

## ARTS

## Theatre duo plan to thrive on 'chaos' in Malaysia

## STEPHEN BEVIS

Andrew Hale and Renee McIntosh hope to steer clear of too much controversy during their three-month residency with a theatre company in Malaysia.

The Happy Dagger Theatre duo flies out from Perth tomorrow to begin work with Instant Cafe Theatre Company in Kuala Lumpur after being awarded an Asialink Arts Residency supported by the Australia-Malaysia Institute and the Australia Council.

After a taut, gripping production of David Mamet's *Oleanna* in 2006,

the two independent theatre-makers came under fire from Christian groups at Easter last year after McIntosh was stripped to the waist to portray Jesus in *The York Crucifixion*, their radical interpretation of a 14th century classic story of the four Roman soldiers at Golgotha.

The Instant Cafe Theatre Company was formed 20 years ago and has garnered a strong following for its political satires which have lampooned everything from political skulduggery to the conservative social standards in the mainly Muslim country.

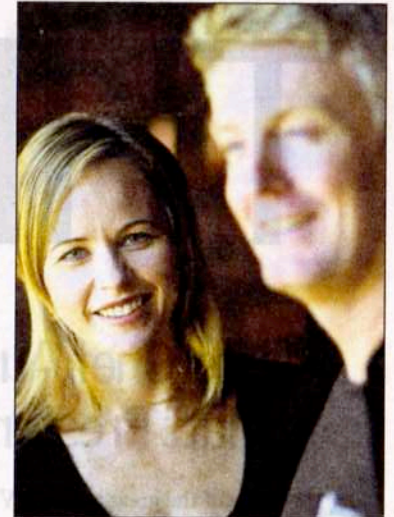
It has been a breeding ground for a generation of comedians, actors, musicians, directors and writers not renowned for pulling their punches. Led by artistic director Jo Kukathas and associate director Zalfian Fuzi, the company is even invited to perform for the very establishment it dissects so ruthlessly.

Hale says the residency will expose them to other collaborative approaches and methods of traditional physical storytelling, comedy and what he calls instant creation from constant chaos. "It means acquiring new influences, getting clearer about who we are and

more secure about where we're going."

For McIntosh, the residency means a return home of sorts, having spent her childhood years in Singapore: "Visiting as a professional adult the places that shaped who I am will be an exhilarating experience, I'm sure."

After they return McIntosh and Hale begin work on Shakespeare's *Turtle*, a new show in collaboration with Aboriginal actor Tom E. Lewis (*The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, *The Proposition*). Also in development will be an adaptation of Patrick White's *The Cockatoos*.



Malaysia bound: Renee McIntosh and Andrew Hale. Picture: Lee Griffith