

Versatility personified

Actor, director, writer - he's doing it, writes **Andrew Taylor**.

HIDING in a cave or joining an Amish community might be the only way to avoid Toby Schmitz this year.

The 30-year-old actor has two gigs lined up with the Sydney Theatre Company - a royal husband in *The Great* and as a boozy, bullying ex-boyfriend in *Rabbit*.

"It's weird, the concept of overexposure in the theatre," Schmitz says. "It's a nice poster for mum to have but the notion that people might be sick of me by the end of the year is a very frightening one because I will only have earned two months' rent. So please don't get over me yet."

A jack of all theatrical trades, he has also written a rom-com series, *Pink Dragon*, which is set to screen on the internet next month.

Schmitz kicks off the year in the director's chair of *This Is How It Goes*, a three-hander by controversial US playwright Neil LaBute about a racially-charged love triangle.

A happy marriage between the high school sports hero and cheerleader is disrupted when an old classmate returns to romance the wife.

Schmitz says LaBute deals the race card as a red herring to keep audiences on edge. He also introduces a narrator, played by Patrick Brammall, who plays fast and loose with the truth.

LaBute's plays typically portray the ugliest aspects of human nature and can be "a bit of a sledgehammer," Schmitz admits.

And it can be just as challenging to portray Americans without resorting to stereotypes. "I think it's often a problem with Australians doing American drama. They nail the accent but they don't nail the person," he says.

This problem is solved in *This Is How It Goes* with the casting of two Americans, Wayne McDaniel and Rebecca Rocheford Davies.

Busy actors are often described as lucky to have work but it's a label Schmitz says he finds a bit offensive, mainly because he's a self-starter, doing things in his own right.

This Is How It Goes plays at the Darlinghurst Theatre, Potts Point, from this Wednesday until March 22. \$20-\$30. Phone (02) 8356 9987 or see www.darlinghursttheatre.com.



Busy man ...
Toby Schmitz.
Photo: Jacky Ghossein