

Lapdog

Clara Iaccarino
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Elena Knox scoured every two-dollar shop in Sydney to source the finest items in pink plastic for her one-woman cabaret show.

Genre

Cabaret, Theatre

Location

The Old Fitzroy Hotel

Address

Cathedral St (Cnr Dowling St), Woolloomooloo

Date

7 January 2007 to 21 January 2007

Phone Bookings

(02) 9294 4296

Online Bookings

www.ouldfitzroy.com.au

Details

Sundays only.

Preview

Elena Knox scoured every two-dollar shop in Sydney to source the finest items in pink plastic for her one-woman cabaret show. She found the pink piece de resistance, her over-the-knee PVC stiletto boots, in a "hooker shop" on Elizabeth Street. The waif-like artist admits she forgoes food to buy props and costumes for her performance art adventures.



Elena Knox, aka Lull.

In a studio above Redfern's Regent Street, Knox (aka Lull) is rehearsing her "solo tour-de-force", lapdog. A former Greek men's club, her home/rehearsal space/gallery, Medium Rare, is strewn with red pillows, hand puppets, stuffed toys and wacky costumes which she guarantees are legitimate props.

A classically trained dancer and cellist, Knox grew up on the Central Coast with her musician parents and younger sister, Jess. Her father founded the local orchestra and her mother was its leader, while Knox was a member since she could remember.

Keen to escape her home town Knox, 31, finished high school and three days later moved to Surry Hills. She fell in with the inner-city artistic crew, studied dance at the University of NSW and played in string quartets to supplement her income.

One of the founding members of CODA, a kooky yet mesmerising instrumental ensemble, Knox soon developed a thirst for spoken word and physical performance. While her solo work as Lull defies genre classification - is it spoken word? hip-hop? cabaret? - it is as comedic as it is stimulating. One moment she's a foul-mouthed diva, dripping beat poetry, the next she's a wide-eyed doll, straddling a bass guitar and batting her lashes innocently.

A Lull fan once told Knox her character was a "drag queen in a little girl's body" and she hardly disagrees. She's been labelled the love child of Sandra Bernhard and Sandra Sully, and she flips from

punk goddess to Barbie doll in a few simple stanzas. But Knox says Lull isn't really an alter ego.

"It's me," she says. "People always come up to me after a performance and say to me 'I feel like I really know you'. Even though it's a poetic way of expressing yourself, I think a lot of the comedy is in laying yourself really bare, exposing yourself completely solo. People really respond to that."

Influenced by the way American artist Laurie Anderson blends text and music, Knox draws on hip-hop and physical performance, peppering her act with poetry, songs and dance. lapdog is an exploration of women in the service industries, created from Knox's own experiences as a call centre operator and "check-out chick", but her approach is hardly didactic.

"There are a lot of people out there doing jobs that are almost computer-isable and we just haven't computerised them yet," Knox laughs. "I've got it from doing some of these jobs and sitting there thinking 'Oh my gosh, I'm a trained monkey', and where does your mind go while you're doing this kind of work?"

In lapdog speak, Knox says she's a "loodle" a Lull/poodle cross, the ultimate serving creature in many different guises. "The humour comes from inhabiting them [women in service roles] to their fullest and pushing it to a camp degree," she says.

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