



Touring tips for new technicians on the road

- **Do your research:** Most venues have a tech spec available online, so always check their equipment list against your needs as soon as possible. Communicate with your tour Booker/producer about what has been agreed in terms of venue staffing, get in times, and additional activities such as post-show Q&As, as well as travel times, accommodation, etc. Gather as much information as possible.
- **Plan ahead:** Get in touch with every venue's technical manager 4-6 weeks before the show to confirm your arrival time, staffing requirements and any other details such as pre-rig, parking, special effects. Attach your tech rider, but include important questions in the body of the email as well. Remember that the information you sent to the Booker may not have been shared – and if you don't get a reply, continue chasing until you get one.
- **Bring the essentials:** If you tape your show cloth down with gaffer tape, weight your set with stage weights, or need dark green gel for the light in that final scene, then those items are essential parts of your kit and you should tour with them where possible. Keep an eye on your stock of consumables (tape, gel, washing powder).
- **Let the cast help:** If your cast are travelling with you, assign them specific jobs in advance (unloading the van, hanging up costumes, setting props, doing laundry) that they can do at each venue, so that everyone gets into a routine and you can get on with what you need to do. Just remember that they also need time to warm up and prepare themselves for performing, and try to choose tasks that suit individual capabilities.
- **Return the favour:** Buy an Argos kettle, some Poundland mugs, and keep a stock of ibuprofen, Lemsip, plasters and teabags so that your cast (and you!) feel cared for. Be aware of any medical conditions in the company and store emergency contacts somewhere easily accessible.
- **Assess the situation:** When you arrive, let the company and technicians start unloading, and have a 5 minute conversation with the venue technical manager about your needs and general schedule for the day. This helps to avoid unpleasant surprises later ("What? All the technicians have to take a 1 hour break at 5pm? But I haven't done a sound check!")
- **Take charge:** Give venue staff specific tasks to do, and keep an eye out – if someone is standing around, give them something to do or they may well wander off. If you don't need any more help, let them know so you aren't wasting anyone's time. Be polite, friendly, and as clear as possible with instructions. Say please and thank you (a lot).
- **Take a break:** If you feel yourself getting stressed and suddenly realise you haven't left the stage since you arrived 4 hours ago, take a 5 minute break, get a breath of fresh air, have a cup of tea... Don't take it out on the people around you. Even if you don't think you have time, you do have 5 minutes. Your sanity and the company's future relationship with the venue are more important than focusing that one light.
- **Communicate with your team:** Send regular show reports to your director/producer so they know how things are going and are forewarned of potential problems. Always mention anything with financial or health and safety implications (the set has a crack, the lead singer isn't feeling well, the costumes have all turned pink) but if anything requires immediate action, ring them.
- **Be a confident and reasonable decision-maker:** Ultimately, on the road, you are in charge. If you arrive late due to traffic, there's no pre-rig, 1 technician, and an artist is feeling poorly, you have the right to tell the artist to lie down, rig enough lights so they can be seen, and make sure the show happens. Try to keep the rest of the team informed, but if they are not there, you have to take responsibility. Remember, it's not brain surgery, it's just theatre!