



# Waiting for a coloured Juliet to take the stage

## theatre

### Who's That Chik?

IT IS hard not to notice Candy Bowers.

The sassy performer who opens her one-woman show at the Old Fitzroy Theatre this week has been one half of hip-hop duo Sista She, playing for a decade to adoring crowds from venues such as the Sydney Opera House and Big Day Out to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

But it hasn't been smooth sailing, and since graduating from the acting course at NIDA eight years ago, Bowers has faced her share of challenges finding work.

"I'm one of those people that sees obstacles and doesn't run away," she says. "My resolve is strengthened and I'm like, 'OK, that's it, I'm gonna bust this s... open'. In the past 12 months I realised the reason I've only had a couple of castings since NIDA is because of my colour."

It has been an uphill battle since Bowers graduated and was told the reason she was the only student in her class to not get an agent was because each already had a "similar-looking" actress on their books struggling to find work.

"It's clear it's about the way we put on theatre here, it's not about the lack of talent and I don't think it's ever about subscribers not wanting to see people of colour on stage," Bowers says.

"Are we in the *Twilight Zone*, that there's never been a girl of colour play Juliet on the stage in Australia and be paid for it professionally? What the hell is going on? It's a really old notion and it just pushes racism onto the audience."

Bowers has responded to the work drought by creating her own jobs, and in *Who's That Chik?* she blends rap, spoken word and a hint of Broadway musical to tell what she describes as "the tale of a brown girl with big dreams".

Growing up in Sydney's western suburbs in a family of South African and Zimbabwean heritage, Bowers and her sisters — one of whom is a successful musician and beats producer known as Busty Beats — were encouraged by their mother to explore their creativity.

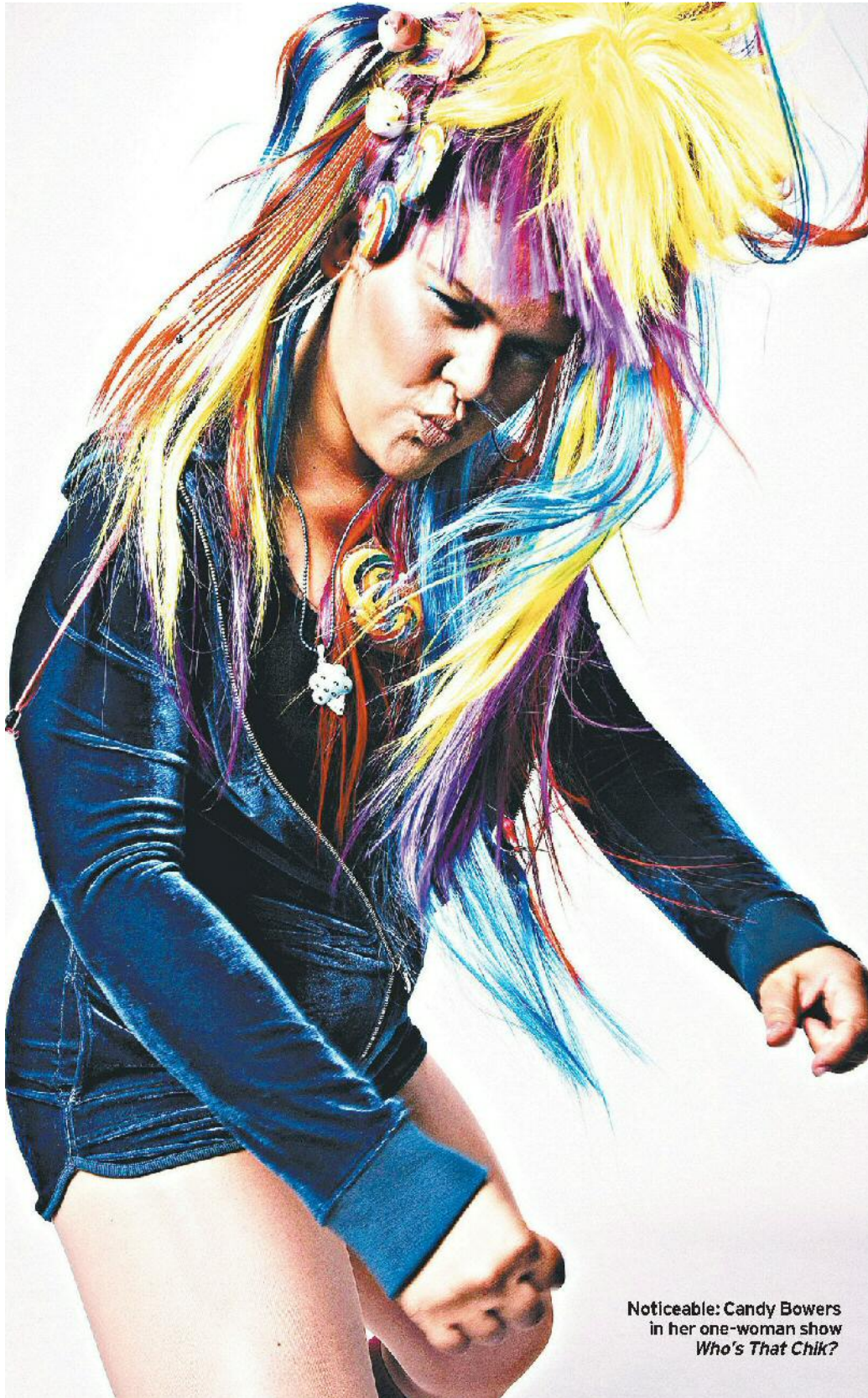
With role models such as Deborah Mailman on *The Secret Life Of Us* making an impact when Bowers finished school, she was confident she would find work after drama school and, though times are tough, she is doing her best to be a role model to youngsters she meets in her work in community and youth theatre.

"In my work I've gone out bush and realised the only thing some kids have is the box in their lounge room for knowing who they are, so they all speak with American accents and wear 50 Cent T-shirts because that's the only black person doing well they can see," she says.

"Girls come up to me after shows and say how they love watching me because they never get to see a brown girl on stage."

**Alex Lalak**

**The Old Fitzroy Theatre, cnr Cathedral and Dowling Sts, Woolloomooloo; until May 30, \$21-\$29, 9380 5553, rocksurfers.org**



Noticeable: Candy Bowers  
in her one-woman show  
*Who's That Chick?*