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## Rock of Ages to descend on Melbourne

Karl Quinn  
February 15, 2010

A stage musical featuring some of the biggest hits - and the biggest hair - of the '80s will be one of the star attractions on the state government's major events calendar next year.

### [Video: Rock of Ages - hair soon](#)

The hit Broadway show *Rock of Ages* will open in Melbourne at the Comedy Theatre in April 2011, Tourism and Major Events Minister Tim Holding announced this morning.

The company behind the Australian production, New Theatricals, will receive an undisclosed amount of support from the government-funded Victorian Major Events Company (VMEC), primarily for advertising and marketing.

*Rock of Ages* is not your typical Broadway offering. The male lead in New York is played by a former *American Idol* contestant, Constantine Maroulis, and audiences there are encouraged to drink and sing along during the show, which tells its simple love story via some of the biggest songs of the "hair-metal" genre: *Oh Sherrie* (Steve Perry), *Can't Fight This Feeling* (REO Speedwagon), *We're Not Gonna Take It* (Twisted Sister), *I've Been Waiting For A Girl Like You* (Foreigner), and the show-ending *Don't Stop Believing* (Journey).

*Rock of Ages* is what is known in the business as a "jukebox musical" - a show that uses existing and well-known songs rather than purpose-built music and lyrics - and while some critics have decried the trend, it has produced some notable success stories in recent years.

The ABBA musical *Mamma Mia!*, which begins its third Melbourne season tomorrow night, has taken more than \$2 billion worldwide. The Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons show *Jersey Boys* has grossed more than \$800 million.

The Australian production of *Jersey Boys*, which is still running strong after seven months at the Princess, was also staged by Sydney-based Rodney Rigby's New Theatricals, and similarly received VMEC support.

It is believed the local production of *Rock of Ages* will cost about \$6 million to mount. It will play at the Comedy Theatre, a 900-seat venue of similar size, layout and design to the Brooks Atkinson Theatre in New York, where the show has sold about \$30 million of tickets in the past 12 months.

Tim Holding, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, said the production was great news for Melbourne.

"This is fantastic news for all of us who think that the 1980s were some of the best years of our lives," he told a media conference this morning.

Melbourne's will be the second international production, after Toronto in Canada. Up to a dozen others are planned or in discussion.

VMEC chief executive officer Brendan McClements claimed the American producers' choice of Melbourne as a destination

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comes on the back of a targeted campaign.

"We've worked very hard over the past three to four years to be the city of choice for international theatre producers, because the prize from having a long-running blockbuster musical is really very significant," he said.

Last November, the government claimed the stage musical *Wicked* had produced an economic impact for the state of \$126 million. Much of that value was attributed to the fact that almost 30 per cent of the 610,000 people who saw the show came from interstate or overseas, bringing to the state money that would not otherwise have been spent here.

Although a 2007 report by the state auditor-general highlighted the difficulty of calculating the true economic impact of any major event, the government will be hoping that *Rock of Ages* is similarly effective in attracting a non-resident audience.

The chances of that are likely to be boosted by news that a film version is in the works, with a scheduled release date of May 2011. The stage show would almost certainly benefit from the associated publicity and awareness generated by such a movie.

At any rate, if the Melbourne production mimics the Broadway one in demographic terms, it will make at least one indisputable difference to the theatre world: 20 per cent of people who've seen the New York show report that they have never been to a Broadway production before.

\* Karl Quinn travelled to New York as a guest of the show's Australian producer, New Theatricals

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2010/02/15/1266082231834.html>*