

Play about misfit morphs into awarding-winning sell-out for former goth

Journey into the light

Theatre Annika Priest

WHEN your show sells out before opening night on word of mouth alone, that's got to put some puff in a young writer's chest.

"That was great," said 26-year-old Fitzroy playwright Declan Greene.

"It's all been great really, it couldn't have gone any better."

Luckily audiences will have a second chance when Arena Theatre's raved-about *Moth* returns to the Malthouse this week.

The story of a 15-year-old suburban misfit obsessed with anime and death and his friend Claryssa, an emo wiccan goth art-freak, *Moth* also cleaned up with three 2010 Green Room Awards — Best New Original Writing, Best Lighting and Best Sound/Composition — and has been nominated for a Victorian Premiers Literary Award.

Beginning with a night spent drinking at the cricket nets, *Moth* moves into darker territory when Sebastian experiences an ecstatic vision and wakes up to find a mysterious moth in a jar by his bed and Claryssa missing.

What begins with some sharp wit and comedy unravels into an ambiguous, psychedelic, evocative tapestry that references religious mania, apocalyptic imagery and anime.

The script was a collaborative

process between Greene and Arena director Chris Kohn, who were both keen to draw upon a particular kind of kid that everyone knew at school — "the kind of kid who was so reprehensible and annoying and bad smelling that even the teachers would bully them" — and not the stereotypical, bespectacled "loser" that appears in so much TV and film.

"Being forced to go to one place every single day and being told you're useless and a loser is real victimisation, and that continual pressure causes people to crack in some very serious ways," Greene said.

The playwright had a certain amount of outsider experience to draw upon himself, growing up as a country goth.

"Country goths are not as hardcore as city goths, you can't wear vinyl or pancake make-up . . . if you wear eyeliner someone will shoot at you from the back of a ute. Being goth for me was wearing a black T-shirt and writing Marilyn Manson on my arm in texta."

Although *Moth* will appeal strongly to a teenage audience, the beauty of Arena productions is that their quality and sophistication appeals to all ages.

"I think people are generally interested in what interests young people as well," Greene said.

Moth is at the CUB Malthouse from Wednesday (June 15) until June 25. Details: malthousetheatre.com.au

