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- [TV on DVD](#)
- [Blu-ray](#)
- [International DVDs](#)
- [Theatrical](#)
- [Adult](#)
- [Video Games](#)

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- [Easter Egg Database](#)
- [Interviews](#)
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- [Feature Articles](#)

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- [DVD Savant](#)
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Showgirls 2: Penny's From Heaven

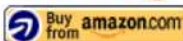
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Review by [Jesse Skeen](#) | posted November 16, 2013 | [E-mail the Author](#)

A sequel to *Showgirls*? How could this miss? Paul Verhoeven's 1995 classic, the widest-released movie with an NC-17 rating and winner of Razzie awards for Worst Picture of 1995 and Worst Picture of that entire decade, is a true guilty pleasure and its ending certainly left you wanting more. I already knew Elizabeth Berkley would not be returning as Nomi, but maybe there'd be at least some mention of what happened to her since the last movie. I'd always wondered what became of the great singer/rapist Andrew Carver as well. I decided to celebrate the release of "Showgirls 2" by making it a double-feature night, revisiting the first movie in all its glory (despite only having [the original non-anamorphic DVD release](#), which I'm going to have to upgrade to [Blu-Ray](#)) before diving into this new entry.



- CONTENT
 ★★★★★
- VIDEO
 ★★★★★
- AUDIO
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- EXTRAS
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Big mistake. Right away I knew I was in trouble when the movie's title came up looking like it was done on a Commodore 64. Say what you will about *Showgirls*, but aside for a couple instances of camera equipment being reflected there's no denying that it was a very good-looking and sounding movie, in fact being among my top favorite movie sound tracks which blew out one of my old speakers once. All of this just made for even higher expectations that "Showgirls 2" just couldn't possibly match. The main problems with it must be discussed right away, which is that not only is this a direct-to-video movie but an extremely low-budget one and shot entirely on video (save for a couple shots done on film that lasted just a few seconds each). I generally don't even consider productions like this to be "movies" at all, since at the bare minimum in my book a real movie must be distributed to theaters on 35mm prints and/or those newfangled DCP things that have replaced film at most theaters by now, and certainly not produced using consumer-grade equipment. (This was what brought an end to the golden age of porn movies, as by the end of the 80s they had abandoned 35mm prints in favor of projected video, with most productions being shot on videotape rather than film. Many of the older films resembled real movies, while the newer ones looked more like soap operas or home videos.)

So what exactly do we have here? Despite Nomi and friends being gone there are a few returning characters from the original which saves this from being an in-name-only sequel. Minor character Penny (Rena Riffel, who also directs) is the focus of the story here- she was the one who had just become a Cheetahs dancer as Nomi was leaving that place, and became the girl to star in the Crave Club dance that Jimmy (Glenn Plummer) had written for Nomi before she got the "Goddess" gig- he returns here too just in a few scenes without his dreadlocks. They've been living together but Jimmy decides Penny isn't talented enough and dumps her. Penny has a dream however- to become part of the TV show "Star Dancers" and sets out to try and get on it. (Though it's supposed to be a big national show, what we see of it resembles a very bad public-access cable show

produced on the stage of some small community theater with the sets of the day's play left up!)



Penny hitches a ride to Hollywood with three other people, but after one of them kills the other two and Penny kills her in self-defense, she has to hide out in a small town called Seven Sisters. She takes the assumed name "Helga" and falls in with a strange group of characters, including veteran dancer Katya (Shelley Michelle, who's been a body double in many films) who teaches her a few dance moves. Eventually Penny gets on "Star Dancers" and there's a bit of backstabbing amongst the group there, not unlike that of the "Goddess" cast in the original *Showgirls*.

A few other things happen as well, including a scheme to get Penny to star in a snuff film. The acting is so bad and incoherent however, it's honestly difficult to explain all of it. Did I mention that the entire thing runs two hours and 25 minutes? I'd love to know how many people who have tried to watch this didn't make it all the way through. I have a long-standing rule of sticking it out through anything no matter how bad it is, but this was a true test of that. Anyone else who can watch this all the way through should be given a T-shirt saying "I survived Showgirls 2!"

Even those watching this for a cheap thrill will be disappointed- there's some nudity in this, but not nearly as much as there was in the original *Showgirls*. The only scene this may be remembered for is where Penny and Katya enjoy some champagne and each other in a swimming pool- but what cracked me up the most was the large number of ants I could see crawling around the pool's edge! They may have been the best actors in this thing though- while the cast here seems to be aiming for intentionally campy performances, it's all just too amateurish to work. I've heard much of "Showgirls 2" was funded through Kickstarter funds, but if I had donated I would have told them to just hang onto the money until they had enough to make something that at least resembled a real movie.



Picture:

It can't be said enough times here that this production was shot on **video**- not film, not the digital equivalent that's replaced film but still looks a lot like it, but consumer-grade video. The picture is still in a 16x9 ratio, and the frame rate is about 24 frames per second which gives it a more film-like appearance but I've personally never liked video at anything other than its native 30-frame rate. The overall quality is comparable to a cheap local commercial you might see on TV late at night, or an amateur production made primarily for YouTube- in fact, I've seen a lot of stuff made for YouTube that had better production value than this. The dual-layer DVD at least doesn't seem to show any issues with video encoding- I noticed some slight blockiness in dark scenes which may be more the fault of the camera equipment than the DVD itself.

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Sound:

The audio here can't hold a candle, or even a lousy match, to the original *Showgirls*. The DVD is encoded in 2-channel Dolby Digital but the sound mix here is entirely mono. (Some of the extras are in stereo, suggesting somebody may have messed up the feature's audio here.) Most of the sound was recorded as it was on location, so dialogue often echoes and is overpowered by sounds of things happening off-camera. This is why real movies use ADR, because most of the time you just can't get a good recording of dialogue on location. The best I can say is at least the levels seem to be right with no added noise or distortion, but like the picture the audio is on par with a typical camcorder video. Music consists of a few Casio keyboard-like tunes, nothing even coming close to what was in the original movie.



Extras:

Director/star Rena Riffel provides a commentary track, which will be another test of most viewers' patience. She does acknowledge several times that this was a "microbudget" production and mentions a few things she would have done differently had there been more funds available, but most of the time doesn't sound too articulate. Her voice is heard without any movie sound playing under it, so you're left watching a few scenes in complete silence during portions where she doesn't have anything to say. I laughed a bit and managed to stay awake through the whole commentary, though I had to take a nap as soon as it was over.

There's also about 2 1/2 minutes of "lost footage," 5 minutes of "behind the scenes" which is mostly dialogue rehearsals and outtakes, and "Hot Dog Scene Remix" which shows the moment where Penny and Katya are cooking hot dogs for dinner with looped dialogue, music and some weird video effects added.



Final Thoughts:

I've seen a **lot** of bad movies in my time, and even enjoyed many of them, but I have much less patience when something more closely resembles a home video than even an attempt at a real movie. I can understand not having the budget to do everything perfectly, but considering what a mega-production *Showgirls* was one would expect any sequel to deliver at least a fraction of that. I know some of you will check this out anyways just to see how bad it really is- I know, because I've done the same thing several times myself, but just don't say you weren't warned! Unlike the first movie, this isn't even good enough to call "so bad it's

good." Unless you're a devoted *Showgirls* completist who simply has to see everything related to that movie (including any fan productions), there's just no reason to bother with this. I'd almost rather eat brown rice and vegetables than watch it again.

If my review didn't convince you, [Tyler Foster has also reviewed this title.](#)

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