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2008 MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL COMEDY FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES \$9.7 MILLION BOX OFFICE

The Melbourne International Comedy Festival today announced **\$9,754,400** in box office for the recent 2008 Festival, an increase of 6% on last year's record breaking Festival.

With a total attendance of **455,059**, and paid attendance of **380,239**, the Festival consolidated its position as Australia's largest cultural event.

The website received **505,378** visits (from **134** different countries and territories) in just three months, with an astonishing **4,133,459** page views.

Festival Director Susan Provan said: "There is a real tendency at this time of year, to think about the Comedy Festival's success only in numbers. The reality is theatres, tents, bars, and broom cupboards all over Melbourne were bursting for a month with the most eclectic and dynamic Comedy Festival program yet.

"There were superstars with sold out shows, newcomers to discover, kids' stuff, free stuff and weird stuff – all marvellous reasons for hundreds of thousands of eager comedy lovers to go out and enjoy a Festival that transforms Melbourne in a way that no other event can. Knowing our audiences are ready, willing and able to take risks, spend money and participate for 28 days over Easter is a great point to start our planning for 2009."

As well as being an incredibly strong year for Australian talent, international artists from Shanghai, UK, Ireland, US and Canada were also represented. The finals of **Raw Comedy** and **Deadly Funny** sold out, along with **The Great Debate** and **Upfront**.

For lovers of numbers, there were **298** shows, with **4,146** performances, by **1,765** performers.

For comedy lovers unable to get to Melbourne, **Raw Comedy** and **Class Clowns** heats were held in every Australian capital city and lots of regional centres. The indigenous comedy competition, **Deadly Funny** was expanded to encompass South Australian, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, in addition to Victoria. **1 million** people around Australia watched the **Melbourne Comedy Festival Gala** on Network Ten.

The Comedy Festival is currently showing off the best of Australian and international comedians in every far-flung corner of Australia, on **The Comedy Festival Roadshow**.

The Comedy Festival is moving to 240 Exhibition Street, Melbourne (above the Comedy Theatre) on 12 May.

THE 2009 MELBOURNE COMEDY FESTIVAL RUNS FROM 1 – 29 APRIL 2009.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Tatia Sloley at TS Publicity

Ph: (03) 9419 8837 Mob: 0403 305 395 Email: tatia@tspublicity.com.au