

# ARTS

## Deitch found going tough while making first film

By CHRIS SHEARER  
Arts Editor

First-time director Donna Deitch has turned a lot of effort and daring into a successful movie with "Desert Hearts," her film version of Jane Rule's book, "Desert of the Heart." The story is set in the '50s and concerns Vivian Bell, a 35-year-old English professor who goes to Reno for a "quickie divorce" and discovers that she is gay. The film is unusual in both subject matter and its treatment of it.

Deitch is clearly the person responsible for putting the film in the theater. She obtained the book rights, directed and produced the movie and raised the \$1.5 million budget. It wasn't easy, she said in a recent interview.

As an independent, she said she had to make many sacrifices to get the project off the ground. "I ended



Donna Deitch

up selling my house to finish the picture." In an interview with the L.A. Reader, she discussed some of her problems: "At the end of the first year I didn't have the \$600,000 (needed to begin the picture) . . . The money-raising business is very humiliating and debilitating . . ." Additionally, Deitch was limited to a 31-day shooting schedule.

Deitch said the film's relatively low budget did not force her to make artistic sacrifices, although each scene could only be shot once. "We re-shot one car scene, but otherwise we had to go with what we had."

If more money had been available, Deitch said she would have had more period vehicles and actors. She addressed some critics' opinion that her film does not succeed in recreat-

ing the '50's.

"I don't agree with the criticism that it's not accurate," she said. "From the hairdos, to the brassieres the women wore, to the cars, it's all accurate. The physical depiction is good."

"Just because not everyone is wearing a Davy Crockett hat or a hoola hoop doesn't mean it's not accurate. Down to the Coca Cola bottles, we were authentic. . . I didn't want to make it too obvious."

One wonders, given the stress of being a first-time director and the disappointment of not raising the money on time along with all else, if there were ever a time Deitch thought it would never work out; did she ever almost give up?

"No. We can't ever be sure of anything, can we, but one can have certain feelings," she said. "I knew this was a film I was interested in, I thought that others would be, too, and that that would translate into ticket sales."

She had a good feeling. The film came close to breaking the box office record (currently held by "Rocky III") when it opened at Cinema 2 in New York, Deitch said.

The 40-year-old has said before that everyone watches a director while he or she is putting a film together.

"I was self-conscious before the filming, but once we were shooting it didn't concern me," she said. "Directing was the most stimulating, creative experience that I have ever had in my life. . . I loved it."

She is right about being watched;

a lot of people are looking to see how the picture turned out artistically, as well as following its financial triumphs, and not everyone sees it as a success. Local reviewer Godfrey Cheshire attacked the film from an ideological point of view: "Things like honesty, understanding, complexity and truth aren't on Deitch's agenda, quite obviously, and that's a shame. It's also a waste of an interesting and very unusual opportunity."

Deitch begs to differ. "I don't agree . . . if the movie is what he says it is, we wouldn't be doing the business we're doing. The film is doing better than or as well as most independent films, except "Kiss of the Spider Woman." It is insightful. But the movie stands for itself. It's not my job to defend it. I made the movie."

Deitch said the abruptness of the film's transitions were intentional and not due to a low editing budget. The plot, she said, follows the novel closely.

"The dialogue is original and not at all in the book, and there were certain character name adjustments," she said. "It was originally set on a dude ranch, but we changed that. . . Essentially, though, the story is the same."

When asked why Vivian, a 35-year-

old woman, would not have discovered that she was a lesbian earlier in life, Deitch said, "She was not open to it. People go through whole marriages and have kids before they realize it. There is no rule about it. You can't say that an intelligent person realizes that they are gay by

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## Art series scheduled

From staff reports

The Carolina Union will present a Performing Arts Series for the fall semester featuring seven shows, including musical theater, classical, jazz and traditional Irish music, and dance.

The series is different from past Union programming, which separated concerts and dance into the Carolina Concerts and Triangle Dance Guild series. Here's a preview:

• **October 30** The season begins with "A Little Night Music," Stephen Sondheim's Broadway musical starring Patrice Munsel and presented by the North Carolina Opera Company. The show is based on an Ingmar Bergman film about romance on a Swedish country estate.

• **November 12** Next is the national touring production of "Evita," the award-winning story of Argentina's former first lady, Eva Peron. The play ran for a record-breaking four years on Broadway and comes from the creators of "Cats" and "Jesus Christ Superstar."

• **January 13** Byrd & Brass: The Charlie Byrd Trio and the Annapolis Brass Quintet combines jazz guitar with chamber music.

• **January 26** The Chieftains will perform traditional Irish music. The band is very popular worldwide and has been noted by The Washington Post as capturing "that rare blend of lusty joy and mournful grace that is the essence of the Irish character."


• **February 3** The North Carolina Dance Theatre will perform from its varied repertoire of classical ballet and modern dance.

• **February 25** The Salzburg Musici, an Austrian 19-member chamber orchestra, is making its first North American tour.

• **April 1** The Pilobolus Dance Theatre offers a unique approach to dance using gymnastics and acrobatics. The company has performed in the state frequently.

All performances will be at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall. Season tickets are available to UNC students for \$65 and to the public for \$75.

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