

Perth Now

Life's a laugh

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Matt Okine, booked for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival Roadshow in Perth this week.
Source: The Sunday Times

MATT Okine's fairytale rise to the top of Australia's comedy circuit is something other comedians can only dream of.

At the tender age of 18, the Queenslander scored himself a spot in Triple J's *Raw Comedy* competition and went on to perform in the national final in front of 1500 people.

Not a bad effort for someone who had done only three previous gigs (in the preliminary stages of the competition) and considering that acting was his first love.

Later that year Okine was a Comedy God finalist and the next year took out the Brisbane New Comic of the Year competition. In 2006 he was part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's New Talent showcase and finally, in late 2007, he scored the chance to perform on *Rove Live*.

Since then, Okine, now 25, has moved to Sydney, shared a stage with Carl Barron and Wil Anderson, performed in a sellout show at the Melbourne Comedy Festival and was flown to Miami to be part of NBC's *Last Comic Standing*.

Perth audiences will have the chance to see Okine when he rolls into town for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival Roadshow.

Also in the show, hosted by Melbourne comic Dave Williams, are British comedian Zoe Lyons, Christian Finnegan from New York and Aussie Josh Earl.

Inspired by legendary comedians Eddie Murphy, Dave Chappelle and Chris Rock, Okine bases much of his comedy on his own life. His father moved from Ghana to Australia in the 1970s to study dentistry. Okine travelled to the West African country recently and says he's already planning another trip.

"It's a completely different world. When you get off the plane you realise you're not in Sydney anymore," Okine says. "People have this idea that Africa is all villages, but the main city is just like any city, but there's people everywhere. Ghana is only about twice the size of Tasmania but 24 million people live there."

It hasn't been all beer and skittles for Okine. He recalls one of the worst gigs he ever did was in a pub south of Sydney. "There was just a little stage and a microphone and no one really knew that comedy was on – no one really cared – so when I went to start up no one was listening. Eventually people just started telling me to f*** off," Okine says. "I started yelling back at them. It almost got really nasty. People were really screaming at me to get out."

The Comedy Roadshow has toured Bunbury, Geraldton, Karratha, Margaret River and South Hedland, and after Perth will continue its regional road trip with shows in Esperance and Kalgoorlie.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival Roadshow.

June 8-13, 8pm. His Majesty's Theatre, Perth.

Tickets \$46, conc. \$39, from BOCS.

For regional dates, visit www.comedyfestival.com.au/2010/season/roadshow

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