

# Case Study

The Confidence Man

Tour Producer: Performing Lines

Greener Live Performances  
*through energy efficiency*



## Background

Performing Lines develops, produces and tours new and innovative Australian performing arts regionally, nationally and internationally. In 2015, Performing Lines is committed to the delivery of over 15 creative projects of varying scale. This includes 5 national tours and 5 international tours/presentations.

Among these projects, Performing Lines is producing a national Roadwork tour of Side Pony's The Confidence Man. The tour traverses the continent and with the exception of Tasmania has performances in each state as well as the ACT. The production is unusual in that it does not tour with a cast, but rather six audience members who volunteer for each show to participate in the performance; each playing one of the six characters. Equipped with a headset and a mask representing their character, each participant enters the world of an ordinary suburban home...

## Key drivers for energy efficiency improvements

In order to ensure Performing Lines can continue to share contemporary Australian works throughout the continent and the world, they recognise that they must move away from the standard touring model and find more creative ways to tour and present shows; while at the same time preserving the artistic integrity of productions.

Performing Lines' commitment to environmental sustainability is driven by a desire to reduce the environmental impact of live performance and ensure a model which is sustainable as well as economical. Transportation of people and freight has massive impacts upon a show's carbon footprint as well as tour budgets and subsequent show price. In addition to Performing Lines' inherent responsibility to the planet, they recognise that their presenters and audiences are eager to participate and engage in productions which are delivered with an eye to sustainable practice.



Image credit: Skye Sobejko

## Opportunities

### **Overview of energy efficiency approach taken, opportunities identified, and business case developed**

The Confidence Man is set in a simple two-bedroom house and the audience sits around the performance space (there are no scenery flats, but rather the walls are represented by tape lines which form the 'blue print' of the dwelling). In assessing the viability of the production to tour, Side Pony Productions identified that the bulk of the set items within the house were generic furniture pieces which could be sourced from most second hand stores.

Performing Lines determined that if they were to ask the venues to provide the bulkiest items that would alleviate the need for a dedicated truck and driver to transport freight for the duration of the tour thus representing a saving of tens of thousands of dollars. They were able to create a national itinerary, which was economically viable and did not rely on support from Playing Australia.

## Measures Implemented

### **The key steps implemented and considerations on operational impact include:**

Performing Lines worked closely with Side Pony to determine what physical elements of the show needed to tour with the production team and what could be picked up at the local second hand store. In order to pursue the idea of venues sourcing and providing their own set, one of the key considerations is the impact it would have on the overall aesthetic integrity of the show. To achieve fidelity to the design, venues will be presented with a 'style guide'. Each venue will receive an e-copy of the style guide in the months preceding the tour.

Performing Lines also reassessed the make up of the touring team. They had a desire for the show's creator - Zoe Pepper - to travel with the tour to ensure creative continuity and also to fulfil community engagement obligations. Zoe's willingness to work with the touring Production Manager and support them in a couple of production areas negated the need for a third person on the road and reduced travel and accommodation requirements by over a third. It has meant that critical set items and the touring team can travel together in a single small vehicle.

## Internal issues / challenges experienced

Performing Lines sees set sourcing as an opportunity for venues to engage with their audiences therefore they used this as a selling point for the presenters - the sourcing of the set becomes a treasure hunt of sorts. It is also an opportunity to activate relationships between presenters and suppliers of second hand and recycled goods in their community.

It is recognised that this may also provide some of the greatest challenges. While there is an element of flexibility in the overall look of the house interior, the items themselves are not subject to interpretation - for example, a king size bed is not an acceptable substitute for a single, a dining room table cannot be replaced with a coffee table, and so on. It is anticipated that this model will require consistently strong and clear communications between the creatives, Performing Lines and the presenting teams, to ensure venues are confident in their responsibilities for the successful delivery of the show.



Image credit: Skye Sobejko

## Energy Efficiency Outcomes

### *Why the implemented strategies saved energy*

Through sourcing the bulkiest set items locally, Performing Lines were able to alleviate the need for the hire of a dedicated truck and driver to cross the continent. Similarly, the willingness of the Director to tour with the production has negated the need for an additional touring team member.

### *Potential energy and cost savings*

If the set for the show were to travel via the standard road freight model it would traverse well in excess of 8000kms. The model of sourcing the set locally is still reliant on vehicle transport however the mileage is massively reduced.

### *Key learnings - what can be transferred to others?*

The Confidence Man does not hit the road until September 2015, so it will be some time until we are able to assess the direct outcome of this particular model. That being said, the approach to this tour has prompted Performing Lines as a company to assess other potential non-conventional solutions to future projects with the aim of ensuring Performing Lines (and the planet) is able to continue working well into the future.



*Image credit: Skye Sobejko*

Case Study compiled with thanks to:

