

ART OF DARKNESS

Tim Minchin had just made his debut in the West End of London, and was about to catch a plane back to Australia, when *limelight* caught up with him to find out how much life had changed since he won best newcomer at the Edinburgh Festival in August. Quite a lot, is the short answer.

He's been courted by London agents and producers, returned to Australia for shows in Launceston and Hobart, attended a musical he co-wrote in Penrith, been to a wedding in Sydney, then back to London for gigs at the Royal Albert and Soho and Lyric theatres (the later being a 900-seat sell-out).

Darkside, the act that won him the Edinburgh award, is more popular than he thought, he says. "I'm surprised by how broad its appeal is. Before the Melbourne Comedy Festival this year, I thought of myself as kind of dark and weird and a little fringe. It turns out, at least according to the predictions of the UK industry, that I'm pretty bloody mainstream. Who would've thought?"

"In some ways I'm still reeling since Edinburgh, because things haven't slowed down. I've had no time to get any post-show blues. Since our last chat [see October *limelight*], things have become so much clearer. I've sorted out the reality from the hype, and it turns out the reality is pretty bloody fun."

But he's learning about audiences, too. "You can't make an audience be a certain

way. Sometimes they laugh till they cry and sometimes they just sit and smile and watch. Every audience is a unique organism and if you fight against it, you'll wreck your show. I've learnt to relax and do my thing and let people respond the way they want. Having said that, when an audience really lets go, everyone, including me, has a better time."

He will continue to play the award-winning *Darkside* between now and the Melbourne Comedy Festival next year. "I want people to be able to see the show that did well overseas." **Ruby Boukabou**

Tim Minchin performs at The Famous Spiegeltent, 3-4 December, Melbourne; Perth International Arts Festival 13-14 February; and Melbourne International Comedy Festival in April.