

Promoting Your Fringe Show or How to Fill the House by Really Trying

Written by Mark Lyon and Jesse Locks and badly cut and pasted by Scott Ewing. "I" references refer to international fringe veteran Mark Lyon.

Dear Nugget Fringe Artist,

In an effort to make this Nugget Fringe Theater Festival even bigger and better than last year we have had our PR person create a little PR Cheat Sheet to help you with your own PR and promotions for your shows. Feel free to email with any questions.

You have written, rewritten and polished your script to perfection and have rehearsed your show to the point that you are performing it in your sleep. Now comes the task of promoting your show in such a way that will attract the large audience your show deserves!

Although fringe festival promotion has changed a great deal over the seventeen years during which I have performed and produced shows at festivals both extremely large and extremely small and the publicity landscape continually evolves, here are a few basic maxims which never seem to change

Press Release

Although the Nugget Fringe will be sending out its own press releases about the festival as a whole and it is unlikely that our local newspapers will have the space or the interest to run a separate article about every show in the festival, you will want to send out a press release to every media outlet in the hope that your show will be one of the fortunate few shows they decide to spotlight. Here are some tips which might improve your chances to be one of the shows selected for a feature article.

Send in your press release one month to two weeks before the festival. If you send it in earlier than one month it is likely to get lost; any later than two weeks and it will be too late.

Find a "hook" which demonstrates to the editor that your show is unique and deserves to be featured in an individual article.

Grab the editor's attention in your first paragraph which includes both that hook and the who, what, where and why of your show.

Keep it short. – no more than one 8 ½ “by 11” sheet of paper which includes a show description, why your show is unique and a “must see,” a bio of the performer’s theatrical background, reviews, awards etc.

Include one to two at the most promotional photos.

Carefully proofread your press release several time and then have someone else proofread it for you. You want to appear as professional as possible and typos will undermine your credibility.

Send all of this off electronically. Busy editors prefer to deal with well-written releases which are ready for publication “as is” or which can be quickly edited using their computer’s cut and paste functions rather than the editor having to spend time typing from a printed page delivered via snail mail.

Promotional Photos

Color is almost always preferable to black and white.

Your photos should look professional, be exciting, dramatic or, in some other manner, have a visual impact which will instantly convey to the viewer an intriguing sense of what your show will be about.

Although there are always exceptions to the following, avoid long distance, outdoor, out of focus or poorly lit shots, shots with more than three people, nontheatrical backgrounds such as your living room, your resume head shot (unless you are so famous that you really don’t have the time to perform at a fringe festival) and shots of your actors fooling around or rehearsing with scripts in their hands.

As a general rule electronic submissions should be no smaller than 4x6 inches and no larger than to 11x17 inches. They should be jpg only and 300 dpi.or larger. Label each photo with your show or company’s name, ie: mycompany1.jpg, mycompany2.jpg, mycompany3.jpg, and include all the relevant photo details in your email – who is in each picture, and a photographer credit.

Online and Social Media

A great deal of prep has already been done for you. Please take advantage of it.

This year's hashtags include #nuggetfringe #nuggetfringe2018 #NFTF

Please use them when referencing the festival on Twitter, Instagram and even Facebook.

1. Facebook

Please like the Nugget Fringe Theater Festival Facebook Page and invite your friends to do so as this is where we will be posting (we'll also be cross promoting on Quest's Page till we get our numbers up). Feel free to share anything and everything we post.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1588664328034425/>

We've also created a few paragraphs that you can cut and paste and use at will.

1) Wild, weird, refreshing, experimental, off-the-wall, innovative and fearless are all words that have been used to describe The Nugget Fringe Festival, January 18 - 28, 2018 in Grass Valley and Nevada City. This year's lineup continues where last year's festival left off, with an unparalleled cross section of Nevada County's finest actors and experimenters, along with opportunities for new, up and coming performers to independently produce theatrical works in the true spirit of the international "Fringe" movement. Tickets on sale now at www.nuggetfringe.com

2) Chicago and San Francisco have one, New York has several, Edinburgh's is the biggest, and now, so does Nevada County. What are we talking about? Fringe Festivals of course. These exciting, envelope pushing, raucous, large, multi-arts festivals are popping up all over the world to the delight of theater hungry audiences. Quest Theaterworks presents The 3rd Annual Nugget Fringe Theater Festival January 18-28, 2018 at locations throughout Grass Valley and Nevada City, CA. Tickets on sale now at www.nuggetfringe.com

3) The Nugget Fringe Festival is an un-curated collection of eclectic theater, dance, music, comedy, and spoken word. This year's festival will include over a hundred performers from Nevada County and as far as San Francisco and Los Angeles, presenting upwards of thirty five distinct shows, comprising more than one hundred and eighteen performances over ten days with about five thousand seats available. This makes The Nugget Fringe Theater Festival one of the largest indoor mountain town arts events in the region. Tickets on sale now at www.nuggetfringe.com

2. Facebook Event

We will be creating a FB event for each Nugget Fringe event. Please click you are attending and invite your personal network. Feel free to post photos, show updates, feedback and anything else you'd like here.

3. Newsletters

We are sending our weekly newsletters. If you yourself have a newsletter feel free to use the verbiage below and the attached festival image.

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The Nugget Fringe Festival is an un-curated collection of eclectic theater, dance, music, comedy, and spoken word. This year's festival will include over a hundred performers from

Nevada County and as far as San Francisco and Los Angeles, presenting upwards of forty distinct shows, comprising more than one hundred and fifty performances over ten days with about five thousand seats available. This makes The Nugget Fringe Festival one of the largest indoor mountain town arts events in the region.

For tickets, a complete list of shows and more info go to www.nuggetfringe.com

4. KVMR/KNCO Interviews

We will be scheduling a series of interviews. If there are days and times that you cannot go on air let us know and we'll schedule accordingly.

5. Online Calendars

We've listed Nugget Fringe Festival on online calendars for Nevada City, Grass Valley, Chico, Sacramento, Reno, Auburn and Truckee/Tahoe

6. Radio PSA's

We've submitted PSA's to various radio stations throughout Northern California.

Consider creating a web page for you show presenting all of your publicity elements. This can be done easily and for free on wordpress.org. Invite fringe patrons to visit your web page by printing the web address on your poster.

If you have a Facebook or Twitter account, make sure that all of your Facebook friends and/or Twitter followers know about your show.

Be creative. While performing a two person play about the lives of Sarah Bernhardt and Oscar Wilde at the 2014 Victoria Fringe Festival, I created a Twitter account in which Oscar sent out fictional tweets describing Sarah and his adventures in Victoria (using the names of commercial establishments in Victoria in the hope that these establishments might forward the tweets on to their followers) and inviting everyone to come see them at the Fringe.

If there is something we've missed please let us know or help us out with promoting this truly unique event in Nevada County. We are so excited to share your beautiful craft and hard work with hundreds of attendees!

Sandwich Board Displays

Consider building an A-frame style sandwich board to display your photos and other promotional materials in or just outside the lobby of your performance venue.

Working the Lines

No matter how eye-catching and professional your posters, photos and other promotional materials, your most valuable allies in selling your show will be developing good and enthusiastic word-of-mouth for your show and personal contact with potential audience

members. An effective and time-honored way to accomplish both of these goals is to pass out promotional materials to patrons waiting in line for other shows.

The materials you pass out can range from highly sophisticated full color, professionally printed postcards to simple back and white photocopied "4-ups" cut into four small flyers from one 8 ½" by 11" sheet of copy paper.

More important than how slick your flyer may or may not be is the manner in which you approach patrons in line. It is extremely helpful if you think of flyering the fringe lines as a sort of performance. Remember, you are representing your show and anything you can do to encourage patrons to positively engage with you on a one to one basis will help in your goal of selling your show.

Anything you can do to attract attention in a considerate and unobtrusive manner will be helpful. I will never forget the petite young lady who would arrive at the fringe ticket lines, quickly leap onto her partner's shoulders and then execute a backwards somersault onto the sidewalk. Who would not be intrigued and wish to know more about their show after that?

You might consider working the lines in costume. Another fringe artist I will never forget was the cheerfully charming young lady who passed out her flyers while wearing a child's plush fabric dinosaur costume. Who could say "No" to her?

If you don't wear a unique costume in your show, you might consider creating and wearing an unusual piece of promotional apparel. While producing and flyering the lines for Marion Jeffery's one-woman dramatization of Neil Gaiman's *Fortunately, The Milk* at last summer's Victoria Fringe, I wore a fanciful hat which Marion created featuring a whimsical milk bottle rising from the hat's crown and I carried a large copy of our poster attached to a stick. I must admit that I had misgivings the first night I approached a fringe line so attired but I soon found that the hat and sign proved to be the perfect ice-breaker when it came offering my flyers to potential audience members.

The hat and sign proved to be so popular and fun, that I took to wearing the hat and carrying the sign everywhere I went for two weeks in Victoria and I quickly found that I was often stopped by people who had never heard of the Fringe but, upon my telling them about the show, they became interested in attending. The hat and sign became so well known by the population of Victoria that, one day while walking through a crafts fair miles from the Fringe venues, a vendor took one look at me and gleefully shouted to everyone there, "It's the milk guy!" On another occasion, a lady I met at an antiques show was so intrigued by my get-up that she took my photo and tweeted the photo to all of her friends.

Another idea you might consider is passing out flyers for your show at Cornish and Victorian Christmas.

The number of creative ways to publicize your show are endless and discovering what will work best for your show can be half the fun. I will be looking forward to seeing your creative ideas in action! Break a leg!