

# Addictive exercise

TheatreiNQ's latest production at the School of Arts is a must-see, writes Georgie Juszczuk

THE third instalment in TheatreiNQ's *Wizards of Aus* series, the production *X-Stacy* is raw, awkward and disturbing – exactly the way it's supposed to be.

Depicting the details of the rave scene with hideous accuracy, Margaret Forde's creation, invigorated by Arminelle Fleming's superior directing and the current crop of talent at TheatreiNQ, *X-Stacy* tells the tale of the staggering turmoil faced by a family after their beloved sister is drawn into the thrall of drugs.

Although a little confusing to begin with, the narrative soon evolved into an elegant plot line, simple enough to follow but complex enough for the audience to still receive satisfaction when the final jigsaw piece was placed.

Scenes of tension were captured with startling clarity, with special acknowledgments to Brittany Santariga as younger sister Stacey, Kellie Esling as Anne, the devout and desperate mother, and the unrivalled performance of James Thomasson as the guilt-absorbed older brother Ben.

This poignant portrayal of a common family reality, as well as reducing even the burlier members of the audience to tears, is testament to the success of the company's Bridge Project – a focus on the transition



**DISTURBING:** Keely Williams, Joanne Renton and Jayden Popile in *X-Stacy*.

Photo: WESLEY MONTS

from local to professional echelons of acting.

In those moments, the parallel lines between performer and character blurred and the audience was witness to someone's life, not scripted lines. Yet despite the intensity, comedic relief was ample, usually in the form of quick-

witted and brash DJs Joanne Renton as Zoe and Jayden Popik as Fergus, who provided a refreshing contrast through their youthful banter.

Sets were minimalistic yet effective, and efficiently used. Scene changes were sophisticated, with action throughout the transitions

polished and flawless. The sound track was complementary and provoking, despite some conflicting moments, and the transition of flashbacks was highlighted by clever costuming.

TheatreiNQ's production of *X-Stacy* is the drug education for teenagers that finally got through, more

enlightenment than frivolous entertainment and masterfully executed.

*X-Stacy* is at the School of Arts, cnr Stanley and Walker streets, tonight and tomorrow at 7, with a matinee today at 11am. Tickets are \$20-\$30 and are available by phoning 4772 2549.