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In the Spotlight: Anna Chapman

By Anna Malpas

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Russian spy Anna Chapman intoned "I will reveal all the secrets" in her new television show, which started last Friday on Ren-TV. Although the show abounded in bleeding wounds and starred Chapman in slashed velvet and high heels, somehow it managed to be a bit dull.

The weekly show has the catch-all title "Secrets of the World with Anna Chapman." The first episode covered Dagestani baby Ali who became famous in 2009 when Arabic quotes from the Quran began appearing on his skin. The story went quiet after the parents stopped showing him to experts or the public. How fabulous it would have been to see Chapman cradling the baby in a strange celebrity collision. Sadly, it did not happen. Chapman just read out the links in a darkened studio, wearing unflattering eye makeup and sounding stiff and headgirlish.

To sex it up, she wore a red and black velvet dress with a slashed neckline and her trademark high-heeled boots. The makers also added gore by including people who claim to spontaneously bleed in the same places as Jesus' stigmata.

Television critic Irina Petrovskaya said on her Ekho Moskvy radio show on Saturday that she "had a good laugh" watching the show. Chapman "has a purely decorative function," she

complained.

The tabloid Express Gazeta, which likes women to have a purely decorative function in very few clothes, wrote mean-spiritedly that Chapman is guaranteed to become a television star — for one reason only. Out of her rivals for the crown, Tina Kandelaki struggles with her weight while Ksenia Sobchak isn't curvy enough, it concluded. "Chapman has one advantage: her figure," it said, calling her "slim, with big breasts and graceful."

The next step will be a seat in the State Duma, following in the footsteps of gymnasts Alina Kabayeva and Svetlana Khorkina, Express Gazeta predicted, while ultimately she will end up singing the Russian anthem at the opening of the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

In Komsomolskaya Pravda, columnist Arina Sharapova criticized Chapman's "super-erotic image" as unwholesome and demoralizing for her undercover colleagues. "Maybe it would be better to get her married and show her off as an ideal wife and mother," she suggests. "What girl does not secretly dream of this?"

Meanwhile Britain's The Telegraph harrumphed in a review of the show that Chapman did not reveal any secrets and was only good at pouting.

Chapman has already appeared on the channel's ratings-topping "Let Them Talk," where in a surreal moment she was given a lion cub by host Andrei Malakhov. She also acted in a parody of the "17 Moments of Spring" scene, where undercover Soviet agent Shtyrlitz agonizingly looks across a Berlin cafe at his wife, whom he cannot speak to.

Those appearances made it a surprise that Chapman did not grab the ultimate prize of her own show on Channel One. I think she could be a good straight woman on its hip current affairs comedy show, "ProjectorParisHilton," although I'm not sure whether she does jokes.

In any case, Channel One aired an affectionate parody of Chapman on its "Big Difference" show on Saturday. "Big Difference" imagined Chapman as an auburn-curled cabaret singer in high heels and trilby, with male backing dancers in raincoats. "It's very easy being a spy," she sings, explaining that her looks alone will make everyone "run to serve Russia."

"Of course I'm not very pleased that I got sent back," she confides, but explains that now, "I'm going to recruit everyone from the television screen and from the pages of newspapers."

Stripping down to a satin negligee, she sings "I'm not Batman, I'm not Spiderman, I'm Chapman."

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