



Amanda, Jo, Frances, Kim and Roy from the Dayenu group get ready for this weekend's parade.

Photo: TIMOTHY CLAPIN

Belief reigns on the parade

Rob Bates

WITH the Mardi Gras Parade just a few short days away, thousands of volunteers and devotees are frantically adding the final touches to the dozens of floats lying in wait around the city.

With floats enshrining everything from Barack Obama to *Sex and the City*, some groups have gone with concepts as simple as fluorescent hula-hoopers, while others have created giant set pieces like *The Love Boat* and a huge rainbow light sculpture.

The SurryHillsong parade group has put together a float with the theme *God is a DJ*, and will have

150 revellers dressed in all manner of faux-religious garb marching beneath a DJ God "spinning disks from heaven's console in the sky".

SurryHillsong's artistic director, who has asked to be called Sue-Ellen Cox, said he didn't know what all the costumes would be but with 22 years' experience he was cautiously confident.

"This is the best thing I've ever f***ing done!" he said. "I do know we'll have at least 14 Lesbian Greek Gods, three self-flagellating monks, one Sarah Palin and I'm taking on [anti-gay pastor] Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church."

Dayenu, Sydney's Jewish gay and lesbian group, has taken a slightly

more reverent tack, using a float to champion the campaign for same-sex marriage recognition. An organiser from Dayenu, Roy Freeman, said the float was about celebrating recent "leaps and bounds", but also depicting what the group would like to see in the future.

"Leading the float in a convertible car we'll have the first gay and lesbian couples to have commitment ceremonies performed in Australia by progressive rabbis, one of which happened here in Woollahra," Mr Freeman said.

"Behind them we'll have the main float which embraces our dream for the future of a gay wedding with an orthodox rabbi."

Mr Freeman said he hoped keeping the issue in the spotlight would help them reach their ultimate goal of same-sex marriage being accepted in both religion and law.

SurryHillsong's production is admittedly less ambitious but no less heartfelt.

"It's set up like a dance party because that's really our church; it's how we live our lives at the moment and what brings us together. Going to dance parties, getting your pills and making yourself happy," Mr Cox said.

"The other message is just that religions are at each other's throats and that there's a much better way to live our lives and get along."