

ATOMIC OZ

A production of the Western Australian Anti-Nuclear Movement. 2000, revised 2001
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& crew from the Community Anti-Nuclear Network of WA

YOU WILL NEED:

The nuclear mafia:

Captain of Industry, British military, PM (Menzies, Fraser, Hawke, Howard)
PR Flack, The Friendly Atom, Matilda, Mrs G (Gaia's cleaning lady), Death,
Radworkers, Mineworkers, Protesters, Musicians

The scene: A large outline map of Australia laid out in carpet painted blue on one edge, green on the other. A bench stands off the south-west corner. Off to the right, a large board displays the date: 1949.

Singer/s do a couple of opening numbers to set the scene. Matilda enters the stage, looks around dreamily, lies down on her bench and falls asleep.

Three Radsuits arrive with geiger counters, scanning the stage (and parts of the audience) for signs of radiation. They're excited. They plant white mine symbols at Rum Jungle (NT) and Radium Hill (SA). They wave to get the attention of their bosses.

The nuclear Mafia arrive.

BUSINESSMAN: Well General, your boffins have made us this beautiful, bright shiny new bomb, but our problem is, how do we turn this weapon of genocide into an engine of profit? Destroying the entire planet is hardly something we can do every day... Where's the long-term profitability?

POLITICIAN: We've started down this road now dear fellow, there's no turning back. We can't not do it. We can't put the genie back into the bottle - we have to figure out how to make it work for us.

GENERAL: But how do we convince people that the best way to keep world peace is to threaten to kill everyone?

EACH IN TURN: A-HA!

BUSINESS: We need...

ALL TOGETHER: ...the Friendly Atom!

Enter the Friendly Atom, bubbling with enthusiasm, skipping around the stage while the three Mafia launch into a smooth sales pitch.

POLITICIAN: It's 1949 - the dawn of the Nuclear Age! It's time to put the past ahead of us and the future behind us, high low, low high, hiho hiho, it's off to work we go, to build a better world for our children!

BUSINESSMAN: That's right! And while were doing it, were all going to make pots of money! You see, Australia might seem to the untrained eye to be a bit of a wasteland; but it's got uranium all over it, just begging us to dig it up and flog it off to the poms.

GENERAL (a Pom): And we'll certainly make it worth your while, chaps! Your freedom and the defence of the free world are at stake, and what better way to protect our children than with thousands and thousands of nuclear weapons?!

POLITICIAN: I see Australia as a whole ... a big hole ... well, what do the people of this great country think?

*The Friendly Atom is busy handing out sweets to kids and money to adults.
The General and Businessman immediately pounce on the politician.*

GENERAL AND BUSINESSMAN: Yeah, great! We love it, etc...

POLITICIAN: Looks like you're all for it, then. It's going to be...

ALL TOGETHER:... a Bright Nuclear Future for everyone!

BUSINESSMAN: Come on then - who wants to join the Yellowcake Rush?

Workers come on stage with spades, overalls, hardhats and two 44-gallon drums.

Singers turn over the date page to 1954.

WORKERS: (song)

Hi Ho, Hi Ho, it's off to work we go...

Radsuits lead the workers on and point them toward Rum Jungle and Radium Hill. The workers drop the 44-gallon drums into position there and mining begins. Workers dig uranium out of the drums and load a wheelbarrow. The radsuits lay out symbols at El Sherana (NT) and Mary Kathleen (Queensland) and leave the stage.

BUSINESSMAN: Well this all seems to be working according to plan! Here - this is for the next election.

The Businessman hands the Politician a fat wad of money and they give each other a big kiss and exit.

GENERAL: *[on telephone]* Hello. Put me through to Number 10, will you? Thank you. Hello? Yes Sir. They've bought it Sir. Yes Sir. Lock, stock and barrel - hook, line and sinker. Come on over whenever you're ready Sir. What's that Sir? Oh no Sir ... don't worry about that Sir, they haven't got a clue. *[laughs]* Cheerio.

Worker 1, with a wheelbarrow full of yellowcake and a bad cough heads offshore, waving goodbye.

WORKER 1: *[cough ... gag]*

WORKER 2: You OK mate?

WORKER 1: Yeh ... yeh mate, just a bit of dust...

Mining continues but some of the blokes are looking a little ill. Worker 1 passes a small, suspicious-looking team carrying an atom bomb, shrugs and carries on. Three Radsuits are carrying the oversized black bomb, led by the General who is clearly very excited.

GENERAL: Splendid!! Just put it down over here. We've got these things to play with, but how do we know whether they will work on the battlefield? We'd better test one. Let's try one here, where is it? The Monte Bello Islands, I believe.

The General directs them to lay down their bomb at Monte Bello. They point their scanners and block their ears.

GENERAL: Everybody clear. Backs to the Blast!

There is a huge BANG. Death strides onstage and flings a handful of ashes into the air. The radsuits scan the area for radiation and back away in alarm.

GENERAL: Wonderful! Well, that one certainly worked. Ah ... but - what about this one? We'd better try this one. Let's find a completely uninhabited area ... Try over here ... what's it called? Maralinga!

The radsuits gingerly pick up the bomb and shift it to South Australia.

GENERAL: Everybody clear. Duck and Cover! [Explosion.] Great! What about the Monte Bello Islands again? Freedom and Democracy! [Explosion.]

At each turn, Death follows patiently, making a mess of the landscape. Matilda is tossing and turning, in the grip of a nightmare.

GENERAL: Well ... they all seem to be in perfect working order.

One of the radsuits whispers urgently in his ear, pointing to his geiger counter and Death, who is still waiting patiently nearby.

GENERAL: Aah. I see. Well there's no need for us to hang around here any longer is there chaps? Thanks awfully. Cheerio!

POLITICIAN: I did but see her passing by ... and yet I love her, till we die.

The Politician, Businessman and the workers, looking on from just offstage with a certain amount of alarm, wave uneasily as the British team scans them for radiation and then heads home in a bit of a hurry. The workers get back on the job.

An elder woman dressed as a cleaning lady steps onstage with a mop and bucket. She shakes her head at the mess and wakes Matilda. This is Mrs G representing Gaia.

MRS G: Wake up Matilda. You must wake up.

MATILDA: (groggy) What's happening ... where am I?

MRS G: You have to make them stop! It's going to take me millions of years to clean up the mess they just made. And those bombs ... They simply don't know what fire they play with. They think they're so powerful but it's as though they're all sleepwalking.

MATILDA: It's nothing to do with me. It's not my problem. [She is trying to get back to sleep]

MRS G: I'm afraid you can't sleep any longer, child, This is for your future. You have to wake up now.

Mrs G packs up the bench and then starts mopping up the mess made by the bombs. Matilda gets up and approaches the workers.

MATILDA: Excuse me ... Who's going to clean up here?

POLITICIAN: Watch out!! She's trying to take your jobs off you!

The workers are all ignoring Matilda. She approaches the Mafia.

MATILDA: Excuse me? I wonder if you could tell me ...

BUSINESSMAN: Out of the way love, you don't need to worry your pretty little head about this. Haven't you got a sponge cake to make or something?

POLITICIAN: It's all for your own good my dear. This is for your future. Listen [steps past Matilda to address the crowd] I wish to announce that we have just commissioned a nuclear research reactor for metropolitan Sydney. This is what we need to be global players in the nuclear age.

MATILDA: But aren't there people living there?

POLITICIAN: Go and make us a cup of tea would you love?

Two radsuits carry on the reactor and dump it in Sydney. There is a round of applause. The date board is flipped to 1958.

A barrel is carried on to Mary Kathleen and mining starts there. The worker with the wheelbarrow returns from overseas looking a bit sheepish.

WORKER: Um ... fellas ... they don't want any more.

POLITICIAN: (*boggled*) What!?

GENERAL: Um, yes. Thanks awfully chaps, but, ah, that's probably quite sufficient for now. Thanks for all your help. Cheerio.

BUSINESSMAN: [strides up to his workers after a nod from the politician.] Right. You're all sacked. Clean up this mess and leave my property. Actually ... on second thoughts, if you hang around to clean up I'll have to keep paying you, so don't worry about cleaning up. Just bugger off.

WORKERS: [*ad lib*] What about my mortgage? Job for life you told me, etc.

There is a heated argument. Matilda is still trying to get the businessman's attention. He swats her away in annoyance. The workers and radsuits carry away the drums and tools, very angry, and the businessman follows them offstage.

Mrs G arrives to begin the clean-up. The board now reads 1962.

MRS G: [*to Matilda*] You see what I mean now? Look at this mess! I mean, this just has to stop.

MATILDA: I still don't understand what I can do about it. They won't even listen to me.

MRS G: Think, girl...

The Mafia have gone into a huddle. An agreement is reached. Money is passed from hand to hand and back very rapidly.

POLITICIAN: [*into a telephone*] We've had a bit of a re-think and we'd really like to sell you the uranium for all the new power stations you're building. I'd like to offer you new terms. Yes ... yes, that would be wonderful. Thank you. No, thank YOU. [*loudly and gleefully to the others*] It's a DEAL.

MATILDA: Look, what on earth is going on here? What are you going to do about the mess up north?

POLITICIAN: Are you still hanging around dear? I thought I asked you to make me a cup of tea.

BUSINESSMAN: We're experts at this. Trust us. [He pushes her away.]

Matilda strides away in a fury as the Radsuits re-enter the map. Matilda calls the names of the deposits while everyone looks on. Mrs G is elbowed aside rudely as huge discoveries are made. [music from offstage]

MATILDA: And so exploration went ahead.

[reads the list while radsuit or Friendly Atom flips the dates.]

Beverley 1969 SA, Ranger 1970 NT , Narbalek 1970 NT, Yeelirrie 1972 WA, Manyingee 1974 WA, Roxby Downs 1975 SA,

The date flips to 1975.

The Mafia step on to the map and address the audience. The Friendly Atom is back, doing pirouettes. She's not well. She keeps baring her teeth and having little fits.

BUSINESSMAN: There's gonna be a BOOM! *[with money spilling out of all his pockets]*

POLITICIAN: We're talking jobs, jobs, jobs for Australia.

BUSINESSMAN: Jobs!

GENERAL: And Freedom! We need you to rush forward to the barricades to defend the free world from being stabbed in the back by the rising tide of the domino effect. *[Having enacted each of the implied directions he falls over in disarray.]*

POLITICIAN: Did I mention JOBS? What do you say, people?

Mrs G sweeps the General offstage with her broom.

MATILDA: Hey.

BUSINESSMAN: We're all going to...

Matilda finally snaps, grabs a mike, stands directly in front of them and yells in their faces.

MATILDA: HEY!!!

Everyone stops and stares at her, shocked.

MATILDA: I am sick to death of being ignored. *[Turns to the audience.]* Look at the mess they've made already. Now they want to set up more of these things. I want to know who's going to do the cleaning up.

The Politician (*Malcolm Fraser at this point*) steps forward and shmoozes up to Matilda.

POLITICIAN: I think you're perfectly right my dear. *[schlurrrp]* Look, I want to be popular. *[schlurrrp.]* Why don't we have Justice Fox hold an inquiry into uranium mining?

MATILDA: OK then. That'll do ... for starters.

The Friendly Atom prances up with a big sheet of card emblazoned with the words 'Fox Report'. Everybody crowds around to look at it. The Businessman and Matilda grab an end each and start reading the bits they like.

BUSINESSMAN: It says here we should go ahead with mining

MATILDA: It says here there should be no mining until we solve the safety issues.

They are both reading different sides of the report. As they walk away from each other reading their favourite bits,

the report tears in half. Mrs G looks over, shakes her head and keeps mopping. Fraser tears off a small piece of the report and steps forward magnanimously.

FRASER: Well it says here that there are a few problems with uranium mining, but I don't think that's anything we need to bother with. Get to work at Mary Kathleen, boys. [flicks the piece of Fox report at the audience.]

The radsuits dump a 44-gallon drum on Mary Kathleen in Queensland. But the transport workers (in T-shirts) are not happy. They have a quick conference and down tools. Improvised dialogue - "Isn't this stuff dangerous?" etc.

TRUCKIE: Sorry mate. We're on strike.

Date to 1977. Cheers from backstage and enter the protesters.

MATILDA: Come on guys. This is it.

Matilda and the anti-nuke campaigners join the unions and sing a rousing protest song, surrounded by banners and flags.

After the song, Matilda takes center stage again.

MATILDA: We did our best. We really did. We had huge rallies right across the country including WA. In 1977 we had rallies of 12,000 people on the streets of Perth, and 20,000 in Melbourne. We collected a quarter of a million signatures. We blockaded ports. The unions banned uranium ships and blocked transports. **(REWRITE THIS SPEECH to be RELEVANT for EACH CITY)**

BUSINESSMAN: But while you lot were busy in the cities, we were busy doing things on the quiet in the bush.

The Politician is negotiating on the telephone, with the Businessman providing helpful advice where necessary.

POLITICIAN: It'll be a great thing for you blackfellas ... Really. A lot of money will come here. Big mining, big money. [Pause] We can build you ... what can we build you? [He looks at the businessman for some guidance.]

BUSINESSMAN: School?

POLITICIAN: [into the phone.] Yeh! A school! Bigfella school.

BUSINESSMAN: Hospital?

POLITICIAN: Right, yeah. Hospital! Bigfella hospital.

BUSINESSMAN: [smirks] Pub.

POLITICIAN: [laughs] Pub. Bigfella pub ... [breaks off and listens. Gets angry.] OK . I tell you what. Either you sign the bit of paper, or we'll take away your land rights and build our mine on top of you anyway. No money for your mob. Nothing. This is in the National Interest you know, and we're going to build it with your signature or without it. Just sign it. [pause] Oh. You will, huh? Great! Hey, you can keep the pen!

He nods to the businessman, who strides up to Kakadu to retrieve the contract. He returns with his bit of paper, waves it under Matilda's nose and presents it to the audience. It is 1979.

The Businessman takes centre stage, munching on a cigar. The Friendly Atom, now a bit psychotic, is bobbing

up and down behind him.

BUSINESSMAN: We told you there was going to be a bright nuclear future! Basically, we're going to make a killing. All thanks to you. No really, thanks!

He waves on the workers and radsuits. They arrive with three 44-gallon drums and get started, first at Ranger, Narbalek and then at Olympic Dam.

WORKERS: *[They have taken to wearing dust masks and are sounding uninspired]* Hi Ho...

These next three actions all occur at once, in different quarters of the stage:

1. Death has been waiting in the background. He comes forward and beckons one of the workers. The worker shakes his head, quaking. Death beckons again. The worker backs off. Death gets pissed off, comes over and takes the worker by the scruff of the neck and marches him off.

2. Mrs G has her hands on hips and is tight lipped. She gives Matilda a hug.

3. The Businessman blows his nose on a million-dollar bill.

BUSINESSMAN: Well it's all going brilliantly. Roxby Downs is just about to come on line and Western Mining are saying that it's the biggest uranium deposit in the western world. The only thing that could really hurt us now would be if...oh no...

His face falls as Bob Hawke is wheeled onstage on a fridge trolley, croaking and muttering to himself.

The calendar flips to 1983.

HAWKE: Aaaargh...basically, Labor Party policy says uranium mining is a bloody evil affair ... and some of the lefties in the union movement are a bit, aaargh fussy about cancer and bombs and so on, and so, aaargh ... But ... I'm the Prime Minister now, and ... I agree that uranium mining is evil. But only a little bit, aaargh, so we'll just keep it at the Three Mines Policy for the moment, I think. OK everyone? Just these three little ones for now *[to the businessman]* and we'll see about the rest later. *[Winks at the businessman.]*

Bob cackles for no apparent reason and is wheeled off stage again mumbling incoherently. The Businessman shakes his head and shrugs at the audience, lighting his cigar. He winks at Death, who has come over to stare at him.

BUSINESSMAN: Well, it's not ideal, but I guess this will do us ... for the moment.

Workers at Olympic Dam and Ranger are quietly working away, not talking to each other. Much coughing and despondency. Matilda, looking a little more feral, takes the mic.

MATILDA: The eighties were a pretty amazing time. We had a major win at Honeymoon where an entire mining project was put on hold. There were protests and blockades all over the country - at uranium mines, on warships, at Pine Gap and other military bases, and we took the protests to company headquarters around the country.

The General heckles through this speech "Bloody communist ... traitor ... etc." and then brings on the bomb and gets jiggy with it. Death is standing behind him.

GENERAL: You're being far too emotional. You need to think logically!!! Nuclear weapons have great strategic value. It's all so simple when you see it rationally. It's like this ... If you mess with me, I'll kill everybody. *[He smiles a lunatic smile, all the time fondling his bomb.]*

The Businessman shuts him up hurriedly and waves him offstage.

BUSINESSMAN: Tut-tut ... bad for business...

The General retreats with his bomb. The calendar flips to 2001.

MATILDA: So now we come to more recent times... and here's where things get kind of weird.

A small suited figure bounces on to the stage, hops about and launches on to the drum standing at Roxby. He gurgles for a bit.

HOWARD: Hello, I'm John Howard. I think there should be more uranium mines in National Parks. We only have one at the moment, and frankly, it shames us in the eyes of the world. The world is looking at us with its eye, and ... it can see things we can't. We're losing vital market competitive share advantage to Canada in this sector. If I wasn't so busy fixing up the bloody GST I'd be out there digging it up myself. *[to the Businessman.]* Go on, get cracking at Jabiluka.

BUSINESSMAN: *[grimly]* Finally. I've been waiting sixteen years for Jabiluka.

Matilda and the protesters are backing the Mirrar at Jabiluka when the miners arrive. They look like they mean business. Some of them have locked on to the mine symbol. They are joined by people from all over Australia.

BUSINESSMAN: Right, you feral rabble, move aside. We have sensitive negotiations to conduct.

He tries to rip the banner away from the blockaders but is repelled. He tries another tack, fishing out a wad of money. They are having none of it. He retreats in confusion.

BUSINESSMAN: What's wrong with you people? This is money, dammit! Money is money!

The blockaders launch into "In Solidarity We Stand Together". The Businessman looks on aghast and then retreats back to Johnny with his tail between his legs.

HOWARD: They didn't want the money? What's the matter with them?

He demands to inspect the money. It looks OK to him. He strides up to Kakadu and is swiftly bundled up in the banner and carried away. His legs are still free however. The businessman looks on in alarm and retreats.

BUSINESSMAN: Right. If I can't have Jabiluka we'll have ... *[looks at his notes.]* Beverley.

He strides south. Matilda and two others sprint around the map to try and get in front of them. They lock themselves on to the Beverley site. The businessman looks piteously at them. He waves over the General and the Politician. The politician hobbles over, still wrapped up in the banner. The Businessman and General proceed to kick the protesters to a pulp while the Politician waves his finger at them.

POLITICIAN: You're interfering with the democratic right of the American nuclear industry to divide an indigenous community and poison the Great Artesian Basin. *[Puts in a kick for good measure.]* There are such things as free speech you know. Go on. Go home.

The threesome step aside and allow the protesters to drag themselves off stage, escorted by the General. The businessman waves on the workers and the radsuits. They proceed to demonstrate the process, tipping dodgy fluorescent liquid into the 44-gallon drum, spilling it all over themselves and the ground as they go. Death is hovering, clearly enjoying the prospects this mine is creating for him.

BUSINESSMAN: *[in Dodgey Brothers mode.]* Allow me to demonstrate our new, environmentally friendly uranium mine. We simply inject the groundwater with sulphuric acid, say around 200 tonnes per

day should do it ... and before you know it the uranium's practically bubbling to the surface. No unsightly holes in the ground, just a faint tang in the drinking water. And with Adelaide's water supply being what it is these days you'll hardly even notice the difference. [Bows to the audience as his workers applaud, drawing attention to the mess they have made.]

MATILDA: *[returns to stage with a black eye]* So is this what you meant by a bright nuclear future?

POLITICIAN: My dear, we're just getting started...

PR FLACK: *[entering]* Yes wait, there's more!

MATILDA: Don't tell me ... free steak knives?

PR FLACK: Better yet! We've been looking around the world, and what we've decided is, well, what I mean to say is, we have rather a lot of nuclear waste piled up in Europe and North America and not a lot of space, so we decided, since we've created a global problem after all, you might like to be part of the global solution.

The Businessman is intrigued, coming closer while everyone else looks horrified.

PR FLACK: My client is a company called Pangea Resources. "We dump it, you lump it." For a fee of course. *[She gives the businessman a business card.]*

BUSINESSMAN: *[reading from the card]* Pangea Resources. Welcome to the future - dot dot dot -suckers!

POLITICIAN: *[timidly tugs on her sleeve]* What's in it for me then?

PR FLACK: Well, let's see. Why don't we start with six billion dollars?

EVERYONE: SIX BILLION DOLLARS?!

PR FLACK: That's just for starters, dear people. We're just returning what's rightfully yours, you see, and it has to go somewhere. Remember, you helped us create a global problem. You have to think of your moral obligation since you have been selling the stuff to us for 40 years ... remember?

MATILDA: I think I preferred the steak knives.

PR FLACK: But wait ... there's even more ... I tell you what, just for you, at a special price ... I've got a brand new Argentinian research reactor out the back. It's going cheap, and I've heard you people are in the market for a new one...

MATILDA: No way, the old one was bad enough. *[defiantly]* Over my dead body...

BUSINESSMAN: *[behind his hand]* If you insist...

POLITICIAN: *[eagerly]* Yes please!

PR FLACK: I have it on good authority that it will be no more dangerous than a washing machine. *[Waves on Radsuits with a new reactor, made from a badly painted washing machine box. Radsuits hover nervously, not sure whether to put it down or not.]*

POLITICIAN: We're going to have a nuclear carnival!

Turgid carnival music and the Carnival of Death begins - macabre jugglers and stiltwalkers, radsuits, drummers and the Friendly Atom all jamming with Death. It's a gruesome slow-motion dance.

MRS G: *[steps forward.]* Stop! STOP THE CARNIVAL!

Everyone falls down and melts into the ground, and lies dead while Mrs G takes the stage.

MRS G: "Look at this wasteland. What on earth are we doing? (*pauses to look around.*)
The facts!

Chernobyl, April 1986. Only 135,000 people were evacuated after the power station exploded. It is now estimated that more than half a million people will die of cancer as a result. In Novozybkov, where the fallout was concentrated, the people can not return to their forests (on which they have always depended) for 100,000 years. The children there are so sick they don't even play sport at school. This is one of the accidents we do know about. There are many we haven't been told about.

There are still some 35,000 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the nuclear weapons states. Bombs a thousand times more powerful than the one that destroyed Hiroshima, on alert, every day, waiting for the signal. Or an accident.

Nuclear waste. Today we have 160,000 tonnes of high level nuclear waste and no idea how to deal with it. It will be killing for the next 250,000 years unless we figure out how to look after it. In Australia they want to bury it on Aboriginal land. Pangea wants to dump everybody's waste here. But once they dump it what then?

SONG: "Who'se gonna be there at the waste dump?"

MATILDA: We've made a mess here. But we know we can change. We have to change, and there are so many sustainable alternatives. We're at a very significant point in time here - we are riding high on thirty years of community opposition that has helped contain the nuclear nightmare.

But the same old people are still flogging the same mutant horse - more uranium mines in WA and SA, expand Ranger and open up Jabiluka, fix us up with another nuclear reactor. They've even started telling people that nukes are a safe, clean alternative to fossil fuels.

This isn't over yet. The Mirrar are still fighting for Kakadu, the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta and the Arabunna people are still fighting for their land, and social justice activists worldwide are still trying to turn this madness around, and they need our help. What can we do? That's over to you!

Carnival is transformed into a carnival of life. Finale song played with enthusiasm. Everyone springs to their feet, ripping off their costumes to reveal colourful party gear. The Carnival of Life sweeps away the ruins of the nuclear age.

