

# Teen spoof delivers – hilariously!

**SHOW:** *Debbie Does Dallas* (Johannesburg Civic Theatre until February 18)  
**CAST:** Jacques Terr'Blanche, Tanya van Graan, Caprice Bourret, Fem Belling, Alan Ford, Tessa Denton, Brandon Auret, Busisiwe Lurayi, Pierre van Heerden  
**DIRECTOR:** Carl Beukes

By **NADIA GARDNER**

THE cheerfully raunchy stage adaptation of the infamous 1979 film about cheerleaders on heat provides an abundance of giggles for those who arrive at the Civic's intimate Tesson Theatre with a lofty tolerance for prurient humour.

In 2001, *Debbie Does Dallas: The Musical* was created by Susan Schwartz for the New York Fringe Festival. In 2002 it was made into an off-Broadway musical comedy. And now it's being performed on local shores, thanks to By Caprice lingerie, Real Theatre and the Johannesburg Civic Theatre.

The plot centres on a team of cheerleaders trying to make sufficient money to send the title character Debbie Benton, played by the beautiful Tanya van Graan, to Dallas, where she has won a place on the illustrious Dallas Cowboys cheerleading squad.

What follows is a coming-of-age story of a bunch of small-town, mid-American high school teenagers. Each youngster gleefully discovers that she can successfully make enough funds during her after school job by having a sexual encounter with her employer.

The musical's cheerleaders are surrounded by three guys who play everything from their high school boyfriends to the lecherous men willing to buy the girls' services.

Former *Idols* contestant Jacques Terre'Blanche is extremely funny in the lead male role of Dick, who is obsessed with sex and just can't control his teenage urges. Alan Ford plays Dick's buddy Tim.

He constantly bemoans the fact that he's only got to "second base" with his girlfriend on a regular basis. And Brandon Auret provides convulsive laughter as he convincingly plays the sweet and vulnerable Kevin, who hangs out with Dick and Tim.

But you'll soon discover that something is different about him.

Although Caprice is a major drawcard to this sitcom-on-stage-type production, outstanding performances are offered by two of the other cheerleaders – Fem Belling and Busisiwe Lurayi – clearly demonstrating that local talent can hold its own.

Belling, coming home to SA after creating the role of Donna in the UK premiere of *Debbie Does Dallas: The Musical* in 2006 and fresh from the West End, where she has recently performed *Footloose: The Musical*, is a bundle of vigour bursting with energy.

Her enjoyment in performing the role is evident in her singing and animated facial expressions.

Lurayi is Tammy, who is black. However, Tammy spends most of the show thinking she is blonde.

Tammy also has her sights set on becoming the President of the United States, and nothing is going to get in her way (Lurayi offers an explosion of adolescent energy and is a gifted performer).

There is nothing substantial or even particularly clever in the music or the lyrics. Some of the dirty jokes are very sharp; some are



TESSA Denton, Caprice Bourret, Tanya van Graan, Fem Belling and Busisiwe Lurayi are the multi-talented cheerleaders.

distinctly not. Some are obvious. Some are disgusting, though granted that's a matter of personal taste. But when you're laughing this hard, who has time (or the breath) to be offended?

As for the on-stage gymnastics, they are not restrained in their suggestiveness.

Though you'll express amusement at the depiction of porn acting, the tacky Eighties-style com-

positions, the outlandish dance sequences, and of course, the phony sex, you'll become aware of something much deeper as you take a peek into the desperation that drives these characters.

On the whole, the play is a lively and light-hearted look at the lengths some people will go to satisfy their desires.

