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## Showgirls 2: Penny's From Heaven

Wild Eye // R // September 17, 2013

List Price: \$14.95 [Buy now and save at Amazon]

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Review by [Tyler Foster](#) | posted October 18, 2013 | [E-mail the Author](#)

Roughly 15 years after the events of the original *Showgirls*, Penny Slot (Rena Riffel) is still stripping in Vegas to make ends meet while she dreams of being a legitimate dancer. She's still with Jimmy Smith (Glenn Plummer), who dismisses her dreams of stardom as unrealistic, preferring to stick with the reliability of drug dealing and busboy gigs. When a Hollywood producer comes into the club where Penny works and gives her his business card, she decides to take matters into her own hands, hitching a ride to the City of Angels, in the hopes of securing a spot on her favorite TV show, "Stardancers." Upon arriving, she finds herself sucked into an all new whirlpool of decadence and betrayal, with ballerina Katya (Shelley Michelle) at the center of it.

Without making excuses for the quality of the finished product, a couple of things need to be known. *Showgirls 2* is not a "real" sequel to Paul Verhoeven's sexy camp disasterpiece; this \$30,000 production was a labor of love for *Showgirls* supporting actress Rena Riffel, who wrote and directed the film herself, with the help of numerous character actor friends who appeared in the original movie, and a 2010 Kickstarter which helped raise \$5k of the budget. That's not a knock: it's legitimately smart and proactive of Riffel to capitalize on one of her most popular works like this. If Bruce Campbell can get *My Name is Bruce* bankrolled and made, I see no reason why *Showgirls 2* shouldn't be equally valid, and Riffel completed her movie with far fewer resources. No joke: it's an impressive feat of independent filmmaking.

Having said that, there's no way one can argue *Showgirls 2* is anything resembling a good movie. Riffel's approach to sequelizing *Showgirls* is pretty simple: rip off the original, while amping up the camp factor to 11. In theory, that's a pretty smart move, but Riffel's execution leaves everything to be desired. From top to bottom, the film exudes amateur production values -- attempting to transition from an expensive Paul Verhoeven film with Hollywood sets, cinematography, costumes, lighting, and choreography to this fly-by-night effort might be enough to give fans budgetary whiplash. Veteran actors like Plummer stumble through clunky, potentially improvised dialogue in poorly-framed, poorly-lit shots, cut together haphazardly (Riffel also edited the picture), all with the final product nearly rendered inaudible by the production's lack of legitimate audio recording equipment.

With Riffel so responsible for the film's existence, one naturally looks to her performance for an indication of what exactly is meant to be going on. There's a sense that the movie's outrageous one-liners and are intentionally ridiculous, but Riffel (who came off just fine in the original film) is not very good at delivering an ironic performance. There's an obvious exaggeration in the way she plays the role and its myriad melodramatic reveals that ruins the joke, as it were. Directorially, her style is very point-and-shoot, unperturbed by quirks that make scenes slightly baffling on the surface. For instance, at one point, Penny is told to wait for someone. The reality of the scene is that she's walking into a pitch-black barn, but the characters don't comment on it, so I suppose the viewer is meant to ignore what's being shown to them and accept that it ought to make sense.

More than anything, *Penny's From Heaven* suffers thanks to Riffel's dedication to the original picture. I suppose it makes sense, considering the movie was made for fans of Riffel and *Showgirls*, to stick to safe territory, but the repetition quickly becomes old. Cameo appearances by sleazy cowboy Jeffrey (Dewey Weber) and dance trainer Phil (Greg Travis) are little more than distended callbacks to the original. "I'm a dancer!" is practically a catchphrase, this time with an exaggerated wink. Worst of all, though, is Riffel's decision to stretch the movie to an unreasonable 145 minutes, an echo of Verhoeven's epic that unquestionably could've been left behind. As a business venture, *Showgirls 2* is pretty savvy. Too bad most of the people who buy into it aren't likely to sit through the whole thing.

### The DVD

Wild Eye brings *Showgirls* to DVD with slick, glossy-looking artwork that successfully hides the extremely low-budget look of the finished film. The dazzling yellow lights all over the artwork might be an intentional riff on the *Showgirls* Blu-Ray artwork. The disc comes in a cheap Amaray case, and there is no insert.

### The Video and Audio

Both the 1.78:1 anamorphic widescreen transfer and Dolby Digital 2.0 audio are entirely at the mercy of the original elements, which vary wildly, mostly for the worse. Although some of the film was reportedly shot in HD and on 35mm, the vast majority of the material appears to be consumer-grade DV cam footage, complete with all the limitations in detail, color reproduction, and clarity that come with those kinds of cameras. Artifacts, black crush, and noise are all an issue throughout. The audio is frequently hard to hear and muffled (at one point, the camera is outside a car the characters are talking in, resulting in muffled dialogue). Characters trail off or drift too far from the microphone to be picked up. All in all, this is probably the best the movie can look and sound, but that unquestionably means "very, very bad." To add insult to injury, no subtitles or captions are provided to help cover the inaudible patches.

### The Extras

The main extra on the disc is an **audio commentary** by director / writer / producer / editor / actor Rena Riffel. A sampling of the track reveals it to be predictably limited in detail, with Riffel constantly trailing off during her overlong magnum opus.

A couple of video extras are also included. "**Lost & Found in the Land of Showgirls**" (2:27) purports to be reported scenes, but turns into a David Lynchian trailer for *Showgirls 2 1/2: Penny's Confession*. A **bloopers reel** (5:40) is also included. The disc wraps up with a bizarre **music video** (2:21) based around dancing, boiling hot dogs, and select lines from the movie ("brown rice and vegetables!").

### Conclusion

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Only the most dedicated *Showgirls* fan should even think about renting this one. It's admirable how much effort went into making it, and embarrassing how little value the production yielded. Even cutting an hour out of the film probably wouldn't be enough to make it a legitimately worthwhile curiosity. **Skip it.**

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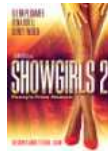
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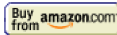
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