



HOUSE OF THE HOLY AFRO

The House of the Holy Afro promises to be the night-time hit of the 2009 Fringe. Peter Burdon spoke to multi-talented dragged-up MC Odidi about the show.



What happens when a celebrated – and not a little controversial – director meets a performance artist singing karaoke in a gay bar in Capetown? Such was the occasion when the famed South African director Brett Bailey stumbled on Odidi.

“He walked up to me at the bar and said, ‘Hey, man, how would you like to be in a play?’ I thought, ‘That’s a good pick up line,’ but it turned out he was serious! I found myself in a great show that started locally but it took off and we ended up touring Africa and Europe. It really opened my eyes!”

How to describe Odidi. By his own admission he’s a singer, actor, songwriter, dancer, drag artist and poet, an inveterate collaborator, and a pretty good MC.

“After that first play,” Odidi explains, “Brett and I kept on finding things to do together. Stage projects, all sorts of

things, we even worked together on a single that was actually quite a hit! But we were looking for something new and thought about combining his skills as a director with the stuff I do best, then we got a brilliant DJ involved, and hot dancers, and put it together.”

And the title, *House of the Holy Afro*?

“It’s a bit cheeky, I guess,” Odidi says with a giggle, “It probably relates more to my hair more than anything else! I started out singing in a rock band in high school and that kind of stage persona with the African hair style has continued over the years while the diva persona grew! Look, *Holy Afro* is supposed to be enjoyable and fun but it’s important to us that it still be clear that it’s saying something about Africa, and that comes through in spite of the visual effects which are absolutely over the top. I think of it like Madonna does Capetown. But I loved the review that said it was like the Soweto Gospel Choir on acid!”

“I’m really proud to be bringing this show to Adelaide,” he continues. “It’s great as a gay artist to be doing something big and loud and classy and camp, because if you’re a gay artist it’s drilled into you that you mustn’t be camp or take on gay roles, so all the straight boys get them! How unfair is that! I’m here to have a good time, so shows like this where I can travel are the best of both worlds.”

Odidi likes to get out and about when he’s on tour.

“Oh yes,” he says, “I’ve got a great drag show that I’ve done in Capetown starring Odidiva, and I’ll be bringing a few of her costumes with me, so you might just see her late one night on stage, if someone invites me.”

Mars Bar please note!

The House of the Holy Afro runs from March 1-21 in the Masonic Centre – enter from Rundle Street/Synagogue Place. Book at FringeTIX or the Fringe website.

