

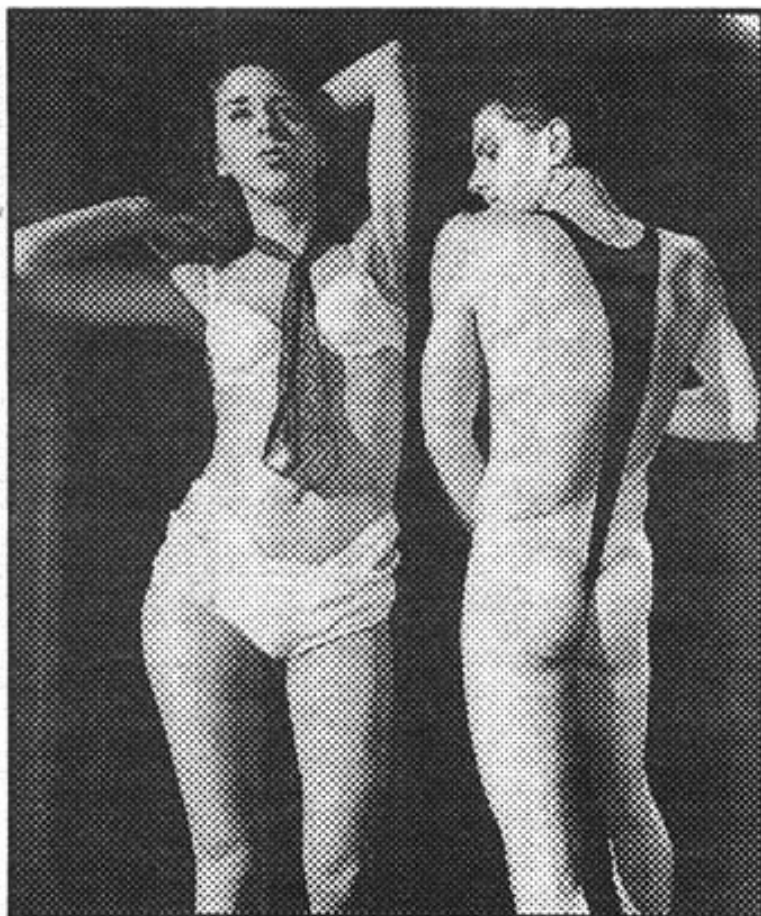
September 1 1993

Edinburgh Festival

Critics' choice

Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!
Scorching, sexy monologues by the silver-tongued Penny Arcade.

□ Assembly Rooms until Sept 4.



**Naked anger in Bitch! Dyke!
Faghag! Whore!**

DAVID SILLITOE

THEATRE

**Bitch! Dyke! Faghag!
Whore!**

BARING souls and breasts is, I gather, the OK thing in current comedy. But the confessional technique is amply justified by this remarkable exclamatory show: a series of radical monologues, reinforced by male and female go-go dancing, from a silver-tongued, bisexual New York faghag, Penny Arcade. Stripping to the buff for the final sequence, Ms A offers us what can only be called naked polemic.

She preaches a post-Reichian sexual, personal and social liberation. But behind the familiar philosophy lurks a razor-sharp mind that attacks the inconsistencies of Jesse Helms-type censorship, the economic conservatism of prostitution, the latent fascism of PC and the absurdity of the debate over whether the services should admit gays when "the American military is run by gay, white, homophobic men".

The confessional style wears a bit thin when the good Penny introduces a brief video of her immigrant, Southern Italian mum. But any hint of narcissism is kept at bay by Ms A's sharp-tongued wit ("Lesbians think if you're bisexual it's because you're not trying hard enough"), generous spirit and straight-talking attacks on censorship and repression whether coming from right or left.

To stand stark naked in front of a right-on Edinburgh audience and accuse hard-line feminists of behaving like male patriarchs requires, at the very least, a certain chutzpah. This is comedy of scorching candour.

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Michael Billington