

Manchester Evening News

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Dream Tent ● Granada Television Croquet Lawn

PACKED not once but twice in the same night, the Dream Tent is a festival feature that has hit its target. The current double bill — for which you must pay twice — ranges from the ridiculous to the poignant, featuring a likeable joke teller from Chester, a high-energy award-winning London comedian and — most interestingly — New York's Penny Arcade in the challengingly titled *Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!*

Chester's own Jeff Green, curly-haired and casual, has the unenviable task of warming up a cold audience at the very-early-for-comedy hour of 7pm and does so with some closely observed insights into the life of a single heterosexual male.

Lee Evans looks like a hyperactive chimpanzee with a touch of the Norman Wisdoms, and bounds around the stage in a sweat of silly walks and cascade of quick-fire patter.

His subject matter — the stuff of

every day life — veers towards the ordinary, but the delivery puts him in a class of his own.

Penny Arcade comes backed by a group of five lively disco dancers who provide the energetic relief from what is otherwise a far more serious show than the title might suggest.

Penny, who resembles a young Ruby Wax, ran away to New York at 16 and was raised by gay men. She has a story to tell, via sketches and more serious monologues, of friends dying from Aids, but of life rather than death. There are plenty of good jokes here, and finally it is a frank and soul-searching series of real live confessions that challenge an audience to respond to major issues of truth and freedom.

● Part of the Boddingtons Manchester Festival. Penny Arcade's show is repeated tonight and tomorrow at 9.30. Lee Evans and Jeff Green tonight only at 7pm.

Alan Hulme