



## WELCOME TO THE TOKYO HOTEL

*ABC launches old fashioned wireless show  
for new generation of podcast listeners*

Check in to [The Tokyo Hotel](#) for a dazzling trip into another world, a Wes Anderson-style 'movie for your ears'.

The ABC is going back to the future for its latest comedy podcast offering: a radio play with a magic realist touch.

"Two people (mostly blokes) doing light-hearted banter has been the standard riff for comedy podcasts for more than a decade now," explains the show's producer, Tom Wright, an audio comedy specialist who launched the wildly successful UK comedy podcast *The Bugle* for *The Times* a decade ago.

"This is very different. We've tried to create something more ambitious, more scripted and highly produced, like some of the classic radio plays of old."

Except this one has a very fresh touch. Millennials Maggie Looke and Ben Russell, who created the original stage show the series is based on, have brought to life a beautiful surreal universe in the spirit of *The Mighty Boosh* or *The Goons* and, more recently Jermaine Clement's comedy podcast *The Mysterious Secrets of Uncle Bertie's Botanarium*.

*The Tokyo Hotel* is a once-iconic establishment in a down at heel part of Los Angeles. (A terrible black mould that tastes like caviar infests the basement.) A shadow of its former glory days, it's where former Hollywood legends go to fade away. Check-ins are down and long term squatters are up.

The staff, though, share a passionate dream that the hotel will rise again. They are an eccentric and eclectic bunch to say the least. They are continually misled by the hotel's well-meaning leader, Con Cierge. Jive-talking Latino-lover and occasional thug, Carlos, plays jazz in the lobby. The famously miserable German film director Werner Herzog operates the lift.

A flighty Spaniard and a (work experience) bear with a Kiwi accent run the kitchen. The bellhop can't speak (shades of Kenny from *South Park*). Then there are kooky guests like failed TV mentalist, Ribocourt, who, in one memorable episode tries to out-psych a hive of bees with disastrous consequences.

The storyline follows the arrival of a mysterious guest, Tuesday Problems, who heralds a potential new dawn. She's the emissary of The Royal Duck (yes, an aquatic bird) whose pending visit needs to be handled with the utmost pomp and care. Along the way there is a love story, a (sort of) murder mystery, a heist and a journey into an arctic tundra with sleighdogs via the kitchen's freezer.

"*The Tokyo Hotel* is the kind of radio that ABC hasn't made in a long time," says the show's Executive Producer Ian Walker. "Something we imagine Spike Milligan would approve of. And we're very proud to bring back this kind of kooky 'movie for your ears'.

"The show sounds like no other kind of podcast we can think of in Australia. It has stunning production values and we're very proud of that. And it's hilariously funny. I'm sure it's destined for cult classic."

The show's creators are comedic bower birds. Ben Russell and Xavier Michelides are masters of silly voices. Icing on the cake is the wonderfully gravel-voiced narration by Anne Charleston (Madge from *Neighbours*).

The list of cameos reads like a who's-who of Australia's brightest new comedy talent, including Zac Ruane (Aunty Donna), Kate Denhart, Geraldine Hickey (Triple R), John Conway, Sam Taunton, Barney Duncan and RAW Comedy winner Danielle Walker.

The podcast also features a lush original jazz score and is accompanied by specially commissioned hand drawn artwork. It was co-produced by Tom Wright.

**THE TOKYO HOTEL** was funded via ABC Radio Comedy, a new collaborative initiative between ABC Radio and ABC Television designed to unearth and support new Australian comedy talent by developing and commissioning original podcast series.

**All 8 x 20 minute episodes of *The Tokyo Hotel* are available now on the ABC Radio app. Subscribe on iTunes or via your favourite podcast provider.**

For updates and information about the show:



[ABC Podcasts](#)

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**Ben Russell** is a graduate of The Second City Chicago and iO Chicago. Ben's stage debut was at The Black Swan State Theatre Company. He has also appeared in ABC TV's *Fancy Boy* and *Fresh Blood*. Ben's 2015 debut solo show *The Tokyo Hotel* at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival was nominated for The Golden Gibbo award and toured nationally and internationally to critical acclaim. Its follow up *Nö Shöw* with Xavier Michelides became 2016's Festival circuit's absurd cult hit.

**Maggie Looke** is an accomplished writer and producer working in cross platform live, radio and television comedy. She's written and produced shows including *Hamish and Andy*, ABC TV's *Fancy Boy*, *7 Creative*,

Nova Drive show and the recent cult hit *Nö Shōw* at the 2016 Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Maggie produced and directed the award nominated *The Tokyo Hotel* live show that toured internationally with critical acclaim.

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