

## THEATRE

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## Casting pebbles at Old and New SA phenomena

TYRONE SEALE reviews

**THE DOGS MUST BE CRAZY**

Writer-director: Mike van Graan

Music: Basil Snayer

Cast: Bo Petersen, Thetha Sithole, Patrick Mofokeng, Cheryl Braaf

Venue: Community Arts Project, Woodstock (until June 2)

*PHANTSI, slogans! Phantsi! Down with slogans!*

This must have been the last slogan to pass through Community Arts Project (CAP) director Mike van Graan's mind as he mapped out this cartoon-style, satirical patchwork reflecting what he calls the vagaries of human existence in South Africa.

While there are more than a few instances where repeti-

tion and obscurity breed contempt, the general success of *The Dogs Must Be Crazy* is based on CAP and Van Graan's inherent commitment to ideological independence and creative experimentation.

As a result, this first full-length production for the CAP Theatre Company features eight players in seven major sketches that mischievously but intelligently cast pebbles at social and political violence and corruption, gender-based abuse, the foggy cultural boycott, sport embargoes and other Old and New South Africa phenomena.

From their vantage on the newly constructed seating ramps in the CAP hall, Jaap Marais and Chris Hani would be equally discomfited by the snapping of Van Graan's poodle characters (hence the title) at their heels.

Take the *Congress Of Cultural Bulldogs (CCB)* sketch where a mob of cultural hit men, dangerously resembling

exiled performers, assume local stages after mowing down everything and everyone set up by the overwhelming mass of non-exiles.

Throughout the production 90 percent of the action is non-verbal, with Basil Snayer's vaudeville-like piano accompaniment providing aural satirical continuity even when Van Graan introduces more sombre visual elements.

*Dogs* is a company venture that rarely lets the emphasis rest on individual players, though Bo Petersen, Patrick Mofokeng, Siphos Masha and Cheryl Braaf seem most at home with their muted comedy.

The clarity of the mime is enhanced by designer Rajen Govender's decision to dress his "poodles" in tracksuits and to make them work with the slightest of props and a simply effective stage layout.