

**PERFECT PITCH**

Eddie Perfect takes on the title role in *Shane Warne The Musical* at this year's Adelaide Cabaret Festival.

Warne's World

Five years after bowling audiences over with Shane Warne The Musical, the show's creator and leading man Eddie Perfect is putting a new spin on the production for this year's Adelaide Cabaret Festival, June 7-22.

While many may know him for his role at Mick Holland on the Australian television drama *Offspring*, off camera Eddie Perfect has carved an equally successful career in musical theatre and comedy. With a passion for writing satire and music, Perfect says he wanted to compose a musical that would appeal to "people who are maybe a little allergic to the idea of music theatre".

The idea for *Shane Warne The Musical* came about while Perfect was on tour with a show called *The Big Con* and noticed that the controversial Aussie cricketer was regularly making headlines on newspapers across the country. "I was on the phone to my manager and I joked that somebody should write *Shane Warne The Musical* and he said, 'I know you're joking but I actually think that he's a pretty interesting subject ...' As soon as I started reading [books about Warne] I knew it would make great material for a musical," says Perfect. "In many ways Warne is a very Australian hero, because I think we like our heroes to be a little chipped and flawed. There's something about failure, adversity and being the underdog that inspires people."

Perfect also wanted to explore society's fascination with celebrity. "I [wanted to] write a show not just about Shane Warne but about why we care so much about sport and sportsmen in particular, and why what they do in their personal life is of such great interest to us."

The process of writing and composing the show took Perfect around three years and it eventually opened on December 2008 at Melbourne's Athenaeum Theatre. Almost five years on, Perfect is preparing to step into Warne's cricket whites once again as he brings a reconceived version of the show to this year's Adelaide Cabaret Festival in June.

"I didn't really think I could do *Shane Warne The Musical* again without talking about the last seven years," explains Perfect. "Shane is still incredibly famous and he's still a part of pop culture consciousness. People are fascinated in his physical transformation and his relationship with Elizabeth Hurley. I knew I couldn't revise the show without talking about that, or the show would seem very dated, very quickly."

The revised show, which features a stellar cast including Shane Jacobson, Lisa McCune, Verity Hunt-Ballard and Christie Whelan Browne, will be a simplified, concert version of the original. "[I want to] put all the attention back on the lyrics and the music," Perfect says. "I thought last time when we added in design elements like set, costume and props that it got a bit busy, so I've got a vision for stripping back the visual aesthetic and putting the music front and centre."

As an Adelaide Cabaret Festival regular, Perfect says he loves the vibe and variety of the two-week festival. "It's a little world to lose yourself in for a while and that's rare. There's nothing really like that in the world, especially nothing that's that diverse that really pushes the boundaries on what can be deemed cabaret," he explains.

Perfect is also clearly passionate about his work, juggling reworking the musical with his *Offspring* filming schedule and his fatherhood duties (he has two young daughters Lucy and Lottie Lux). "I don't sleep much," he admits. "I just get up early and work hard every day and try to schedule any free moments when I'm either writing or doing some other project around *Offspring*. Then maybe once a month I have a tiny nervous breakdown and realise I'm doing too much and I look at all the things I've got to do and I make decisions about what needs to go."

But when it comes to cutting back, there's one thing Perfect will never give up – the theatre. "I'm a theatre person. My whole background has been performing in theatre; I really love the theatre. I like that the curtain goes up and for two hours you're left on your own to create a performance and that's really exciting."



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