

# show GIRL

Aspiring thespian Liesha Ward Knox is determined to make her way in the world of make-believe

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**SPORTING A STARTLING TAN**, and pumpkin-hued palms revealing its origins, the lovely Liesha Ward Knox lights up the room. Bright-eyed, bubbly and beautiful, she's fast becoming a familiar face on stage and screen, with her growing list of credits including everything from Shakespeare to *Shortland Street*.

Liesha, 25, has creativity in her veins – dad is Kiwi punk-rock icon Chris Knox, mum Barbara Ward's a sculptor and brother John a budding artist. "I guess because my parents were creative they let me go for gold in whatever I wanted to do. When I was younger I'd say, 'I want to be a baker. I want to be a dentist.' The way I conceived I could fit everything into one lifetime was to become an actress."

The ultra-bronzed glow is thanks to her biggest role yet as a bikini-clad California girl in the Auckland Theatre Company play *My Name is Gary Cooper* – strutting her stuff as Jennifer Ward-Lealand's daughter, and getting hot and heavy with

Robbie Magasiva. In fact, he's the second Magasiva brother she's dallied with, having once played the love interest of the younger Pua.

"I know!" she exclaims. "The things you find yourself doing... In every role I'm pregnant wanting an abortion because I'm drug addled, or prancing around in body paint. But really I'm such a prude."

While acting jobs can be intermittent, you won't find Liesha waiting and hoping in her downtime. Last year she and flatmate Nisha Madhan (the *Street's* Shanti) founded independent theatre company Phundmi Productions. They've staged two shows already, with another planned for 2008.

A weekend gig as a fairy at kids' parties helps pay the rent between jobs, but she says, "You've got to be wonderfully optimistic, to keep yourself motivated, thinking you'll do everything you can to make sure you keep acting. I'm fairly confident that if nothing turns up I'll make it happen." **N**