ciaran Frame designed or 'choreographed' the sounds of the hours and hours of interviews we recorded?

SA: I wanted to work with a young, emerging, incredibly talented artist and Ciaran is all of those things. So yes, 50 hours of interviews! And they had to be edited to create a sound design that was immersive, and that told a story. We worked on a few key themes: risks and experiments, spaces for making and presenting art, community and beginnings, and the body. These gave us a curatorial lens for editing and sound design. There are key institutional moments like the Fringe Parade or the Spencer Tunick photograph (the nude photograph that thousands of Melburnians were part of in 2001), or the digital festivals in the pandemic. These

iconic moments have naturally become a focus for storytelling. But we also uncovered new stories and wanted to incorporate those surprising elements into the sound design.

KR: I like the reflections on class and what open access means, the importance of bad art and the future of art making. With Ciaran's help these responses fill the gallery space as a choreography of sound: long and short snippets of emotion, anecdote, and memory. These create a funny, moving and thoughtful collective act.

SA: Absolutely. It makes the room feel alive.

KR: The stories have been visualised by Paul Fuog and Uriah Gray of Studio U-P (who also designed this book) as colourful moving-image graphics across screens around the gallery space. These transcriptions are important in terms of accessibility so that all audiences can experience the sound installation. They are a visual performance of memory. In some ways they are also an oblique re-embodiment of the artists who aren't physically there. This feels most powerful when we've used large screens in portrait orientation. They take on a human-scale, as if the artist behind the words is actually speaking them. Seeing the stories visualised as texts also tethers us back to the context of the Library.

SA: The artists' voices also appear as quotes on large banners and wrap the gallery walls!

KR: Kate Davis, our exhibition designer, has used them to great effect!

SA: I'm a massive fan of The Rabble (Kate Davis and Emma Valente's experimental theatre company) so I knew that Kate would be a really exciting collaborator on this project. She's got such a strong, bold, visual eye, and a really long history with the Fringe. And she brought

to this conversation, this idea of the banner which has been part of Fringe from the start. If you look at those photographs from the first city square event, there's 'Fringe Network' in giant letters. And of course, you've got the Fringe Parade and show posters that represent the festival, and which are still displayed across the walls of the Festival Hub. So, this idea of posters or banners became central to the visual identity of this exhibition. It speaks to those notions of social change, protest, solidarity and the nature of what the Fringe does. We all felt that they should hold artist voices.

We've also included artist voices inside the display cases. I like having the voices of artists narrate this exhibition and bring this archive to life. It meant that our job became letting the artists tell their own stories, rather than us as curators trying to impose a narrative or tell a story for them. There are 40 odd stories through this exhibition and thousands more that we're not telling. But these artists are symbolic of the diverse representation of Fringe over 40 years.

Kate, you didn't know much about Fringe before this project. But you've been through our archive endlessly. Are there particular items that stood out?

KR: One of the first things I found in the archive was the 1983 Program Guide for the first fully fledged festival. It's a Berliner newsprint and it's got this great, energetic, graphic image on the front cover by Warwick Jolly. It symbolises Fringe in a drawing: people moving down the street, making art in public. There are musicians and filmmakers and artists spilling over the balustrades of the buildings and there's an audience member signified by a keen, oversized eye observing all from the front corner of the picture's frame. The artists in the picture are also lining the streets – they are in the parade and the audience for it simultaneously and this dual role is so much a part of Fringe.

SA: Yes, that drawing is wonderful and reappears on the 1992 Fringe Guide.

Arpad Mihaly plunging a sword into a launch cake at City Square. It's a grainy but powerful picture. It's taken from behind, there's a crowd in front of him and the city is towering in the background. It drew me in entirely. They are keenly aware, of course, of the showmanship. It's an image taken at the first ever public Fringe event at City Square: the venue you have when you don't have a venue.

SA: Which has been closed for years during the underground rail construction! This says something about the role of artists in the city and why the Fringe is still important!

KR: And one of the mechanisms that drew all those people together was, from our perspective today, a very quiet piece of paper – a press release – that's also in the archive. This first press release announces the launch of the Fringe Network, and why the network should exist, and the anger, frustration, and disappointment with the arts ecology in 1982. There's great passion in that document, good humour and a rallying cry within it that talks to the power of a collective vision. I love the palpable tenacity in these archive materials. That has really stood out to me.

SA: I found that green piece of paper fascinating too because it's written on a typewriter – it's 1982. I think of all the press releases that have gone out since, and the way in which we do that now. That single press release, simply by announcing that there was a Fringe Arts Network, that first act of the Fringe, was an act of telling the story of what Fringe would become. I find that a fascinating birth. And to think that has shaped what the organisation continues to be, which is to support and promote our artists, to tell stories, to bring these stories together to tell a greater narrative about our city.

Our vision is one of cultural democracy. It's about saying, 'Anyone can express themselves' and our job is to provide that platform. And I think that was the vision back in 1982.

KR: Yes, even from the beginning it is about creating a platform and the support for the new and the untested, even if you are an established artist. The ethos seems to be: If you've got something new to try, and you want to see if it's going to work, this is the place to do it.

It's interesting that the 10, 20 and 30 year anniversaries were relatively low-key affairs for Fringe. Why celebrate this moment with an exhibition, what can an exhibition do?

SA: Melbourne Fringe is an active organisation that creates art now. And I knew I wanted to create an artwork with this project. It couldn't be a book that just told a history, or a website. An exhibition is the perfect way to capture those stories in a way that is engaging for audiences who love coming to the Fringe.

KR: Yes. An exhibition – when it is a dynamic, social and collective form – is just right for this reflection on, and celebration of all things Fringe and everyone who shelters under its umbrella. Exhibitions are always a collection of artistic labour, and none more so than this. The exhibition title – *The Rest Is Up To You* – comes from an early festival newsletter encouraging artists to practice and promote their work while advancing Fringe too. It's interesting to think about how Fringe artists are also a big part of the Festival's audience. What do you want our audience to take away from *The Rest Is Up To You*?

SA: I want our visitors to understand the diversity of the Fringe and the multiplicity of stories, and the sense that the Fringe doesn't belong to any one person or any one group. It is something that belongs to the people of this city and reflects the cultural and artistic shape

of the city at any particular moment. I want visitors to leave understanding how the festival has shifted and changed over 40 years. But also to know that what has been represented at the Library is just one version of a history of Melbourne Fringe, and that there are thousands, maybe millions of different perspectives. It's exciting that our visitors can also leave their own stories (through Storybank), and that this exhibition continues to evolve. And so I hope people feel that they're part of the ongoing story of Melbourne Fringe, that anyone can make a contribution to the cultural life of the city and this festival can help them do that.

KR: Because so many thousands of people have been involved with Fringe over the last 40 years, have you had any anxieties about how to make an exhibition that tells all those stories?

SA: Yep. My biggest fear with this project was that people, when asked about Fringe, would give a rose-coloured version of history. And I'm just not interested in that. I don't see this as a publicity piece for the Festival. I see this as an artwork that tells stories and embraces complexity. As people told their stories about Fringe, I hope they told the truth: the ups and the downs, so that the good and the bad form part of this exhibition. When I recorded my history, it wasn't just the glorious, brilliant, incredible things (of which there are a lot!), but also the challenges and difficult times. I hope that this is layered and complex, and gives multiple perspectives on the past, present and future of Melbourne Fringe.

I knew that we couldn't create a typical exhibition. We had to create something more exciting, unusual or surprising. I wanted to create something that was simultaneously an exhibition, an installation, an oral history, and a collective future-making project that enabled us to reflect on the past 40 years and imagine 40 years in the future.

34 KR: Absolutely. And our main curatorial move is to make the voices of Fringe artists central to the experience of the exhibition: we're attempting to make visible some essential collectivity that characterises Fringe in one room at one time that would otherwise be difficult to see. It's a sort of gathering of forces.

SA: Totally. When you first started thinking about this show, what did you imagine?

KR: I'm often exhibiting things that are traditionally hard to display, like architecture and fashion, and I'm also very interested in exhibiting artistic or design *processes* and making *people* the centre of things: artists or designers *and* audiences. I do think that you can make an exhibition of talks and workshops and I'm always attempting to expand the idea of what exhibitions can be while keeping fundamental the idea of them being social spaces.

SA: Yeah, not just to walk in and have a series of posters on the wall. But to create something that is as diverse and as complex as the Fringe.

KR: As you say, it's not posters, it's not framed works, it's not a book. It's an exhibition. And in exhibitions we get together. Even when they're online there's a sense that we're coming around something. Who do you think this exhibition is for, and why is it important to dedicate at least half of the show, at least conceptually, to thinking about the future of Fringe?

SA: It's important for so many reasons. It is an oral history project fundamentally. We have recorded both old and new Fringe stories and the Library has accessioned them into the collection. Our visitors can listen as part of the exhibition and then the stories will be kept forever. So, firstly the exhibition is an important way to capture history – knowing where you've been, and what's come before. But secondly, it's important

because it frames the independent arts as central to our culture and showing that the way our artists create artworks reflects the way our city sees itself. I want to look back at how that's changed over 40 years.

But importantly, this exhibition goes until 2062. Elements of it are going to extend for another 40 years because I want us to continue to capture stories and imagine what that future might look like. And then every 10 years... so in 2032, '42, '52, and '62, I want us to come back to this work in 2022 and see how right or wrong we were. To look in 2042 and say – 'this is what we said the world would be' – and compare it to the reality. There'll be an opportunity for us to come back and look at what we said we were going to do and see how our best laid plans may or may not have come to fruition. It's a project that future Fringe Directors can take or leave but I hope they continue to explore its possibilities. In 2062, I hope we're sitting here, maybe a few more wrinkles, but reflecting on what was achieved over 40 years and how right or wrong we got that in 2022.

KR: What do you think makes Melbourne Fringe particular to Melbourne?

There's something in the ethos of Melbourne Fringe SA: that's really different. It's different to Edinburgh or Adelaide or other festivals that have become guite commercial and in some ways, very audience focused. Melbourne Fringe remains artist focused, and a place for experimentation. I'm really grateful that Melbourne has the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, which in some ways grew out of the Fringe. It means there's already a huge mainstream, very popular, very successful, brilliant Comedy Festival, so the Fringe doesn't have to be that. By taking that element out of Melbourne Fringe, it's enabled us quite uniquely to be this space for experimentation and risk taking, and artist focused. I think that's what has kept us honest. There are other uncurated festivals and other open access festivals that don't say no to anyone. But what that's meant for the most part is that the mainstream or the commercial has become the dominant voice. What's different about Melbourne Fringe is that it continues to amplify voices from the margins and support our artistic risk taking. I hope as we shape our next 40 years that we continue to fight for that.

KR: How has that ethos translated into exhibition making at the Library for you?

SA: We talk about amplifying voices from the margins, well we do that quite literally — it's a sound installation of voices from the margins. There are the voices of older artists, First Nations artists, disabled artists. We haven't interviewed the most famous Fringe alumni. We could have gone to Tim Minchin, Patricia Piccinini, Rachel Griffiths, Judith Lucy, Jane Campion. Instead we hear from diverse voices and people that have important things to say about artmaking in the city over 40 years.

KR: This brings us to the bold range of dates in our title! This show looks forward to Fringe's next 40 years and asks audiences to leave their response to the question 'In 40 years' time, in 2062, what do you hope Fringe art will be?' in our exhibition recording room. What do you want to see in the next 40 years in terms of independent art-making, audiences for independent art-making, a city for independent art-making? What needs to happen?

SA: 2062! It's pretty exciting to imagine what the independent arts could look like. I think this project is writing a history of the future. The kind of changes we've seen over the last two years, driven by the pandemic, have, I think, been the catalyst for a different way of looking at our world. I'm hoping that we continue to see that explode over the next 10, 20, 30, 40 years. My hope is

that the independent arts are central to our culture in a really different way in that every conversation about our city, about design, solving social and economic problems, mental health...that artists become the first go-to in that. And therefore their artistic projects have impacts and benefits across our culture more broadly. I want to see our independent artists on our biggest stages, being central to our culture, infiltrating in a way that we haven't seen before.

KR: Fringe really is an important part of why Melbourne promotes itself as a cultured city, defined by the arts that are made here, rather than those that it imports.

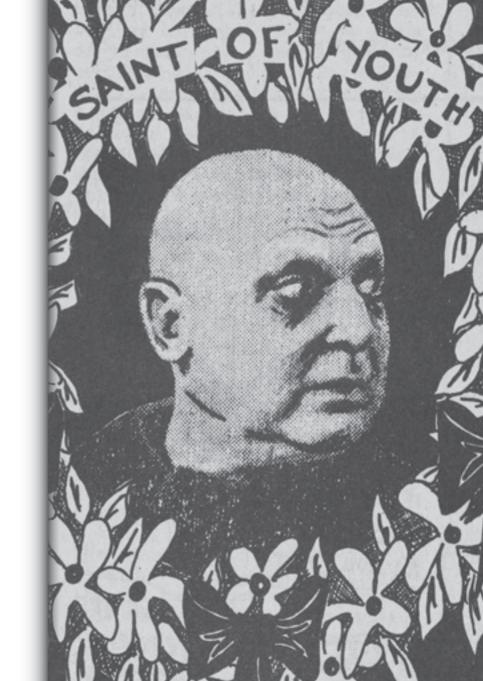
SA: Absolutely. And pretty much every artist or arts worker of note in this town has come through Fringe at some point. It is this amazing trampoline for artists who bounce in and bounce out, but go somewhere extraordinary. As those artists, arts workers and that talent have become our arts leaders and start to take over at big institutions, we're seeing those places changing and evolving. Hopefully those previously marginal voices are now becoming the most important voices in our culture.

KR: We're also putting live performance at the centre of the show through both our exhibition design and our public programs. The gallery is a performance space itself — even to the extent that the entire room is painted 'Fringe-pink'. The Festival has quite literally seeped into the mouldings of the Library architraves. It's in the very architecture. Through public programs we'll also explore what the next forty years of Fringe might look like.

Curatorial work is traditionally about helping to transform chaos into order but in this exhibition we have been mindful of the lure of chaos, that it drives artists to be part of Fringe. It also doesn't stop us from trying to make meaning out of the Fringe archive and the

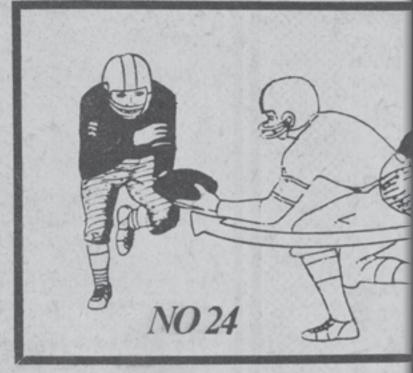
many stories we have gathered to help talk with audiences about what Fringe was, is, and could be. Our exhibition thesis can be characterised as: there's no one Fringe, only thousands of views onto it. The exhibition is a moment to celebrate the achievement of making a Festival that's for everybody for 40 years, and to reflect on how that work is tethered to the social, cultural and political life of Victoria.

SA: Absolutely. This is an exhibition that is past, present, and future.



SIMON ABRAHAMS is Creative Director and CEO at Melbourne Fringe KATE RHODES is Curator at State Library Victoria

THE FRIN



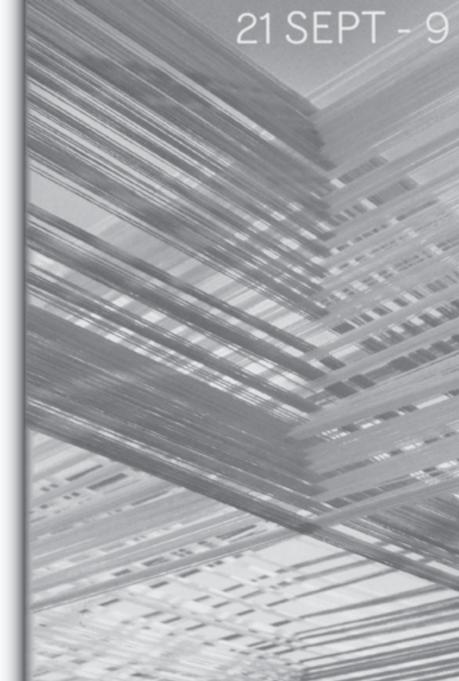


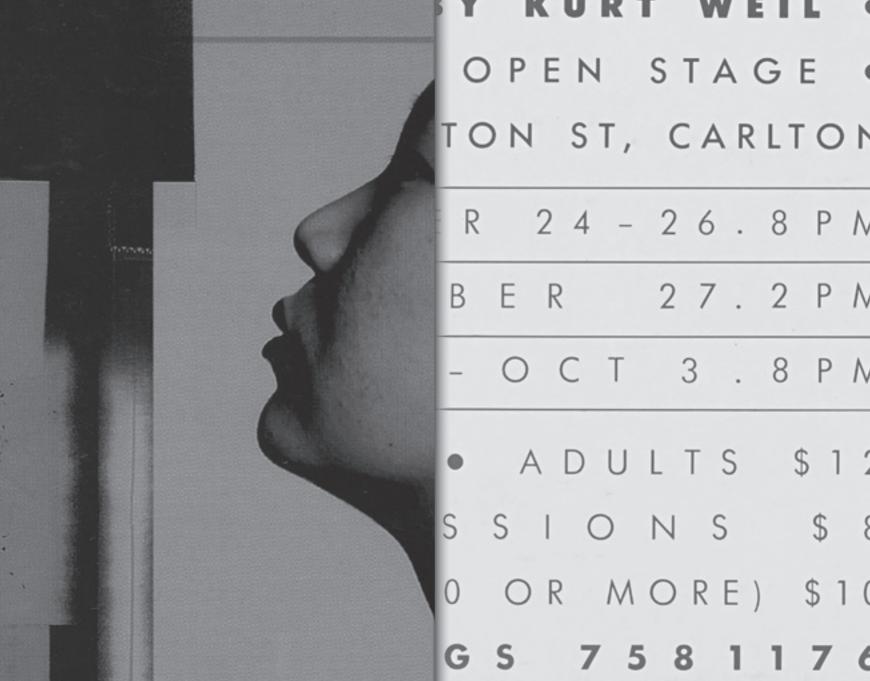


AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1984

The Fringe Festival opens with a parade down Brunswick Street, an event that will cement itself as an anarchic Melbourne institution for the next two decades.



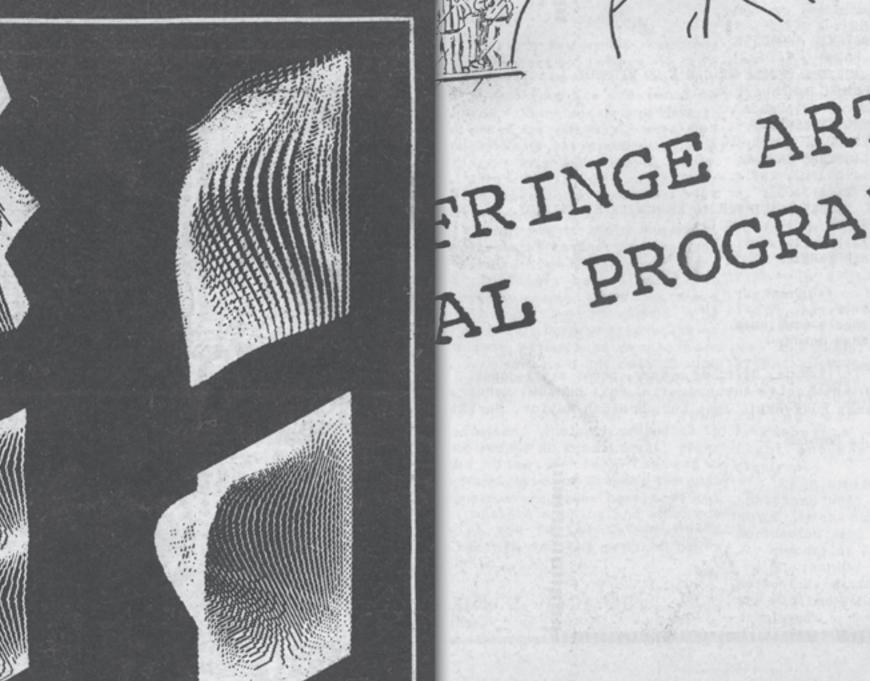


VIULU MAR 1 FEB 25 I AVIT93:

t caffe latte in Brunswick Street. Emma Bathgate and Greg Derham he waiters' race in the Spoleto Fringe festival. Ms Bathgate won

ONE OF THE GREAT JOYS OF LIFE IS BAD ART





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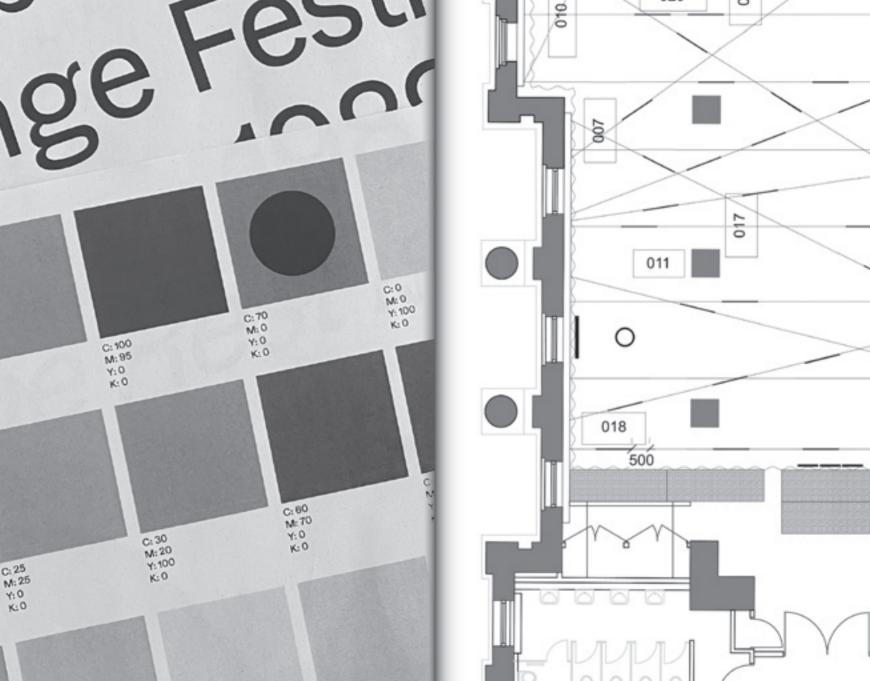




AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1986

The international arts festival Spoleto expanded to include Melbourne as one of its host cities, and along the way the Melbourne Fringe was renamed Spoleto Fringe. Spoleto would eventually be reinvented as the Melbourne International Arts Festival, and Fringe would reclaim its independence.

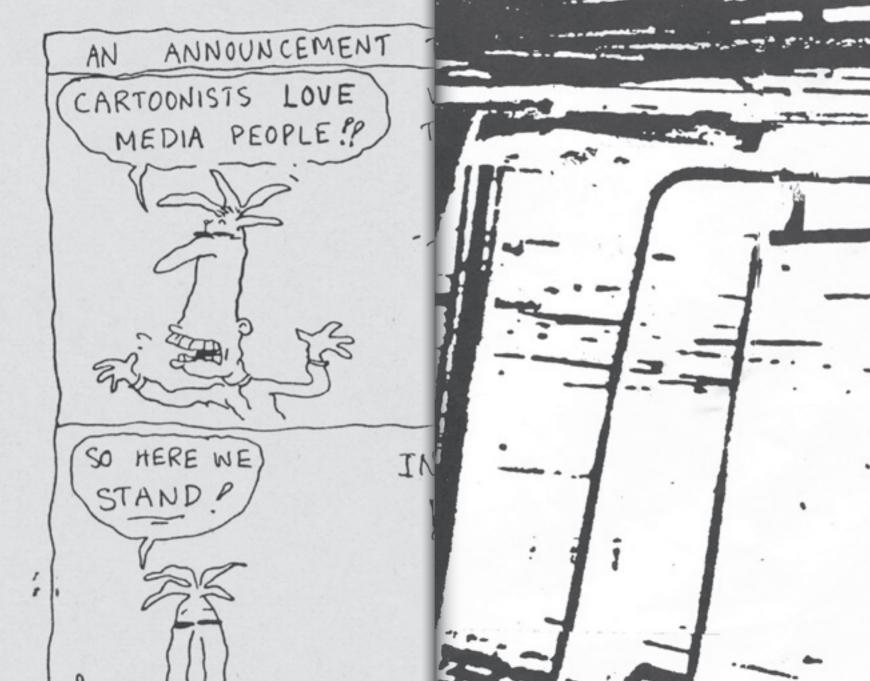


A COLLECTIVE ACT OF ARTISTIC SOLIDARITY

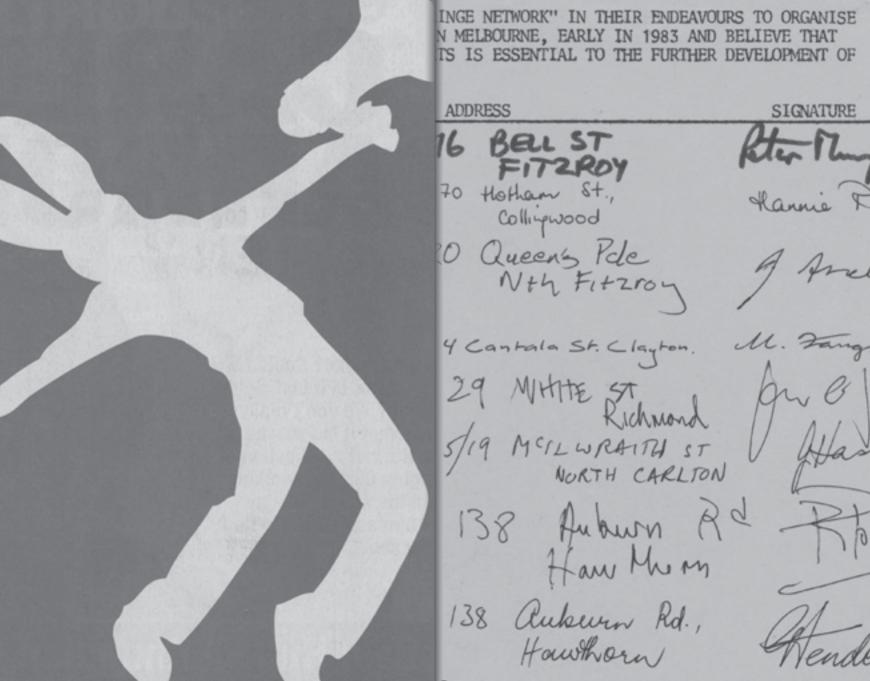
e a fabulous end of year celebration and here's
- Virginia Hyam

000 people opening the Fringe Festival, Street Para









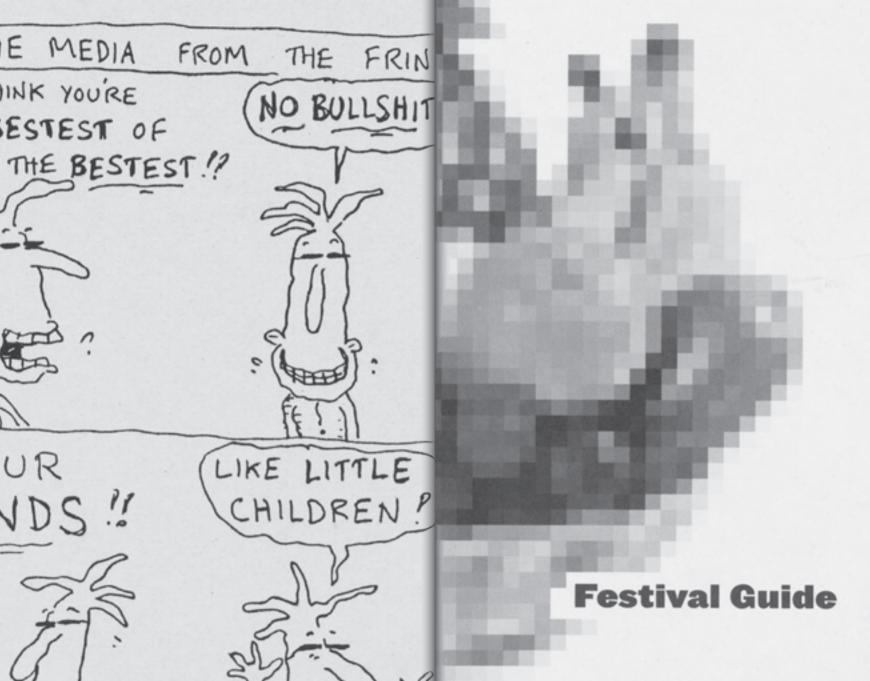


VICTORIA TH-28T EPTEMBI ROGRAMI

With more than 250 events in the audience numbers from previous re always with you. We hope your you to keep producing new work. venue manager, producer and all le Fringe Festival a huge success. t experiences during the Festival, le to get to everything or even to akes Fringe so tantalizing. Fringe that rate, there were events that rew themselves body and soul ing to squeeze in at least two those artists and venues we ch will be our 21st birthday ing to us about the 2003



TO NOT SAY NO TO ANYONE



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1987

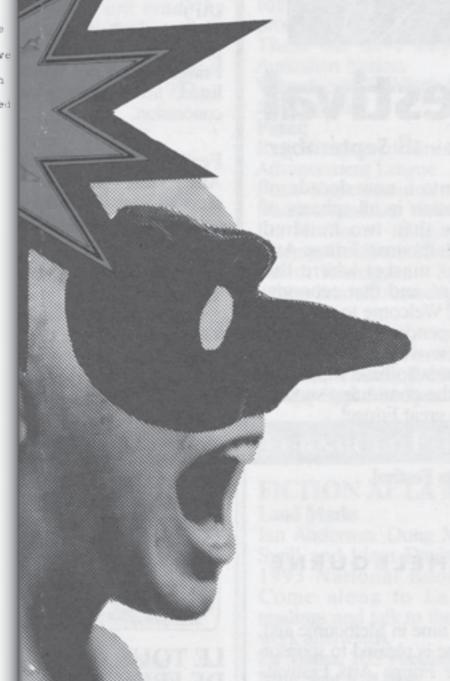
The success of the previous year's Fringe Furniture exhibition brings about a second installment... 35 years later, the longest-running Fringe event is still going strong.





The 2nd Fringe Anthology

I'm concerned with a system that recognizes more than one style of the artists. Painting must never become a straight line for me. It must have the ability to surprise and contradict itself. often find myself working in the space between seeing and registering the different sensations am capable of feeling. A response twice removed from a subject presents no quilt whatever.) BILDON LANDSCAPE. CROSS ON ME. Three paintings. WHITE 1) DANCING BOYS, 1,2,3, TRIPTCH 2) OLD TENNIS COURT. 3) GIPPSLAND. My name amon. Imaginary thought. Are to be shown. At the artists festival spree. 1) CHANGES. 2) THE END. DARLINGHURST. BOURAKIS I paint to capture atmosphere through use of colour, creating an individual mood in each painting. Subject matters mainly derive from a life in Kenya and Greece - for me, great sources of inspiration 1) CHECKED IN THOUGHT \$390. BANANA LOUGNE COLOUR \$390. THE PINK SUNGLASSES \$270. 4) MALINDI \$320. 5) MASAI BIBI'S \$350. TRIBAL TRIO \$280. 7) PINK LADY \$320.



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ABORIGINAL KYOGEN MIKE LEIGH

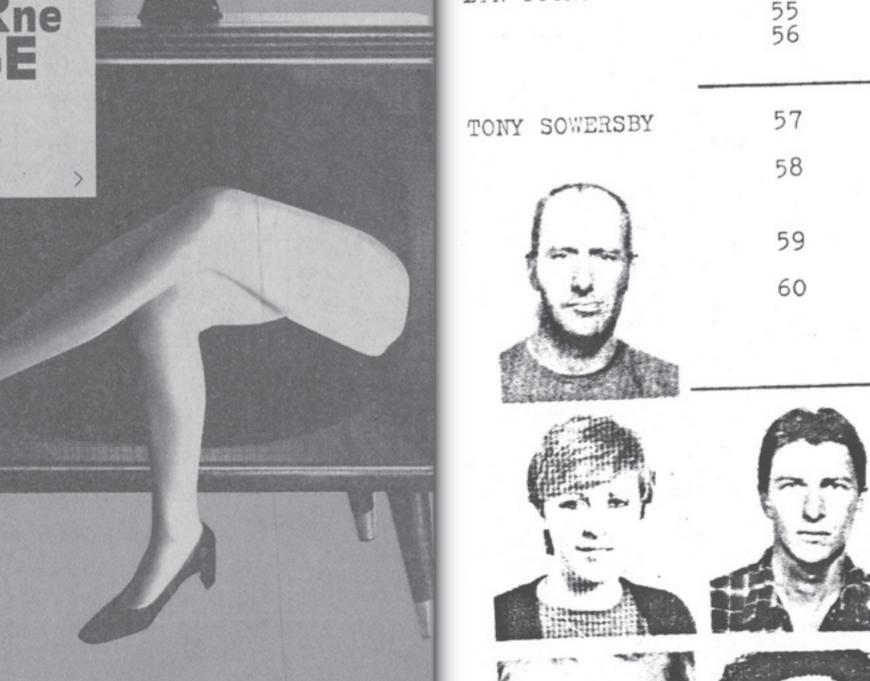


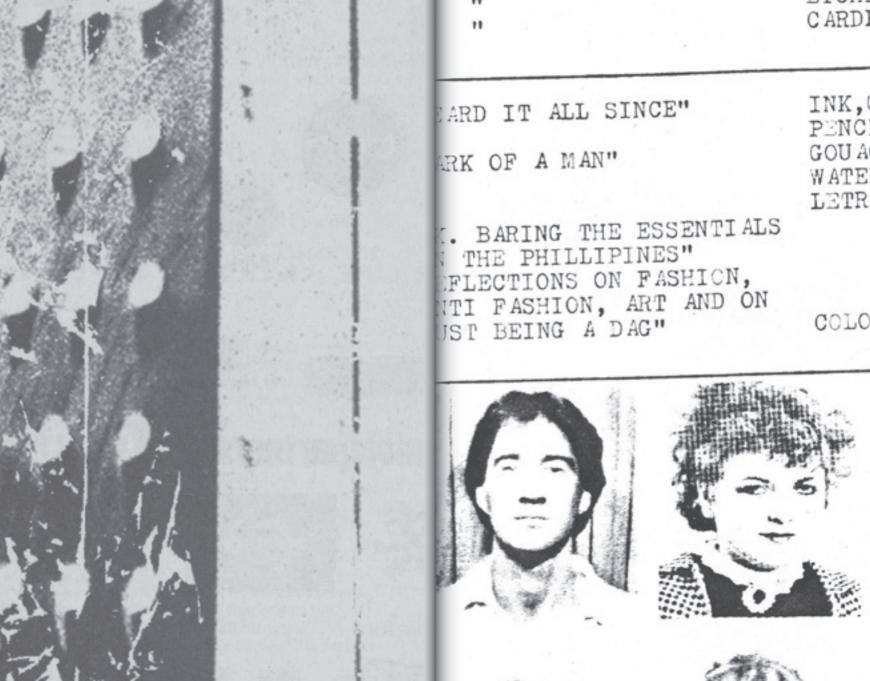
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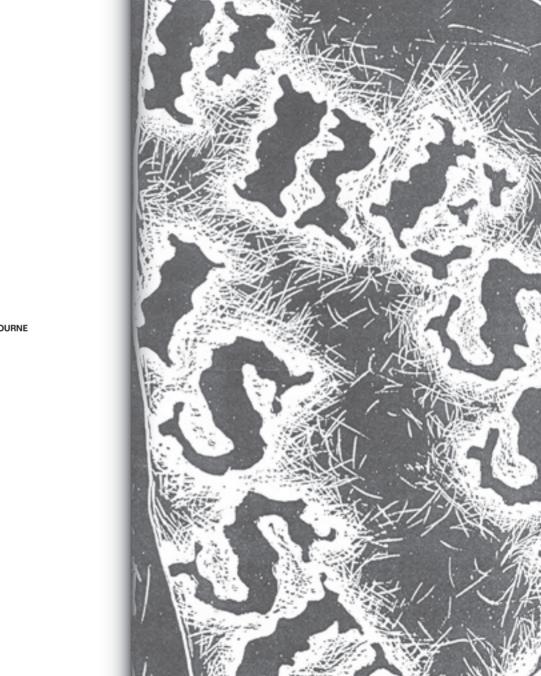
1988

For the third year running critics are almost unanimous in their disappointment with the Spoleto Festival, frequently pointing to the Fringe as the home of the real excitement.









VOICES FROM THE MARGINS AMPLIFIED ACROSS MELBOURNE





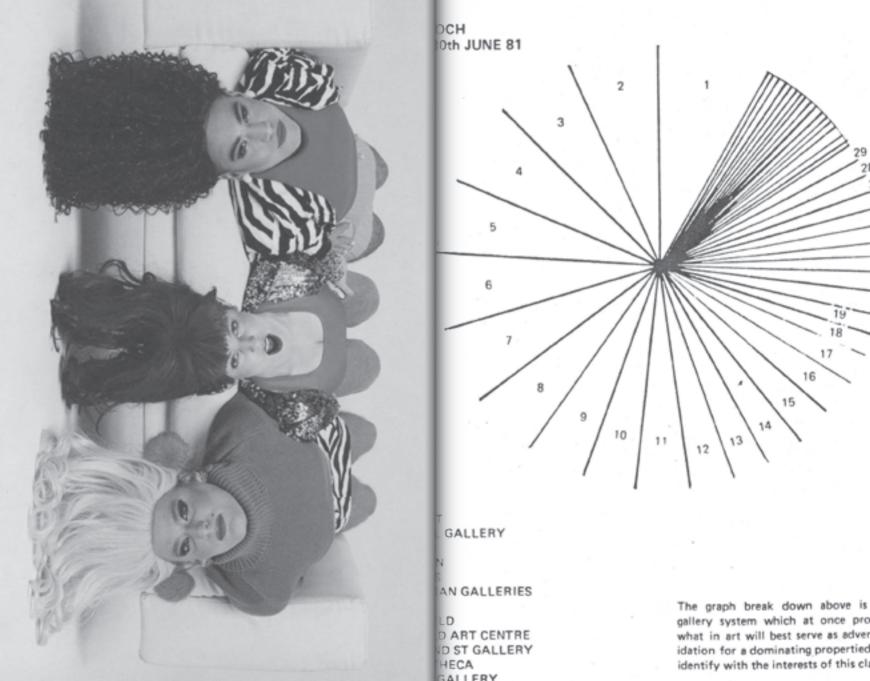
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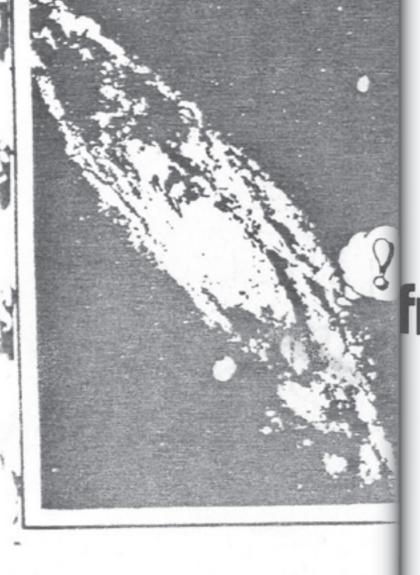
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fringe network Ne

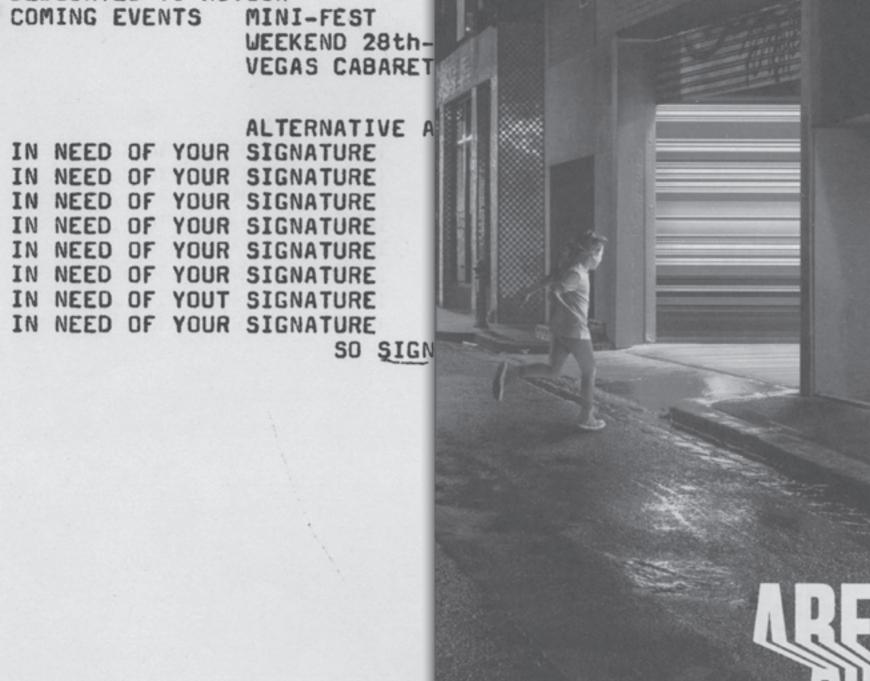


1990

Attendances at the festival reach 80,000 per year.









FRINGE IS WHATEVER WE NEED IT TO BE

2031 NE 2052

FRINGE

DOES NOT

spoleto fringe festival

All day readings

SATURDAY 27th SEPTEMBER, 11AH to 5PM

Peter Murphy Cliff Smythe Phillip Motherwell Chris Barnett Peter Spence Raphaele Pomian James Rogers Linn van Hecke Marcus Breen Daniel Keene John Ashton Graham Henderson Sue Byrne Joe Dolce Sue Hawthorne Lily Brett Wayne Macauley Patricia Cornelius Kominos Zerros · Sue Byrne Robert Finlayson Tony Kioman-Schier Lauren Williams Chris Corbett

Robert Kenny

Migrant Women Writers & Readings from 5 Continent

Gordon Johnston

SUNDAY 28th SEPTEMBER, 2PM to 5PM

at THE FRINGE CLUB, 400 Sydney Rd. Brunswick

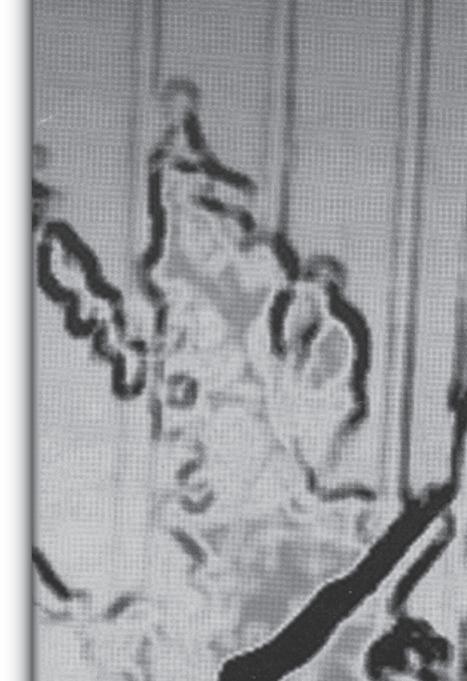
201BRUNSWICK S T R E E T F I T Z R O Y VICTORIA 3065 (03) 419 9548 (03) 419 9549



re Bourne Fringe festival 26 Sept-20 Oct or

1991

Ilbijerri stages its first production, *Up the Road*, at the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

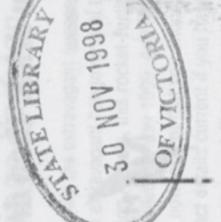






on successes, and points of difference in exting into the next year and beyond.

a chat.

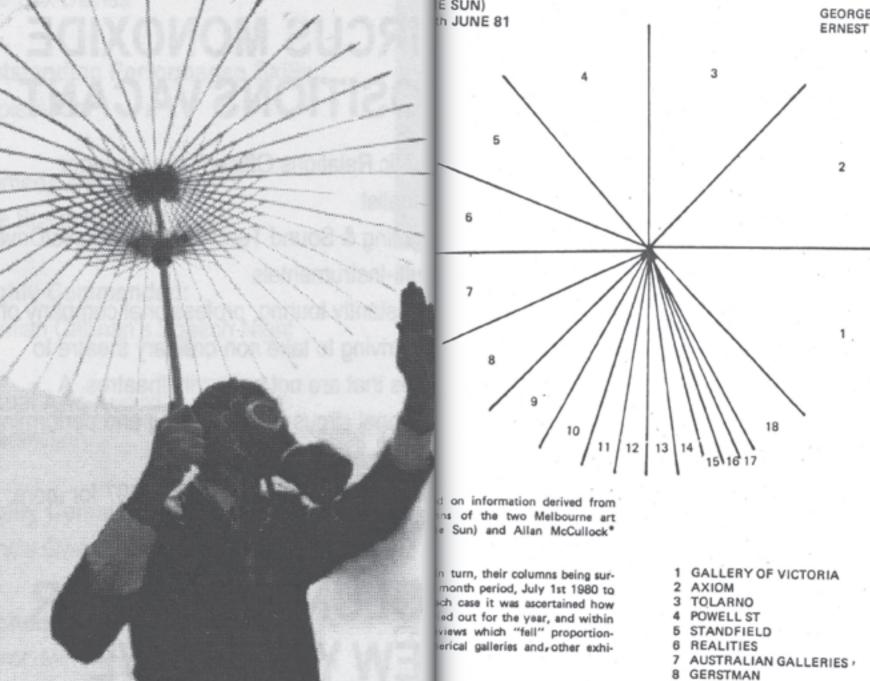




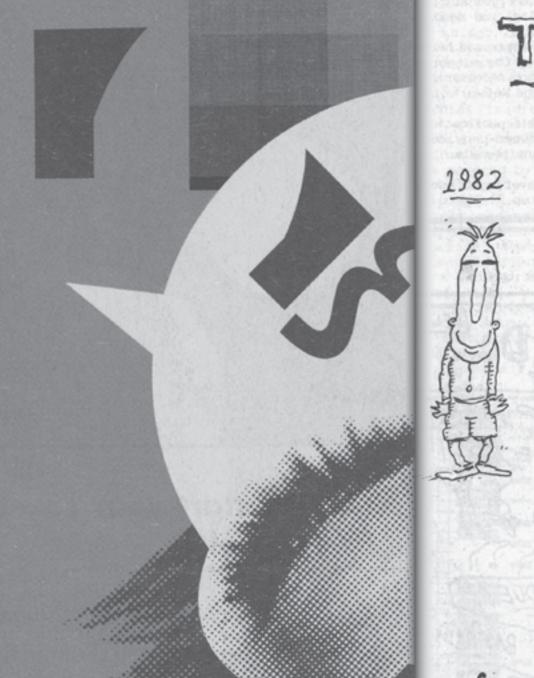


DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO DO



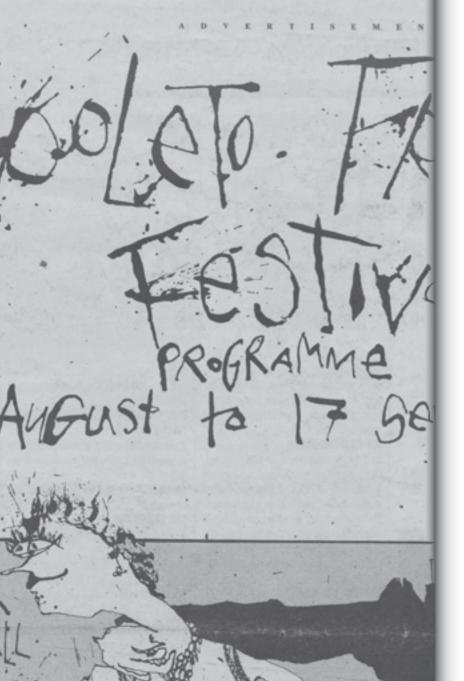






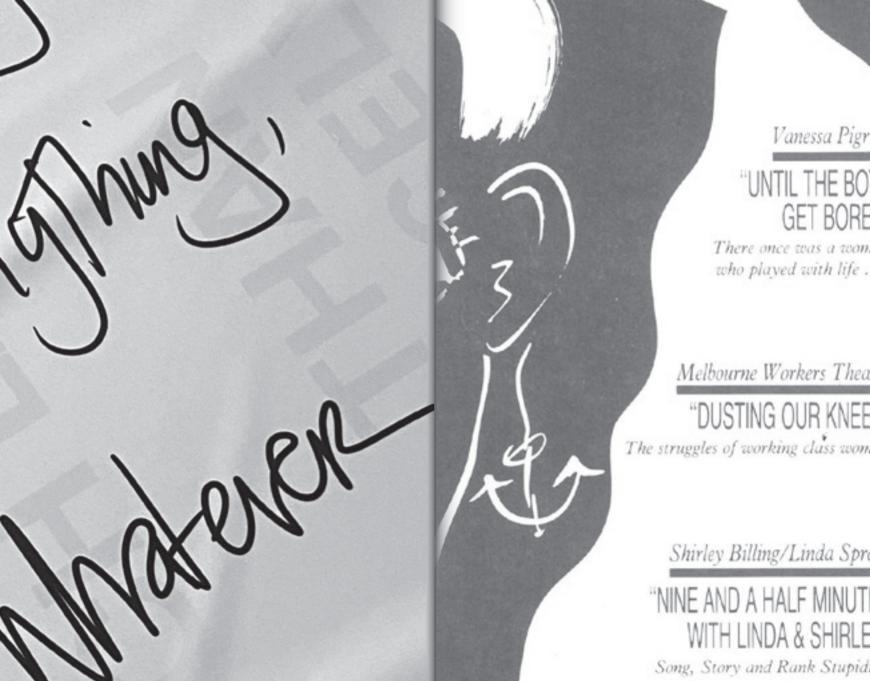
TWO YEAR





1992

Destiny Deacon's Fringe exhibition *Kitsch'n' Koori* shifts critical dialogue around Indigenous Australian art.



ANARCHIC DIZZY EXUBERANCE



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2037

CONTEMPORARY POSTERS FROM **LOCAL CO-OPERATIVE PRESSES**

15th September — 28th October

328 Swanston Street, Melbourne State Library of Victoria Irving Benson Hall

10.00am-6.00pm Tuesday to Sunday

1.00nm—6.00nm Monday



7 August 1986

e Editor HE AGE" encer Street LBOURNE 3000.

ir Sir

rick McCaughey inundates Melbourne with a flood of tears for hissing piece of pricy art history. Meanwhile a group of rather perate artists and performers have just had the true picture inted for ground level funding in Victoria.

Australian Council has managed to perform an act of cultural rorism.

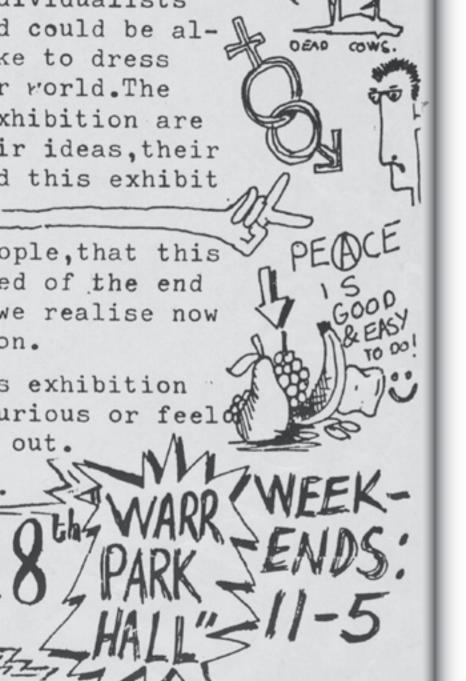
has decided not to grant the money needed (\$3000 - not exactly rival to the Australian Opera subsidy) for an open and accessible ists run venue at Station Pier during "our" Spoil-eato Fringe tival. Therefore, a large number of Melbourne visual artists, formance artists, musicians etc. are not to be privileged with once-a-year (and be thankful!) real (festival) space.

Il, we've heard it all before. And no we didn't take the paintin d we don't know who did - but we wouldn't tell you if we did know thaps if it is sold, our own racey kings ransom could be paid so it an exciting, unique and representative event could occur in a le and available to take it.

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· Australian Cultural Tearaways.

BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL CHAOS

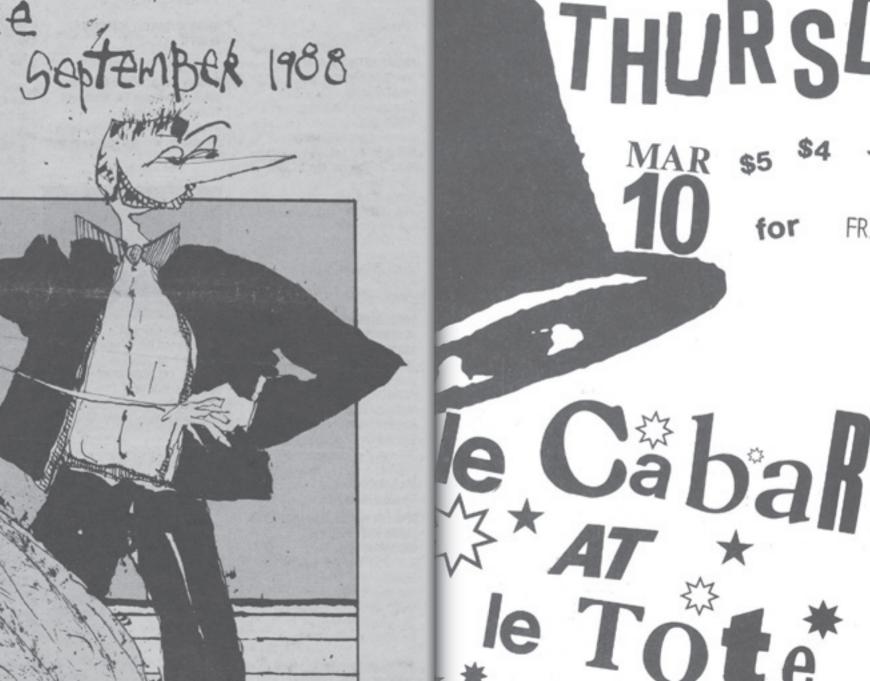


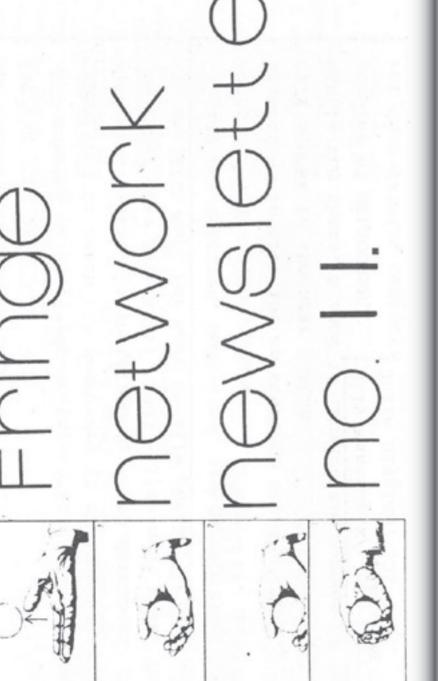
AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1994

Fringe takes over three blocks of Swanston Walk for the duration of the festival.







163

NOT AN IMPARTIAL HISTORY OF MELBOURNE FRINGE JOHN BAILEY

The document before you is not an impartial history of Melbourne Fringe. To write an objective, impassive history of Melbourne Fringe would be like trying to describe a banquet without eating a crumb. To experience Melbourne Fringe is to be part of it. Good luck finding an artist in Melbourne today who doesn't have some story or recollection of the glorious outpouring of art, sharing, community making and chaos that erupts just as spring hits the city each year. Countless household names have swum in that cascade of creativity, and an even greater number of people nurture enduring memories of some tiny moment in a crowded lane, neon-drenched dance floor or living room-slash-theatre-stage.

The words ahead are drawn from the extensive archives housed at State Library Victoria and Fringe's headquarters at Trades Hall, as well as the dozens and dozens of interviews conducted as part of the exhibition *The Rest Is Up To You*, curated by both organisations. Given the kind of revelry that often accompanies Fringe, it is perhaps inevitable that some of these recollections are fuzzy, or contradict one another, or are possibly embellishments on the facts. Again, this is not a stone cold record of what's been and gone – Fringe is a living beast, and its history is still being written.

And just like you, I'm far from an impartial observer. Fringe is part of my history: I've driven a ute crowded with costumed actors down the middle of Brunswick Street as part of the legendary Fringe Parade. I've staged shows in abandoned CBD buildings, and lost innumerable nights to the Festival Club. I've judged awards, made lifelong friends and even met my

NOT AN IMPARTIAL HISTORY OF MELBOURNE FRINGE JOHN BAILEY

partner at a show. I've been hauled on stage to ride a bicycle powering a silver-suited performer's glowing crotch, I've been tasked with shaving a man's extremely hairy chest, and I've been the sole audience member in more than one show. So this is not an impartial history of Melbourne Fringe. What's yours?

FILLING THE DOUGHNUT

Melbourne used to be such a hole. In the early 1980s it was mockingly called a doughnut city – some flavour around the edges, but a gaping vacuum in the CBD. Step off at Flinders Street Station and you'd be greeted not by Federation Square but by the notoriously ugly Gas and Fuel Buildings; look past the muddy Yarra and where the Arts Centre buildings now stand yawned a vast pit of endless construction. In the other direction lurked a City Square that seemed purpose-built to ward off company, a labyrinth of shadows and stone and moss-ridden waterways.

In 1982 the city's cultural life was just as unwelcoming. John Brack's famous paintings of dead-eyed Melburnians shuffling through streets as monochromatic as their drab overcoats capture the impression of a city that has abandoned hope in itself. In those days nobody lived in the CBD and once the working day was done they couldn't wait to flee back to the suburbs. There was no arts festival. There were no comedy or writers festivals. The Regent and the Forum and the Princess Theatres were derelict shells. Even the airwaves were mostly vacant: FM radio had only launched two years earlier, and choices were still limited to Fox and EON. The What's On pages would list the latest MTC production of Hedda Gabler alongside wrestling and rotary club meetings. There had never been a major production of Samuel Beckett's work. The Melbourne Film Festival was a couple of years away from liquidation.

"Melbourne didn't have a festival back then, which seems remarkable," says veteran performer Maude Davey. "But

Melbourne was a pretty benighted place. When I 165 first got here, there were no pubs open on Sundays. You could not buy a bottle of wine on Sundays. And there was still six o'clock closing. It was that post-war, kind of post 50s, oppressive kind of dull." The pinnacle of Melbourne's culture was Moomba, and even that was criticised early on as too radical for this conservative town. To be fair, one Moomba fundraising option raised around this time was a "roulette/ gambling ship" that could sail out past the 50-mile limit of Victoria's laws. If even Moomba was too decadent for Melbourne, consider the suspicion directed towards the avant garde. The recently closed Pram Factory had been a den of iniquity and god forbid your children ever caught a whiff of the filth that passed for music at St Kilda's Crystal Ballroom. Even the Heide Circle artists were always having affairs and ménages à trois and saying nice things about communism.

To recap: doughnut city, cultural desert, artists were weirdos. Yet in spite of all this – perhaps because of all this – Melbourne wasn't a hole. Melbourne had always had artists. Melbourne had always been full of passionate people creating daring new work. You just had to go to Adelaide to find them.

Every two years since 1960 the South Australian capital had been home to the Adelaide Arts Festival, and from its very beginnings a Fringe had taken place at the same time. It had been created by artists – feeling excluded by the Arts Festival's programming, they'd decided to stage their own. In the years since, the Adelaide Fringe had grown and grown (it's now the second largest in the world) and in the early 1980s, more than half of the faces that made up that Fringe came from Melbourne. Some looked around and thought: wouldn't this be easier without the long drive?

The first meeting of the Fringe Network in Melbourne took place at the All Saints Town Hall in St Kilda. Three people showed up. Hardly an auspicious opening. One of the trio was actor Bill Garner, however, a veteran of the Pram Factory scene, and his words were encouraging: meet again. And again. And again. Stick at it, and

166

this thing will build momentum. It did. Soon enough more than 60 people would fill a room under the fledgling banner of a Fringe. Remember, there was no arts festival in Melbourne at the time. If you're wondering why anyone would name themselves a Fringe festival when there's no festival to be the fringe of, you're not alone. There were plenty of people involved in the Fringe's inception who just called this thing the Melbourne Arts Festival. To begin with, Fringe wasn't even meant to be a festival. "Fringe Network doesn't have a festival," it announced. "Fringe Network wanted to organise a Fringe Festival but then there isn't a Festival to be the Fringe of. There is Moomba but it's not an Arts Festival - it's getting together to have fun. A strange place to have an Arts Festival - but maybe poor old Melbourne could learn from the other big Arts Festivals and actually have a festival which comes out of its grass roots." Rather than a festival, the Fringe Network was intended to be a one-stop shop for artists to get in touch with each other, to find fellow travellers who'd help mount their show, install their exhibition or turn up to their band night.

The Fringe Network had three objectives. The first was to form a communication network for non-mainstream artists in Victoria. In some ways artists were far more isolated than they are today, which explained the need for the Fringe Network. Yet to actually make contact meant turning up in the flesh – once you were part of the network, it meant something real. The second goal flowed from the first: to establish a central office that could act as a physical hub for that Fringe communication network. There would be a telephone and a photocopier and maybe even a computer. The third objective was to promote the growth of artists working outside the mainstream, to build their skills and equip them with the tools to make a go of it.

Theatre director Arpad Mihaly was one of the very first founders of the Fringe Network and would go on to be its first co-ordinator. From the outset, Fringe would never have an artistic director – it was an open access festival, rather than one curated by a solitary figure. The co-ordinator role would have different titles over the years - creative producer, creative director, CEO. But never AD. Mihaly says that art can have a reputation as "a thing that you watch or see, whereas the Fringe was an attempt to say that art is something you do. And you do it together." The coalition of artists who comprised the early Fringe Network came up with concrete ways to realise these ambitions. There was a newsletter that later transformed into a magazine, running articles, interviews, ads and opinion pieces. It was a sensationally messy affair: one page might offer an explanation of the 'guerilla theatre' taking over West Berlin (still divided from the East by the Berlin Wall) while the next would feature Tracey's ad for a room ("in a big house with lively, creative, talkative, tolerant, hard-living atrocities...

167

The Fringe also sought to compile an Artists Data Bank: "Looking for people to work with on a project? Are you available to take workshops? Are you experienced? Willing to work in another art-form? Prepared to travel to the country, interstate or overseas? Contact me ONLY if there's money in it? These and other vital questions will be asked of you and stored on our computer for your use and by those organisations out there wanting to offer you employment." A historical note: throughout the 80s and into the 90s, the government ran something called the Commonwealth Employment Service. If you were looking for work, you'd head down to the CES and someone would try to match you up with an employer. Depending on the era in question, you might peruse job listings pinned to a wall or try to navigate an early version of the internet. The early Fringe in many ways wanted to be a kind of arts CES.

able to pay up to \$30 p.w.").

There was talk about the ways a Fringe Network could hook up aspiring artists with the many organisations that could use their services. It's a crucial piece of the puzzle that's easy to miss, and will prove import-

ant later. But first: they had to build the network. And 168 so they did it. After a press conference at La Mama, Fringe Network was officially launched on Friday 13 August at the City Square and - because what better to fill a doughnut hole but icing - attendees were urged to bring a cake. They'd be assembled into one giant, ur-confection. Around 500 turned up. "GIANT CAKE at City Square" screamed the headline. "Religion and the arts have not always been the most compatible bedfellows. Yet at lunchtime in the City Square today the Reverend Albert McPherson, the Chaplain for the Arts, will bless the formation of a new movement representing people in the non-mainstream arts." (That Melbourne had an arts priest before it had an arts festival is a story for another day).

"Taking the cringe out of fringe theatre" announced the Melbourne Times on 25 August, 1982. Wendy Harmer wrote the report (she'd go on to revolutionise the comedy scene herself): "The fledgling Fringe Network - a group formed to represent the interests of Melbourne's struggling fringe theatre scene - is holding a mini-festival this weekend...The most ambitious project they are undertaking is to organise a Fringe Arts Festival." This account is typical of the reception the Fringe Network launch received. For many outside the arts, the actual function of an 'artists' network' seemed kind of vague. Once they heard talk of a festival, though, they found something to grab hold of. It's no surprise that the Fringe very quickly began to run with that. The City Square launch was followed by a two-day mini-festival at Vegas Disco, the site better known to generations of Melburnians as Dracula's Theatre Restaurant, and just 200 metres from Fringe's home today. The mini-festival of music, sculpture, performance and more was just a sampler of what was to come.

2. SO WHO WERE THEY?

When Fringe began to take shape you couldn't really say there was an arts community in Melbourne. There were venues like La Mama in Carlton that supported indepen-

THE REST IS UP TO YOU
MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL 1982–2062

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1995

Fringe TV launches on Channel 31.

dent theatre artists, and pubs scattered around the 170 suburbs occasionally let bands perform. But people only came together in little pockets, and most wouldn't recognise the majority of artists working in their own artform, let alone others. If there were cliques and cohorts and coteries, they operated in bubbles, largely invisible to the rest. Fringe brought together six kinds of artists who normally wouldn't have much reason to rub elbows: Film & Video, Writers & Publishers. Music. Youth Arts. Performing Arts. Visual Arts. Over the decades, the categories that would make up the Fringe program would vary widely, but this was the founding membership. The diversity of this artistic spread meant that for its first few years the Fringe Festival was actually a series of mini-festivals, each devoted to a different form. One week would be given to film and video, the next to writers and publishers. There might be some overlap, but for the most part people would stick to their own patch.

The people who gravitated to the early Fringe came from all walks. The Fringe archives are full of letters from hippies and punks and choirmasters and street poets. Film nerds picked fights with storied stage actors; one page might be plastered with the cut-and-paste outpourings of a radical activist, the next with the curling, cursive script of an elderly painter from the outer suburbs. Fringe was a broad church that welcomed all comers.

"There are many groups extant in Melbourne, hampered by the ubiquitous curse of the artist – impecunity. The Week aims to highlight these groups under the Festival banner, at their usual venues at their usual times, bringing them within licking distance of the public, out from under the overpowering wings of the established media." This extract from an early Fringe Publishers and Writers Week flyer suggests that Melbourne already had a flourishing array of writers struggling to make any money from their work. The Writers and Publishers were a feisty and fractious pack, positive about the local talent ("WRITING IN AUSTRALIA is now coming out into the open, and it's GOOD!").

The visual arts crowd, on the other hand, was more 171 circumspect. Drawing and painting and sculpture had perhaps possessed a thicker veneer of respectability than some other artforms, and while the later boom in independent galleries was still a long way off, visual artists had long been accustomed to working away in solitude with the hope of exhibiting at one of the small galleries that dotted the suburbs. There were exceptions, of course, but even they were remarkably polite: a group of punks planning a group showing got in contact with Fringe to see if it would be a fine fit: "Punk is not just people who like to dress offensively and not give a shit about our world. The people who are putting works into this exhibition are all people who strongly believe that their ideas, their art must be brought out into the open and this exhibition is perfect for doing this." From the outset Fringe was also home to visual artists who worked outside the gallery system. In 1984 it held the first Australian exhibition of cartoonists - "Cartoons have been called 'the medium of the eighties" - and after an open call out, more than 50 Australian cartoonists were shown at Rhumbarella's cafe in Brunswick Street.

Fringe's music cohort arrived with lofty and noble intent: Melbourne already enjoyed one of the most robust live music cultures in the world, and by the mid-80s up to eighty bands played per week. Almost none were paid for their efforts, and the group who took up their cause at Fringe were determined to reshape the scene. The plan was to level the playing field by programming popular acts alongside unknowns, none given more prominence than any other. This meant that obscure outfits shared billing with the likes of The Go Betweens, Hoodoo Gurus and Weddings, Parties, Anything. "A wide variety of music is encompassed by the Festival: jazz, swamp, electronic music, pop, funk, theatre rock, experimental, African percussion, ethnic, women's... In the Festival no performer/band is paid to 'headline'. Each artist has agreed to an even distribution of the doortakings." By 1984 the ambi-

172 tions paid off: Fringe music co-ordinators organised more than 100 bands to play across two weeks. Tickets were ridiculously cheap – a season pass would mean you paid a mere 10 cents per band. Nearly five and a half thousand punters turned up. Musicians received \$70 per performance.

The indie theatre scene in Melbourne was at a very different point in its history: the 1970s had seen the organic rise of a unique precinct in Carlton centred on an old pram factory. The space became home to a vast range of artists of all kinds who treated art as a radical lifestyle. When the building was sold, however, the various collectives that had called it home dispersed or dissolved, with only Circus Oz emerging from the ashes. By the time the Fringe Network was formed, the bohemian revolutionaries of the 1970s were already framed as part of the past. "Since the demise of the Pram Factory and the Carlton Scene there has been a notable decline in fringe theatre activity," wrote the Fringe theatre crew. "However, almost without our knowing it, a new generation of experimental theatre artists has begun to emerge... The Melbourne Fringe Arts Festival gives the public its first chance to see the artists who are injecting the flavour of the 80s into age old theatrical styles. Just as the Pram Factory defined the flavour of the 70s so the Fringe Festival will define the 80s."

If the Pram Factory was the birthplace of Don's Party, the Fringe would be home to more radical experiments in theatre. It was also from the outset a natural fit with Melbourne's burgeoning comedy scene – though it would be a while before comedy scored its own section of the program, comics of all stripes were a heavy presence from the outset. Early Fringes saw the likes of the Doug Anthony All Stars, Jean Kittson, Found Objects (Lano and Woodley's early outfit), as well as the massively popular Let the Blood Run Free, a medical-themed satire of TV soaps whose plot was determined by audience voting (it would eventually be adapted for television, with viewers able to vote by telephone). Improvisation was one of

the hot items of 1980s performance: an early Fringe also saw the Australian premiere of Theatresports ("a new concept in workshopping!! Theatre will never be the same again!!") and for a few years the general public would prove willing to pay to watch actors play improv games.

The fertile grounds of Carlton and Fitzroy in the 1970s had also given rise to a strong film culture. At the time there was a passionate ring of aficionados, cineastes, scholars and makers who traded journals and film mags, organised screenings of hard-to-find international fare, and of course made their own work on Super-8 and 16mm film, with the new technology of the portapak (a bulky camera and briefcase-sized video recorder) making video an increasingly common new mode of homegrown filming. The people who made up the Film and Video wing of the Fringe Network were enthusiastic to the point of obsession - the first full festival saw hundreds upon hundreds of films screened. At that point, film exhibition in Australia was very conservative. SBS was spoken of with a raised eyebrow – it had a reputation as a venue for X-rated material purely because it was the only place you might catch a piece of European cinema. This is why Fringe of the mid-80s became closely linked with transgressive adult fare, premiering such films as Peter Greenaway's A Zed and Two Noughts and Derek Jarman's Caravaggio. This positioning of Fringe film as subversive would only grow throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, before a sudden and almost complete vanishing of the category that would last until the digital age breathed new life into screen culture.

The Youth Arts section of the early Fringe hasn't survived the decades, but it was an ambitious prospect first organised by a 16-year-old schoolgirl. Not much remains to describe the goals of that program, beyond giving students and young performers some prominence outside of school and youth groups. For a few years the Fringe dedicated a season at the Organ Factory theatre in Clifton Hill to young performers. What happened

to this mysterious corner of Fringe? Perhaps the kids 174 grew up, or were absorbed into the main body of the festival. It's certain that the early Fringe gave a lot of thought to what it meant to be young in the 1980s, growing up in a culture that didn't afford a great deal of promise or freedom to its younger members. The social conscience of the early Fringe made itself known in other ways, some of which haven't aged well. A poster for one of the first Fringe parades calls on members of the public to "FLOAT your mobile... SPEAK your peace... BLOW your brass... INTEGRATE your ethnic group". A series of shows by young bands and performers in the first few years included a "movement piece from Footscray and District Mentally R******d Children's Centre" and the co-ordinator repeatedly used the catchphrase "If you can't abuse them, amuse them."

> The Fringe newsletter and magazine was as open access as the festival itself would become, and a great sense of the personalities attracted to the Fringe bleeds from its pages. There are a good number of unselfconsciously angry young men, eager to overthrow the artistic establishment, railing against: "the corrupt and degenerate sea of shit issued out from our state theatres... Let's not be liberal about that because a theatre which needs to be hit in the mouth should be hit enough times so that it does not get up to oppress its audience with half-baked notions." The most common sentiment from those pages is uncertainty, though: no one knew what they were building with Fringe, because it had never been done before. "Fringe is not synonymous with amateur," argued an early Fringe statement, and it would be a distinction central to the Fringe mission for much of its existence.

But running throughout those early years is a theme of incompetence – for every grandiose statement of brilliance or earnest claim to artistic integrity, there would be a self-effacing joke or disappointed admittance of failure that suggests how hard it is to develop confidence in your practice when it has been so marginalised. A cartoon drawn at the bottom of

a Fringe form is illustrative: a panicked and trembling 175 artist with an 'avant-garde fringe' thinks "Oh no! It's on again! Can I make it through another Fringe Festival without everyone finding out what a hopeless incompetent I really am? When they said I could coordinate I thought they were complimenting my clothes." That self-doubt is understandable. As Mihaly explains today, those responsible for creating Fringe had never done anything like it. "The people who volunteered to do things were uniformly the people who'd never done these things before. We had attracted people who were organising community festivals up in the Dandenongs, or in the outer suburbs, but none of them wanted to be involved in organising this festival because they knew what was involved. And those of us who did volunteer, we did so because we didn't know what we were doing!"

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The prominence of women behind the scenes at Fringe was evident from the outset, and the festival emerged at a time when feminism was flourishing in Melbourne. Its founding coincided with the six-year period in the 1980s when the Kingston Hotel in Richmond was a women's only space; the New Moods festival of 1985 was entirely dedicated to showcasing art by women and some of the organisers of that festival went on to create the two week Women's Season of performance at Fringe that would continue for more than a decade.

"The Women's Season was a season of new short works," says Davey today. "I think what happened was that the Fringe curated a season called New Short Works... I think it might've been a bit boysy, so a few women decided they would run their own new short works program and call it the Women's Season. And back then, amazingly, if you put the word women in your publicity or in your title, you got this guaranteed audience... Everybody would come. I said it was good marketing to call it the Women's Season. Wouldn't be now. It'd be fucking box office death, but back then..."

It's common to read the words "women's theatre" in programs and newspapers of the 1980s. It might seem a jarring phrase today, but this was an era in which playwright Michael Gow could tell an interviewer that women weren't able to occupy positions of power as theatremakers. He believed, according to one report, that women are "better in the supportive roles in the theatre because they can't handle the daunting responsibility of writing or directing." From the outset the Fringe would set him straight. An early Fringe newsletter describes director Lois Ellis and administrator Kerry Eccles's company Flash Rat, a theatre company which "acts as an administrative unit linking a network of professional women in theatre across Australia." The Women's Seasons would go on to produce highly acclaimed work. Two of the four pieces in its first incarnation would go on to tour extensively - Black Market Productions' comedy Ethnic A Go Go would play Sydney's Belvoir, while Patricia Cornelius and Susie Dee's Lily and May would play Belvoir and Playbox, tour Victoria and travel as far as the Edin-

176

Davey says that by 1989 the Women's Season was so popular that it was playing for almost a month at The Athenaeum. That's where a 21-year-old Rachel Griffiths performed in the group Chasing Spaces, in one of the four weekly programs that also featured nightly guest artists. Music was also a focal point for grass roots feminism. Consider a review of a series of women's music gigs in the Fringe magazine: "It was decided that at least one of the nights should include male audience access - traditionally women's music nights have femaleonly audiences... The styles of music were very wide-ranging; from high-energy rock and roll from the Wet Ones and Polytix, through garage punk from exciting new band Plain Wrap, into the dark grunge experimental tribe of Guess What." Of course, feminism is far from a fixed politic. At an early meeting a playwright expressed reservations about an R-rated John Waters film that had screened before The Saints played at Brunswick

burgh and Boston festivals.

177 Street's Metropol hotel. Fringe had nothing to do with the event but there was concern "that Fringe Network somehow endorses the showing of 'obscene' videos" by using the Metropol as a venue.

Elsewhere Fringe-associated feminists would turn their attention to the hugely problematic celebrations the State Government had planned for the 150th anniversary of Victoria's founding, a series of events collectively known as the 150. Most of the program ignored any contributions by women to Victoria's history – instead they were relegated to The Women's 150, whose organisers were the last to receive funding, and even that was only one quarter of the amount that other groups received. "Unlike other sections of the 150," noted Fringe, "W150 can only use the money for projects approved by the general 150th board. The general board therefore largely disregards the ability of the women to choose their own projects." Add to this the complete neglect of Indigenous history in the 150th commemoration, and it's clear how this celebration expressed the damaging and cloistered self-understanding of the culture from which it sprung.

Vanessa Pigrum would become Fringe's Creative Producer in 2001, but began her association with the festival in the Women's Season in 1987. When she reflected on the intervening period in a 2002 interview, she noted how the feminism of the early Fringe wasn't a reflection of values but an active creation of them, often involving much debate: "Many events were driven and organised by committees of artists, which has faded away, probably because it was cumbersome. There were incredible arguments at those meetings: huge blues over whether a work had to be written by a woman, or just performed by a woman. Or if it was by a woman, but totally non-feminist and apolitical, should it be included? All those sticky issues. Times change. I don't think artists want to be ghettoised anymore simply because of their sexuality or gender or race." In the same interview, her predecessor Palz

178 Vaughan agreed that the political feminism of the 1980s had given way to that of the third-wave feminism that would define the early 2000s. "I think there's more nudity in Fringe these days, and sexier underwear. There's been an end to the extreme, no-fun feminists, thank god."

Feminism wasn't the only politics to animate the Fringe's early years. The 1985 festival featured a Rock Against Racism concert, while another event celebrated the five year anniversary of the birth of Poland's Solidarity trade union. Artistic endeavour was itself sometimes seen as innately political – an early poster calling for artists to join Fringe depicts a city entirely populated by chubby policemen in a state of riot, zealously clubbing everything they can when not throwing up or running face first into walls or each other. It's a very 1980s vision of censorship and oppression, and in the sky above the scene the cartoonist has drawn himself doing a backflip - "turning the arts on its head!" Of course, this idea of art sticking it to the man can sometimes be a way of patting your own back. The same artist's cartoons in the Fringe magazine were sometimes criticised as "generally trivial, esoteric, reactionary, authoritarian and/or sexist". Elsewhere, there have been plenty of Fringe acts that might seem subversive but only reinforce the status quo.

The early Fringe offered a home to those whose struggles were more immediate, though. A letter to the festival thanked the music team for consciously programming Indigenous artists: "Many of our bands submit demos and video clips to both radio and television only to be rejected because the band is 'too political'. Yet if one examines the lyrics of songs or the images of the clip there is no indication of strong political views. It is rather the fact that these bands are Aboriginal that automatically puts them in the 'too political' category." This was in keeping with what the music programmers had themselves encountered: "In looking for venues, the Fringe even with government backing encountered a degree of resistance to

Aboriginal bands. There is no question that a number of bands in the programme would have found it difficult to obtain work in such mainstream venues without the support of the Fringe Music Festival."

The early years of Fringe also saw organisers stage an event in support of asylum seekers. The Midway Hostel in Maribyrnong provided accommodation for more than 500 refugees, but with the recent closure of a similar venue in Springvale that number swelled to more than 800: "The largest group are from El Salvador, followed by Vietnamese and Polish refugees. Since the civil war in Northern Ethiopia, refugees from this state have come to Midway. There are also small groups from other African states such as Angola and Sudan. "As a gesture of hospitality and to lessen cultural isolation, Fringe Network will hold a multi-cultural festival day at the centre." The event included readings, performances, and a special kids section with clowning and songs, puppetry and magic.

Activists, feminists, angry rebels and unrepentant hippies, reactionaries, experimenters, jokers and hornblowers. Fringe welcomed them all. "Fringe Network is not a new arts movement, it does not push any one artistic ideology. It hopes rather to catalyse new growth within the arts. The artists who make up Fringe Network are committed to a revival in the arts." So there you have it: a Fringe. Next stop? A festival.

4. THE FIRST FRINGE

After the two-day mini-festival of 1982, Melbourne's first fully fledged Fringe festival took place in February and March of 1983. Now, wait a minute, I hear you say. February and March? Doesn't Fringe traditionally happen in September and October? You're not wrong, reader. It turns out the first Fringe Festival was on the fringe of something. The first Melbourne Fringe was a Moomba Fringe. Around 120 artists took part. "This will be a working festival as distinct from a consumption festival," wrote planners, making clear that artists and audiences were overlapping categories. Volunteers ran the

show, and most events would set you back less than a couple of \$1 notes (gold coins wouldn't be introduced until 1988). The theatre category boasted work by Patricia Cornelius, Daniel Keene, Jean-Pierre Mignon and Peter Corrigan. The writers published Fringe's first anthology, and the opening night party – which coincided with the election of the Hawke Government – saw bands Pseudo Echo and Kids in the Kitchen play live. It was the film and video people who went above and beyond, though. The screening program runs to a whopping 63 pages, with categories ranging from 'sex identities' to 'disabled' to 'war photography' to 'Indigenous Australians'.

How did the first festival shape up? Remember that this was more a series of festivals than a single cohesive program, and Fringe Network was careful to allow each section a great degree of autonomy. There was no centralised ticket-selling system for the festival, for instance - the Fringe office wasn't involved in any ticketing, which was instead the domain of individual venues. Attendances were counted, though: the theatre program had consistently good audiences during the festival "people seemed prepared to see a lot more than usual." Seasons were deliberately kept short so that people could catch each other's work, and the result was an atmosphere of cross-pollination and exchange. For just three bucks you could feast on a full day's selection of screen fare, but the film and video component was criticised as too diverse, its nine venues too scattered. These are the complaints of people who haven't yet got the hang of festivals you're not supposed to see everything, or even want to, argued the programming team. The point wasn't to give everything to someone but something for everyone. It's a microcosmic version of the bigger problem that Melbourne will face in coming decades - a dry run for the later laments that this is a city with too many festivals. There are a heap, it's true, but perhaps they're not all for you.

In any case, the film and video programmers for that first festival had been faced with a particular curse: the wealth of fascinating celluloid fare that had been denied to Melburnians stretched back almost a century, and that initial festival included films as old as the silent era. Having cleared much of the backlog, as it were, future festivals would only need to survey the previous twelve months of production. The writers and publishers team drew together more than 150 writers for a large series of events offering Melburnians "a chance to hear, meet and talk" with this diverse array of thinkers. "The public, however, did not respond by attending en masse." This was "to their detriment," the organisers declared.

Artists, too, felt the sting. Writing in 1985, a poet described her experience of the first Fringe: "I was asked to read my poetry in Polish. It was to be an hour of ethnic poetry. I looked forward to this event with great expectation. On the day, accompanied by a few friends, I arrived at the selected venue. To our dismay, we found that the worst thing that can happen to a performer... happened! THERE WAS NO AUDIENCE AND NOBODY KNEW ABOUT OUR PROGRAM! The hall was empty, and even worse, there was some sort of rehearsal in progress. Double bookings! A French group scheduled to read before me was practically in tears: they had prepared a one hour program with songs and music, and it never occurred to them that nobody would be there to listen."

Remember how the Fringe Network wanted the various festival streams to operate autonomously? In their wrap-up reports for the first Fringe both the writers and film and video programmers STRESSED that the festival was the responsibility of its participants: it's great to be decentralised, but not so much if nobody is willing to do the work. The theatre team concurred: "Some groups assumed that Fringe was a resource centre of money and labour and failed to adequately prepare themselves for their participation relying on workers to motivate and organise them. As a result they felt that Fringe was a very sloppy set up and had somehow failed them." The visual arts

team lamented a similar organisational sloppiness. "The exhibition of sculpture, painting, drawing and printmaking by nine artists had no format or cohesive presentation. Because discussion and meetings between the artists on the use of the space were not held, the hanging, overseeing, extra publicity and coordinating of the space was limited." This wasn't a problem limited to that festival. Two years later, the visual arts coordinators would report that for the 1985 festival "poster and program distribution and general media publicity were not efficiently tackled due to the shortage of person power. This in no way reflects on the hard work and commitment of the volunteers involved in the Festival, but is rather a comment on the need for greater artist responsibility in the promotion of their own work."

SPACE IS THE PLACE

In 1985 the Fringe writers program included readings at venues as far afield as Pentridge, Diamond Valley, Footscray, Middle Park and Brunswick. For the first Spoleto Fringe the following year a 'rock steam train' chugged from Flinders Street to the suburbs featuring bands like Painters and Dockers and music icon Molly Meldrum. Fringe wasn't centred around a few innercity precincts. One show in Newport earned 130 attendees, while another in Sandringham drew 153. But this breadth wasn't just about bringing work to the suburbs. Again and again in these early years, a lament is made: we're making something great and there's no room in Melbourne for it. This is from 1984: "Many are still uncertain as to what the Festival is all about and the extraordinary lack of suitable venues means that we have problems built into the programme." Keep in mind that this was long before the cost of renting space was prohibitive: the Fringe offices in Brunswick Street were only \$1600 a year in 1987 (the same space is closer to \$65,000 per annum today). But the shortage in suitable venues would continue to plague the festival for years to come, and it would be some time yet before the longer term solution presented itself. From the most likely quarters, of course: artists themselves. But long before then, Fringe stepped up with its own initiative.

Few today remember The Fringe Studio. It was launched in May 1989 as a space for hire, and the kinds of groups that a typical week might see using the space could include a comedy writers group, Morris dancers, a group of female artists from Ethiopia's Tigray region and a painter who specialises in works on doors and windows. The Studio generated a decent income stream for Fringe, but from the outset generated a small degree of controversy. Even its opening was contentious: playwright Patricia Cornelius "questioned the reasoning behind the invitation to Steve Crabb, Minister for Police and Tourism to open the Studio." The reasons behind that invitation, it turns out, are elaborate. Rumours had been doing the rounds that the end was nigh for the Community Order Scheme, which sentenced offenders to carry out community work instead of serving prison time. The Fringe Studio had itself been partially created by people under community orders, and Fringe reasoned that inviting the police minister to open the space would mean "he would have to say positive things about it in front of the press. This was the most effective way we could think of to thank the people who worked on the Studio with us." The Fringe Studio is now largely lost to time but Melbourne Fringe is inextricably linked to the changing shape of the artistic spaces of Melbourne itself.

THE WORK OF ART

183

Making art is work. This might not be evident to an audience watching a polished piece of theatre or contemplating a well-hung painting. The effort has been erased. That erasure is work, too.

But any artist who has attempted even the most basic creative endeavour has quickly come up against the realisation that art is work, and lots of it. Despite the old inspiration/perspiration adage, there's still the sense that a second or third rate Fringe work is

due to lack of talent. But Fringe history is stuffed to the gills with artists who made brilliant things that are still talked about to this day – who changed the culture in which they found themselves – and who have never been heard of since. Because art is work. Even Moomba began as a celebration of work: the inaugural parade in 1955 took place on Labour Day to honour the historic eight-hour working day, first implemented 99 years earlier.

The history of Fringe, then, is a history of work. Back in 1984, this was news to many. As festival coordinator Angela Bourke wrote: "Meetings arranged between festival coordinators and artists were generally either poorly attended or people sat like slightly sulky students, waiting for instruction. Not good enough – A festival such as this is absolutely dependent on as much individual involvement, initiative and commitment as possible." The Fringe had been envisioned as a way of empowering artists to make their best work, but in the early years of the festival, artists didn't seem keen on embracing their side of the bargain. Volunteers were treated "like pack horses".

Bourke continued: "The Age Weekender lift out programme legitimised the festival for the participants and some sections of the general public; even so, the way many participants conducted themselves still gave proceedings the flavour of a Mickey Mouse operation: no mention of the festival appeared on much individual publicity and not enough individual publicity invited people to individual events. Too many artists are prepared to perform/exhibit, etc. for no one in particular. Who is the work being produced for? What is the best way of inviting them to attend? These questions need answers, otherwise why bother having a festival?!"

The writers of the Fringe echoed a similar lament the following year: "The last meeting concerned with the 1985 anthology was attended by 12 people. No-one was interested in assuming the role of instigator of the work. None of the proposals put I forward for voting on by the previous meeting were actu-

ally voted on, as the meeting considered that more discussion was needed. To that end, another meeting has been called..." In 1986 the film and video-makers were likewise in a state of disarray: "The Fringe Film and Video Group as a group is incredibly disorganised and constantly relying on individuals to set up and/or see things through. This year has been particularly insecure – the question even came up at a committee meeting of 'Do we continue?' Can you imagine!" It's easy to read each of these reports and imagine a cohort of artists at best disorganised and at worst lazy, but that's not necessarily the case. Making culture is work, and until this point it was work that hadn't been done by many.

Remember the CES? When Fringe came into existence you couldn't look for work as an artist: "you may have attempted to register with the C.E.S. in the past as an Actor or Writer or Painter or Sculptor and been told that as they do not have any job vacancies of this type you had better register as a teacher or clerk or house painter," wrote Fringe organisers. Fringe Network wanted to change that. Firstly, it imagined organisations looking to employ artists could go through Fringe, what with its handy Artists Data Bank and all. Secondly, the welfare organisations Fringe rubbed shoulders with in Fitzroy had plenty of pointers when it came to obtaining government funding. Fringe discovered that money was available from the Ministry of Employment and Training to train workers as part of a job creation scheme for the longterm unemployed. There was no shortage of artists who fit that description, and so six positions were created wherein artists would be taught computer skills, graphic design and project management to help operate Fringe Network and the festival. The funding coup was seen as a spectacular win. Until this point arts funding was doled out piecemeal, mostly to individuals or a select group of institutions. It was an arcane process that few understood, and there was very little financial support available to produce an

arts infrastructure. Most of the larger organisations had been borne of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, a forbidding entity that had been pivotal in the creation of institutions including Opera Australia, The Australian Ballet and Melbourne Theatre Company.

But with Fringe's funding, the organisation now had enough money to pay six months of full-time wages, enough to make the festival a reality. This was later expanded to a larger project training people to work in communities as sort of artists-in-residence: "25 traineeships are now available for unemployed artists throughout Victoria... for a period of approximately nine months, with weekly salary of about \$230 gross." That's about \$850 today. It wasn't money for nothing, however, and the community scheme quickly hit obstacles from all sides. Fringe staff wrote to the Ministry for the Arts with their complaints. Neither the artists involved nor the groups hosting them had been adequately screened or prepared: "We are now entering the third month of a 10 month project and some artworkers are still without either budget, work space or support. In many instances Hosts are totally ignorant of their obligations and have been in no way officially bound to provide even a minimum of satisfactory working conditions." The interactions between artists and the people with whom they'd been embedded were often fractious. A Fringe magazine report explained: "For the artists and communities involved, the experience was exhilarating but stressful because the interaction between the two was not always harmonious. There were clashes on both sides, most of the artists were unused to working with a community and found the expectations and the demands hard to cope with. They also had to oversee the coordination of the project and the administrative work necessary to get the project moving. Again, this was something most artists had not encountered before.

It turns out, you can't just throw an artist at a community and expect magic to happen but Fringe was discovering its own role as a facilitator of such interactions. The United Nations declared 1985 International Youth Year, and Fringe's interest in the category of

187 Youth Arts meant that its organisers were particularly attuned to the problem of youth unemployment. There were plenty of opportunities for financial relief available to families, the elderly and children, argued Fringe, but young people unable to find work didn't have the same recourse. "Youth unemployment is an embarrassment for the young person and the family and has traditionally been hidden away... Of greatest importance, there are not enough jobs available for the people seeking them."

In February 1985 Fringe Network was made responsible for the Youth Booth at Moomba, which was heavily utilised by the CES and the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. It doesn't sound that fun, admittedly, and for some reason it was located in a dark underpass, but numbers were good. There really weren't a lot of options for kids around that time, and the Youth Booth gave them something to do. Plus, tucked in there between the training and further education pamphlets was information from organisations for queer young people. And maybe some of those teens went home wondering if a job in the arts was for them. Their parents might not have approved, but on the other hand things were changing. In a few months the Victorian State Government would sign off on new award wages and conditions for art workers: an hourly rate of \$8.98 and a weekly rate of \$341, plus generous casual loading and annual leave. To obtain these benefits you had to be eligible to join the Operative Painters and Decorators Union, but that minimum wage would equal around \$27 per hour today.

Art is work, but sometimes it doesn't. The 1984 annual general meeting of the Fringe was sparsely attended, meaning few were there to witness the dramatic events that unfolded. It was reported that the anticipated shortfall of \$5000 the following year would blow out to three times that amount. All staff were given notice of termination of their employment, and it was moved that Fringe Network be dissolved. That motion was defeated. But things needed to change. A taskforce was appointed to try to reel in costs,

and the office was downsized. A lock was put on the 188 Fringe telephone, and a Board was created who would have approval over all Fringe Network projects. The proposed makeup of the Board says a lot about the era: "two artists, a lawyer/corporate manager, a media person, an accountant, a practising arts administrator, a politician, a unionist." The Fringe would continue, but the following year was a tight one. The festival in 1985 had no disposable cash. There was no way to pay for general admin, publicity or other expenses. Artists were "encouraged to devise ways in which they can pay for all costs that their presentation will incur." Artists had to start pulling their weight, or the Fringe would die a quick death. It's no surprise that the theme of that year's Fringe music program was "Down and Out in Melbourne". Bummer, right? Only if you forget the parade.

7. A PARADE IS BEING ORGANISED

For the first half of its existence, Fringe was synonymous with the parade that kicked off each festival. It was a raucous affair that eventually attracted a third of a million people each year. Parades had a history in Melbourne. Moomba had seen floats drifting in formation since 1955, and the Grand Final parade had followed suit in 1977. Fringe's homegrown carnival was probably both an ironic take on these institutions and a genuine attempt to harness the energy that had fuelled their longevity. Organisers knew that Melbourne loved a parade; they didn't necessarily know how to organise one. "Trying to estimate the size and final shape of the event was impossible. We did not know what to tell the authorities so we made it up. They did not seem to mind because they did not know either. With a laughable budget of 170 dollars, lots of naïve enthusiasm and a will to succeed the event was fast becoming a reality."

In keeping with the Fringe's open door policy, anyone and everyone was invited to be part of the parade. "If you or your group would care to participate with floats, music, food banners, marshalling or anything else you

can think of, then this is your chance to have buckets of fun and help the Fringe Festival off to a good start." There were only three rules: no racism, no sexism, and no commercialism. The parade would begin at the southern end of Brunswick Street and travel its length to Edinburgh Gardens, where a 'garden party' would continue throughout the day. It would all culminate in "A KILOMETRE OF COLOUR, FUN AND EXCITEMENT BOTH PLANNED AND UNPLANNED". The unplanned certainly showed up. The curator of Edinburgh Gardens was only told of the event shortly before it took place. The main oval was in the midst of being replanted, making it off-limits, while only one gate to the gardens could be opened. The main switch board supplying electricity to the party was locked, wrote an organiser: "this plus my lack of expertise with 'electrics' resulted in the power blowing out. However, the curator and the caretaker, upon realising the situation, were very helpful. The Tramways were not very co-operative, unless of course we could pay them for disrupting their service. We were not in a position to do this. If they had been approached earlier, they would probably have been more receptive."

189

There was little crowd control, and the workshops planned (kite-making, sheep shearing) didn't happen. "Last but by no means least, was the absence of the ethnic community," reported organisers. "They are a valuable asset in our community and should be encouraged to participate."

For all its shortcomings, the parade was a hit. An ABC telecast called it "everything that Moomba isn't" and for years to come the anarchic, lurid, weird and often hilarious cascade of carnivalesque energy would only grow in power. The event had its share of controversy. In 1986 City of Melbourne wrote a stern letter scolding the festival for selling alcohol at the garden party. The last time the council had allowed booze to be sold in a park or garden had required a special Act of Parliament to be passed – this time around Fringe

had convinced the Lord Mayor to intervene directly, arguing that a refusal to grant the festival permission to serve alcohol would be an embarrassment.

But the Fringe Parade fulfilled a social function that has always been a part of the Fringe DNA. The same impulse drove countless other events in those early years. 1984 also saw the festival opening with a costume ball: "Once you have procured a ticket you will be treated to a visual, oral, and aural extravaganza and we know you won't have ever seen anything like it before. It's original! A Gourmet smorgasbord, beer, wine and softer drinks is included but it is the entertainment, the company, the excitement, the prizes, the dancing and the light show that will captivate and transform you." The night would feature three bands, as well as projections by the legendary Melbourne light artist Hugh McSpedden: "Now this is really something to write home about. A light show with spotlights ricocheting off and around mirrored and glass surfaces. Polaroid slides of the ball goers processed and projected larger than life across the ceiling for all the ball to see. Who you were talking to, how you were dancing, whether you were still walking ... an hour before!"

Flyers also promised "an eerie yellow period with floating fog" and cartoons created on the spot to be projected overhead. There would be an appearance by Elios, the youngest magician in the Southern Hemisphere ("Elios has been a magic person now for three years and he is in Form Two at a local school.") This, organisers concluded, "will be a witty ball." It was a good time, according to reports: "The Ball and Parade too, were not only successful, but seemed to set precedents for the type of festivities most suitable for 'The Fringe'. But within a few years the Costume Ball would be dropped in favour of a regular Festival Club, which had the advantage of running seven nights a week. It rewarded the urge to socialise that drove so many Fringe initiatives.

Like the fortnightly Fringe Tea Party: "Every second Tuesday... the office staff of Fringe Network will be having an afternoon tea, next door to the Fringe office, upstairs and out the back.

The idea is that you bring along a cup which you donate to the Tea Party, eat some scones which will be available at reasonable rates, and generally get to know, abuse, harass, fall in love, and lounge about with, anyone else who happens to be there..." All of these chances to get together came and went, with the exception of the Fringe Club, which has adapted to a changing cultural landscape while always retaining its relevance. It even outlasted the parade, which by 2001 was costing Fringe \$100,000 each year – the festival's entire funding from Arts Victoria was only twice that amount. But that's years away. In 1986, the festival was barely out of its infancy, but already about to undergo a major transformation.

8. THE OTHER FESTIVAL

It was the International Year of Peace, and a spirit of optimism was in the air. A bunch of young Australians launched The Million Minutes of Peace appeal, asking people to spend a moment in meditation or reflection and donate it to a 'world peace bank'. Today we might seem to have emptied out that bank account, but in 1986 some people were willing to dream big. Melbourne was beginning to turn heads. Keith Haring had just visited, and Pope J-P II was on his way. Someone stole a Picasso from the National Gallery of Victoria. Someone blew up our police headquarters, while artists were proposing that the derelict Regent Theatre be transformed into a huge complex for creatives and the public alike. Things were changing.

The Melbourne Fringe Arts Festival was no longer the only mass arts event in town. In 1985 it had rubbed shoulders with two other major multi-artform kneesups in Melbourne: Next Wave, a festival for emerging artists that has continued in various forms to this day, and New Moods, the festival celebrating women artists that took place as part of Victoria's 150th festivities. That's three festivals. This town wasn't big enough for such a glut, and having them overlap or run so close to each other meant there was a shortage of venues, publicity, sponsorship and audience. "This is not a criticism of either festival," stated

Fringe's 1985 annual report, "but rather, an indication of the need for greater planning and foresight in the Melbourne Arts Calendar, and a reiteration of the invaluable groundwork that Fringe Network has undertaken for arts activities in Melbourne and beyond." This isn't self-congratulation. It was a commonly held sentiment that Fringe was establishing a model that would inspire other festivals and organisations in the decade to come. With regards to Next Wave and New Moods, concluded Fringe's organisers, "it is a pity that these events could not have united in some way in order to encourage the presentation of arts in Melbourne..."

In 1986 another festival threw its hat into the ring, and it was a hefty one. In 1958 the composer Gian Carlo Menotti had founded the Festival dei Due Mondi (Festival of the Two Worlds) in the Italian city of Spoleto. From 1977 Menotti also ran a 'twin' festival in Charleston, USA. Though the two worlds are no longer connected, as it were, both Spoleto festivals still operate today. It was a festival of three worlds for a while, though, after Menotti successfully convinced the Victorian State Government to take up the baton for a third festival. If the Spoleto Festival of Three Worlds sounds like science fiction, remember that festivals were still a novelty, and with Menotti's fancy European background it mustn't have been hard to convince certain VIPs that this high arts festival was the way of the future. Thus it became official. Melbourne's Spoleto Festival would showcase international artists, while an accompanying festival would be dedicated to local talent. This second festival was known as The Other Festival, and would be organised by Melbourne Fringe and Multicultural Arts Victoria.

So from 1986 onwards Fringe had a new name: The Other Festival. It meant that Fringe no longer operated on its own, but was defined in relation to a festival with very deep pockets and a very international focus. According to Fringe: "Even a cursory look at the Spoleto programme, with its emphasis on the so

called 'High Arts', its heavy reliance on imported works, and its support of already well established, famous (if not infamous) artists, must leave the Melbourne artist wondering 'where's my niche?' Your niche can be found in an active support of "The Other" festival, the official 'fringe' to Spoleto." Already this positioning alongside Spoleto was creating a sense of a divide between a mainstream and its alternatives, and this would dog Melbourne's cultural landscape for decades to come.

"The Other as a title for the festival will denote "something different", rather than the 'fringe' being synonymous with the periphery," wrote the Fringe. "The importance of 'The Other' Festival is in the artist's opportunity to present the contemporary and local, not as a 'poor relation', but as indication of the richness and diversity of the Melbourne and Victorian artistic scene." Fringe and Multicultural Arts Victoria eventually decided to operate independently, however, and that split allowed Fringe organisers the chance to immediately dump The Other Festival title in favour of calling the festival the Spoleto Fringe. MAV went on to run its own festival too, named Spoleto Piccolo, leading to the city's new title of Melbourne: City of Three Festivals.

The first Spoleto had originally been intended to run in 1985, but was cancelled when organisers realised that you needed more than a few months to pull together an international arts program. Fringe had already been learning the ropes for a handful of years, though, and the first Spoleto Fringe was packed with content. There was a young Barrie Kosky mounting Monteverdi's Orfeo with his company Treason of Images; a solo performance from the wildly original postmodern choreographer Deborah Hay; an exhibition of controversial portraits of Japanese writer Yukio Mishima taken by influential photographer Eikoh Hosoe; and two productions of The Secret Garden by local company Whistling In The Theatre — one for kids, and a separate, darker version for adults only.

Spoleto might have claimed a greater degree of prestige but critics and commentators for the first festival were unanimous: Fringe did it better. From *The Age*: "With the Fringe activities, there was a dynamism and often a sense of excitement which was missing from the core festival ... In a sense, it is early days with Spoleto ... If it is to become an annual, or at least biennial, event, more thought needs to be given to the festival's philosophy as well as its content. As it is, it is a festival without festivities."

This damning assessment would continue the following year. From *The Age* again: "Part of Spoleto's problem is that it is run by an absentee landlord. Gian Carlo Menotti, the artistic director, is nominally in charge, but his time and energies are divided between the other two Spoleto festivals and his musical and compositional obligations. Menotti was around for the whole of the first Melbourne Spoleto, but this time he stayed for only the first week and half – just long enough to observe that there wasn't much festival feeling in the air. In fact there was, but you had to go to the Fringe to find it."

The editorial concluded that "the Fringe was the real success of Spoleto. There was a sense of excitement about much of the work. For the Spoleto organisers, the challenge is to inject the same sense of excitement into the core program." Numbers overall were impressive. The theatre and music programs each attracted around 18,000 festival-goers, while visual arts pulled in a respectable 12,000. The Festival Club, Garden Party and Parade collectively entertained almost 10,000 revellers. In total, more than 63,000 people showed up to a Fringe event, a figure that nearly matched the main Spoleto festival, despite Fringe only being given one third the funding. This didn't go unnoticed by Fringe artists, "Spoleto Fringe organisers and performers have threatened to withdraw from next year's Spoleto festival unless their funding is increased from \$85,000 to \$200,000. At a public meeting in a Collingwood hotel yesterday, about 100 Fringe artists called on the State Government to ensure next year the Fringe be allocated at least 10 percent of the mainstream festival's \$2 million budget." This money would not be forthcoming. In fact, it would soon be possible to look back on a Fringe with a third of the Spoleto budget and be shocked at how generous that sum now appeared.

9. COLLECTIVE MEMORY

1987. Did anyone think Fringe would get this far? Five years in, the festival was becoming something, even if nobody knew exactly what. It's easy to look back on a festival with a 40 year history and give it the weight of a Melbourne institution. Back in the early years, though, Fringe didn't feel so substantial. When you're starting off on a journey into unknown lands, accompanied by relative strangers and with no one to lead the way, anything feels possible but nothing is certain. Fringe still wasn't sure of its identity. The same program might feature the Australian Welsh Male Choir and something called *Castrate Me Boy Sex Man*.

By this point Arpad Mihaly was Chairperson of the Fringe Artists Committee. He wrote: "Not to have any idea of what or why to celebrate dissipates an arts festival into just a carnival, a circus, a playground, a museum, a resort, a trade show or a supermarket." Mihaly called for proposals that might change that: "artists/critics/theoreticians are invited to submit a curatorial program proposal for any of the following areas: performing arts, visual arts and crafts, film and video, writing, music, the Festival Parade and Garden Party and the Festival Club ... These curatorial programs will be part of the normal program of the Festival but will enable us to have our own inbuilt critical focus for it ... The most interesting and pertinent proposals will be shortlisted and published in the January/February edition of the Fringe Magazine to invite others to comment and participate if that is agreed to." The result wasn't a curatorial program as such, but it provided the seed of what would become the Fringe-produced program of later years. Fringe

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1996

Fringe Fashion is launched, providing a home for alternative design that will continue until 2002.

would forever be an open access festival, but the organisation itself realised it could do more to nurture the artistic landscape that was beginning to flourish.

Because that landscape was inseparable from the community it was bringing into being. Artists were seeing each others' work, yes, but that sheer proximity also meant that relationships formed, ideas were exchanged, mistakes were made and sometimes people found themselves drawn together by less fortunate circumstances. In 1984 Fringe worker Liz Honybun died suddenly. "On Sunday, June 3rd, Liz Honybun, Special Projects Officer at Fringe Network was killed in a car accident on the Hume Highway. Liz was co-ordinating this year's Fringe Arts Festival. "Everyone who worked with her, the office staff and all the volunteers, will remember Liz as a sparkling, talented and very capable colleague. Her strength and warmth are missed by all of us at Fringe and by many others involved in the arts in Melbourne. Goodbye Liz." In 1987 a 23-year-old named Brian McCarthy programmed the comedy season at the Prince Patrick Hotel for the Spoleto Fringe. He had been running comedy at the Prince Pat for the previous six months, and had quickly developed a reputation as one of Melbourne's most energetic exponents of the live comic scene. He was killed driving home from the opening night of that year's Fringe. His death wasn't the end, though. Not long after, the Brian McCarthy Memorial Moosehead Award would be established to further his mission of encouraging up-and-coming comedy performers, with an emphasis on those who push the form. It was exactly the kind of thing that spoke of a culture and a community, rather than a collection of individuals working away in isolation. McCarthy's send-off at the Prince Patrick saw a crowd turn up that would have filled the venue several times over, with performances/tributes from some of the comedy scene's biggest names.

It wasn't the only time support came in the wake of tragedy. Ewa Czajor was a director, performer and teacher for more than 15 years, spending three as Artistic Director of Student Theatre at Melbourne University. In 1988 she was murdered in Thailand. The

Ewa Czajor Memorial Fund was established to support women theatre directors, and administrators of the award eventually founded the Australian Women Directors Association after realising that many of its recipients experienced a certain degree of isolation within their community. In 2005 the poet Patrick Alexander died, the only artist to have produced an event for every Fringe thus far. None of these deaths explain Fringe. But a community that comes together by happenstance is still a community.

10. TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

If you're younger than Fringe itself, the technological landscape of the 1980s might be alien to you. It's really hard to overstate just how different it was. To take a photo of your theatre group you'd need to find someone with a camera, buy some film, take the shots and head off to a chemist, wait a few days while they developed it and pay way too much for the whole ordeal. It shouldn't be surprising that there are items in the Fringe archives – headshots, band demos – with a note scribbled on the back asking for the image or tape cassette to be returned, since it was the only copy. It might be a little surprising that the photo clearly wasn't sent back, since it's in the archive, but postage was expensive too.

The Fringe archives are awash with references to the three days of 'computer music' that were broadcast from City Square in 1984. It seems to be one of the proudest moments for the early Fringe. The Fringe Network was deeply enamoured with the fact that there was a computer in the office, even if only one person knew how to operate it, and it might be that in those days — a decade before most households owned their own computers and years before techno and smartphones and outdoor raves — the notion of 'computer music' in public seemed akin to a spaceship touching down on Swanston Street. It wouldn't be until 1993 that the Fringe program featured a multimedia category, and even then none of the featured

199 events included anything resembling a computer.

The minutes of one Fringe meeting were typed up and printed out, but every instance of the letter 'g' has been written on the page in pen – was the word processor missing that key? So much in the archives is handwritten or drawn - posters were designed by cutting and pasting real materials before slapping them onto the Fringe photocopier, and even official resumes sometimes employed collage, presumably to prove the applicants bona fides in the art realm. The office itself made a reasonable income charging low rates for use of that photocopier. And the reason there's so much early material in the Fringe archives is precisely because communications back then were so paper-based. With the advent of email and other digital forms of exchange, there just isn't the same accumulation of stuff, and what is preserved is invariably more cautious in form and tone. Today we all know how a carelessly-worded message can damage our reputation, but back in the 1980s there was less self-consciousness, less self-censorship. You can even read the social milieu of the times in the correspondence that has been retained; in contrast to the artists who invariably corresponded in pen and pencil, the institutions and corporations that Fringe sometimes dealt employed elaborate and sometimes embossed letterheads whose expense is tangible in the material itself.

The Fringe telephone also got plenty of work – in 1987 the phone expenses were more than half that of the rent on the office itself. But unless you happened to be by the landline it was impossible for someone to get in touch with you quickly, meaning that trying to pass a message via phone wasn't necessarily quicker than posting it. Just as useful were noticeboards – leaving a physical message for someone (or anyone) was the pre-digital version of posting something online, and it's strange to imagine doing legitimate business using technologies now restricted to lost cat posters. But all of this is chronological arrogance: those living in the early 1980s felt themselves to be existing in the future just as much as we do today. There may

have been no internet, but radio was skyrocketing – the most popular medium in Australia, according to some Fringe documents of the time. This explains why one of the earliest Fringe-produced projects was an ambitious series of radio dramas.

Public broadcasting was new – RRR and PBS aren't much older than Fringe – and early on the Network began creating With Our Highest Voice, a half dozen radio plays that would air on 53 independent stations around Australia. Radio plays might seem quaint today – indeed, in a few decades Fringe would be home to hugely popular live radio dramas whose wild success was exactly because of their nostalgic appeal. But in the early 1980s, beaming out new Australian writing across the country's airwaves must have seemed hugely exciting and contemporary.

Another example of the distance between our own technological horizon and that of the early Fringe comes in the realm of Film and Television. At this time, spurred on by the success of public radio, a group of enthusiasts began putting together plans for TVU, an independent television station built from the ground up. It would be housed at Open Channel, the community television advocacy group then working from Victoria Street in Fitzroy and broadcast independent television for a grand 17 kilometres. TVU was imagined as the democratisation of television, and would eventually morph into Channel 31, which offered an alternative to the main networks for decades. It was never great quality, but it was a televisual equivalent to Fringe, offering an early home to many who went on to bigger things.

11. SETTING AN EXAMPLE

As the 1980s came to a close, it had become clear that Melbourne had indeed become a city of festivals. Spoleto was about to change its name to the one it would be known as for years to come – the Melbourne International Arts Festival – and Fringe was finally free to revert to its true form.

201 Except, in doing so, it became apparent that the Spoleto Fringe Festival had never officially existed. While registering the name a key document had been lost in the post, meaning that for years the Fringe had technically still been titled The Other Festival.

But festivals were popular and Fringe was leading the charge. "What next?" asked one columnist. "Perhaps a comedy festival?" That suggestion took root - in 1987 the Melbourne International Comedy Festival kicked off, and others began to follow. The Fringe was often noted as the fest that inspired the rest: "specialist festivals focusing on youth arts, multicultural arts, gay events and our thriving comedy scene have sprung up in response to audience enthusiasm for these types of events at Fringe Festivals." The powers that be took heed. For a long time the arts had been narrowly defined, and organisations such as Fringe had been compelled to find roundabout routes to obtaining help from the government. By 1986 that same government was starting to cash in on cultural credit, putting out a brochure during Youth Participation Week to encourage young people to think about 'the arts' differently, "these might include playing an instrument, dancing at a disco, learning trumpet, writing a story about coming to Australia, singing along to the radio, going to a cinema or gallery or circus, rap dancing, drawing cartoons, reading comics, running a band night, exhibiting baby photos, shooting a video as part of school, and at least another 99 'arts".

But money, meet mouth: since 1975 there had been a dramatic and ongoing drop in real terms of money given to the arts by Australian governments of any political persuasion. At that time the entertainment and cultural industry contributed \$6.5 billion to the economy, but governments didn't want to hear about it. Money went where it had always gone. In 1987, for instance, 38% of the Australia Council's entire music budget was allocated to Opera Australia, and the government could still dig around the back of the couch for an additional one-off grant of \$200,000 to the same organisation. Palz Vaugh was festival direc-

202

tor during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and says that arts funding has always been related to class. "Class is an interesting thing, most Australians don't believe it exists. But if you just look at the difference between the opera and the Fringe Festival, there's class in a perfect little picture. There's a denial that there is class in Australia, there's a denial that there's racism in Australia, too. And what you would hope is that those sorts of issues are explored in a forum like Fringe, because there's the freedom to do that. It's not politically contested or dominated by political ideology. Each individual has their own expression. So the class thing, I suppose, comes down to funding. And the funding bodies purport that they're not racist or elitist, or any of those things. But you do find that the squeaky wheels of the elite get oiled more frequently."

The upcoming Bicentennial celebrations also saw the government funding a select few cultural organisations who would presumably deliver the flag-waving commemorations that were expected.

Artists, in general, weren't a priority. The late 1980s saw a series of rallies in which the creative community called on its leaders for more attention, whose consistent response was to find sponsors from the private sector. In this, Melbourne was a reflection of the broader transformations upending the global economic landscape. For the growing philosophy of neoliberalism and free market aesthetics, if it didn't sell, culture wasn't worth the canvas it was printed on.

The launch of the 1989 Fringe Festival was a controversial one. "We were present at the Fringe Launch last Friday week," wrote a Fringe artist. "The space looked beautiful and we truly appreciated the luxury of smoked salmon, oysters and quality champagne. Amongst the various people we have come to recognize as being associated with Fringe – those responsible for management, coordination and assistance we duly noted the sponsors and the media. We were asked to mingle and chat particularly with those whose name tags were underlined

or double-lined. Needless to say we were tag-less. 203 It became apparent that we were part of a minority group that evening...several people asked good naturedly what we were doing there, no artists had been invited. Now that came as guite a shock, no artists had been invited! It seems to us that without artists there is no Fringe Network. While we applaud the great efforts of management and administration to raise public awareness and money on our behalf it felt absolutely wrong not to have been included in celebrating the opening of our 1989 festival. We felt like poor cousins, in fact humiliated and belittled." The same artists noted their difficulty with the entertainment that had been provided to the media and sponsors that evening – while artists had been kept away from the event, an independent company had been brought in to present a fashion parade "that was performed without irony, without any political awareness or even at the very least any commentary on the world of fashion. It seemed in fact to support conservative sexist concerns." Another attendee expressed the same sentiments in print: "we were treated to a parade which unquestioningly reinforced gender and role stereotypes. The showing also seemed to emphasise performance rather than design, yet was executed by those whose area of expertise this is not. I also believe sections of the parade were televised and I question whether this is the sort of performance (in both content and form) that you wish to have representing the range and diversity of work generated by the fringe arts community." The Fringe Board took the objections seriously: "General consensus from Board Members was that the Parade was politically unsound and inappropriate."

12. THE COMING UTOPIA

As the twentieth century drew to a close there was a tangible sense of change in the air. Millennial fever was real, and it manifested in competing ways. For many the end of an era and the birth of a new millennium was cause to celebrate. Fringe programs from the mid to late 1990s are rife with public spectacles and parties. In 1994 the length of Swanston Walk from The Lounge to the State Library was taken over by artists for

the duration of the festival. The following year was rounded out with a Goa-style rave on St Kilda Beach, while the festival also took to the air with Fringe TV, a weekly show on the independent broadcaster Channel 31.

TV was far from the only new medium to be seized upon at that time: a techno-utopianism accompanied the end-of-a-century vibes, and Fringe was possessed by this enthusiasm for whatever would come next. "Movies on CD-ROM!!!" squealed the Fringe program's Film & Video section. "In a multimedia first for the Fringe, a state-of-the-art Macintosh desktop environment will be installed (for one day only) in two venues, giving audiences a unique opportunity to experience a range of movies, through the computer, on CD-ROM. Here's your chance to gain hands-on access to the multimedia technology you've heard about." Many forms of technophilia merged with a pseudo-mysticism and cultural exoticism: Ancient Cyber Tribe billed itself as a "techno corroboree" at City Square, while Tek>Know>Temple promised "the full fluro mystic, psychic, cosmic, trance dance ritual installation space." There was 'diGitAL ciNEma'. There was a 'ZEEN rave'. A lot of things were 'unplugged' and one event declared: "Come with us on an interactive journey through the world's hottest Websites, as we explore the latest mind-blowing moving-image clickstreams."

The paint-and-glue resumes and handwritten funding applications of the early Fringe seem like envoys from a distant past, but sometimes the more recent past can feel even more remote. The arrival of 'Virtual Fringe' in the late 1990s is evidence that new technologies do not always equate with progress. If it's an evolution, it's as full of dead ends and throwbacks, as is the biological world. The program listing for Cyberfringe 1996 is pretty much illegible, not just in its description of "ISDN-based projects" but through the visually chaotic design style that seems to make a virtue of hurting the eyes. The programs of this era are sometimes literally

unreadable, listings provided in aneurysm-inducing messiness, but the language can also be both alienating and indicative of the era: a show exploring "qwerty as a mode of technological resistence [sic]" suggests the creep of academia into independent arts practice at the time.

Between 1970 and 1990 the number of Victorians who'd been to university quadrupled. It's no surprise that this was reflected in Fringe. Arts degrees increasingly made their presence known. Programs from the time are stuffed with works that both revere the classical canon and cannibalise the then-academically fashionable language of post-structuralism. The result might be an intriguing deconstruction of Milton or Marlowe, but more often it was impossible to figure out exactly what the artist was even attempting. Sadly, this was a period when the fetishisation of theory and the collapse of aesthetic hierarchies had the knock-on effect of widening the perceived gap between the fringe and the mainstream. Fringe did its best to combat inaccessibility. There was the Hit Pix Hotline – just call a number to hear the day's highlights. Or you could head to Binary Bar or the Fringe cyberlounge at Southgate to check out the program on a dedicated computer. Even radio was back in the mix, with an FM station providing extensive coverage of the festival: "In 1997, 774 3LO is The Sound of Fringe."

It wasn't just Fringe trying to lay out the cultural welcome mat. Throughout the 1990s Melbourne began a physical transformation that continues to this day. The doughnut era was over, and massive efforts were underway to recreate the CBD wholesale. In 1992 the entire spine of the city — Swanston Street — was permanently closed to cars, as the ambitious Swanston Walk project came into being. Seemingly overnight, the city was awash with lattes, focaccia, wheatgrass shots and spirulina smoothies. In 1991 Victoria launched the country's first cultural policy. At the Victorian Arts Centre, Premier Joan Kirner and Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts Jim

A Policy for Victoria. Its objectives were to recognise and support the creative culture of Victoria, to foster cultural literacy, to increase access, conserve heritage and support diversity. This is one of the rare government documents that doesn't treat cultural policy as if it were synonymous with arts policy, but expands the notion to consider how culture extends well beyond the familiar domain of 'the arts'.

A similar process is in play when you look at how Indigenous Australian culture - the oldest continuing culture in the world - became increasingly prominent in the Fringe of the early 1990s. While First Peoples had been part of Fringe festivals since the beginning, the organisation employed Maxine Briggs to coordinate the growing Indigenous program of the festival. 1991 was the same year Ilbijerri premiered its first production, Up the Road, at the Melbourne Fringe Festival. The following year Destiny Deacon's Fringe exhibition Kitsch 'n' Koori would attract raves. In 1993 Wesley Enoch directed what was then called the Lost Children's Project, an immersive oral history that would eventually transform into the play Stolen. Stolen premiered at the Melbourne International Arts Festival in 1998, before touring the country and, eventually, the world. "It started in this little cramped space at Melbourne Fringe," says Enoch. "And I can hand on heart say that that play helped influence the way Australia thought about the Stolen Generations."

Fitzroy was still very much the epicentre of Fringe at this point. The Fringe offices were on Brunswick Street, and the festival still kicked off each year with its Parade. By this time the event had become a gigantic street party that was a highlight of Melbourne's cultural calendar. As the day progressed, things could get messy. "The street parades were kind of remarkable, rambunctious, sloppy, weirdo-filled kind of parades," says Maude Davey. "It was kind of wild and silly and not very impressive. It was all made out of cardboard, and things would fall apart. And really bad music. But it was really exhilarating."

In 1994, the Fringe made a deal with the Transport Accident Commission to sponsor the parade. There was a condition: no nudity. "Now, there was always nudity at the Melbourne Fringe," says Davey. "There was always some guy running around with his dick out. And so, I did a performance." On the balcony above a friend's shop in Brunswick Street, Davey staged a protest work: "it was kind of a political statement about the lack of nudity in the Melbourne Fringe and how that was anti-Fringe, and it was called *This Woman is Partial to Nudity.*" Her friend wouldn't let her actually get naked on the premises, so Davey devised a Bob Dylan-style series of signs that could pull off the illusion of nakedness while telling a story of censorship.

That anarchic spirit is very much characteristic of the first two decades of the Fringe. It's also what animated an outfit virtually synonymous with the Fringe Parade: Snuff Puppets. In 1987 Pauline Cady and Andy Freer arrived in Melbourne as part of Splinters, an anarchic bunch of performance makers who shunned theatres in favour of quarries, burnt out homes and other strange spaces. They were in Melbourne to create a Fringe work in the old Seaman's Mission in Port Melbourne, which at the time was a squat. Fringe artists around this time were campaigning for the space to be converted into an arts complex, though it would soon be leveled to make way for the controversial new Station Pier development. But out of Cady and Freer's experience at Fringe grew Snuff Puppets, a company that has thrived for 30 years. The often grotesque and oversized figures that are emblematic of 'Snuffies' were a staple of Fringe Parades, and the absence of barricades at those events meant that ordinary punters frequently got up close and personal with gigantic, abject embodiments of irreverence and transgression.

The Fringe of the 1990s can seem like a carnival of good times: you had the likes of Denise Scott, Bruce Gladwin, Melbourne Workers Theatre and separate shows by Colin Lane and Frank

Woodley earning popular and critical approval. You'd score \$1 off the entry price to any show, too, if you took public transport in and flashed your MET ticket. Another first in 1991 was the arrival of the pokies. A new bill legalising gambling promised that gaming machines would contribute 1-1.5% of their gross turnover to a Community Support Fund – between \$5-10 million to arts and tourism combined. The announcement wasn't greeted with open arms, and the impending arrival of a casino on the burgeoning Southbank precinct would prove even less welcome, especially given the economic storm that Australia was about to hit.

By 1992 a grim shadow seemed to hover over the arts. It was a shiny, happy time, on the surface, but there was also an undercurrent that suggested the opposite. It was the moment of grunge, the time of the Young British Artists, the rise of goth and industrial aesthetics, heroin chic, and Fringe guides of the era are packed with images supposed to represent people going mad or getting super angry. Theatre shows most commonly focused on themes such as AIDS, youth suicide, homelessness and drug use. The Film and Video program was even bleaker: Requiem for a Whore. Chicken Hawk: Men Who Love Boys. Hated: GC Allin and the Murder Junkies. There were two documentaries about David Lynch in the same year, and a program of music videos from the likes of Nine Inch Nails and Ministry declared "You won't be seeing these babies on rage!" Fringe had gone full Gen X.

13. DARK TIMES

Generation X owned the 1990s. They were a strange cohort whose main characteristic was a resistance towards being characterised at all – the media typified them as slackers, ironic, lacking in affect and unable to commit. It's perhaps true that the artists of this era were disaffected and disdainful of the mainstream – the number one sin was selling out, compromising your authenticity for a corporate buck. But they were

also the offspring of punk, a recession, an academic culture of resistance and the corporate co-opting of that culture. There's almost a quaintness to the casual nihilism of this period. In 1995 Melbourne Fringe called for works under the banner of Bombs Away! "Atomic bombs, H-bombs, Molotov cocktails... Writers are invited to submit any writing under this theme on disk. Selected works will be published on the internet." Three years later the short film *Stygian* premiered at Fringe, directed by Shannon Young and James Wan. It was a dark and not great production, but Wan would go on to reshape the horror industry making films such as *Saw* and the *Conjuring* franchise.

The same year 50 Fringe artists would be tasked with reimagining the wine cask at the NGV. In the Vic Health Access Gallery, no less. The NGV also hosted Andre Serrano's work 'Piss Christ' a few years later. The work features a small plastic Jesus suspended in the artist's urine, and after the installation faced attempted theft, hammer attacks and George Pell the gallery eventually pulled it from view. Fringe responded with Christ I'm Pissed Off!! 16 artists respond to the cancellation of the Serrano exhibition. "The Christian community just went crazy about it," says Virginia Hyam, the festival's creative producer at the time. "We got threats, and we had to have security there. It became a really major thing." There was no chance the festival would close down the exhibition, however. "It's open access. Everyone needs a voice, but... I do remember it causing quite a controversy. It was pretty bizarre to have security guards on the door of a fringe visual arts exhibition."

The 1990s in particular were an era in which freedom of expression was considered paramount in the arts, but in practice this often led to some pretty nasty work. Much of the Fringe's program throughout the 1990s was characterised by a cynical, ironic or pessimistic tone, and while the festival never interfered with art that wasn't blatantly discriminatory, there were some events that put coordinators to the test. "I had a few

personal issues with a few of the shows," says Hyam.
"There were a couple times where I felt compromised
as a director, but I couldn't actually outwardly speak about
it, because it was just my opinion about it. There were some
shows that were going into some very dark areas, that I just
didn't feel was a great space for audiences to watch. And I don't
need to name any of that. Maybe that was just a personal thing.
But then as the Fringe director, you go, well: open access." If
the 1990s Fringe had its seedier side, it's tempting to lay part
of the blame on the Australian recession of 1991 and 1992: jobs
were scarce, pay rates were low, conditions weren't great and
interest rates were through the roof.

The mismatch between a struggling social sphere and the glossy hype of pop culture was enough to occasion scorn from Gen Xers, whose TVs were flooded with Mad About You and Melrose Place. No wonder the film and video program at Fringe grew increasingly bleak during the period: the festival was home to plenty of films about teenage murderers long before high school shootings in the US became a regular occurrence. Splatterpunk and violent anime and Hong Kong bullet ballets were Fringe film staples, as if the only appropriate role for such a festival was to offer a visual negative to the blinding vacuity of mainstream culture. The bleak prospects appearing on screen would have their echoes off: in the midst of the recession, the film and video section of Fringe would cease to exist in any form, after Film Victoria slashed its Fringe funding from \$15,000 to \$8,000, and no money was made available by the Australian Film Commission. The Indigenous program of the Fringe also suffered, and the organisation struggled to raise the \$4,000 needed to keep its Koori coordinator employed.

On top of all this, 1992 was an election year, and if the Liberal Party got in, Fringe organisers worried this GST they'd been talking about could become a reality. From all accounts it would be 15 percent more expensive for an independent artist

to mount their show. Still, the 1992 program was the 211 biggest the Fringe had ever seen, and festival director Palz Vaughn attributed that to the recession too: with less paid work for artists, more were drawn to Fringe's open access model. In keeping with the Festival's history of spotting the silver lining, Vaughn hit upon a philanthropic trust that sponsored women prisoners to work in community jobs while serving out their sentences. "It was very successful, although one of them did rob a bank," she said in an interview at the time. "I was using them for reception work, and anything else they could handle. I encouraged one woman to try stand-up comedy because she had such outrageous excuses about why she was late all the time." Throughout the 1990s art took on the function of resistance and transgression, and by the end of the decade artists became fully-fledged freedom fighters. The Fringe embraced the notion of guerilla art that had been floated in a divided Berlin a decade earlier: "Guerilla art is art that hits you in the face when you don't expect it," said festival director Virginia Hyam. "It just happens."

This was an era in which suspicion towards any form of authority took root, and by sheer coincidence the State government of 1992 to 1999 gave artists a full-blown villain to rile against. Jeff Kennett was bold enough to appear at Fringe launches to open the festival, but his ongoing agenda to privatise anything he could lay his hands on gave artists ample proof that protest wasn't just fun, but necessary. Dan Mitchell was festival director in 2003, and characterises Melbourne in the late 1990s as a pretty grim place. "The Kennett era had this weird tension where you've got things like the casino being built, and all this strange architecture with sort of Hitler salutes, as we used to call them, the exhibition building, the art gallery, the cheese sticks. You had this sort of fascist architecture appearing around Melbourne." Regenerating the inner city was an overall good, Mitchell says, but "there were a whole lot of social byproducts to this that were really pretty disastrous. Health system, education, closing of schools, all this sort of stuff, a lot of rationalisation in the public sector. Public transport being privatised, the loss of conductors, all this was sort of that period of transition between the mid-late 90s through to the early noughties that I was sort of coming into Melbourne in at that time. So it was dynamic and fraught as well."

14. RAINING ON THE PARADE

The madness of crowds has long been recognised. In groups we do things that would have us shrinking in terror if we were forced to enact them solo. For decades the Fringe Parade had made that spectacularly evident, as folks from all walks of life stripped down, glammed up, and waved their freak flag. If – as the parade's first organisers had hoped – the parade was full of unplanned moments, it was because no one can predict who they'll become in a sea of strange bodies, or what they'll turn out to be willing to do.

Perhaps that impulse to lose yourself in the mass is what drove so many to turn up to the 2001 photo shoot by Spencer Tunick. The US photographer had made a name for himself staging images in which urban land-scapes were covered by naked forms en masse. Fringe put out an open invitation to any Melburnians willing to go drape themselves au naturelle on the freezing asphalt of Princess Bridge at dawn. With the city as backdrop, these volunteers would be posed to form an arresting, anonymous tide of raw humanity.

Vanessa Pigrum was the creative director of Fringe when Tunick's shoot took place. "The political and social environment at that time was that there was this enormous optimism and great joy about hosting this event. And then a month before it happened, September 11, the World Trade Center terrorist attack occurred in New York. And it changed everything for everybody. Suddenly, we as a team at Fringe were involved in a different type of risk management conversation, let's just say that about all of our public events. And we were very concerned, I guess, that this event with Spencer Tunick

may have to be cancelled." Tunick was a New Yorker, but even the tragedy facing his home town wasn't enough to deter him from reaching Melbourne for the Fringe event. His enthusiasm didn't go unrecognised. Fringe Living Legend Ian Pidd was among those who signed up to strip down. "As I drove into town before dawn on the morning that we were going to shoot it, I knew we were in some kind of trouble because people were running. People were running through the city, towards the bridge." Until that point, Tunick's shoots had usually seen a few hundred volunteers show up at best. In Melbourne, four and a half thousand were waiting for him.

"It was a ton of humans and Spencer was great and his crew were just marvelous," says Pidd. "They took it completely in their stride. There was that beautiful moment where through the loud-hailer he said, 'Everybody, take your clothes off,' and we all stripped naked. And we were naked together for about an hour, that big group. And we walked and lay down and it was really, just totally incredible. And the photos are very beautiful and he still talks about those photos. It was a pretty amazing shoot." Pigrum says that "in hindsight, I do think there was an element of this communal wave of response to what had happened in New York, that our public spaces were no longer safe," says Pigrum. "And as a community, we just wanted to claim them again... These events will not stop us enjoying our open space, being in the street, claiming our city."

One lone and fully clothed protester tried to disrupt proceedings, waving a homemade sign declaring that "All Men will bow down to the name of Jesus". A huge media presence was also a challenge for many of those naked folks, but Pigrum says that after about 20 minutes the crowd turned to proudly face down the press photographers in all their naked honesty. That was when the festival director decided to cast aside her walkie-talkie and jump in. "When I got dressed again and came back, apparently the police had been trying to find me. And I had to say no, sorry, I was nude."

For Pidd, "the final, joyful memory is that we all dropped our clothes basically where we were and everyone was in a very heightened state because we were getting naked. And then we'd been for a big old walk in our nakedness, and we all came back and there were maybe 20 or 30 people who couldn't find their clothes. So, for a good half an hour there were people wandering around, most of us fully clothed, just going, 'I can't find my clothes, I don't know where my clothes are.' And that was interesting because our nakedness had become nothing, but then when most people are clothed, when there are naked people, nakedness was a thing." It's hard to imagine staging an arts festival two weeks after the terrible events of September 11, 2001 but the festival that year saw Melbourne transfigured: the city was now officially announcing itself as "A City for the Arts" and Fringe went all out with an unprecedented number of Fringe-produced events.

214

Laneways in the CBD were transformed into canvases for visual and installation art as part of The Lane Event, which also featured seven nights of free performances. The Shaggin Waggins were painted vans to entertain passersby, while a mobile stage toured the city. Once again Fringe gave punters Fringe Furniture and Fringe Architecture, but also Hot Air (Fringe inflatables) and Fringe Inventions. Another public event highlighted the friction between a heightened sense of risk post 9/11 and the desire to connect with urban spaces. People were invited to decorate some tiny, simple blocks of wood with their interpretation of 'home', and these miniature dwellings were scattered throughout the city's many lanes and byways. Then Pigrum received a call from a young man whose hobby was tracking police radio. He said, "I think your art project is the discussion on police radio at the moment. I think you should call them because they're bringing the bomb squad to this laneway." As Pigrum notes, "They had found one of these little homes that had an oven timer on it. And they just didn't know what it was. Was this credible? Everyone was on a hair trigger. And they did bring in the bomb squad and they blew it up and I had to inform them that it really literally was a block of wood."

If recent events had put officials in a state of elevated tension regarding public safety, you might think the events of late 2001 were what brought about the end of the Fringe Street Party and Parade. By that time it had swollen to a bursting point and now included stages hosting bands and performances and spilling well beyond the confines of Brunswick Street down neighbouring roads. Hundreds of thousands of punters attended every year. Many point to the costs of public liability insurance blowing out as the deathblow that ended the parade. The logistics of running the event had also spiralled. And then there was the simple fact that while a huge number of Melburnians loved to show up for the parade, relatively few went on to actually see anything in the festival. In a survey from the turn of the millennium, somewhere around 85% of people attending the street party and parade said it had no connection with Melbourne Fringe. The festival and its parade had slowly crept further and further apart. 2001 was the last hurrah.

15. FIRSTS AND LASTS

While the vast majority of each year's Fringe festival is created by independent artists doing their thing, we've already seen how Fringe-produced events have been central in creating a sense of cohesion and community across the three-plus weeks of its duration. From the first there was the parade and the costume balls and tea parties, and across its forty-year history there have been a wealth of sometimes outlandish projects dreamed up in the name of bringing people together en masse. Many didn't stand the test of time. In 1994 the festival announced the first ever Fringe Maze (this would also be the last ever Fringe Maze). The following year came Fringe Sports, which consisted of a drag race — not the vehicle variety, obviously — as well as lawns bowls and the Waiters' Race, a longstanding element of the Fringe Parade. Fringe Sports quickly went the way of the maze.

But other innovations found their footing. Fringe Fashion was launched in 1996 and attracted the likes of

216 Jenny Bannister and Catherine Manuel submitting entries. The judges were led by Toorak socialite Lillian Frank, and each year the festival would call for designers to imagine an alternative vision to the mainstream commercial fashion market. Just as fast fashion was making inroads and exponentially upping the amount of waste generated by the industry, Fringe Fashion would invite designers to create wearable art using recycled or discarded materials, for instance. Fringe Fashion was a popular corner of the festival and kept on growing until 2002, when it perhaps became a victim of its own success. It had become so established that organisers decided it had become "too mainstream," and was put back on the hanger for good.

Fringe Inventions was an ever more unexpected turn for the festival, running from 2001 to 2004. Makers were given the chance to devise and exhibit whatever their dreams and mechanical abilities would allow, and while the annual results didn't draw the biggest crowds, the event's organisers were always pleased with the level of ingenuity on offer.

Fringe Furniture is an event that has weathered the demands of time, however, and is almost as old as the festival itself. In 1986 a young expat American named Bruce Filley wandered into the Fringe offices and asked if the team had thought of running a furniture exhibition. They hadn't, and told him he was free to start organising the thing. As he recalls: "It was my intention to suggest it, but not to organise it. The people at Fringe were very persuasive. Ultimately, they convinced me that I could do it with their support, and sure enough, that happened." Thirty-six years later that same project – now Design Fringe – continues to showcase striking and beautifully crafted realisations that ponder the intersection of form and function.

16. SPACE IS THE PLACE (AGAIN)

For many the death of the Fringe Parade would be a sore point for years to come. Much of that grief comes from the fact

that the massive event had been such a communal one – a place to gather and go wild in a way that the festival itself wasn't. The 1990s had been a period of artistic growth in Melbourne, but much of it occurred in isolation. The Fringe during those years was – like much 1990s culture – largely atomised, consisting of a great range of individuals and companies but rarely feeling much like a community of diverse interests and variable lines of communication. The earliest years of Fringe had seen artists flock to each other's work, because there wasn't that much to see. As the festival universe expanded, its stars only moved further away from one another.

Remember how the early Fringe was beleaguered by the "extraordinary" lack of venues in Melbourne? That problem didn't just clear up overnight. There were an increasing number of options for bands, with cafes and bars opening spaces for live music. But it wasn't as if there was an explosion of theatres and other performance venues following suit. Until there were. From the mid 1990s on, artists in the Fringe increasingly found they could present their works in the likes of fortyfivedownstairs, The Store Room in North Fitzroy, Chapel Off Chapel, Revolver, Bar Open, The Shed, and other independent venues. The same went for the cavalcade of Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs) that popped up in the visual arts sphere. The city hadn't officially set off on a mission to create new homes for art, but a slew of artists and arts lovers began trying their hand at opening their own.

They'd also take art where it had no place being. In 1999 a young choreographer by the name of Gideon Obarzanek was making a name for himself with his fledgling company Chunky Move. He raised eyebrows by programming a show for Fringe at the nightclub Revolver in Prahran. At that time Chunky Move was only beginning to find its feet, but Fringe audiences proved willing to show up for something they knew nothing about. That, in combination with the club kids who regularly haunted the 24-hour venue, meant that Chunky

218 Move very quickly accrued a reputation as the coolest company in town, and queues would extend around the block at any of its shows. Obarzanek – who would himself become Chair of Fringe decades later – says that the cross-fertilisation of club and contemporary dance fans is typically Melbourne: "there are actually at least ten different Melbournes." It is Fringe that allows these cultures to collide and intersect, exposing people to aspects of their own city they might otherwise never encounter.

This proliferation of new arts spaces reached the point at which they could coalesce. While many were lamenting the end of the parade, a viable alternative quietly asserted itself. From the turn of the millennium the Fringe program began to revolve around hubs. From here on, an indie theatre company didn't have to be a lonely outlier playing some cold suburban hall - it could find itself programmed as part of a season, alongside a whole gamut of similarly keen emerging artists. Stand-ups could see their faces sharing a poster with comics they'd been admiring for years, while audiences could hit the same dance venue week after week to find a new show programmed for each visit. There'd be space to mingle before and after, and word would get around about the next hot thing you shouldn't miss.

By 2003 the Fringe program was providing maps of the four precincts that housed the majority of the festival: the Fitzroy/Carlton/Collingwood precinct, a St Kilda/Prahran/South Yarra precinct, a Northcote/Preston entry and the CBD/North Melbourne zone. That last precinct, especially, had grown to take on great prominence, with a heavy Fringe presence in Fed Square and Swanston Street, and an official Fringe hub at the North Melbourne Town Hall. In 2005 that hub doubled in size to include nine venues including the Lithuanian Club on Errol Street. This emphasis on centralised hubs had unpredictable side effects. Where Fringe had once spread its arms as far as Diamond Creek and Sandringham, it would now be harder to convince audiences even to travel a fraction as

far afield. Why make your way out to The Gooch in Thornbury when there are forty shows to choose from in a single North Melbourne block? You could step out of a venue onto a chilly and anonymous street in Footscray or Port Melbourne, or you could emerge right next door to the Fringe Club until 3am.

The growth in hubs also explains in part why the early 2000s sees a corresponding growth in unexpected venues. This was an era that loved the allure of a mystery location, and audiences were certainly happy to turn up to a street corner at the appointed hour and await further direction. Shows that didn't even have venues were equally embraced, with walking events that meandered through entire neighbourhoods attracting plenty of followers. Without a doubt, the early 2000s was a boom time for artists working in Melbourne, and there were countless opportunities that had previously not been available. It was easy at the time to blur the lines between that artistic landscape and the new slogan that abruptly asserted itself around this time: Melbourne, someone told us, was the "world's most liveable city". There was grumbling. The nightlife was rich, for sure, but world best? There were places to eat, but they weren't open that late? And art-wise, could you really not find this stuff anywhere else? Spoiler: the most liveable cities index is created by the Economist Group as a way of recommending to multinational corporations the most financially attractive cities in which to post their white collar workers.

But who wouldn't want to live somewhere liveable? For seven years you couldn't find anywhere more liveable than Melbourne, and once we'd drunk the liveable Kool-Aid there was only one way up and that was by populating the most liveable city with ... The Creative Class. Richard Florida's 2002 book The Rise of the Creative Class might have been based on solid research, but it was also one of those books like The Celestine Prophecy, The Secret and The Came that gives people what

they already want to hear in a purer form than they thought possible. Its thesis was that in the new world of the 2000s economic growth would be driven by those who work in creative professions, and that by supporting these thought leaders an entire city would benefit. If you get behind the cool artists, everyone else will be better off. You can see how such a message would be attractive to both city planners and the egos of artists themselves.

There's a more cynical take on Florida's thesis: in the years since, it's become apparent that artists and 'the creative class' aren't one and the same, especially since the former often live in financially dire circumstances while the latter are highly employable as content creators, communications experts and design consultants. Florida's notion of 'class' is pretty ahistorical, not to mention apolitical, but is that such a bad thing? After all, doesn't every artist lie awake dreaming of the moment that their hard work will be rewarded with the whispered words: "You're driving economic growth..." This was a time when arts bureaucrats and town planners grew terribly cosy, and we were constantly reminded of the wonderful financial impact that the creative sector had on national growth. There was a lot of vibrancy.

There's no denying that there was new money in creative production around this time, though. In 2004 a Pricewater-houseCoopers assessment finds that the overall economic benefit of the Fringe Festival to Melbourne will that year be \$5.7 million, equivalent to around 57 full time employment positions, although perhaps an analyst at an big accounting firm has a different idea of what a full-time arts worker was earning in 2004. The language of Fringe begins to shift in these years, too. Artists are still sometimes describing their shows in infuriatingly obtuse ways, but many are starting to see that they might find better audiences by communicating their ideas clearly and attractively – dare we say selling their work? Behind the scenes, Fringe internal missives and official reports begin to adopt the new lingo of the creative industry: gone

are the 'paid pack-horses' and 'hard-living atrocities' of the early Fringe, replaced by stakeholders, KPIs, core business processes, risk management, and unique selling propositions.

From Fiona Scott Norman's terrific 2002 interview with then-current and former Fringe creative producers: "One thing that Mihaly, Pigrum and Vaughan all lament is the blunting of Fringe's political edge. Vaughan thinks a lot of shows now are all hook and no bait, and Mihaly considers it conservative and calls for a return to direct involvement on the behalf of the artists. "Pigrum observes that, being non-curated, Fringe reflects the time that it happens. Society and the arts are definitely more corporate now, and, as a result, Fringe is less edgy at the moment. For years, in the parade, there was an HIV-positive man (Bruce Fentham), who developed full-blown AIDS, getting weaker and weaker every year. In his final year, he was lying on the bonnet of a Valiant or something, covered in Kaposi sarcomas, being driven down the street. It was incredibly simple and personal, but very confronting. I haven't seen anything as moving as that for many years."

The tussle between antisocial nihilism and techno-utopianism that characterised the 1990s was largely resolved come the new millennium. 2000 saw the introduction of Fringe Goes Green, in which recycling stations were installed for the parade, and the same year saw Fringe merch on sale for the first time. The new dichotomy wasn't between no future and an impossibly bright one, but between unashamed capitalism and social responsibility. It's an all-star wrestling match that continues to this day.

By the early 2000s the Fringe had grown to such a size that it was impossible for any journalist to cover the entire program, and a result was that we began to see festival coverage focusing on a small number of shows by media-savvy artists who knew how to capture attention with a strong hook. Certain artists

and groups began to dominate discussions around Fringe, and while it was certainly possible for anyone to break through by generating buzz during the festival, this was still a long time before artists had been thoroughly schooled in how to market themselves and their work as saleable products.

There were reasons to get educated, and fast. Fringe had spent a long time as an alternative to the mainstream, but during this unexpectedly fertile few years the gap between those two narrowed considerably. In 2004 the old Playbox theatre company was reinvented as Malthouse Theatre, and would soon prove willing to boost independent acts to much bigger audiences. In 2005 the Malthouse included Eddie Perfect's show Drink Pepsi, Bitch in that year's Fringe season, while independent theatre companies Red Stitch, Uncle Semolina & friends and The Suitcase Royale all found themselves programmed by the Arts Centre. The Chaser's first live show would premiere at Fringe, as would comedian Sammy J's. Tim Minchin would play Tony Starr's Kitten Club. Rawcus would debut the astonishing Not Dead Yet, and there would be memorable offerings from groups that no longer exist - Eleventh Hour Theatre, Theatre in Decay, Oubykh Theatre.

It helped that this was the same era in which arts blogs and social media were beginning to offer alternative spaces in which conversations could take place. People who had gone unnoticed in official media channels could discover themselves recommended among the new networks of discussion taking place online. Self-appointed reviewers would offer their critiques of shows with no budget for self promotion, and lively exchanges often followed. This was the brief period before algorithms took hold of major internet platforms, and it was relatively easy for novice users to build their own sites with little coding experience. It was also a blessed moment before the internet began to reward snarkiness and contrarianism, and for just a while it seemed as though sites like

223 Blogger and Facebook and even early Twitter could prove revolutionary within the artistic sphere.

17. THE WAR ON ARTS

IRL was changing, too. By the end of the 2000s the doughnut city was a distant memory. Melbourne had launched its plans to become a 24-hour city, rich with life and culture around the clock. It was a big initiative on the back of the newfound economic interest in creativity as saleable culture, and it had the supporters it needed. Not everyone was so enthusiastic. Making culture is work, but unmaking it can be a form of warfare. In 2007 the conservative blogger and soon-to-be-convicted racist Andrew Bolt began a righteous crusade against the arts, with Melbourne Fringe the first target of a cultural carpet bombing.

For the most part, the Fringe had been affectionately addressed by the media up until this point. At worst artists were treated with friendly condescension or head-shaking pity – journalists weren't the sort to go pale in the face when confronted by even the most transgressive of Fringe acts. It was better to sniff at any perceived pretensions, amateurism or excessive earnestness. This included the publications under the umbrella of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. But in the first decade of the twenty-first century, these media outlets began to systematically set their sights on the same targets, banging drums whose insistence and omnipresence began to alter the course of public opinion. Screechy old white men such as Bolt would spew slight variations on the same tirade for weeks, months, years, perhaps hoping to drown out alternative voices, or just fatigue the listener into tuning out from public life entirely.

Bolt timed his attack to coincide with the opening of the 2007 Fringe. The Fringe, he reported, was defined by an "unthinking conformity to the faddish politics of the left." As evidence he quoted at length an Age article exploring the festival – perhaps reading the program himself would have been too

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

1997

The Buzzcuts program is launched, providing a platform for reviews of Fringe events. Buzzcuts kept up the critical dialogue until 2016.

much of an affront for his sensitive soul. He lamented such works as a show about environmental disaster, a protest cabaret and "three Muslim comics in Fear of a Brown Planet." If you know anything about Bolt, you'll know this last was a rag to a bull, and he spends considerable time suggesting that the show would generate "public concern about Muslim extremists." It didn't and the Brown Planet team would soon be some of the country's most sought-after standups.

But Bolt's own volley of spiteful missiles are only glancingly directed at Fringe: the festival is apparently merely one example of the corrupt ideology affecting every artform, and he goes on to explain why the same rot has infected the Melbourne Writers Festival and even that bastion of hard left radicalism, the MTC. An interesting side note to this rant is how Bolt's tactic during this era was to lump all members of 'the Left' into a giant, undifferentiated mass: "My point is our artists now display such an eerie unanimity of fashionable political views..." This is in stark contrast to the conservative rhetoric of today, which aims to cast suspicion on a progressive politics as feeble and divided — "the Left is tearing itself apart!"

Reactionary attacks on Fringe weren't entirely without precedent. In its early years Fringe held a benefit night at the Prince of Wales in St Kilda (the Prince of Wales Motor Hotel, as it was then cutely known). The newspaper *Truth* had begun its existence as a champion of the working class, but by this point had been sold to Murdoch's News Ltd, and was now better known for its bare-chested page three girls. It's hard to tell if the newspaper's assessment of the Fringe benefit as "a mixture of whores and weirdos" was intended as an insult, and the declaration that making one's way through the crowd was made impossible due to the fog of dope smoke might have been a positive review for some. But there was no mistaking the main object of the vitriolic ink spilled in this review: the two youngest acts on the bill, Royal Flush and The Sweedes.

Both bands were composed of teenagers, some still at school. Royal Flush was the band of Tim Hemensley,

226

later a founding member of Powder Monkeys, but the Truth description of the night and the way it targeted the young bands caused Royal Flush to break up. Tim's dad Kris wrote to suggest Fringe take up the matter with the Press Council on grounds of gross misrepresentation and harassment of the young performers. It's hard to keep sensationalist news quiet, however, and after the Truth's report "the commercial radio station 3UZ, in the Bert Newton show, managed to go a step further and denigrate Julie Higgins, Youth Arts Coordinator and the whole notion of young people being able to express themselves." When Bert Newton turns on you, you're sowing the seeds for a generation of older Melburnians to remain disposed to suspect the corrupting influences of the Fringe for the rest of their lives. Bolt just had to lob in a few code words to activate these sleeper agents. 'Group-think'? Check. 'Dictatorship of approved opinion'? Check. 'Tax-payer funded'? Deirdre, fetch my artist-beating stick.

Bolt didn't win his war on the arts, but he and his fellow travellers have certainly flung enough mud to have caused a real difference to the lives of many. Remember: Melbourne artists of the 1980s and 90s held rallies protesting the feeble funding policies of both Liberal and Labor governments. But by politicising the funding of the arts as an explicitly progressive and left wing act, Bolt paved the way for an astonishing decimation of arts funding in Australia, forcing the closure of companies and the exit of many artists from the industry.

Throughout the 2000s a typical Fringe risk management report would include concerns about loose electrical cables near water, or a drunk passerby voicing their ardent criticisms of a piece of public theatre. By 2010 these same reports had to include possible attacks by Bolt – was anything in the festival likely to attract his outrage? He'd recently come at City of Melbourne itself on the front page of the Herald Sun, weaponising its arts grants program as a way of convincing readers that artists were lazy

good-for-nothings gorging themselves at the trough of public money.

The facts spoke otherwise: that year's festival theme was "MADE FOR THIS CITY" and an independently commissioned report sexily titled *The Economic Impact of the 2010 Melbourne Fringe Festival* found that total expenditure associated with the 2010 Fringe – not just money spent on tickets but on meals, travel and other flow-on spending – was \$21.4 million.That's not an insignificant lump of cash.

Let's leave the anti-arts establishment now, to turn our attention to the fact that the artists of 2010 were not the messy layabouts and hippie radicals of an earlier time. The Gen Xers of the late 80s and 1990s had been defined by a concept that would now seem alien: 'selling out' was like kryptonite to them, having seen each and every artistic movement of their making quickly co-opted by corporate interests and bled of all vitality. From the get-go the famous Fringe Parade had followed three rules: no sexism, no racism, no commercialism. Those first two persist, but the idea that artists couldn't make money, promote themselves, or hitch their wagon to big money? Somewhere along the way that dropped off.

Pre-millennial Fringe guides were populated by countless listings that didn't come with their own photos, and the copy could sometimes be a misspelled swamp of incomprehensible gibberish. Even well into the early 2000s there were shows without images or even a sense that the creative team had been finalised. In the face of an increasingly hostile funding climate, artists couldn't get away with that slipshod ethos anymore. Around 2009, Fringe staff began to review the way that the festival's artists were perceived. Then-CEO Esther Anatolitis says that in news coverage of the festival, the media consistently focused on events that were eccentric, absurd or plain weird. "(But) not every artist in the festival wants to be known as wacky and zany. They want people to know that it's taken years and years of training and sophisticated education to be an artist."

You know the joke, how it takes a bunch of years to become an overnight success? Anatolitis points to a statistic in a study by economist David Throsby that suggests that it takes longer to become an established artist than it does to become a doctor. "It would never have been the intention of the Fringe Network in the first place to present all artists in this wacky, zany way. But they would absolutely have wanted to be completely bold, shocking, in your face." Somewhere along the way, that stance had become muted by a media that preferred to defuse the more transgressive elements of Fringe through the vaselined lens of zaniness. That was about to change.

Fringe began a concerted campaign to reframe the terms through which the media - and the public - characterised its artists. "Making sure that artists were presented as being rigorous, expert, curious, adventurous, experimental," says Anatolitis. This was something in the air. The 2010s saw a widespread professionalisation of independent artists. Small companies began officially incorporating and instituting their own boards. Artists built their own websites, optimised their search engine results, commissioned expert photo shoots and striking visual designs. Art is work, and throughout this period Melbourne's artists really rolled up their sleeves. "Artists are now much more aware of having to brand themselves in order to build an audience," says writer and director Jean Tong. "There's less of an expectation that anyone else is going to do it for you. There is less of a reliance on the old kind of media marketing, stuff that you have to do in terms of contacting mastheads and contacting magazines. All that kind of stuff is still there, but a lot of that now is self-pushed on social media."

Fringe had always sought to assist this kind of thing, and it now took up a leadership position that helped transform Melbourne's culture once again. Where once it had offered a platform for thousands of artists to become visible to a wider population, now it began equipping those artists with ways in which to survive

as professionals in a landscape coming to associate 'creativity' with economic gain.

During the late 2000s through to today, a range of new programs became pivotal to Fringe: artist developments programs, producer training, artist services and 'tour ready' schemes began to provide artists with the kinds of skills and experience they need to make a go of the arts as a viable career, rather than a hobby or opportunity for self-expression. Mentoring and 'outside eye' guidance programs team emerging artists with industry veterans. Broadcaster and Fringe Living Legend Richard Watts was Chair of the organisation for much of this period, and says that "particularly over the most recent decade... Fringe has played a much greater role in artists' development as well as commissioning work, providing Fringe artists with mentors, with outside eyes, helping assist them to develop their work and develop their creative practice, not just put on a show during the festival." And while this professionalisation of the arts takes place in a broader culture of competition and personal branding, Fringe takes an opposite tactic. Rather than encouraging artists to play a zero-sum game - grab your slice of the pie or someone else will - Fringe continues to push a climate in which anyone's successes only boosts the chances for others. In 2009 the program intro includes mention of composer Brian Eno's notion of 'scenius'. Scene + genius. It's like the outdated notion of the solitary genius, but with more kudos to the folks around them. An artist immersed in an environment of fellow dreamers and makers will be elevated and inspired: 'when buoyed by scenius, you act like genius.' It works. Take a look at the Fringe program today. It's not stacked with shows whose only audience will be the director's parents. Instead, there are people you've never heard of who will enjoy full houses. There are comics who will set foot on stage for the first time and slay the crowd. There are visual artists who will seem to have emerged with a fully formed style of their own. That's what happens when a critical mass of artists are exposed to each other's work over a sustained period, in a culture where there's more art than is possible to

take in. The internet is obviously part of that picture, but so is the sense of walking through a cultural land-scape that is the exact opposite of the barren vacuum that Melbourne once presented.

The theme of the 2014 Fringe was Art + Atmosphere + Community. It was an equation that sought to explain what the festival was composed of in that moment. and it does the job. Fringe is a festival ostensibly based around the works that populate the program, but it's just as much about the atmosphere that's produced when so many artists and their works are presented in close proximity, and the community that can result when avenues of exchange and communication are established to foster connection. The tone of the works that featured in Fringe took a noticeable shift during this decade, too. In the preceding era, a snarky if not downright bleak outlook could set art aside as boundary-pushing, convention-breaking and propriety-busting. By the 2010s that stuff was the default setting of the internet. And so, instead, the Fringe began to be home to an increasing number of works that eschewed provocation-for-provocation's sake in favour of something more generous, curious and kind. "There is a shift, generally, away from uncomfortableness at the Fringe," says Jean Tong. "I think that is not necessarily a festival approach so much as a societal kind of a cultural shift in what it means to make art." Lou Wall and Margot Taniutco are two of the most lauded performers in the current generation of Fringe acts, and perhaps typical of a wave of artists looking not to alienate but to connect. "I'm anti-provocation, says Wall. I think as an artist, as a person, I'm a very deep people pleaser... What I crave when I say theatre is a safe space. I understand how important provocation is, especially because a lot of left-wing comedy actually came out of provocation. And that was provoking, once. But I want people to be entertained, have a good time, feel safe." "If you're thinking of provocation as a rush of emotions that I'm trying to draw from an audience from a political perspective...," says Tanjutco, "I don't think that my work does that... I want this to be a show that someone will look forward to seeing, someone who has had a long, terrible day at work. And then afterwards will maybe be okay with being alive for like a little bit."

For some of the old guard, all this talk of generosity and connection - not to mention professional development and entertainment - might leave a sour taste. The Fringe of the 1990s was rife with artists sure of their own genius, and the fact that they were often untrained and unversed in their fields was just proof that they were the real deal. Anything more would be selling out. You had to burn the establishment down before you could build it anew. And perhaps there's an argument that the Fringe of the 2010s, with its brand-conscious and media savvy artists, was becoming its own type of mainstream. During this period Fringe organisers expressed internal concerns that the precincts and hubs that had been pivotal in building a sense of community and camaraderie had gone too far, and that it was no longer worth appearing in the Fringe if you couldn't secure a spot at the North Melbourne Town Hall.

But culture evolves, and what was once avant garde can now seem reactionary. Tong wonders if "people who really appreciate being confrontational and being provocative and doing all that kind of stuff will also be the people who become uncomfortable in the show about race. And then say that it's not pushing the boundaries of art, even though they are feeling a similar discomfort... even though the cultural ideas that are within that piece might be much more challenging than what they were doing in terms of like, should a performer touch an audience member?" Moira Finucane is an artist who has been reinventing her practice at Fringe for more than 20 years. Her work is both dark and unsettling and

deeply invested in connection and community. She says that the ultimate arbiter of 'good' or 'bad' art is in how it treats its audience. "The only bad art is art that is disrespectful of the audience," she says. "If it doesn't cherish the audience, it's really easy for it to end up being bad art. Because it can be arrogant and contemptuous of the audience. There's some art that's been globally defined as great art that's all of those things."

Culture evolves, and Fringe keeps evolving too. Which it does, by design, even though that design can be hard to discern. Perhaps the very word Fringe should be thought of as a verb, rather than something fixed – a dynamic that describes a culture forever in flux. Perhaps Fringe will never be fixed, because after all these years it remains a network by nature if not by name. It's why the program always offers a fascinating way to chart broader artistic interests that transcend any one entry. There was the moment in 2009 when shows for tiny audiences - just a handful of folks - suddenly appeared everywhere. There was the circus revolution of the following few years, in which a whole swag of artists stripped the art back to raw essentials and revitalised the form along the way. Who could have predicted that clowning would enjoy a renaissance, but it sure as hell did, as a slew of post-Gaulier performers lit up the 2010s with brilliant, mostly silent acts. More recently there was a surge of comics and theatremakers mining their own lives for illuminating true stories, while works by trans and non-binary artists have seen a huge uptick in the last few years. In 2019, 142 artists and 8 percent of Fringe audiences identified as Deaf or with a disability. The Indigenous component of the festival is stronger than it has ever been, with Deadly Fringe now a backbone of the program.

The Fringe program also reflects larger cultural conversations taking place. The 2012 comedy show Memoirs of an Aisha didn't attract much comment, but when the same character appeared in 2019's Aisha the Aussie Geisha an open letter signed by more than 70 artists objected. In its early years Fringe

trumpeted itself as a safe space for free expression, but the nature of safe spaces has changed. By the late 2010s Fringe had begun to acknowledge how heated the discursive space around art had become, and included guidance as to where a particular event would fit within an audience member's 'comfort zone'. It's a clever strategy. Rather than getting mired in politically loaded debates about so-called cancel culture versus artistic responsibility, it aims to provide due warning as to the potential volatility of the space a person was choosing to enter. Fore-warned is better than pre-judged.

When current creative director and CEO Simon Abrahams arrived in the role in the mid 2010s, he took a hard look at the deeper implications of an open access festival. "One of the most important things to realise about open access is that it doesn't equal accessibility... It's easy to say, 'oh, we're open access, anyone can register an event.' What that naturally does is reinforce market forces. The most commercial work or the most popular work, or the most straight-down-the-line work, or the work that aligns with the values at the centre of our culture, is the work that sometimes floats to the top of the pile. And that doesn't seem very Fringey to me." Opening the door, says Abrahams, isn't enough. "We need an active invitation...We need to actively reduce barriers to get people in the door. And once they're in the door, we still need to be doing work to amplify that in different ways."

One of the first things he did in the job was to raise money to cover things like registration fees and venue hire for people who couldn't afford them. "It was clear to me that if we wanted to get First Nations artists and people of colour, and Deaf and Disabled artists in the room, we had to drastically shift our approach, or our understanding of what open access could mean." Under Abrahams' watch the festival has also sought to recreate the Spencer Tunick-like moment of 2001, in which a city seems to galvanise itself around a mass Melbourne event. To this end the festival now

234 commissions major public works each year that take over the CBD.

In an echo of the youth program harking back to Fringe's earliest days, the festival also now features a strong element for or by children and young people. "They have these incredible, unfettered views of the world that I am fascinated to hear about and to follow their views," says Abrahams. In a less fortunate throwback to the youth of the early Fringe, there are still those who clutch the pearls whenever young voices make themselves heard. As part of 2017 event The Children's Party, a group of kids were given a spot on ABC's Q&A. "The children talked about refugee policy," says Abrahams. "And the right wing trolls online attacked these children, like these views that these 12-year-olds had were so dangerous, that essentially, we decided that the safety of these children was at risk. And so we actually had to pull the project. Which fascinates me. It says to me: the project did more than we ever imagined it could do."

18. THE REST IS UP TO YOU

Melbourne Fringe has always been a festival that puts artists at its centre, and it's never had difficulty finding them. The 1984 festival featured 81 individual artists, and by 1987 there were that number in the performing arts category alone. In 1998 there were 225 events in the festival, and these numbers have grown every year since. In 2014 there was an inexplicable jump in registered shows – 100 more than the previous year – and by 2019 Fringe was home to 458 events attracting more than 385,000 attendees. After 20 years at the North Melbourne Town Hall, the festival's new hub shifted to Trades Hall – where the organisation is now housed year round, and just a block from the former Dracula's, the venue that was home to the very first Fringe mini-festival.

Simon Abrahams says that Trades Hall is "the people's palace, it belongs to the people, belongs to the workers. And people know that it's not an intimidating building to go into. In fact, it's dirty, and grungy and Fringey. And because it has recently been renovated,

it also is now accessible, which was incredibly import-235 ant to us, moving in there as well." Harking back to its very roots, Fringe isn't just a festival today, but also programs events across the calendar. It's still open-access, and it still doesn't have an artistic director. It's also not the same fringe you'll find elsewhere. Many festivals the size of Melbourne's have morphed into bloated commercial beasts, where artists struggle to find any purchase alongside the big ticket offerings that hardly invoke the elusive "spirit of the fringe". Melbourne has somehow managed to retain its reputation as a space for artists to experiment and take risks, invite their audiences somewhere they've never found themselves before and be confident they'll find those willing to come along for the ride. It's not just a home to independent artists, but it offers independence to all comers. It doesn't have the same commercial imperative that some festivals do – perhaps the abundance of other festivals in Melbourne partly alleviates that need.

Way back in 1982, they didn't call it the Melbourne Arts Festival. They could have. They chose Fringe instead, even though there was no festival to be the fringe of. This was an identity. "The Arts" was something, and they wanted to be something else. They wanted great things, but they also valued chaos. They wanted accidents and happenstance. Posters for the parade promised what now seems faintly ridiculous:

"improvised theatre will happen continually"
"fun and excitement both planned and unplanned"
The event would be "so out of control we don't even believe it".

In the earliest years there was even an 'Open House' venue for artists so disorganised they hadn't managed to pull their act together, but still wanted to be part of the festival – as the program kindly put it: "for performers dedicated to last minute arrangements". For more than a decade, however, last minute arrangements haven't cut the mustard. The artists of the Fringe today are multidisciplinary polymaths, highly literate in vari-

ous artforms and clued up as to self-promotion and fruitful networking. They have a technological arsenal at their disposal literally unimaginable to their forebears. All of this came in handy when last minute arrangements suddenly came back into vogue.

The 2020 and 2021 Fringe Festivals were completely upended by the global COVID-19 pandemic, and artists of the Fringe were tasked with reinventing their work in multiple ways as the landscape of what was possible endured a succession of seismic upheavals. For many it was too much, and the arts sector across the board suffered devastating rates of attrition. There were those who reimagined their work as digital offerings, and it's astonishing that the 2020 Fringe – almost entirely online – still managed to feature hundreds of entries. Moreover, some who had never handled a camera became instant Fringe celebrities by delivering work that didn't just manage to overcome the hurdles of COVID but pole-vaulted them with effortless glee.

Two events from the 2020 Fringe Festival illustrate the way that fringe artists can keep things going when others give up the ghost. During a period of lockdown, when human contact was almost impossible, choreographer Stephanie Lake created *Multiply*, a work for hundreds of non-professional dancers who would be spaced 1.5 metres apart in a piece of mass choreography. Organising and rehearsing the work had to be done via online video, and restrictions on social gathering meant that the outdoor work wasn't intended to be performed for a mass audience, but was created for the sake of the creation itself. As with Spencer Tunick's event two decades earlier, huge numbers proved willing to step up and reclaim public space at a time of fear and trepidation.

The same year saw the unrepeatable *Midnight Mess*. The minute that Melbourne's lengthy lockdown was lifted, a raucous gathering of arts lovers assembled to celebrate the return of performance. At 11.59pm the doors opened and live theatre was back, baby.

Fringe today can seem as distant from its beginnings as the city itself is unrecognisable from the Melbourne of 40 years ago. The city and its festival are inextricably connected, though. "In a lot of cities that have a Fringe," says lan Pidd, "artists feel like they graduate from the Fringe to go to the main festival or to be programmed by the big art centres. In Melbourne, people don't give a shit about that. They'll do Melbourne Festival and they'll come back. They'll go to the Opera House, they'll go and have a big thing at the Kennedy Center, or they'll go to the South Bank in London and then two years later, they'll premiere something at the Fringe and not feel like 'Oh my God, my career is on the slide'. They go, 'No, no, I'm just working. I'm just working.' This Fringe is not the Fringe of anything, it's just what's going on."

"I feel like Melbourne Fringe has hung on to that support of the idiosyncratic, of the non-aligned, the little venues that pop up here and there, the little works that are in garages," says Moira Finucane. "In any institutional setting, it's very hard to leave strange little spaces for things to flourish... What I would really love to see in Melbourne's art community is a continued support of everything that Fringe can be by not only the people who desperately need those platforms, but by everybody who's benefited from them." Melbourne Fringe is not an algorithm. It will never serve you up what it thinks you'll already like, but you might stumble onto something you never knew you could love. "I think the most important thing to protect about Melbourne Fringe is that it can make you feel uncomfortable," says Wesley Enoch. "It can make you feel excited about new things. And Melbourne Fringe by its very nature pushes you out of your comfort zone and makes you a fuller, rounder, more connected to your society because of your connection to artists."

With the 2022 Fringe looming, there will be familiar faces and strangers alike. With so much deferred throughout the previous pandemic-stricken years, the festival promises to be three in one, and it remains to be seen how such a colossal

mass of artistic energy will transform the city once again. There will be art bleeding into the streets, love on the dance floors, crushing disappointments and roaring elation. Hundreds of thousands of people will be lifted from their seats, given a whirlwind tour of new galaxies, and spat out into the night to wonder: what just happened? Because it's never happened before, but it's also been happening for 40 years. While we're at it: a parade is being organised.

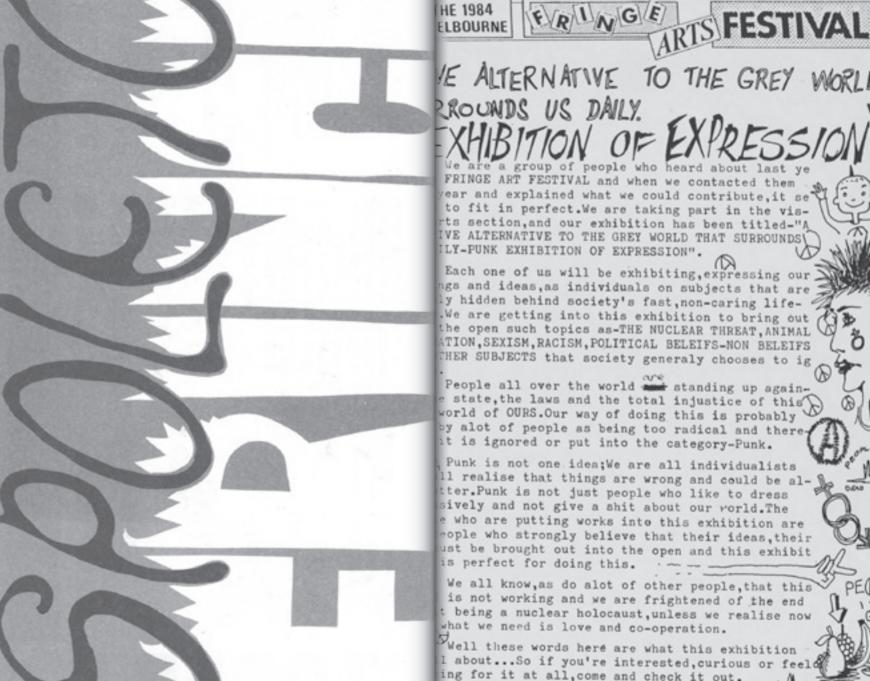
JOHN BAILEY is a Melbourne arts journalist and writer. In the past he has worked as a broadcaster, lecturer, teacher and panellist, and in various capacities has contributed writing to more arts organisations than he can remember. He remains eternally fascinated by the complex ecology of Melbourne's artistic landscape.

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2001

New York artist Spencer Tunick invites Melburnians to pose naked en masse for one of his signature photographs. More than 4000 – an unprecedented number for Tunick – prove willing to strip down in the middle of St Kilda Road.



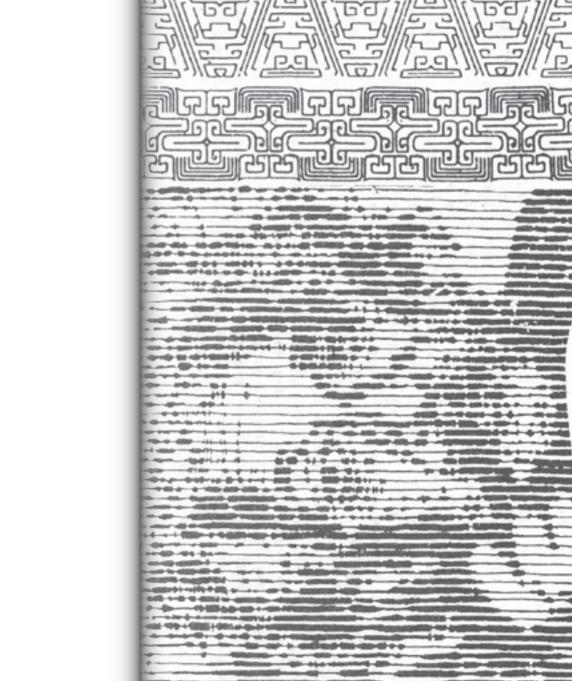




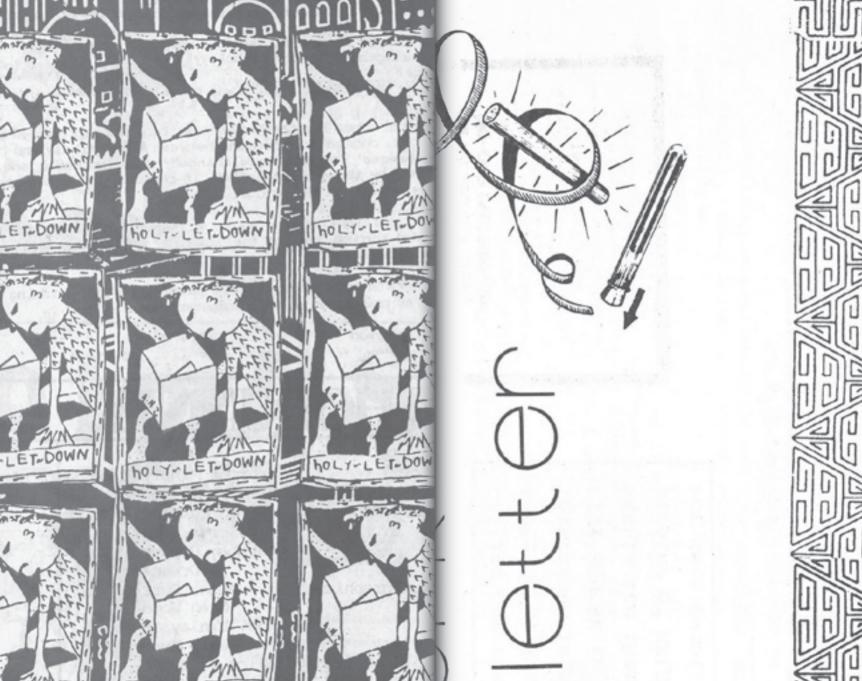


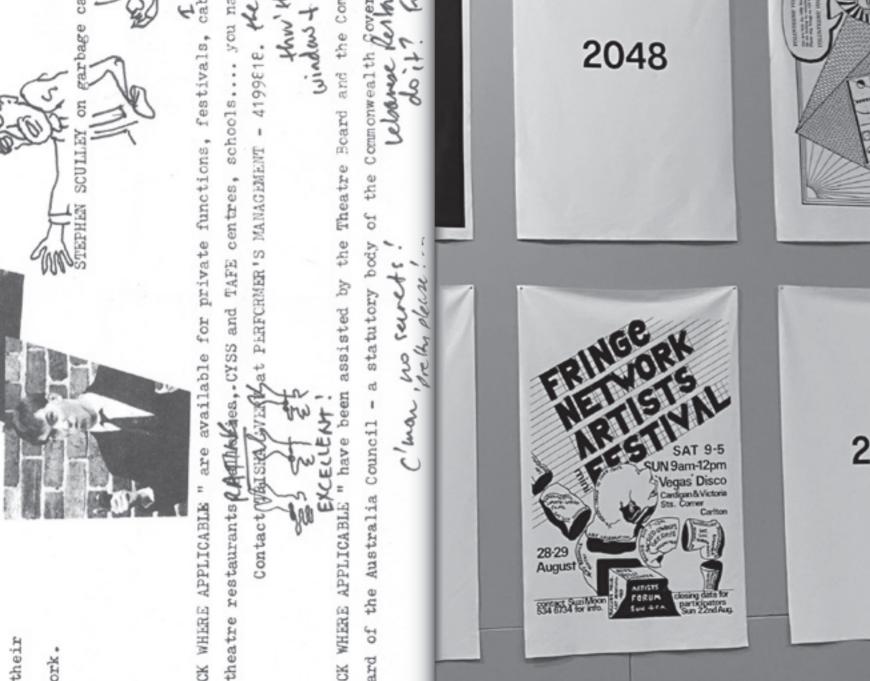






FREEDOM TO CREATE







the sense of loss they both still feel.

The play is performed by SUE BYRNE and CHRIS

HE NOMAD prose poems by rapha

Beyond time and place a woman is lost in the

HUTCHISON.

THE NOMAD sequence is read by SUE BYRNE. THE MC SHERRY and features the voices of JANICE

HE SHE-WOLF play by graham
In the late 1860s, in a remote and inaccessi

Ural Mountains, hunters discovered a lost to people. It has been recorded that one of the a woman of the tribe and took her back to his

lived out her days there and bore him two ch the events on which The She-Wolf is based.

The play is performed by IRIS WALSHE with mu

ONGS FROM "KATE KELL

words - daniel keene, music - mark

WILD BOYS ... sung by RHONDA WILSON
KELLY SHOW ... sung by SUE BYRNE and JULES
MY JOE IS ONE ... sung by JULES HUTCHISON

ENUE - RECONNAISSANCE GALLERY 72 N

WED. 24 - SUN. 28 SEPTEMBER 8 PM



AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2005

The newly created Malthouse Theatre begins programming Fringe events, with other mid-to-large scale venues including the Arts Centre following suit.

PAGE 1... Visual Arts Venues 2... 1st Press Release 3... Drummond St Gallery 4... Art workers Union 6... Iceberg 8... Womens Art Movement 10... Print Show 11... Anthill Foyer 12... Studio 184, Studio 6 13... Melbourne College Bl 14... New Work Drawing, Gr 15... Extensions Dance Stu. 16... A Performance by the 17... Grant St Theatre Pho 18... I Hate Tony/In Hawth 21... Collingwood & Carrin 22... A.M.P. Square Exhibi

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Fringe whets appetite

FRINGE FESTIVAL An overview

J. CARR

There has been much sweating over Fringe Festival programmes lately, seeking relief from this unspeakable weather in muggy coffee shops between events. The program is essential - they're free and can be picked up at the Fringe office, which is the old Flying Trapeze, 201 Brunswick St and Fringe venues (foyers of the Universal, Playbox, RMIT, Black Cat, Roar Studio, etc.).

Some of the most intriguine events challenge neat slots like 'theatre' and 'dancel. One such piece is Washing by Liz Paterson. (Universal foyer till March 6). It has the creator's characteristic gentle whimsey with a touch of bittemess. In a stunning costume covering all but toes and fingers, she presents a beautifully crafted domestic fantasy. Two quibbles - we need more time to enjoy the final image and the use of writ-

ten words at the end is unnecessary and a little intrusive.

This piece was followed by Witch, an effective and economical cunningly piece by Pat Cornelius. Hopefully, both these will surface again.

First Fridays (of each month) at Extensions, the Modern Dance Ensemble studio in Off St. Carlton, are always worthwhile. Despite steamy conditions, it was packed out for last Friday's Fringe offering. Highlights were Interview with Wolf Bostal, chorecgraphed by Ruth Komersaroff, for three dancers. Soundtrack was a collage from Radio France. Shelly Lasika's work in progress looks most stimulating.

A pity it was on only one night. But there is another program Friday and Saturday, 11 and 12, at 8, called Dance Circle and another on Sunday 13 called Ritual.

Also worth catching is Contemporary Dance and Wire Act at St Mark's Hall, George St. Fr Last shows are Thu and Friday, 10 and midday. So if you dance is swans in you're missing out. A Melbourne, from k to decaying factories ple are moving in wei

wonderful ways.

Passionfruits Gre

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> Stylianou presen dense and conce work, using sound lights and moveme central theme of cla versus romanticis attitudes emerged

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at the Food Factory

Watch out for

(For the uninitiat Food Factory is in Suggestions out smorgasbord of e

ces: 'Dr D, till Ma 7.30, City Square rette - political va about the writer

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5.30 on, State Film

Fringe Network in association with Moomba Festival are presenting a one day Festival at the Myer Music Thursday Rowl

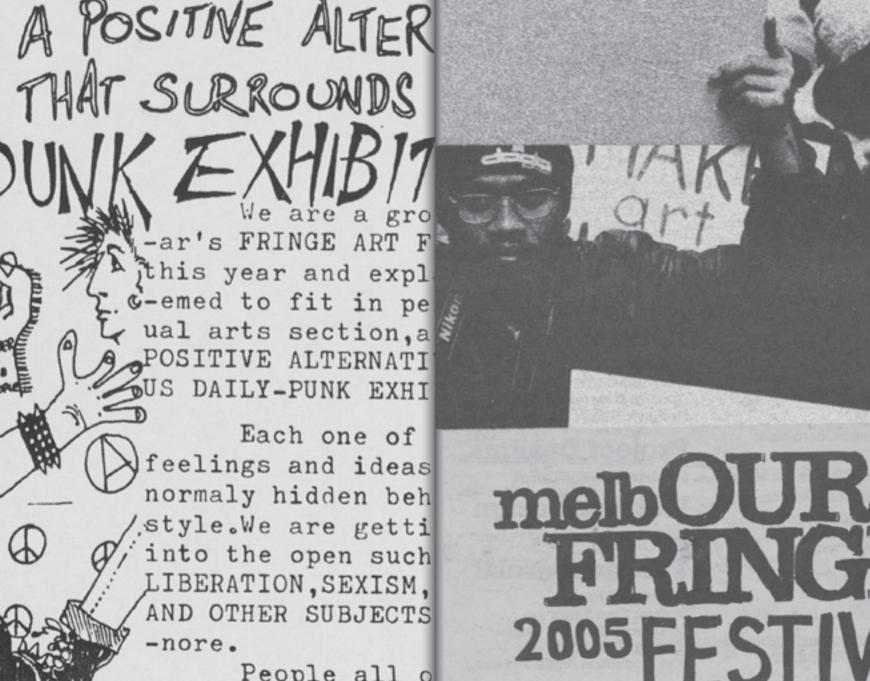
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AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2007

Angry blogger Andrew Bolt pens a two page *Herald-Sun* opinion piece targeting the Melbourne Fringe. There is no indication he has read a Fringe program or attended a Fringe event, and the images accompanying the screed are from the film Don's Party that predate the existence of the Fringe by half a decade.



opening night at the Prince of Wales Hotel: SCATTERED ORDER, KRYPTIK TONES, CRUSHED UNCLE PUSH OF I (not confirmed), ADZOHU, THE HOGIE CATS, FISH VIRGINIA, DHINK. .. respected Helbourne and Sydney under ' ground musicians: demanding, diverse and INTERNATIO exciting. MUNRO (VII SUNDAY OCT SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 30 This venue was to be the Union Cafeteria. Unfortunately there are Council problems. Watch for the programme on the handbill. 5 - 10 pm; \$2 entry SUNDAY HO PRUSSIAN BLUE, PELVIC THRUST, EVERYDAYS DEPARTURE, CAPTAIN COCUA. Jazz at the University Club. PINK FREU Free F.M. members; \$5 others. DALE DUET MARTIN JACKSON, SECOND PHASE, LANDING, MATTHEW . Afri REES. MONDAY OC MONDAY OCTOBER 1 Prince of Wales: NERVOUS BUH STEERS, MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION, SOCIOCUSIS, CREATURES OTIS MACE, KLU KLUX FRANKENSTEIN, alternative ANDY VANO disco. .. abrasive experimental with comic edge. with defi TUESDAY (TUESDAY OCTOBER 2 Prince of Wales: SCHAP MUSEUM, I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVY, PIZZA SLUTS, HAREM SC BAY OF PIGS, THE BRAINSHACK. BRICK KR. . Letter-known sewer bands + light melodic relief. Africal Tukul Eating House: Open from 7 p.m., \$2 for music. WEDNESDAY AFRICAN DANCE AND PERCUSSION, IMPROVISED AS WELL AS STRUCTURED. (TO BE A A CATTL WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 3 PRAGUE. Prince of Wales: TOMBSTONE HANDS, POLAR 1500, A GREAT DIVIDE, DECAY CONSTANT, COTHIC FARMYARD, MARTIN JACKSON. .. miscellaneous grupge-mungers and finer THURSDAY screaming sax. Africal Tukul Eating House: SHANGHA Open from 7 p.m., \$2 for music. FURNITUR AFRICAN DANCE AND PERCUSSION, IMPHOVISED AS WELL AS STRUCTURED. FRIDAY O THURSDAY OCTOBER 4 Prince of Wales: FREE OLYMPIC SMILING INFANTS. MERCY MERCY. FOYER TALK, DELTA RED. PIL

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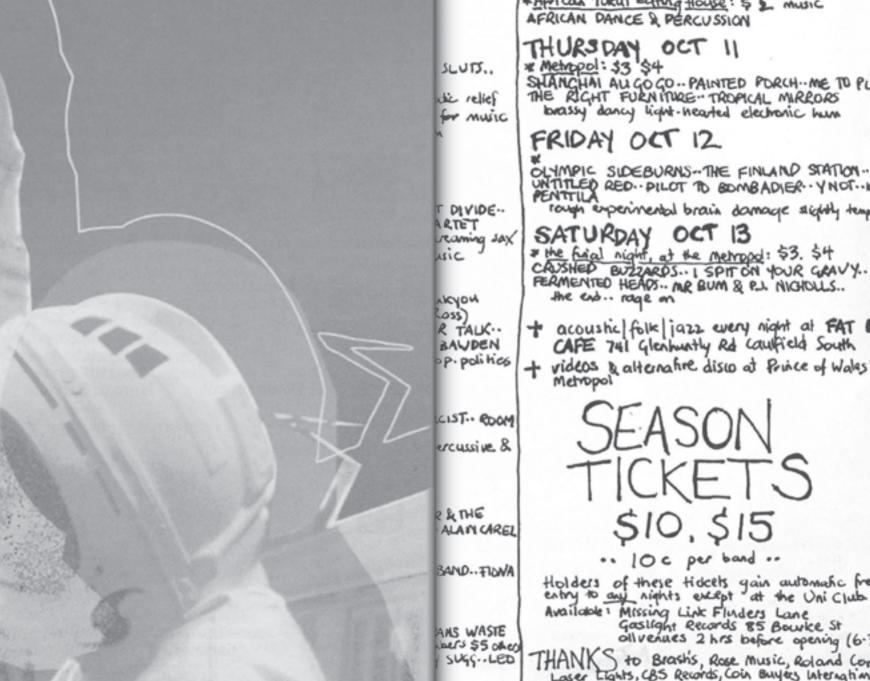


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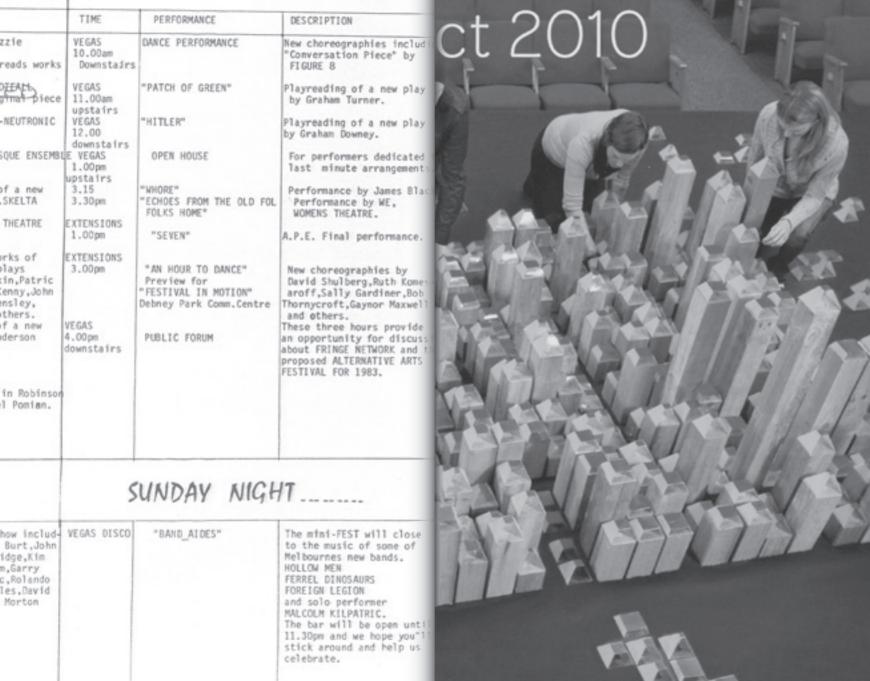
EN)PARTY

I GAME?





THE MIDDLE OF THE FRINGE IS THE CENTERING OF THE OUTSIDE



AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2011

Melbourne Fringe wins a Tourism Victoria Award for Best Major Event or Festival.



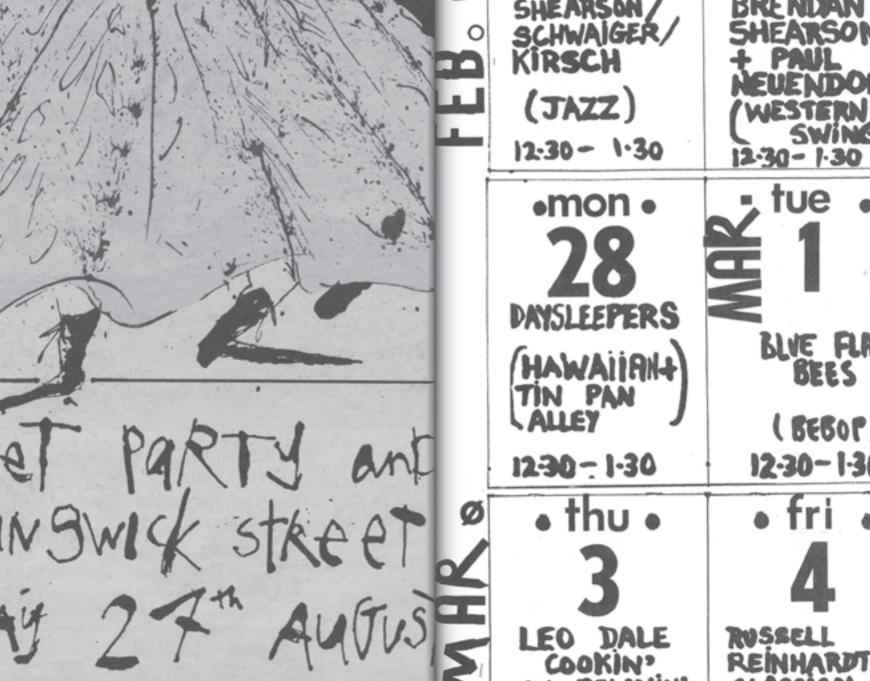
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FRINGE NETWORK NEWS! ETTER NO 5





FLAMING ABANDON THE FESTIVAL CLUB THE WILD FRONT EAR FOUR DAYS-13 BANDS

INCLUDE

FEATURES

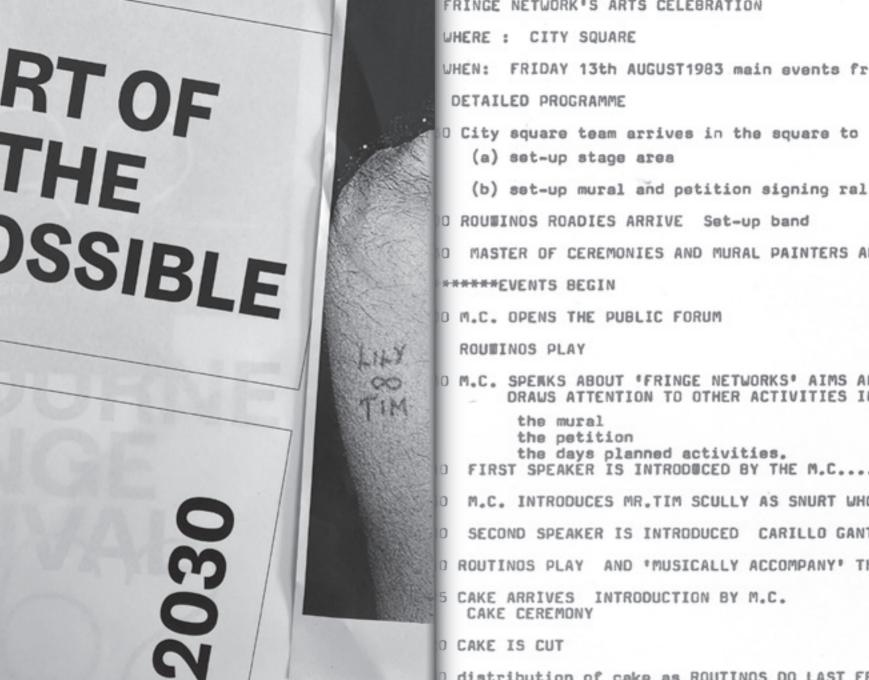
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AND THE ESPLANADE HOTEL FESTIVAL PROGRAMME IN THE AGE FRIDAY AUGUST 19TH







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(b) set-up mural and petition signing ral

MASTER OF CEREMONIES AND MURAL PAINTERS A

D M.C. OPENS THE PUBLIC FORUM

ROUWINGS PLAY

DRAWS ATTENTION TO OTHER ACTIVITIES I the mural the petition the days planned activities.

FIRST SPEAKER IS INTRODUCED BY THE M.C.... M.C. INTRODUCES MR.TIM SCULLY AS SNURT WHO

SECOND SPEAKER IS INTRODUCED CARILLO GANT

D ROUTINOS PLAY AND "MUSICALLY ACCOMPANY" TH

CAKE CEREMONY

distribution of cake as ROUTINGS DO LAST FE



9th. - 11th. and 16th. - 18th September 7.30pm 17th. and 18th September Late Show at 9pm

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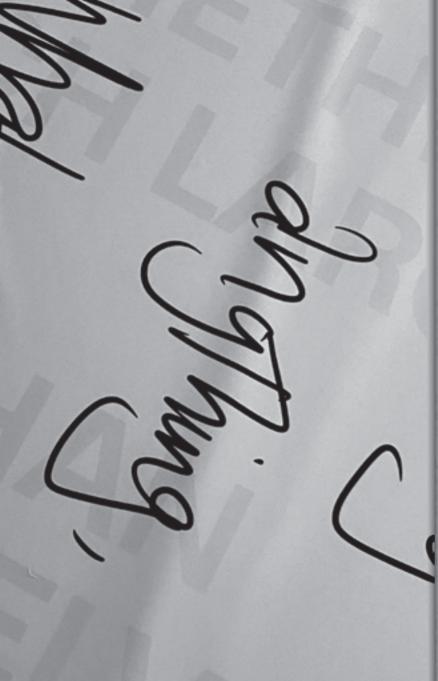
BOOKINGS: 619 7366 534 8986

MELBOURNE WORKERS THEATRE

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2011

An economic survey indicates that Melbourne Fringe has an annual impact of over \$12 million in the state of Victoria.



MELBOURNE ARTISTS FESTIVAL : URITERS AND PU
WRITERS &

PUBLISHERS

RITERS ARE A BELATIVLY UNTAPPED SOURCE OF CREPRESENTS A GAMUT OF POLITICAL AND EMOTIONAL OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THEIR WORK TO BE ON. THE WRITERS PROGRAMME INCLUDES OVER ONE IS DOETS, PLAYURIGHTS, PROSE WRITERS AND SCRIPTHEIR WORK THROUGH READINGS, PERFORMANCE AND NEVER HEARD A WRITER OR A GROUP OF WRITERS

HIS FESTIVAL PROMISES TO PLACE YOU IN SEVEN ETS OF FITZROY, THE BATHTUB OF WANCY REAGAN, OF THE WRITERS IMAGINATION A MAN'S MIND IN ON INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY, (TUES. 8)

SENTING THEIR WORK TO THOSE STILL MYSTIFIED.

THE FOLLOWING DAY WRITERS READ IN RUSSIAN, G.

N, YUGOSLAV, TURKISH, SPAINISH, POLISH AND MALT

L WRITERS DAY YOU WILL BE ABLE TO LISTEN TO

R OWN LANGUAGE.

RE OF TOWN THE SMALL PUBLISHERS BOOKFAIR HAS JIDE RANGE OF BOOKS PRODUCED BY VICTORIAS SI PRESS.AT THE INFORMATION OFFICE CITY SQ. YOU G WITH SOCIAL ISSUES, NEW PROSE, GARDENING, PH IN AND BROWSE THE PERSON BEHIND THE DESK W

HER.
ROOM CITY SQ. URITING WORKSHOPS TAKE PLACE.
BLIC POETRY DAYS. THIS WILL BE A CHANCE TO R
WITH POETS, WORKSHOP AND READ YOUR WORK TO
IPTURITING IS THE TOPIC OF THE SIX DAY WORK

ES. 1. AND TUES.8 ARE BLACK CAT CAKE READING OF MELBOURNES MOST EXCITING WRITERS WILL R OF GREEVES AND FITZROY STREETS BRUNSWICK.

EVENTH IS ST.KILDA BEACH DAY AND BENEFIT NI ON ST,KILDA BEACH, AND READING THROUGHOUT TO

NADE HOTEL ST, KILDA. AT NIGHT THE PALMS CONT F WALES HOTEL WHERE THREE ENTERTAINMENT ARE NO WRITERS PERFORMANCE WILL RUN SIMULTANEOUS

Network on 419 9548/9

22nd: 6-11.00 p.m. Independent Filmmakers screenings.

21th: 7.30-11 p.m. Independent Filmmakers screenings.

20th: 7.30-11 p.m. Community Media Groups Project

18th: 7-11.00 p.m.

Reel Women, John Flaus' programme.

and

programs

contact

Fringe

PERSUASIVE STIMULATING" - THE AGE "INTENSE, IRONIC... FINE ACTING". SUNDAY PRESS med GOOD BIT OF THEATRE" - MELBOURNE TIMES

PR

THEATRE

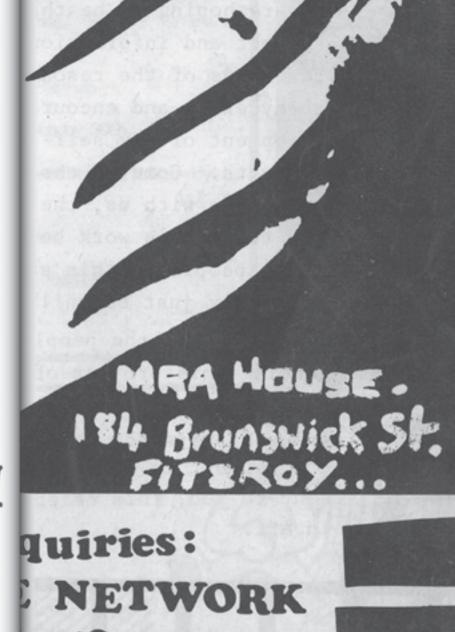
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bookings: 699 3253 or bass - 11500



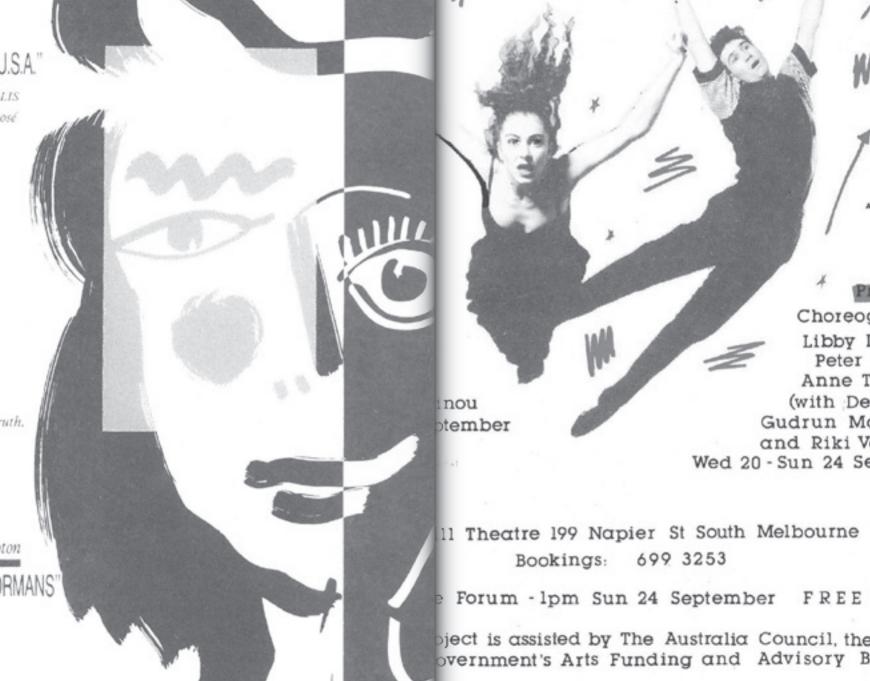
REPORT TO CADEMY and performed burton

OCT 17.30



SOUTH MELBOU ONDAY 22 TO 0 PM STRE PTEMBER AV 28. SEI SCI

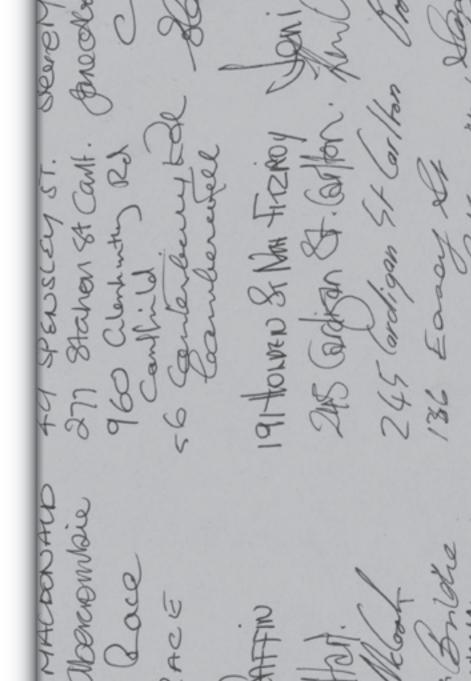




AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2013

Melbourne Fringe On Tour launches: this new regional and outer-metropolitan program tours work from the Melbourne Fringe Festival, reaching eight regional performing arts centres and bringing independent work to new audiences.



gnites

Invasion

to go and what to see. In this, the 10th year Festival and to Beat's guide to where Welcome to the 1992 Fringe Arts

erse program late. The philos of the Festiv by of the Frin estival has alway een to take risi tinge presents

OPENING EVENT

FRINGE PARADE AND STREET PARTY August 29, Brunswick St. Walten Ruce at Parade at Tpm. Party from 2-dpm. FREE. BYS Race at 12.30

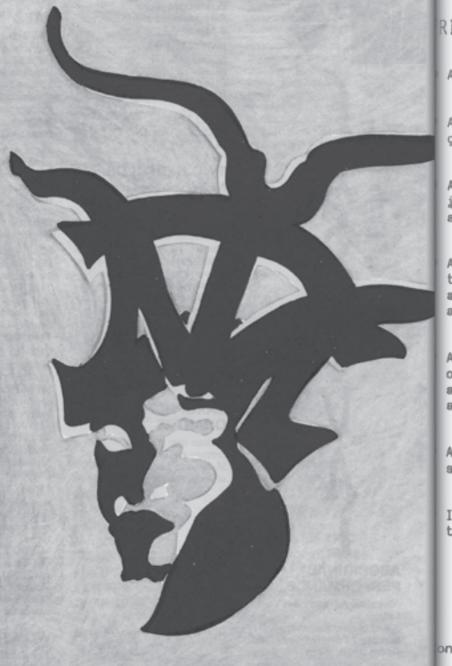
Lest Laugh, 64 Smath St. Collingwo Sunday 13 Sept at Itom \$173512, Bit. 419 3869 MITTEE and EVERY FUNNY MISSON IN

PERFORMING ARTS WOMEN'S SEASON









RINGE NETWORK IS

A new group formed to represent non-mainstream arts.

Aiming to provide a focus for the media, the public, government and ourselves.

Aiming to form a communication network between groups individuals involved in the Alternative Arts in Melbo and invites you to contact us on 347 0465.

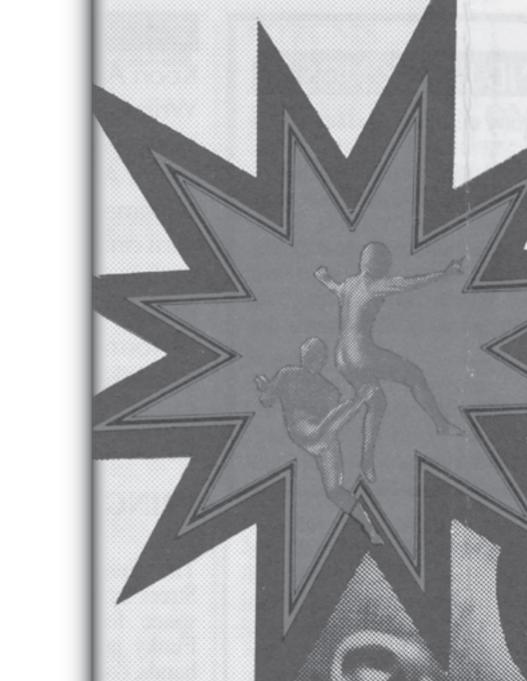
Aiming to enable its members to become increasingly a through the sharing of resources and skills. By fill attached questionnairs, you can contribute to the Ski are compiling.

A group which represents people working in the non-me on a professional basis. We are on the fringe but was amateurs. We are concerned with original works, expand the furthering of new expressive forms.

An umbrella organisation for all who do not discrimin sexist or racist basis.

Inviting member groups to maintain their autonomy - a their survival - by supporting FRINGE NETWORK.

17 GRATTAN STREET, (temporary office)



A SAFE PLACE FOR THE UNSAFE



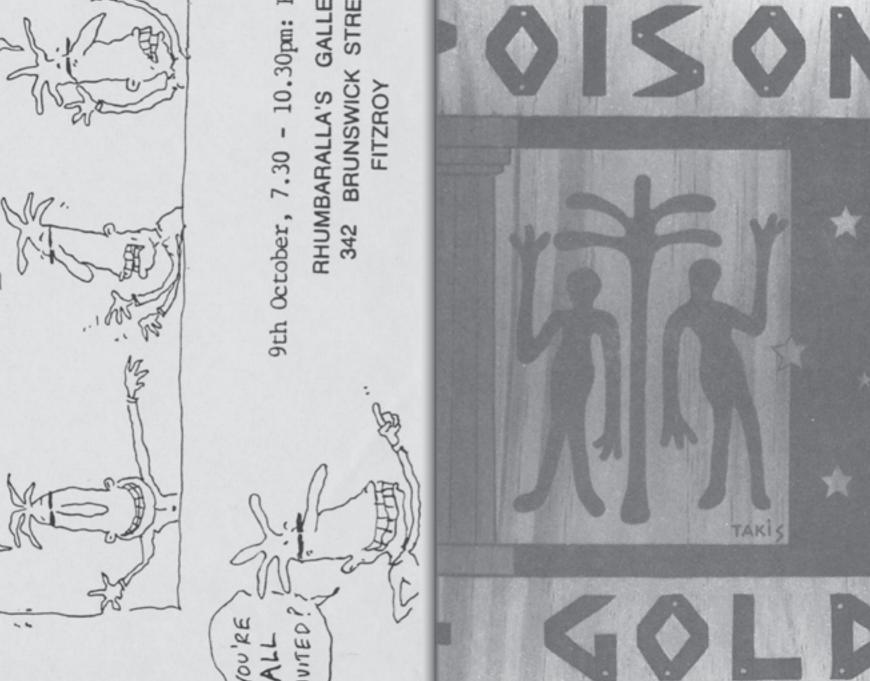
were too personally based education group which was successful program, had its a following year judged and r

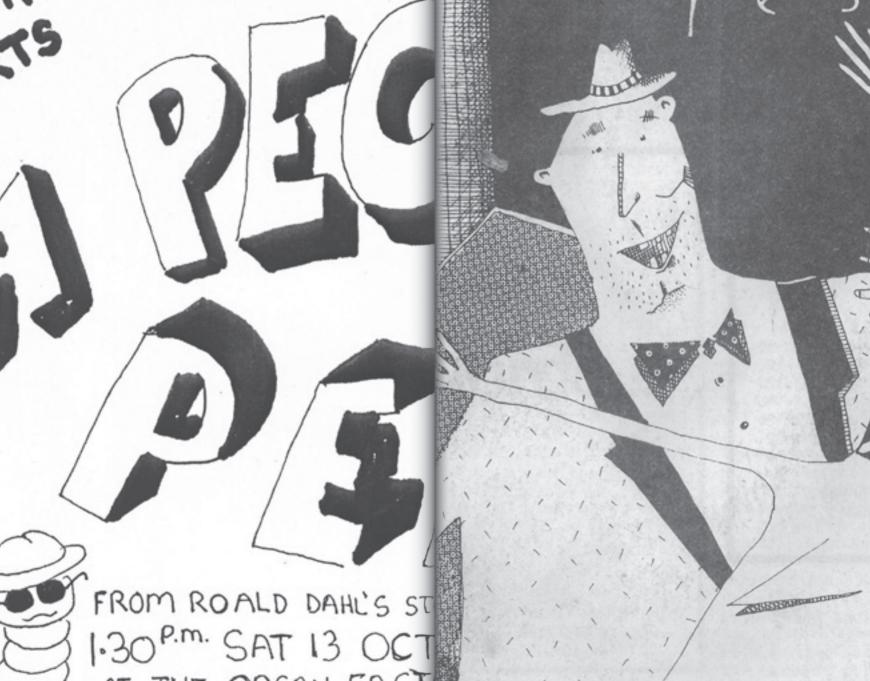
There is a belief that mitment to experimental ar increasingly worthless, a toke while steadily lining the traditional and easily digest ballet, opera and mainstrea groups have had little response sources, and the notion that t of well-heeled businessmen finance avant garde artist fanciful, or is a convenient feel their case has been ov government and private secto by other, more comfortable as

In a mood of fierce self-su Fringe Network is planning a for next March. Its energy sh on the Melbourne artistic scen

The demise of the Pram F theatre artists, for instance time, or else working in a q But the discovery by network

Partial is the latest and most achieve





HIGHET FEST HMONI ARTS 55 R1 JAMES AND THE GIANT TORY

Festival, the th anniversary /ed. To mark this has been his year, as alnewstandards to take risks, est and most die presents its the Festival, s, the 10th year o and what to see. ival and to Beat's guide to where program to The philosohas always the Fringe Parade at 1pm. Party from 2-6pm. FREE. FRINGE PARADE AND STREET PARTY August 29, Brunswick St. Waiters Race at 12.30 PEACH 9911 shirt). Enquiries P (includes map and Sat at 10.30am \$1 Collingwood Aug Streets, through F Cnr. Kerr & Bruns Tour, B.U.G. Bus inner city. Outd treadly for a 17kr hour peddle arou Deck out your de GROUP FITZROY BICYCLE COLLINGWOOD TOUR DE FRING

come to the 1992 Fringe Arts

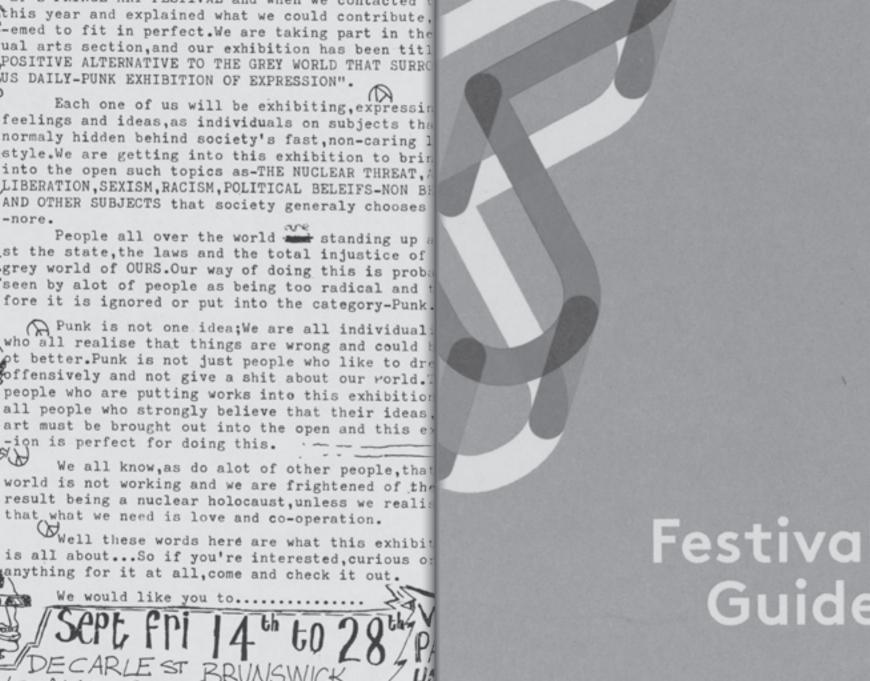
OPENING EVENT

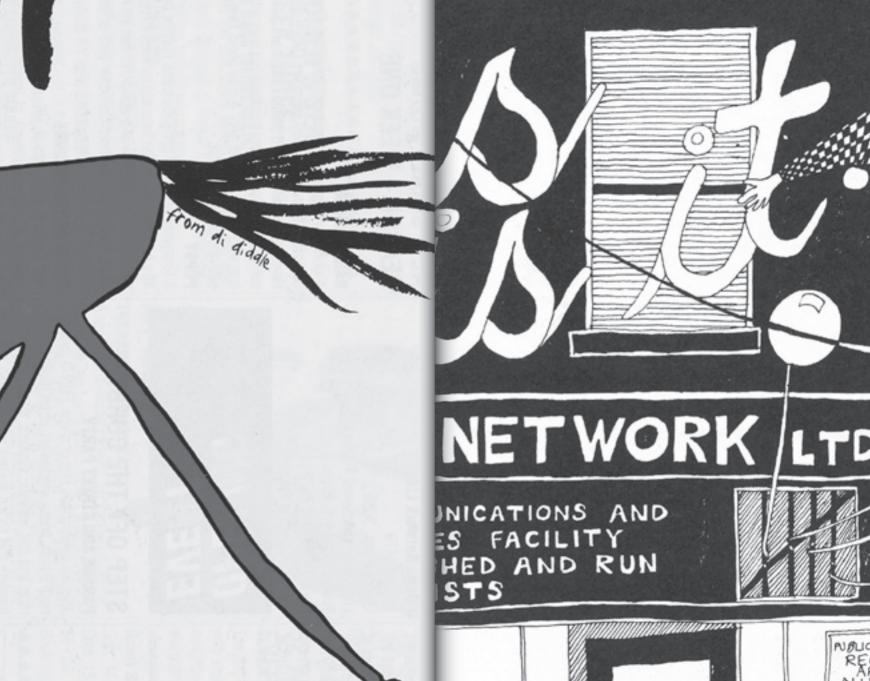


AIMS AND OBJECTIVES-CONTINUE ION FUNDING











AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2015

Melbourne Fringe wins a Melbourne Award for Contribution to Profile by a Community Organisation.





GROUP SHOW 20th

Peter Adams

Richard Collis

Craig Haire

Julie Higginbotham

Karen Preston

Exhibition opens Sun





2016

Ralph Mclean Microgrants program launches, supporting participation by marginalised communities.



Protect your glory box. Use condoms and lube. melbournefringe.com/glorybax



VENUE: METROPOL HOTEL UPSTAIRS, cnr. Gertrude St. & Brunswick St. Fitzroy.

Dates: SEPTEMBER 22nd - 27th



Times:

Acts:

- Crinkle Steward. # 9.00 p.m.
- . 9.30 p.m. Prahran TAFE Cabaret. *10 p.m. Box Hill TAFE Cabaret.
- * 10.30 p.m. Mystery Band.

Date: SEPTEMBER 29th



Times:

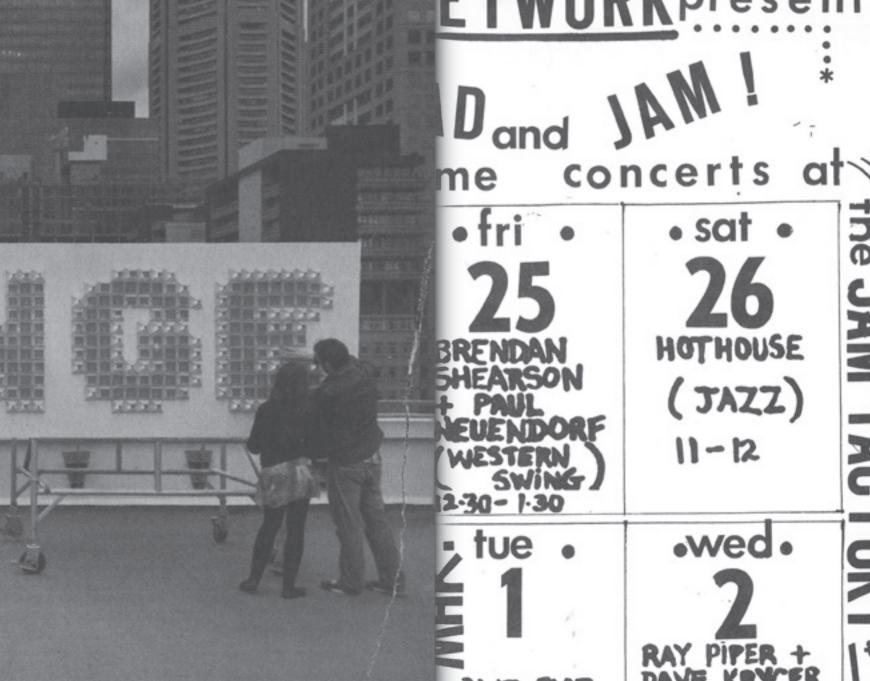
Acts:

- * 9.00 p.m. Gretel Killern.
- *9.30p.m.PrahranTAFE Cabaret.
- Box Hill TAFE Cabaret. # 10 p.m.
- Mystery Band. # 11 p.m.

Dates: OCTOBER 2nd

Acts: Times:

- # 9.00 p.m. Gretel Killern.
- # 9.30 p.m. Prahran TAFE Cabaret.
- * 10.00 p.m. Hard Dreams.
- * 11.00 p.m. Mystery Band.
- * MAEVE VELLA will be performing between acts every night.



The Rent is Up to You Methourne frings Festival foliati-2000's a calebration of Methourne's longest-nursing matti-arts festival, it Norks book at 40 years of Frings theater, music, film, writing, visual arts, circus, disease, comedy, cabases, performance and design. But we don't stop these. The exhibition specularies on the future of art-making on the firings, at the edge of the resolutions. Temboration has been the edge of the appear as benner quates and it helping us to 'hear this musti-The exhibition size. The Ri-1984 festival neveletar encou-and promote their west while Nothing has changed about making art, but today we migh

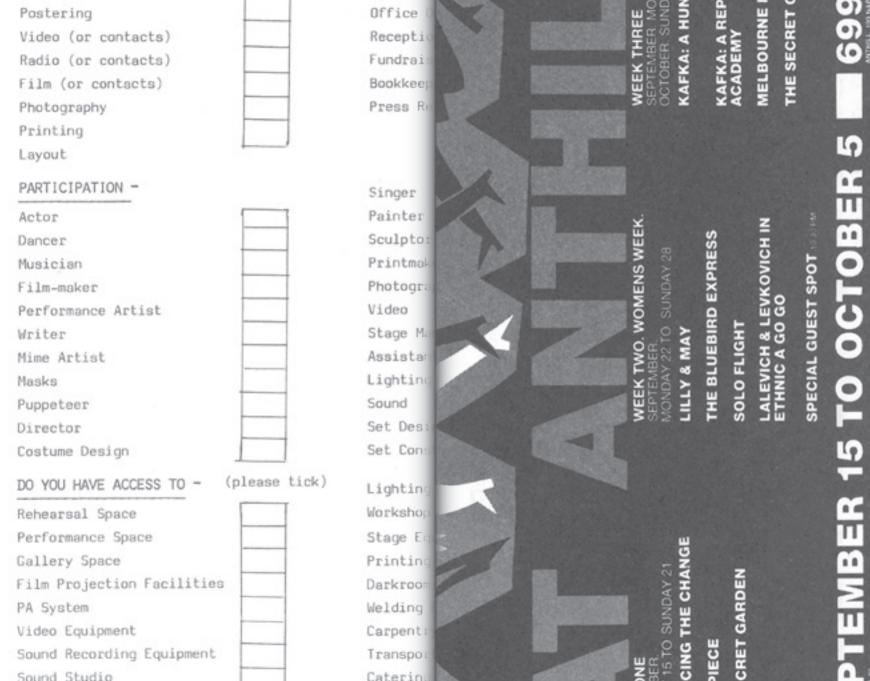
0

0:30

NOT









WE DIDN'T **KNOW** WHA

Arpad Milh

WEW DOIN

We moved into our first office in Grattan Stre here I was up the stairs at the back, I had a room ar rooms. There were people coming in to find out wh how to participate, where things were happening, th get people coming in And they were leaving posts their events. So that meant that the newsletter the from being just an administrative thing less now who's doing what. - Arped Mihaly

The thing about th organized was that our m body had a place in the fri - Arped Mihaly

C It was announced in arts festival. And I thought - Arpad Milhaly

In the Fringe, the oc carded, it's out there. Even cept of independent artists ture cannot beer to look at. - Arpad Mihaly

The major problems money. So Fringe started as ing together artists so that er artists and so that there is that people would come. Th burgh and what was happen of centrifugal force of a fest build interest and it become - Maude Davey

We moved into our f back. I had a room a they could do, how t ple coming in. And t the newsletter then tent about who's do

Fringe h

Antill Th Newspe Centre Fringe I **Club Fi** Fringe I Call out

Copies

First p on wh first m article

run sh Fringe

Past, Present and Future of Melbourne Fri ree - Open Daily - October 06 2022 to July





slv.vic.gov.au/fringe



HUNGER ART dapted and perfy wayne macau

"THIS CELEBRATION OF IRRATIONALITY IS ALL KAFKA...



AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2017

With project partner ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, Melbourne Fringe instigates Deadly Fringe, unearthing and nurturing new First Nations performance works and mentoring First Nations emerging producers.

NO.

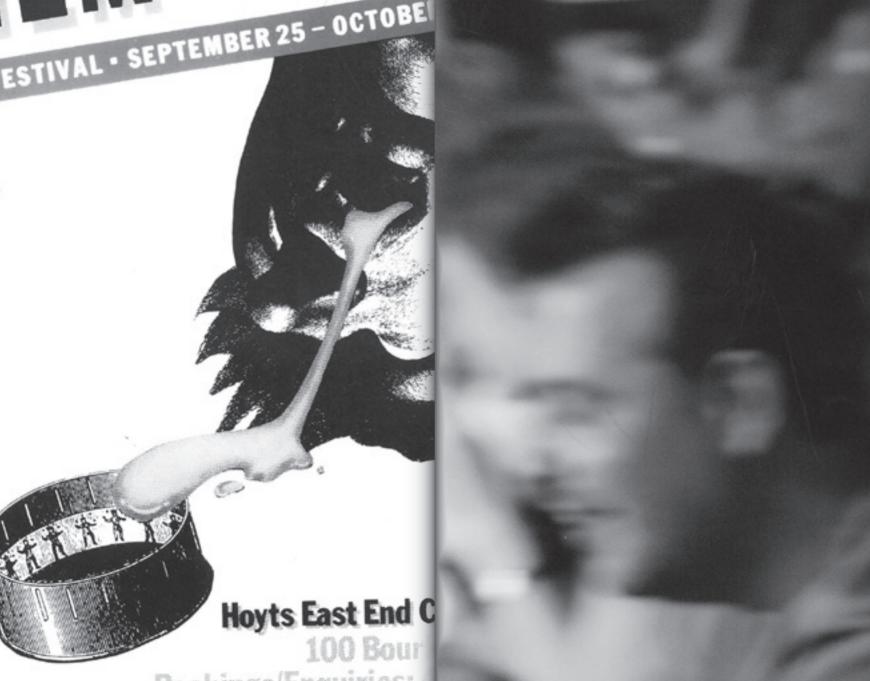
LIVE MULTI-MED ERFORMANC
F SOUND AND LIGH

OS BANDT, HUGH McSPEDD TER MUMMÉ, GRAHAM JAM

EPT 19, 21, 26, 28. OCT 3 8.00 P.M.

VING RAINBOWS WORKSH STAWELL ST., NTH MELBOUR







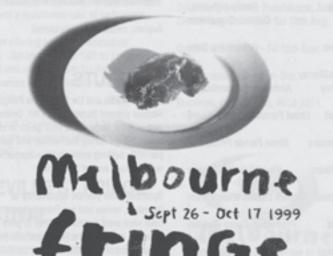
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DIRECTORS STATEMENT

The frenzied pre festival lead up has hit us all again, the office is a buzz with coordinators, trainees and volunteers who are helping to pull it all this together and hundreds of artists are frantically working on shows in last minute preparations. So if you were thinking of doing a show for the Festival you are too late, but you can still be involved in a whole range of other levels. Why not take part in the Fringe Parade or perhaps Fringe Furniture is more to your taste, or perhaps you have made a short film for our Short Stuff screenings. Read on for the relevant contacts. But of course if you would just like to offer your time and help out in the operations of the Festival there are plenty of opportunities.

Once again the Festival spreads across the city, with its hub base at North Melbourne Town Hall Arts House, where both the Artists Party and the Awards presentations will be held, along with over 35 different shows. There are loads of free events on offer, both indoors and outdoors, lots for kids to go to and more than enough to get your teeth into for three weeks, whatever your bent.

See you at the Fringe !



melbourne IRING

eptember - 14 octobe

IG AUCTION

ELSTIVALE



T F MUCH MORE CE RANGE



2018

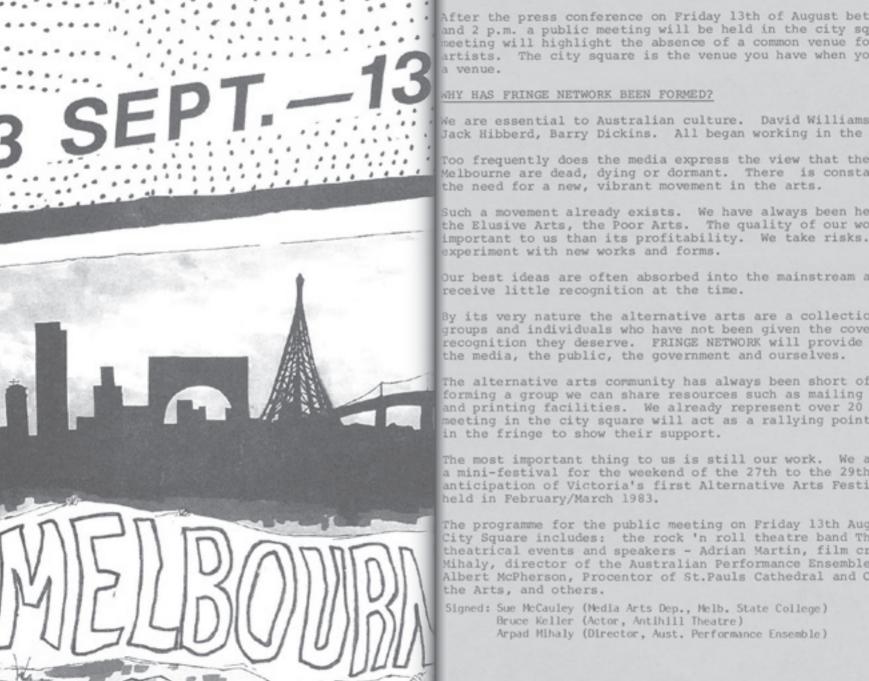
The dedicated position of Access and Inclusion Coordinator is created as a commitment to supporting people who are Deaf or Disabled.



FITZROY TOWN HALL

SEPT 21 2-6pm

ART FOR ANYONE



. After the press conference on Friday 13th of August bet and 2 p.m. a public meeting will be held in the city sq meeting will highlight the absence of a common venue fo artists. The city square is the venue you have when yo a venue.

WHY HAS FRINGE NETWORK BEEN FORMED?

We are essential to Australian culture. David Williams Jack Hibberd, Barry Dickins. All began working in the

Too frequently does the media express the view that the Melbourne are dead, dying or dormant. There is consta the need for a new, vibrant movement in the arts.

Such a movement already exists. We have always been he the Elusive Arts, the Poor Arts. The quality of our wo important to us than its profitability. We take risks. experiment with new works and forms.

Our best ideas are often absorbed into the mainstream a receive little recognition at the time.

recognition they deserve. FRINGE NETWORK will provide the media, the public, the government and ourselves. The alternative arts community has always been short of forming a group we can share resources such as mailing and printing facilities. We already represent over 20 meeting in the city square will act as a rallying point

The most important thing to us is still our work. We a a mini-festival for the weekend of the 27th to the 29th anticipation of Victoria's first Alternative Arts Festi held in February/March 1983.

The programme for the public meeting on Friday 13th Aug City Square includes: the rock 'n roll theatre band Th theatrical events and speakers - Adrian Martin, film cr Mihaly, director of the Australian Performance Ensemble Albert McPherson, Procentor of St. Pauls Cathedral and C the Arts, and others.

Signed: Sue McCauley (Media Arts Dep., Melb. State College) Bruce Keller (Actor, Antihill Theatre) Arpad Mihaly (Director, Aust. Performance Ensemble)

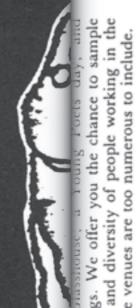


- 3 TOLARNO
- GERSTMAN
 - 5 REALITIES
- 6 AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES
 - AXIOM
 - STANDFIELD
- CAULFIELD ART CENTRE DRUMMOND ST GALLERY
- PINNACOTHECA 11
- 12 LEVESON GALLERY
- NIAGRA LANE 13
 - MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY GALLER
- **GRYPHON** 16 EDITIONS

 - RUSSELL DAVIS GALLERY HAWTHORN CITY ART GALLERY
 - THE VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE
- 22 JOSEPH BROWN
- ACLAND ST GALLERY 23
- 24
 - MONASH UNIVERSITY GALLERY
 - **ABORCOM**

IMPRESSIONS

DEUCHER GALLERY



the four weeks of the Festival. Visual arts will b variety of venues and will include the work of graphists, painters and ceramicists. There wil projections, murals and a cartoonists' exhib

FIVAL

October 14

nce of Wales Hotel, St. Kilda and The

tion. We would like to discriminate as onent is aimed at encouraging originality

vith respect to rigid musical labelling and music equal billing and respect. A wide is encompassed by the Festival; jazz, c music, pop, fun, experimental, African

re rock, ethnic, and women's.

ople aged six to twenty-five will present a explode into life at the Organ Factory ry from October 7 to 14.

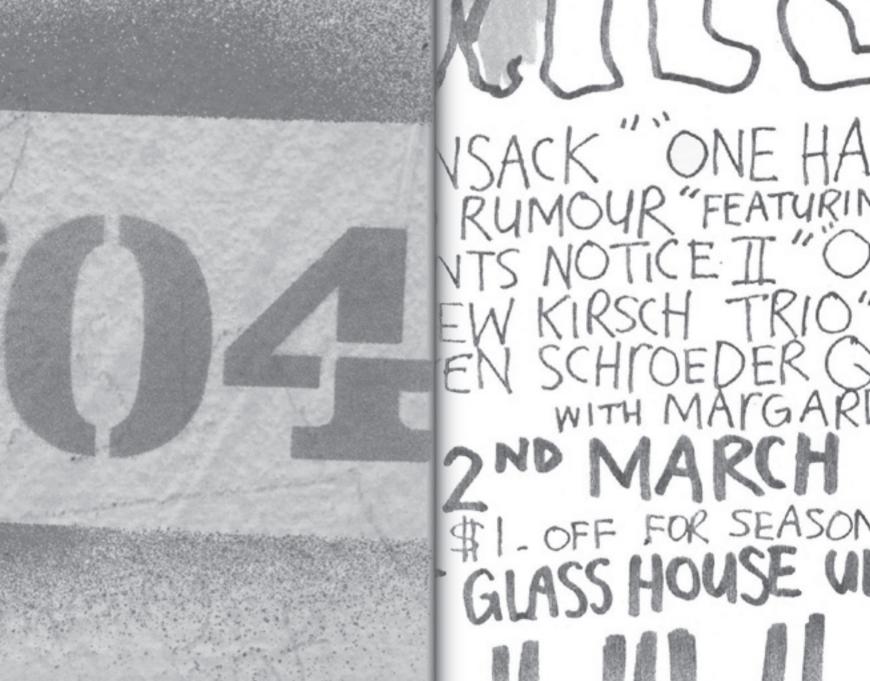
dance, circus, visual art, film and video,

and music.

We are sure that the Melbourne Fringe Ar

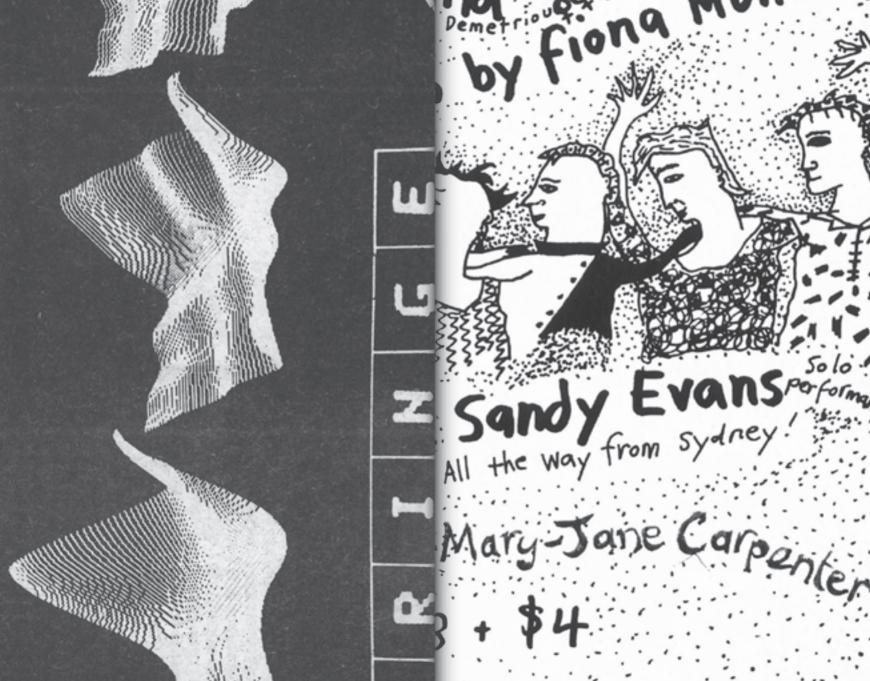
October 3 to 23.

will educate, inform, excite and entertain you. If you have any enquiries regarding full p details, venues, prices, etc. please ring Angel Festival Co-ordinator at Fringe Network on 4 or drop in to 201 Brunswick St., Fitzroy. FRINGE NETWORK LTD



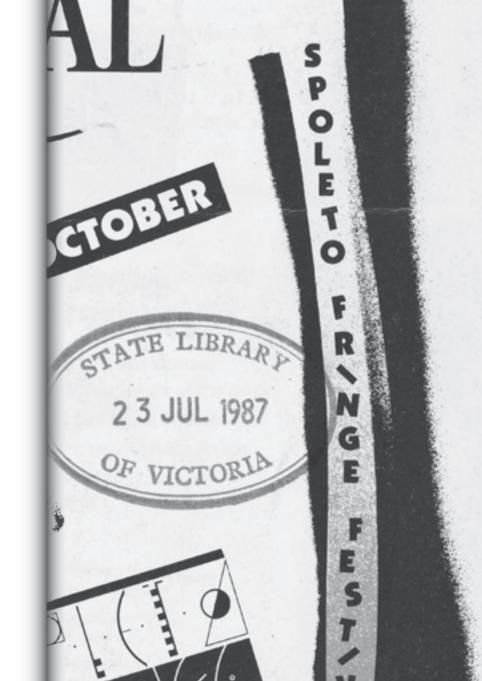


ass/anthill 6993253.



2018

XS program of experimental, contemporary and live art for children begins.







THE STATE LIBRARY

328 SWANSTON STREET - MELBOURN AUSTRALIA

ne 669 9888 A38104 please quote TG:WJ La Trobe

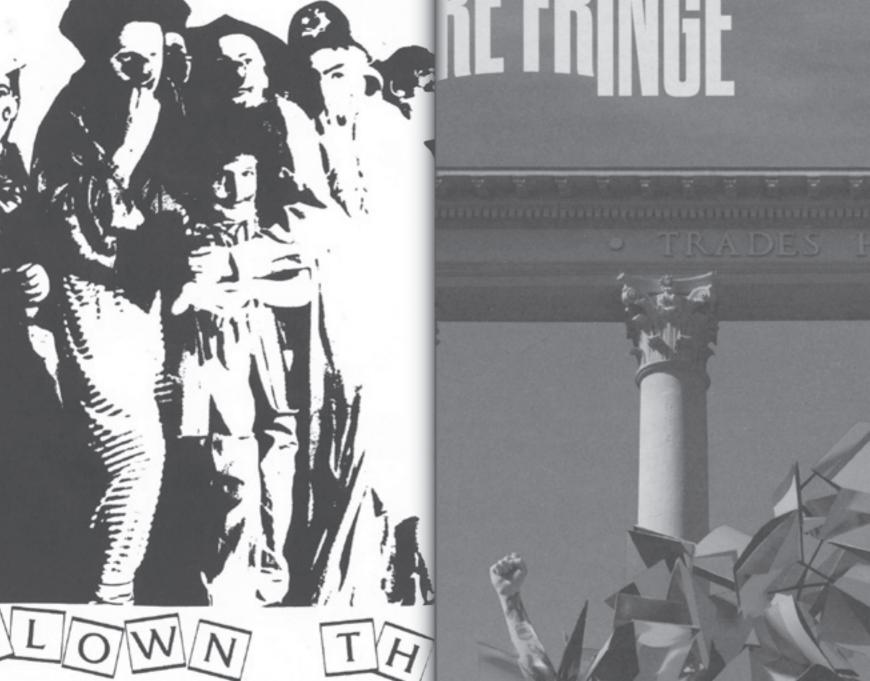
Mr. Arpad Mihaly,
The Convenor,
Fringe Network,
201 Brunswick Street,
Fitzroy. 3065.

Dear Arpad,

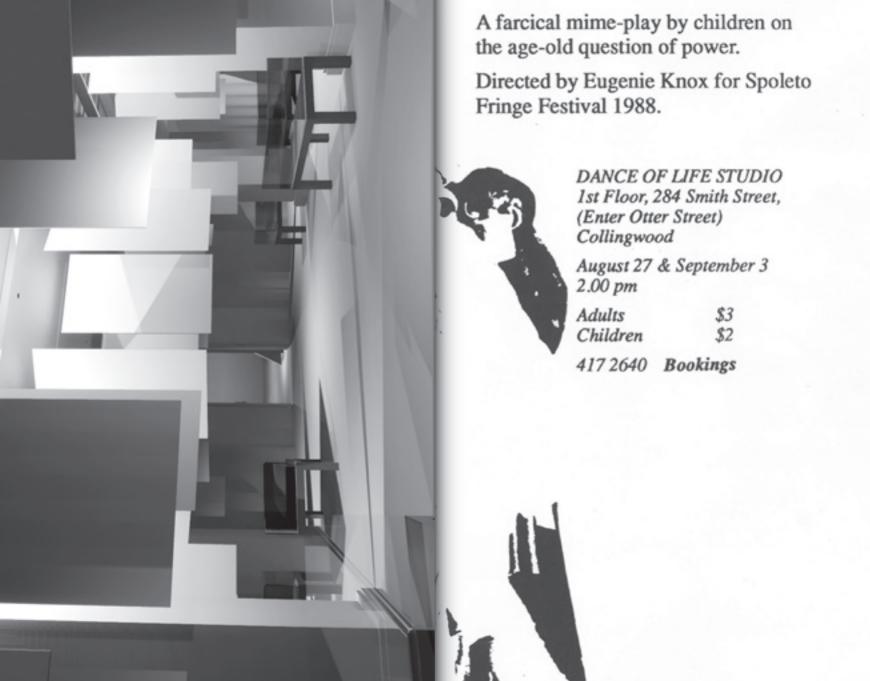
Following our discussion the suggest that Fringe Network may wish to deposit with the State Library of Victoria. The Library of Victoria. The Library collections - the Manuscripts and Picture Codocument literary, artistic and cultural library beginnings right up to the present. We concerned to collect material recording contacts and have, for instance, recently received Australian Performing Group and the Pram Factors of the Melbourne Film Festival.

The archive that you establi encompass the whole range of material that we include:











2019

Melbourne Fringe moves into Trades Hall, both as its new Fringe Hub and as a year-round venue, Fringe Common Rooms. The festival is home to 458 events attracting more than 358,000 people.

In October over 50 of Australia' coming together to celebrate CAR

1984 CARTOUNISTS EX

(10th - 30th Octo

to tap a large reservoir of undiscovered The exhibition is being organized as part Fringe Arts Festival. It will run from th October at Rhumbarella's Gallery in Bruns The Fringe Arts Festival brings together

the general public and to all those inter tradition continue to grow and prosper. Cartoons have been called "The medium of cartoons at the exhibition will reflect t

national, racial, women's; through humore social, to the ridiculous. Great effort has



FABULOUSLY QUEER



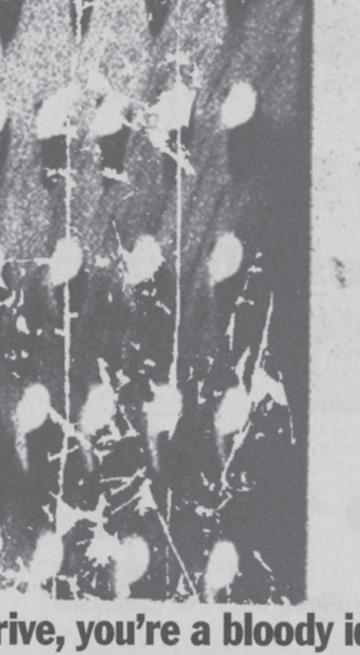
SEN CKENSACK JAMONENTS NOTICE II

2020-21

In the face of a global pandemic and massive lockdowns, Melbourne Fringe still presents two festivals by developing a bespoke digital platform and orchestrating a mass socially-distanced participatory dance event.







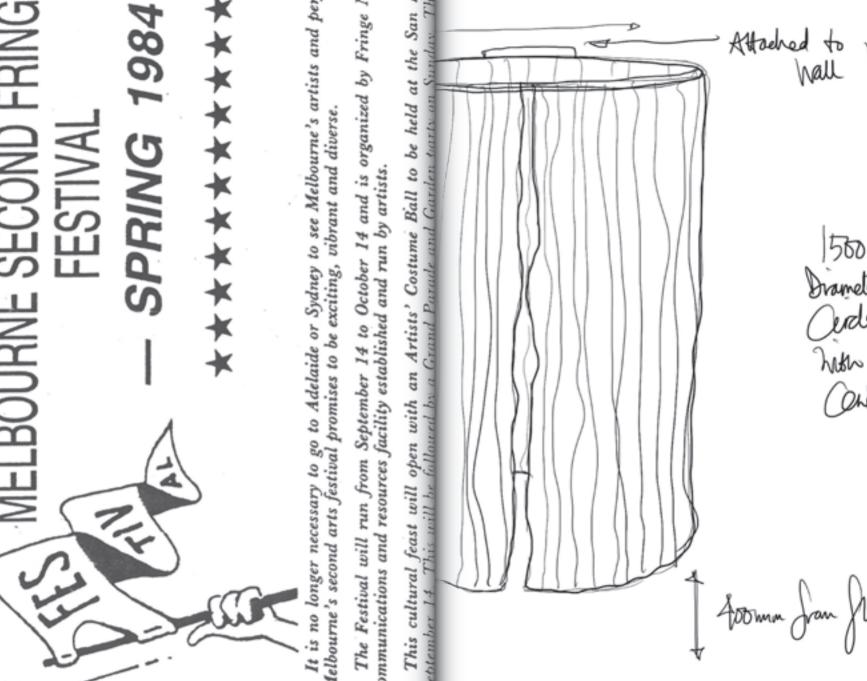
rive, you're a bloody idiot.

CARBRUNSWICK.S \$ ALEXANDER PPE. ·FITZROY. CARLTON GARDENS.

PAROTY +11110.

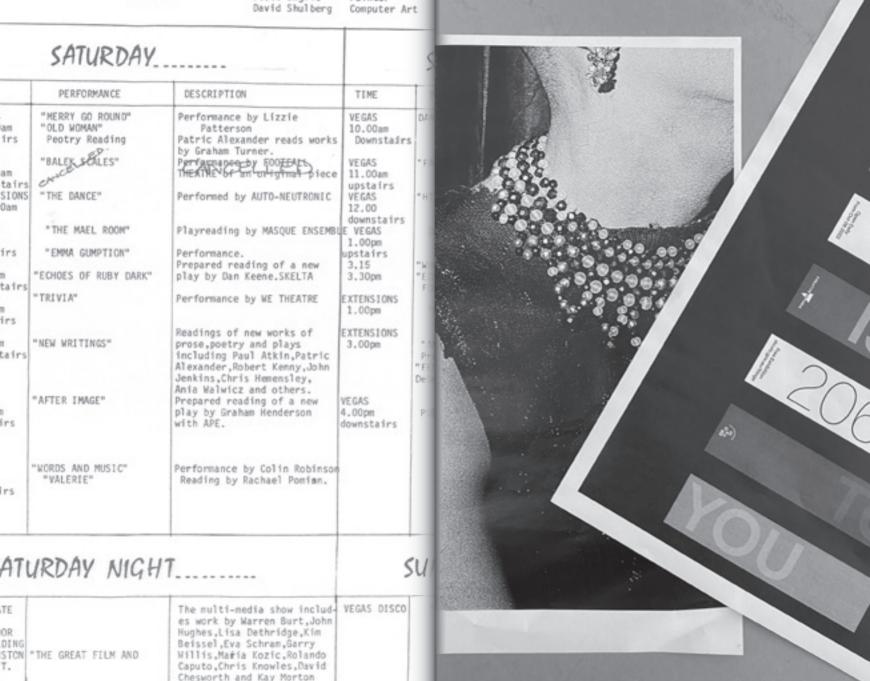


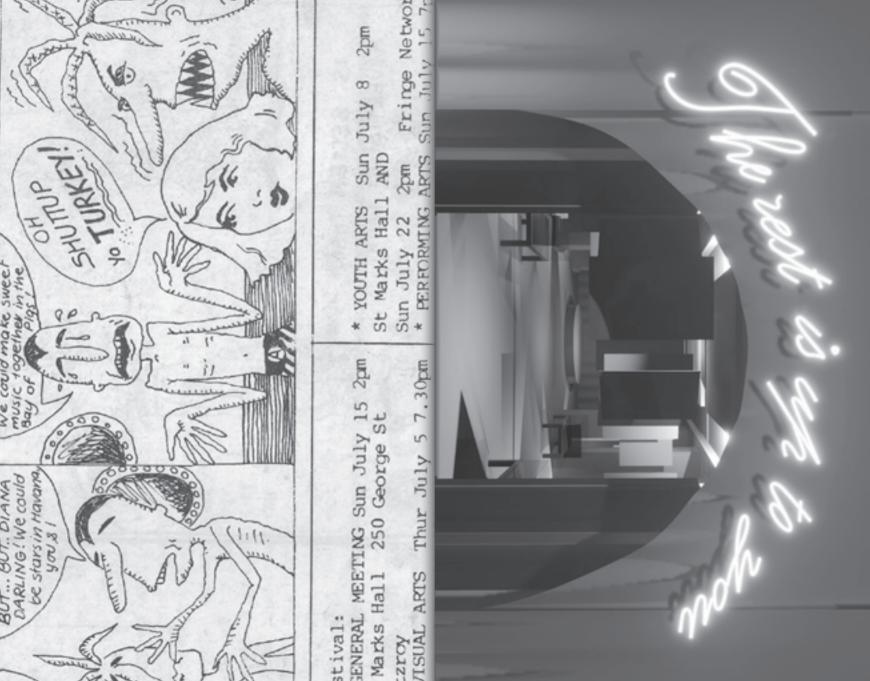






THIS IS YOURS







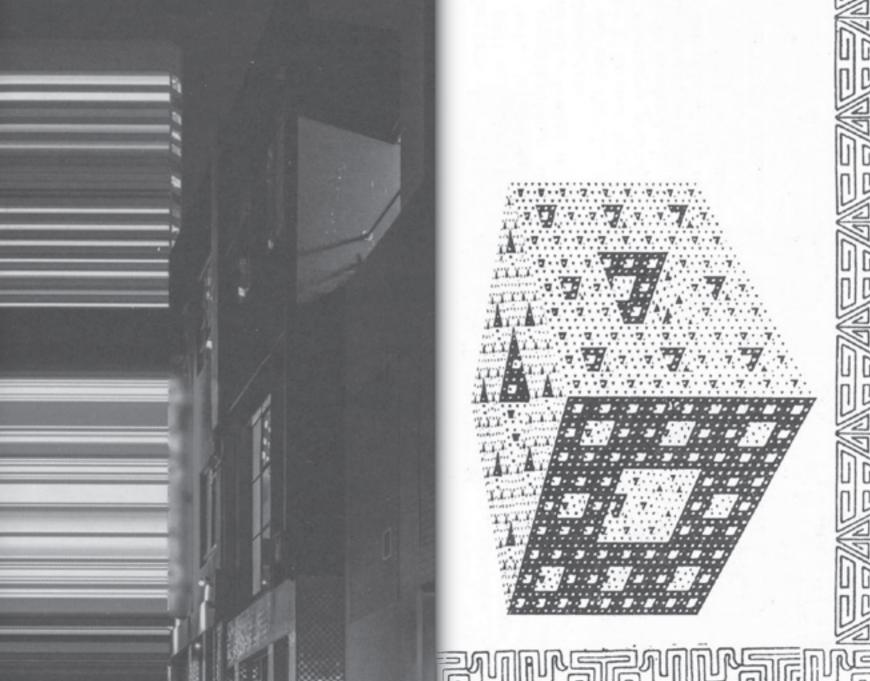


b:1914 d:1984

Instrumental in changing the Child Labour Laws. The 'Coogan Act' was passed to protect the Jackie Coogan or The Kid earnings of child stars. alias











WALK YOUR ELEPHANT OR OTHER PETS



VCLUDING... original artworks holidays new furniture new clothes new hairdos collector items posters - programs records - books electrical goods AND MORE! MIICH

FUNDRAISIN

entire evenings on the town

14 SEPT.....50 TIVAL PROGRA

INTERWES

AN INCOMPLETE TIMELINE

2022

Melbourne Fringe celebrates 40 years with *The Rest Is Up To You* exhibition, the one-off return of the Fringe Parade and the first in-person Festival in three years.

JULY meetings

NG Sun Ju. 250 George

MEETING

restival: * GENERAL MEE St Marks Hall July Bruns

Thur 201

Fringe Network

Fitzroy
* VISUAL ARTS

8pm

Mon July 9

Fitzroy * MUSIC Fringe Network

Fringe Network Ltd 201 Brunswick St Fitzroy Australia 306 Tel: (03)419 9548/9 Fringe Network and The Club present...

Tringe C A B A R E T



the CLUB

132 Smith St Collingwood. 417 4039

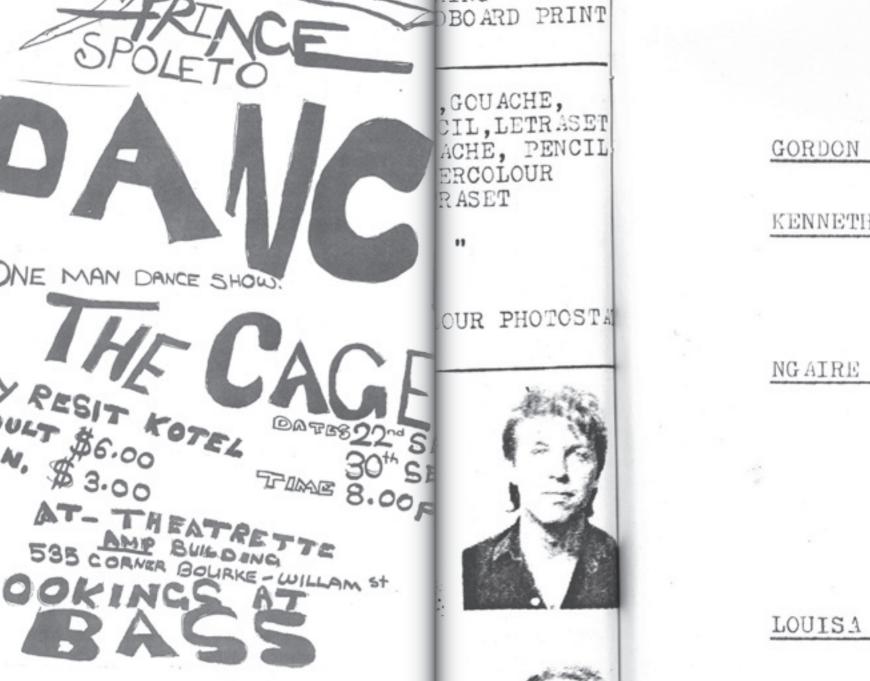
Wed 9th

WE HAVE ENERGY WHICH SHAPES THE LANDSCAPE



fAMC) ARTISTS BALL

ARION": 141 JOHNS FITZROY





THE REST IS UP TO YOU

The Rest Is Up To You: Melbourne Fringe Festival 1982-2062, edited by Simon Abrahams and Kate Rhodes is published on the occasion of an exhibition of the same name at State Library Victoria, Melbourne, Australia 6 October 2022 to July 2023.

ISBN: 978-0-6455979-0-5

The Rest Is Up To You: Melbourne Fringe Festival 1982-2062 is curated by Simon Abrahams and Kate Rhodes.

Published in 2022 by Melbourne Fringe Festival, Melbourne, Australia Text © Simon Abrahams, Kate Rhodes, John Bailey, and Paul Duldig.

While most of the image creators are unknown, the fragments used in this book are fromthe Fringe collection at State Library Victoria and the archives at Melbourne Fringe. These image fragments also contain graphic illustrations from Fringe newsletters and magazines by Felix; Warwick Jolly's graphic image on the cover of the 1983 Program Guide, Melbourne Fringe Arts Festival; Tim McKew (Drag Artist) by Maggie Diaz and, Melbourne Fringe program guides by the following designers, 1996: Pethick Design; 1998: Divadata; 1999: Fish Communication, Jude Reynolds,

Tord Johnston; 2000: Michael Lelliott, Damien McGrath; 2002: Kuan Ung; 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006: Cornwell Design; 2007, 2008: Studio Pip and Co; 2009, 2010, 2011: Something Splendid (Jonathon Bellew, James Yencken); 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015: Sweet Creative; 2016: JWT; 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022: Raft. The book contains working drawings, installation photography and draft files by Studio U-P and Kate Davis from the production of The Rest Is Up To You: Melbourne Fringe Festival 1982- 2062.

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GRAPHIC DESIGN: U-P PROOFING: Will

Will Dawson

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Supported by the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government initiative

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