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SYDNEY FESTIVAL PROPOSAL FOR 2009

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Samsung Mobile Festival Garden

Introduction

For the past two years Sydney Festival, with the support and approval of the City of Sydney, has created a Festival Garden on the British Lawn in Hyde Park North.

In 2008 the footprint of the Garden was increased to allow for the erection of a second tent adjacent to The Famous Spiegeltent which had been the focus of the precinct in 2007. As in the previous year, the Spiegeltent was home to both free and ticketed performances ranging from *La Clique* and early evening music performances to Festival Kids during the day. The second tent was the venue for a French new circus company called Cirque Ici.

Due to the extraordinary demand anticipated for *La Clique* the Festival Garden dates were extended beyond the official Festival dates to 3 February. Even so, demand for tickets far exceeded availability for the season.

A naming rights sponsor, Samsung Mobile, was sourced for the 2008 Festival to assist with the Festival's costs.

The Festival Garden proved very popular with the public and was a success on a number of levels. Total attendance to the ticketed shows was 21,083 with a further 1835 attending the free Festival Kids events.

Exact attendance figures for the food and beverages area and free late music are not available, however despite the number of rainy nights many people came to enjoy sitting under the trees with friends and to dance to one of the popular bands programmed inside the Spiegeltent.

It is worth noting that at no time during the day is the designated area off limits to the general public.

Financial Forecast

The accounts for the 2008 Festival are still being finalised at the time of writing however it is likely that after expenditure and revenue, including box office, sponsorship and catering, is taken into account the net cost of the Garden to Sydney Festival will be in the region of \$200,000. This does not factor in any underlying expenditure nor the cost of marketing, publicity nor development activities which would run well into six figures. Excluding those areas, production and programming expenditure totalled around \$1.67 million.

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Site Restitution

The unusually wet conditions impacted on the final bump out from the Garden. All except two containers were off the site on schedule however those final two were delayed a week. When attempts to remove the containers on Monday 11th February failed, Sydney Festival staff consulted closely with the City of Sydney and their horticultural staff about the best course of action. The Council commenced preparing the ground for returfing on Wednesday which resulted in the Festival requiring cranes to lift the containers out. The appropriate permissions were sought allowing the containers to be lifted clear of the site at 2am on the morning of Monday 18th.

As a result of the rain, the site was extremely muddy by the end however as the photographs below show, the returfing was completed quickly and after only a week little sign of the Festival activities was visible. The Council maintained fencing around the area to encourage a speedy recovery. All fencing had been removed by 10 March.



Photos taken of the British Lawn on 26 February showing new turf

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Festival Kids

1835 attended 10 afternoon performances given by a range of Sydney Festival artists including the casts of *Ngapartji Ngapartji*, *La Clique* and *murundak* as well as special guest artists. Children between the ages of 3 – 12 years were introduced to indigenous language and songs, Latin dance, circus skills, Tim Hawkinson's inventive world of sculptures and drawing and much more. All sessions were free.



During the day the picturesque surroundings provided the perfect environment for the free kids program originally only scheduled for inside the tent, but which by popular demand spilled out into the surrounding Garden area where additional activity was programmed.



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Music in The Famous Spiegeltent

Early evening saw 17 concerts given by six exceptional artists from Australia and around the world. These were presented in the relaxing and intimate environment of the Spiegeltent and every artist performed to a capacity house. The total audience was: 5,014. Ticket prices were ranged between \$35 and \$45.

"Rare talent in full flight" Daily Telegraph review of Andrew Bird

"Experimental UK electronic folk band Tunng appeared before a crowd seated underneath the Famous Spiegeltent in the Hyde Park gardens. Backed by a black backdrop covered in golden fairy lights, the stage was set for what would prove to be a magical performance." Drum Media

La Clique

For the second year, *La Clique* was one of the hottest tickets of the Festival. This show combines an astonishing combination of vaudeville and music hall and the public can't get enough of it! Over 37 performances 12,110 people experienced its special magic performed by ten artists of rare talent. Tickets were between \$55 and \$65.



"This spicy, awe-inspiring and hilarious show, along with the cocooning splendour of the 1930s Famous Spiegeltent, is a delectable blast once more."
(Sydney Morning Herald)

Late at the Garden

Following *La Clique* and *Secret* each night was a line-up of Australian bands and DJs in the Spiegeltent. Entry was free and the only prerequisite was an inclination to dance.

Cirque Ici – Secret

“Beast, scientist, cowboy, - the full shebang in one man's body of magic”
Sydney Morning Herald

In 2008 a second tent was erected in the Festival Garden. This custom built tent is home to the extraordinary artistic talent of Johann Le Guillerm – tightrope walker, feline, clown and magician. Fascinated by gravity, by physics and by objects, Le Guillerm animated the inanimate and defied the senses.

This tent was erected during the second week of the Festival. Total attendance to the season was 3,959 over 10 performances from 14 – 26 January. Tickets were \$50 and \$60 each.



Food and Beverages

The Festival Garden also made an attractive venue for people to meet friends and to enjoy food and drinks before and after a show, or perhaps as a destination in its own right.

Unfortunately, this year was the wettest for many years and so this social aspect of the Garden did not achieve consistent attendance levels across January. Nevertheless when the weather was conducive a relaxed and friendly atmosphere prevailed.



The Samsung Mobile Festival Garden in 2009.

Building on the success of the 2008 program Sydney festival is keen to again create this popular and entertaining component of the Festival offering in 2009.

We seek to use the same footprint and to recreate the two tent scenario and to also ensure that free kids activities are incorporated into the programming as in previous years. We would also create a schedule of events commencing at varying times from early evening through to late night. As in previous years, the site will remain available to the general public throughout the day.

We are aware that concerns have been voiced about the location of the Garden on the British Lawn in Hyde Park because of the sensitive natural environment. All identified alternative sites have been considered in conjunction with the Council with the conclusion that if the Garden is to continue Hyde Park presents the only viable option.

Alternative sites considered were:

1: Cook and Phillip Park

- (a) Cathedral Forecourt
This has a structure load rating of 500kg/m³ when a tent such as the Spiegeltent's structure load is 2700kg/ m³
- (b) Lawn Terraces
The size and shape of the terraces make the placement of the tents impossible.

2: Belmore Park and Prince Alfred Park

The general environment of these parks and their proximity to residential areas make them an undesirable option. There are uninterrupted line-of sight to residents in both instances which would make prevent late night operation.

Prince Alfred Park is isolated from other Festival precincts and has poor visibility and little or no passing pedestrian traffic.

3: Domain Precinct

- (a) Domain car park roof
The site would require that all infrastructure would have to be Craned onto the roof and, with an EPA finish time of 11pm key activities that characterise the Garden would be impossible.
- (b) Adjacent to the Gallery
The Spiegeltent was located here some years ago as a stand alone event however taken together, the size of this location which does not allow for any complementary activities and the early EPA of 11pm, would also render the site impossible if one seeks to replicate the atmosphere and purpose of the existing Garden.

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Neither of the Domain precincts could operate on Domain Concert Series event days which would also rule out Saturdays. The impact of this and the limitation on the operating hours and size of sites would seriously impact on the budget and likely render it unfeasible.

Given this investigation, Sydney Festival's conclusion is that Hyde Park presents the only viable option for the Samsung Mobile Festival Garden and we request that the Council take this into consideration in its discussions concerning our submission to proceed in 2009.

Dates and Operating Hours

Sydney Festival 2009 will run from 10th to 31st January.

Set up of the site would commence around 5 January
First performances would be on either the 10th or 11th January 2009
Final performance would probably be 1 February 2009
Site clear by 8 February 2008 – earlier if weather permits.

At this stage we envision something happening on the site everyday during the performance dates and as stated above, activities would include free daytime events for kids and families through early evening and into late night.

As in previous years, public access to the site throughout the day would be unrestricted.

Licence

We would again seek to licence the site from 5pm until 2am for the evening events. We are mindful of our obligations under the EPA guidelines and will program accordingly. As in previous years, Sydney Festival will also engage with the local stakeholders to ensure a quick response on the night to any sound issues.

The British Lawn, Hyde Park

Sydney Festival is respectful of the significance of Hyde Park and, as in 2007 and 2008 we will ensure an adequate budget and other necessary resources to rehabilitate the site after the event. We will also continue to work closely with the Council's horticultural team and, in particular to seek and to heed the advice of the arborists.

The Festival will be utilising the services of a well reputed security company contracted to ensure optimum security levels. Please note that there were no significant security issues in 2008.

We will again offer Australia Day organisers access to the site's infrastructure for their activities on 26 January.

Sponsorship

Samsung would continue as the naming rights sponsor.

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In conclusion

Sydney Festival hopes that the City of Sydney will once again approve use of Hyde Park for the Festival Garden. In its first two years, it has found a place in the hearts of the Sydneysiders and has contributed greatly to the Festival's ability to really connect with the city.

We have been mindful of the sensitivities surrounding the park, in particular its trees, and following our investigations into alternative sites we believe that there is no other suitable location for the Garden and therefore its inclusion in the 2009 Festival is dependent on whether we can locate it in Hyde Park.

We are very proud of this component of the Festival and despite the fact that it requires considerable resources and subsidy from our staff and our budget we are committed, with your permission, to continue to include it in the program.