

# More than a dirty night out

How far will Debbie go to get a spot on the team?

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**W**HEN one goes to see a musical based on a pornographic movie, it's natural to expect the worst. And when one expects the worst, it's easy to be pleasantly surprised.

This is the case with *Debbie Does Dallas* — *The Musical*, showing at the Johannesburg Civic

Theatre. It's no work of art, but it is a tongue-in-cheek romp that doesn't take itself at all seriously, and neither should the audience.

I suspect that no one involved in this show is under the delusion that people are going to flock to see it for its deep intellectual underpinnings.

They're there to ogle hot chicks and hot studs baring plenty of flesh.

Nothing wrong with that — at least it's honest in its intentions.

Interestingly, though, there is a bit of a Faustian morality tussle tucked under its skimpy skirt: how far would you go to achieve your dream? Would you compromise your ethics to get ahead in life?

What is the price of your soul?

This is the dilemma that confronts Debbie, a delightfully dim-witted teenager who resolves to do whatever it takes to fulfil her ambition of becoming a Dallas Cowgirl cheerleader. Although lingerie superstar Caprice has top billing, it's model and actress Tanya van Graan as Debbie who is at the heart of the production.

Van Graan seems to have huge fun sending up the stereotype of the brainless but bouncy American cheerleader.

She and her ditty bimbo friends take on part-time jobs to raise money for the trip, but find that granting sexual favours to their bosses is potentially more lucrative than an honest day's work.

Caprice has previously acted in the West End production of *Rent*, as well as *The Vagina Monologues*, and is vivaciously vampish as Lisa, the school slut,

who has her eye firmly set on Debbie's sex-mad boyfriend Dick, played by *Idols* heart-throb Jacques Terre'Blanche.

Hormones flow thick and fast in this show, the centrepiece of which is a simulated orgy, in which clever lighting and skintone bodysuits give the impression of total nudity.

The unabashed sexual groping, writhing and groaning may make some audience members uncomfortable (and others a tad hot under the collar).

Although it's based on a porno, the only incidence of nudity is the sight of Terre'Blanche's well-toned bum, and the actual deed is not performed on stage, although it is suggested.

Explains director Carl Beukes (Paul in *Isidingo*): "It's not vulgar or dirty, or

untastefully done. It has a moral element but people will walk out having had fun and not feeling they've been taught a lesson."

This one-act show throbs with enough sexual innuendo and double entendres to make the *Carry On* team proud, and it's clear the cast is having a ball (no pun intended).

Delicate sensibilities are trampled on, taboos are flouted, fetishes are exposed and the world's obsession with sex is mercilessly spoofed.

A highlight is seeing one of South Africa's brightest theatrical exports, bubbly comic actress Fem Belling, returning to the country at Civic CEO Bernard Jay's behest to reprise the role of Donna, which she created in the UK premiere of *Debbie Does Dallas*.

And Pierre van

Heerden is in magnificent vocal form as Debbie's horny but sweet boss Mr Greenfelt.

Fans of the butch cop Doep in *Isidingo* will be intrigued to see Brandon Auret whooping it up in a very different guise in this show.

Let's just say it involves a feather boa and six of the best...

While it's inevitable that the show will attract what Belling terms "dirty anoraks", it should not be pigeonholed as a grubby below-the-belt teasefest.

Although it does veer into crass territory and the provocative subject matter may be hard to swallow, those who opt to see *Debbie Does Dallas* should take it with a pinch — no, a sack — of salt. Or Viagra, for that matter...

● *Debbie Does Dallas* is on at the Tesson at the Johannesburg Civic Theatre until February 18. It carries a parental guidance warning. Book at Computicket



HIGH AMBITIONS: Caprice Bourret, Tanya van Graan and Fem Belling do the cheerleading thing in the pornographic-movie-turned-musical *Debbie Does Dallas*, on at the Civic Theatre  
Picture: MUNTU VILAKAZI

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