MARKETING + PUBLICITY

October 2026

MELBOURNE
INTERNATIONAL
COMEDY
FESTIVAL
COMEDYFESTIVAL.COM.AU

FESTIVAL MARKETING

The Festival's overall marketing strategy is designed to increase attendance and maximise the profile of the Festival locally, nationally and internationally. As a Festival artist, you'll have a presence in the following Festival-owned marketing channels:

comedyfestival.com.au – FESTIVAL WEBSITE

This is the main source of information for Festival goers, with individual show pages and a full list of shows in the Festival.

With so many eyes on the website, it is one of your most important marketing tools.

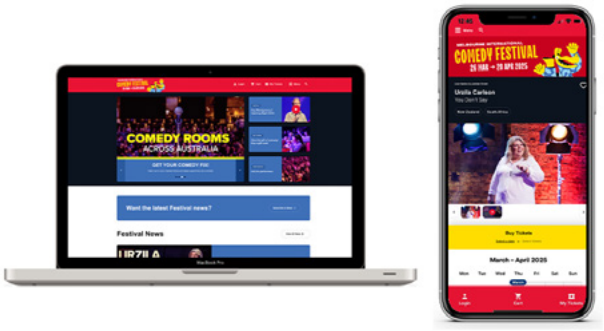
It's your responsibility to keep the information up-to-date. You can make changes through the Registration Site. Changes will be reflected on your page within 24 hours.

Be sure to:

- Upload your copy, images* and links to video content, venue and session information and ticket links (if applicable).
- Track your statistics and web traffic.
- Upload links to reviews once your season opens.
- Recommend/cross-promote other shows in the Festival.

Tip – Keep your show page updated with interesting and dynamic content – videos, reviews, blog links, anything to tell audiences more about what to expect from your show.

*Please note; hero images for the Festival's Printed Program Guide and website cannot include text such as show title, artist name, reviews or otherwise. In some instances the Festival may accept a "brand logo" with text. If you are unsure, please contact registration@comedyfestival.com.au to discuss.



FESTIVAL PROGRAM GUIDE

In 2027 the Festival Program Guide will profile all shows that have completed their registrations by the deadline.

- Over 100,000 copies of the Official Festival Program are printed and distributed throughout Melbourne, regional Victoria and into key capital cities nationally.
- The Program Guide is released in The Age in late February.
- The Program Guide uses information you have added to your show page in the registration site and includes a listing for every show registered with the Festival (by the registration deadline). This includes a show blurb – keep it short and sweet.
- There is advertising space in the Program Guide for artists/producers wanting to feature their show more prominently. Advertising rate cards are available in the registration site under the resources section.

FESTIVAL MARKETING

MEDIA

The Festival works closely with our Major Media Partners, as well as radio, TV, print and online media more broadly, to promote the Festival far and wide. This includes sponsored advertising space and airtime as well as editorial.

INTERSTATE ADVERTISING

We market the Festival interstate with a view to increase the attendance of interstate visitors.

SOCIAL

The Festival's strong social audiences are engaged in the lead up to and across the event, with social campaigns supported by paid advertising and new original content to help audiences navigate the program.

OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

The Festival's marketing includes a range of outdoor advertising such as street banners across Melbourne and at Melbourne airport, café posters, outdoor advertising sites, trams, trains and other assorted signage.

The Festival's Box Office & Info Booth is set up outside Melbourne Town Hall for the duration of the Festival, to promote shows to audiences.

The Festival offers participants some paid advertising opportunities including digital screens, website display banners and more. We will let participants know about opportunities to purchase advertising as they arise.

MARKETING YOUR SHOW

YOUR MARKETING BUDGET

The best way to allocate a budget is to determine your ticket sales objectives and cost accordingly. Don't budget beyond your means, but don't rely on your Festival program entry and website listing alone to promote your show.

Consider the following costs when developing your marketing budget: graphic design, photography, video editing/content production, advertising (social media, print, online and radio), printing, distribution, publicist fees and extras such as photocopying, postage and couriers.

Tip – A good rough guide for how much to budget for marketing is 10-15% of your projected income.

YOUR TARGET MARKET

Use your time, money and other resources effectively by asking yourself:

- Who will want to see your show? Think about gender, age, family, work, cultural heritage, nationality, lifestyle and geography.
- What do you know about them? Where do they live and hang out?
- How will they learn about your show? What media do they read/listen to? Who do they trust? Who do they follow on social media?
- What do you want them to think and feel about your show when they see your promotional materials?

Rather than try to market to everyone, focus your effort on one or two target groups, think creatively about how to reach these people and talk to them in their own language.

YOUR MARKETING CAMPAIGN

A successful marketing campaign should incorporate:

- Social media – your own channels, and other channels your audience may follow or engage with.
- Advertising – paid space in print, radio, TV, online, social.
- Promotions – making the public aware of your show (giveaways, 2 for 1 offers, strategic papering, direct mail to your e-database).
- Printed material – distributed to communicate key details about your show (e.g. posters, flyers).
- Direct – e-newsletters and other direct communications to previous audiences and your subscribers (f you are ticketed through the Festival's ticketing service and need help accessing current and previous show subscribers reach out to our Ticketing team).
- Publicity – free/editorial media coverage (print, radio, TV, online, social).
- Fellow comedians! Work with other artists with styles similar to yours or that you also enjoy to share audiences, resources, and costs.

If you can incorporate some (or all) of the above into your strategy as creatively as possible, you'll have a better chance of getting noticed and standing out among the other Festival shows.

One of the most valuable elements of a marketing strategy is good content. Think about your unique selling points to , create funny, engaging content (video, photos, gifs, memes, compelling copy) and have a strong call to action on all promotional material. Think about what things make you stop and want to learn more or buy tickets.

SOCIAL MEDIA

ORGANIC

Social media is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to promote your show.

We have a large and active social media following and use our channels to generate buzz and promote the Festival program as a whole.

Get involved in the conversation with comedy punters by updating your Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube... and the rest! Aim to create and share engaging content that will stop people scrolling past when you come up in their feeds. The sooner you start, the better – if you already have content that showcases your style, people are more likely to get on board and buy tickets.

You don't need to be on all social channels. In fact, you probably shouldn't be. The fewer platforms you uself you focus on the platforms where you can regularly create engaging content, the more likely you are to succeed on them, so think about your style of comedy and your audience and which platforms are most relevant.

Most importantly, don't use social media just to broadcast, use it to connect with both your audience, and fellow comedians.

Facebook

- Don't use your personal account – if you want to use Facebook, set up a page for your work, and make sure your cover photo and profile picture are eye-catching and high quality.
- Create a page for your work rather than just your Festival season so it has longevity and relevance beyond the Festival.
- Engage your followers with new content in the lead up to your show – this may include videos, photos and updates on the development of your show. Don't just push the show and a sales message.
- If you're creating video content for Instagram or TikTok, post it to Facebook as well! It's easier than ever to cross-post on both Facebook and Instagram at the same time.
- If you're just starting out, invite your friends (and their friends) to like your page.
- Include a link to your show page on the Festival website, so your followers can find all your show information in one spot.
- Think about creating a Facebook event for your season, you can post updates directly into the event, and your followers can register their interest and share with their networks
- Use Facebook Insights to determine which posts are getting the most interest and when, then do more of what's working.
- Tag the Festival @melbournecomedy and other relevant pages in your Facebook posts.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram

- Follow/tag us @melbcomedyfestival #MICF
- Keep the links in your bio up to date – if your shows on sale, that should probably be your first link!
- Be strategic about the way you use stories versus your feed, e.g., keep your feed as a selection of images and video, but use stories for daily on the ground updates and sneak peeks, or to boost your feed content. Stories are also the best way to get links in front of your audience.
- Share work from other artists that you like or that have similar styles, or even consider collaborating on something to share your audiences with each other.
- Reels are a great way to get reach on Instagram, so try incorporating some vertical video into your marketing strategy. For reels content, it'll be similar to what you create for TikTok, but it's worth having a look at what's trending at the moment on Instagram. Remember that trends could get you short-term visibility, so what's going to make people want to stick around and follow you?
- Tag in locations, use hashtags and trending audio (where appropriate) and engage with other accounts to maximise visibility.

TikTok

- Follow/tag us @melbcomedyfestival #MICF
- Look at what's trending, use hashtags (a few selected ones, don't just try to catch everything) and engage with other accounts to maximise visibility.
  Use the 'add to favourites' option to save sounds and trends for use later on!
- Make use of sounds, video effects etc. in your content, and use Creator Tools to lean about how videos are connecting with others on the platform, and for tips on developing your content and engaging audiences.
- Share content that allows your audience to get to know your comedy style and humour rather than straight sales messages.

YouTube

- If you have or make video content, put it on YouTube!
- •You can add a link to a YouTube video on your website listing, which is a great way for people to watch something from you without having to click away from your listing page.
- • YouTube shorts are a great way to find new audiences – anything you make for Reels or TikTok can also be used as a short!

SOCIAL MEDIA

PAID

Paid social media advertising is an effective way to reach your target audience, and you should consider this as part of your marketing mix.

Boosted posts or advertising campaigns through Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are effective, measurable and cheap, and allow you considerable control over who will see your ads.

At its most basic, to get started with social media advertising, pick a piece of content you want to promote and think about the audience most likely to enjoy it. Then set up the ad to target that group.

Note, you will need to have a Facebook page (as opposed to a personal profile) to run paid advertising.

Tips – Try to engage your followers with insightful, funny, interesting conversation, rather than only spamming them with a hard-core sell.

Supporting other artists on social media will encourage them to support you and increase the sense of community during the Festival.

PRINTED MATERIAL + SHOW ARTWORK

Posters and flyers are a popular way of creating a street presence for your show. A great poster is attention grabbing and creative – if it's funny, even better.

Factor the costs of distribution into your budget (even if it's nothing because you'll be doing the leg work yourself!). There is no point printing 1,000 posters if you don't have time or can't afford to put them up. Your print run should also depend on the capacity/size of your room and your target audience. If cost is a prohibiting factor, consider doubling up with a fellow comedian – can you get double-sided flyers printed and share the cost?

Tip – If you decide to print posters & flyers, it's better to slightly overestimate your print run and have a few leftovers than needing to cough-up for a costly extra print run or shoddy-looking photocopies.

Remember to proof your copy. Check show times, venue details, spelling and grammar at every level and every round of changes and get someone else to proof it for you too. Errors can be embarrassing and costly to remedy.

Include in all marketing material:

- show title
- artist name
- who the show is presented by
- a strong, eye-catching key image
- dates, time, venue of show
- a clear call to action about where and how to buy tickets (comedyfestival.com.au)
- sponsor logos (these must be cleared with the Festival's Partnership Manager first)
- one or two genuine quotes about how fantastic the comedian or the show is
- Melbourne International Comedy Festival season logo

THE FESTIVAL LOGO

Melbourne International Comedy Festival logo must appear on all the advertising and promotional material of shows officially registered in the Festival.

More information on these requirements is in the Resources tab on the registration site.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Consider using a professional photographer for your marketing shots. The impact of an eye-catching, high quality, strong image is substantial. Have a look at a few portfolios and discuss the cost of taking shots and copies in the size and format you need.

DESIGN

If you're handy with design, go for it, but otherwise you may wish to engage a graphic designer.

Provide a clear and complete brief to your designer (including the 'look and feel' you want), determine your design budget and ask a designer (or two) to quote before you start work.

Think about what the design says to punters:

- Who are you targeting? Where will they see it? How will the design be applied (posters, social media advertising, newsletter)
- What should the design achieve? What two words describe the 'look' (e.g. colourful, modern)?
- Provide any existing artwork or images to the designer to help with the process.

If you don't know any graphic designers, try joining graphic design Facebook groups, or reaching out to universities with graphic design courses to see if they can recommend any current or past students. Do you have friends that are handy with design that you can exchange favours with?

Even if you need to do it yourself, there are free applications like Canva that make it incredibly easy to make unique, original designs – your poster is often the first thing audiences will see, so it's worth putting the effort in. Get creative! Who said a poster design needs to be digital?

PRINTED MATERIAL

PRINTING

As always, obtain a few quotes before selecting a printer. Check that the quotes include GST, proofs if required, and ask for their turnaround times. You can reduce the overall cost by printing flyers and posters at the same time, or by combining your printing with another show.

We recommend:

Plakkit
Maya Love
P: 03 9354 6611
E: maya@plakkit.com
W: plakkit.com

Minuteman Press Abbotsford
P: 03 9415 8818
E: abbotsford@minutemanpress.com.au

Kwik Kopy Exhibition Street
P: 03 9663 2522
E: print@exhibitionstreet.kwikkopy.com.au

Tip – be realistic about the amount of printed material you require. Check with your venue regarding how many posters you can put up and make a distribution plan before pressing 'go'!

DISTRIBUTION

You may want to employ a company to distribute your flyers and posters around Melbourne. We suggest using an experienced distributor as they have established contacts and regular runs and will save you the frustration of driving around Melbourne and looking for parking spots.

Distributors can distribute posters, handbills, programs, catalogues, and postcards to cafes, live venues, cinemas, retail outlets in and around Melbourne and can tailor runs to suit your needs. There are some that print in-house so you can get print and distribution deals.

The Festival uses Plakkit for all our distribution.

They have offered a discounted rate to all Festival artists. Plakkit also print posters and flyers and offer competitive rates.

Plakkit
Maya Love
P: 03 9354 6611
E: maya@plakkit.com
W: plakkit.com

Mr Moto
P: 03 9417 7008
W: mrmoto.com.au

Tip – if you decide to hit the pavement yourself, think about distributing at places relevant to your show (e.g. exit flyering other shows, specific areas of town, events) rather than just flyering outside Melbourne Town Hall. Be sure to ask permission before leaving posters and flyers in restaurants, cafes and bars.

ADVERTISING

Special advertising rates are offered to Festival participants as part of our sponsorship arrangements with specific media outlets. Details will be made available on the Registration Site.

PRINT + ONLINE ADVERTISING

You have a choice of mainstream newspapers, street press and niche publications. Street press offer more affordable advertising and access to a younger market.

Advertising in The Age or Herald Sun requires a substantially larger budget but they have significantly larger circulation and readership than street press. Most publications offer discounts for multiple bookings, or for packages that incorporate print and digital.

Tips – concentrate your advertising between the dates of the Guide launch (late Feb) and the Festival.

Try to negotiate editorial when booking your ads with street press.

RADIO ADVERTISING

Radio advertising can be an effective component of a marketing campaign, if it makes sense for your target market and you can work it into your budget.

Commercial FM stations include FOX FM, Triple M, Nova 100, Smooth FM, or you may want to consider public radio stations such as 3RRR, 3PBS, SYN FM, JOYFM and SEN.

WEBSITE ADVERTISING

The Melbourne International Comedy Festival website attracts a high volume of traffic. On peak days during the Festival can attract over 60,000 unique daily visitors.

Advertising on the season site is available from January to all participating artists but is limited. Speak to the marketing team for more information.

PROGRAM GUIDE ADVERTISING

Advertising in the Program Guide is another option available to artists. Space in the Guide is limited and bookings close in December. Speak to the Marketing team for more information.

INFO BOOTH ADVERTISING

You have the opportunity to provide a limited number of A3 posters and DL/A6/A5 flyers that the Festival will display on your behalf. Advertising is also available for show promotion on the digital screens at the Box Office & Info Booth. Speak to the Marketing team for more information.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

See above under Social Media.

Advertising rate cards and booking forms for the Festival website, Program Guide and Digital Screens at the Tickets & Info Booth will be available on the Registration Site.

PROMOTIONS

WORD OF MOUTH

Word of mouth is one of the most powerful marketing tools available. If you have a creative and entertaining show, people will talk about it, and talk positively. It's worth filling early shows with guests to help get that talk going.

GIVEAWAYS

Make the most of ticket giveaway opportunities offered by publications and radio stations and use social media and your own personal networks to get the word out about competitions you're running.

Tip – approach the 'talkers' in your community – people who run bars, hotels, backpackers, cafes, hairdressers and offer them tickets to your first weekend.
Don't forget your own personal networks – everyone you know should be at your show early and talking it up.

PAPERING THE HOUSE / COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS

'Papering the house' means giving away tickets strategically to fill your venue to a comfortable level. Don't think of it merely as the distribution of free tickets, but rather as an opportunity to help generate positive word of mouth about your show.

Papering should only take place in the first week of your show if you're doing the full season, or in first night or two for half seasons.

Use your own networks and contacts, contact business organisations, potential sponsors and community radio stations and ask them to giveaway a small number of tickets. Send guest invitations and distribute complimentary tickets to friends, community and the media. Be aware that your Ticketing Agreement may have a limit on how many complimentary tickets you can offer per season and your venue may charge you for extras (usually only if your venue rental is tied to ticket sales).

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is a commercial arrangement whereby a partnership is established between your show and a business. This association primarily involves the exchange of either a cash investment or the provision of contra products or services in exchange for branding or promotional opportunities linked to your show.

All Melbourne International Comedy Festival participants MUST have potential sponsors approved by the Festival's Partnerships Manager, Matthew Withers (matthew@comedyfestival.com.au) before entering into a binding agreement. This is necessary to ensure that no individual event's sponsorship arrangement is in direct conflict with any Melbourne International Comedy Festival partner; and that the Festival maintains control over how our brand is used and what commercial entities the brand may be used to promote.

More information about how to approach a company to sponsor your show is available on the registration site or contact our Partnerships Manager.

Need help or advice?
Contact the office on 03 9245 3700 to speak to a member of our marketing team!

Denise Damianos, Marketing & Partnership Director

Brooke Reilly, Social Media and Digital Content Manager

Matthew Withers, Partnerships Manager

PUBLICITY

Publicity is editorial coverage in the media (radio, newspapers, magazines, websites, television). Publicity is free, but the media outlet chooses what they will cover. This differs from advertising, which is booked and paid for media coverage.

Publicity can be used to:

1. Build and maintain a profile
2. Raise public awareness
3. Make a public announcement
4. Promote an event
5. Launch a product
6. Enhance a marketing and advertising campaign
7. Generate buzz

The Festival's publicists are responsible for publicising the Festival as a whole. They do not run individual publicity campaigns for each show but are available to all participants for advice and assistance in the lead up to the Festival provided an appointment is made for a briefing before the end of February.

MEDIA PORTAL

The Festival's publicists manage a Media Portal, an invaluable reference for journalists, which gives ~200 media outlets information on every show. Relevant details flow through from your show registration, including a media-facing publicity contact and a high-resolution image (min. 1800 x 1800px). If you don't have a high res image, just make sure tou tick "Make image available for publicity" on your best image in the Assets section. You can also add an Artist Bio in the Publicity tab.

HELP OUR TEAM SELL YOUR SHOW

In the Publicity section of registration, please add 2-3 plain-language sentences describing your show for our box office, info booth and customer service teams when speaking with audiences. This is separate from your show copy, so write it as you'd explain the show to the public *(e.g. an Estonian clowning show about friendship with limited consensual audience interaction and a fun surprise at the end! Suitable for mums, dads, carers and their cheeky little-monkeys. Seats for adults and cushions on the ground for little ones)*.

Need help or advice? Contact our Publicity team at pr@comedyfestival.com.au.