

## Performance

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Penny Arcade, CCA, Glasgow

Mary Brennan

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## Beyond the tracks

OH wow! Here we are confronting what makes Bad Girls despise themselves. We sit in the upper reaches of CCA and we learn first-hand from Penny Arcade just what it is that can suddenly transform an ordinary life into a life beyond the acceptable tracks. Suddenly we're having shoved in our faces the true facts of what it's like to be pounced on and designated bad — you are in the wrong place at the wrong/right time, you hung out with those guys, you wore the short skirt at the low hemline time, you ended up raped when no nice girl would even have admitted to a fumble or a kiss behind the bike sheds. BAAA-AD!

The essence of badness is a strong feature in this Penny Arcade show. It's called Bad Reputation because it chooses to pursue the public perceptions that arise from almost nothing, except perhaps a tabloid headline or a rumour. She, herself, holds the stage in a tight black slink of a dress in order to tell us of personal bad moments. She is, without being histrionic, open and forthright about rape in adolescence, about exploitation which gave her the sense of being bad before she had even thought through whether she was good, bad, or indifferent.

The personal testimony is, in itself, powerful and confrontational. But the entire caboodle

wants to look further than this intimate resource. The drive is to confront us with what happens on our own doorstep — rape isn't just the particular ravishing of one young girl, it's something to do with attitudes, the things we blink at, the things we allow. Enter exotic dancers culled (so I believe) from Edinburgh's Pubic Triangle. They cavort. They display their bodies covered by minimal strappings in a way that could be called erotic, could be called exploitive.

This show actually pushes the choice and the decision back to us. Throughout there is anecdote, repartee, enactment, all dealing with those moments in which women are badged as to whether they are nice or not nice . . . with the proviso that the degrees of niceness are defined by the likes of us, sitting in the audience.

This is very much an up-front show taking its immediate confrontational values from the American scene. As such I suspect most audiences will sit tight, sit pretty, and not necessarily respond to the questioning session tied in as an afterthought to the action. I wish that people would speak up. Simply because hypocrisy needs to be pinpointed and deflated and a show like this, with personal statements allied to exotic dance, challenges the audience to speak out, acknowledge and address issues that usually are swept aside or at any rate masked by fine language.

I gather the performance changes night from night, simply because those involved feel that the issues are too vital and cogent to be trapped in any particular avenue of discussion. In that case it seems to me there is a marvellous opportunity for interested Glaswegians to speak out on issues of pornography, individuality, identity, violence.