

Posters of a scantily-clad woman (right)... Ads that lead to a husky voice... These are all part of a practise-safe-sex campaign, But it's got some wondering if they're...



Picture/ KELVIN CHING

# Creative or too

# IN-YOUR-FACE?

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IT'S a hotline number that's making the rounds. And it's got men curious and excited, and a few women hot and bothered. It's easy to understand why. Dial the number and a sexy voice greets you. Do you like my voice, she asks teasingly. Would you like to meet me, she adds. Yes? Well, press 1 if you will wear a condom or press 2 if you don't want to.

### A PHONE-SEX HOTLINE?

Wow. A hotline for sexual services? Wrong. It's part of a campaign spearheaded by Action for Aids (AFA), which also includes posters of scantily-clad women displayed at several coffeeshops. The purpose: To warn people of the dangers of Aids (Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome). The hotline number is given in a classified advertisement, and is run like a personal ad, with a photograph of a model named Nikki. An enticing tagline reads: "You'll call, again and again. Once is not enough. You'll call twice just to hear her sexy, soothing voice. Truly enjoyable." Tucked at the bottom right-hand corner of the ad is a small AFA logo. The call ends with Nikki telling you how important it is to use protection when having sex, especially if you engage in casual sex. But the best option, she says, is to abstain and to "sayang" (love) and remain faithful to your loved ones instead. Clever, you say. And a good message, surely.

But are people getting it? Undergraduate Adrian Kheng, 23, who got the SMS from a friend, admitted that he rang the hotline for fun and out of curiosity. Since Nikki did not end by identifying which organisation is behind the message, he thought it was an elaborate prank cooked up by someone. He SMSed some friends the number "just for laughs", he said. Like him, freelance writer Irzuan Mohd, 29, thought it was a prank at first.

"When it dawned on me that it is part of some anti-HIV message, I thought it was a very creative way of getting the message across. It is purposefully misleading. "I am sure those who are sincerely interested in these services will definitely be struck by it. It makes them think for a bit," he adds.

### NOT IMPRESSED

While some call the number for thrills, others who have seen the posters, like Ms Cheryl Teoh, 28, feels that the campaign is too cheesy to have an impact. Says the human resource executive: "The posters are showing women with so little clothes on that you can even see their boobs spilling out, and the Aids warning is slapped over that. As a woman, I feel that it is tasteless and demeaning. "It's titillating, not clever." She feels that it will have the opposite effect - it will entice men into thinking about casual sex rather than putting

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them off it. A retiree who wants to be identified only as Mr Ng, 62, feels that it takes more than a saucy poster to deter some men from engaging in unprotected casual sex. Speaking in Mandarin, he says: "These hardcore types won't bother unless you offer them free condoms as an incentive or threaten to punish them with a fine or a jail term for not wearing condoms." Disagreeing, administrator Lilian Ho, 34, says she is not offended by the posters.

### SERIOUS MESSAGE

She believes it has to be bold to draw attention to its serious message. "You need a blunt image, something in-your-face such as this to shock this target group into realising that a HIV carrier is faceless... that it can come in a pretty body and face too, not just some sickly person. "That might just change their habit or make them stop having casual sex."