

# Deckchair is back to its best



ARTS  
BRENDAN FOSTER

**T**HE dramas surrounding Deckchair Theatre recently may read like a compelling and ambitious piece of theatre but the company says it's all part of entering a new era.

In October 2007 the Australia Council axed about \$150,000 in funding, saying the company was churning out "inconsistent shows".

Shortly after long-time general manager David Gerrand and artistic director Angela Chaplin fell on their swords, clearing the decks for a new team that makes no secret of its desire to get more cash out of the feds. New artistic director Chris Bendall took over in April last year and immediately shelved the successful Shakespeare in the Park to work on plays for 2009.

## Lean times

He is confident the lean times are over for Deckchair: "More than anything the funding limits the amount we can put on, but it doesn't change what we would program," he said.

"We want to support new writers and identify unique talent but in some ways we are playing it safe, particularly with our first show."

He's referring to playwright Vanessa Bates' absorbing and suspenseful *A Checklist for An Armed Robber*, which kicked off the new season March 13.

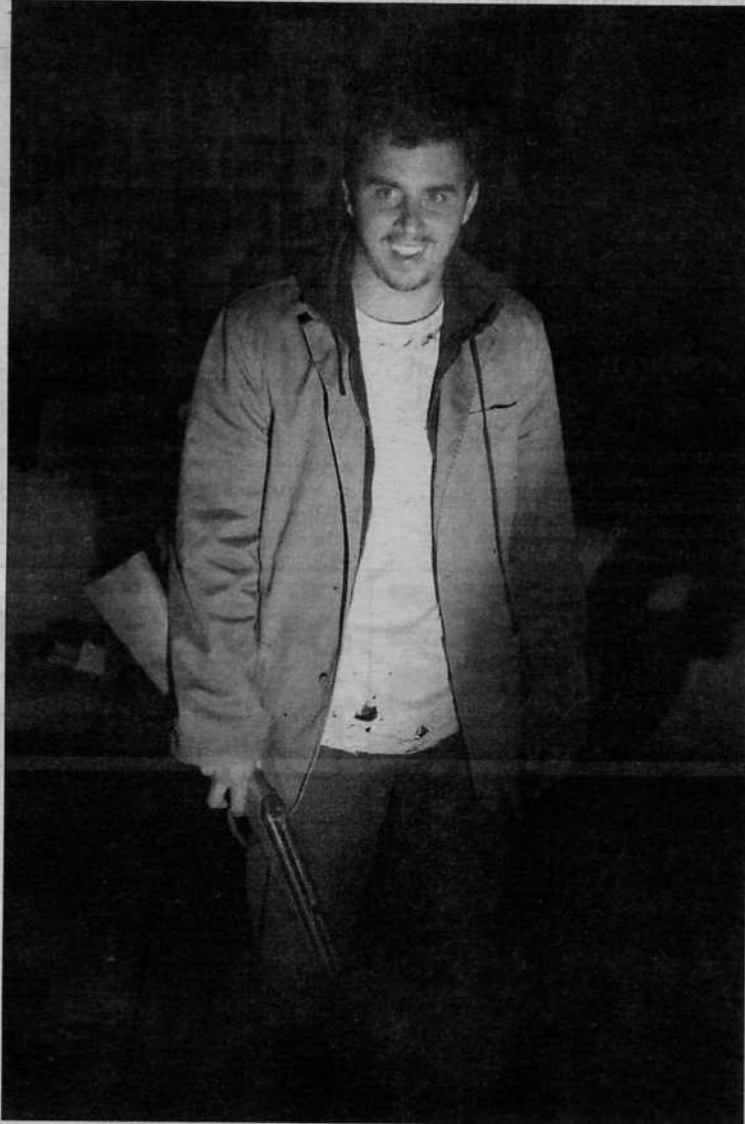
It also marked Deckchair's return to its HQ the heritage-listed Victoria Hall in High Street, after a year-long exile caused by Freo council's restoration.

The opening night performance was absorbing and totally captivating.

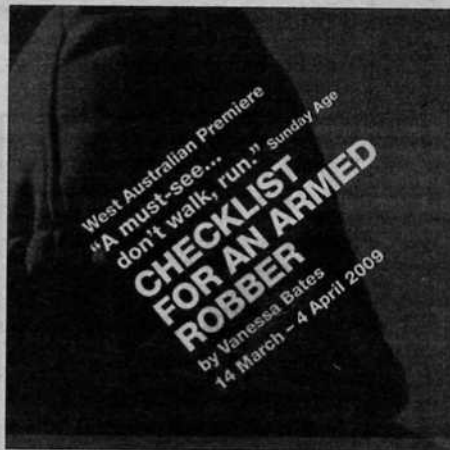
The play interweaves two divergent worlds and happenings - a siege in Moscow and a robbery in Newcastle.

Bates interweaves the two stories with pace and poise.

The Sydney-based writer said the purpose was to explore terrorism, to understand what



• Tim Solly plays a number of roles the young Newcastle bandit.



motivates such acts and to perceive their impact on victims.

"I was fascinated with what leads people to these acts of terrorism," she said.

"In the end though there is

that counter position in the play - violence and compassion - desperation and hope."

Patrons won't have to wait long for Deckchair's next outing, with the *Lonely Hearts Club* opening its doors March 20.

Bendall says the company is pinning its hopes mid-year on *Krakouer*, a play about footballers Jim and Phil Krakouer which is based on the book *Brother Boys* by Sean Gorman and adapted

by Jeff Cribb.

"Reg is a great writer and the story is particularly strong for WA audiences, because football is massive here," Bendall said.

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