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## Star shines from her own mirror

**T**RUE Stories is a series of monologues delivered with boundless energy and enthusiasm by its creator, Penny Arcade (aka Susana Ventura).

With the don of a wig, a pair of glasses, or not, some extra lippy, a touch of the feathers, hey presto — here's a new character striding down centre stage to deliver a homily on the gutterside of life in the Big City.

There's Charlene, the whore, there's Margot Howard Howard, the smack 'n' tranny, there's the

### THEATRE

BY ANGELA BENNIE

**True Stories, Upstairs, Belvoir Street Theatre, February 8**

Warhol superstar, Andrea Whips, there's Blond Dee, acid head and airhead, and there's Girl, the homeless prostitute — and, of course, there's Penny Arcade, the most interesting creation of them all.

But though some of us who live in the gutter can still see the stars, these characters see only their

own reflections. Interesting though these are — Penny Arcade's finely honed wit and irony makes sure of this, as does her superb comic timing which give them all a command and hard-edged spit and just the occasional polish — the fundamental narcissism at their core renders them ultimately theatrically impotent.

For the image that is reflected is not the lively, teeming face of New York's underbelly, nor a vision of the human beings hurting and desperately crawling

like lice through its rank pubic hair, but the lively, beaming, demanding face and voice of Penny Arcade, public persona and performer.

No matter how many different wigs she might don, no matter how many slips she might change in and out of, how many dialects she might add or subtract, *True Stories* is really about Penny Arcade, performer.

The characters in her stories might look different, but that is where it all begins and ends. Underneath the outer garments,

they all have the same persona, the same voice, the same manners and the same attitudes.

And why not? As a creation Penny Arcade is something to write home about, let alone base a True Story on. She is full of life and zest, a worthy Narcissus to shine like a star from anyone's theatrical mirror — why not she as the star shining from her very own?

● *Bitch! Dyke! Fag hag! Whore!* and *True Stories* continue at Belvoir Street Theatre until February 19.