

British Theatre Guide

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When Women Wee

Rachel Hiron

Dirty Stop-Out Productions

Underbelly

5–29 August 2011



At 11pm every night, in one of the dank cave-like spaces in the Underbelly, audiences are transported, suitably, to the women's toilets in a nightclub to watch an array of women pushing through their night. It's all a bit grim in here, with the smell of piss and sweat and vomit, and the women's maintenance routines as the night goes on - frantically re-spraying and re-powdering to try and keep the sweat sheen off and the frizz under control, and perfuming their nether regions, or giving them a quick top-up shave.

For men it might be too much information; but God, for women it will all ring true! This show, created by Hiron and director Stef O'Driscoll (co-founders of Dirty Stop-Out Productions), throws snatches of real conversations into the script to create an unabashed authenticity that is massively enjoyable to watch. It's not just about beauty and hygiene habits, of course - it's about female friendships, and our hedonistic culture, and how women feel about their bodies and their sexual availability in this modern society of ours.

But there's not a moment of preachiness. When Sam, avowed feminist, criticises her friend's promiscuity as damaging the cause of women or some such rhetoric, she's cheerfully batted back down by her mates. Friendship and the desire to have a good time wins over idealism every time. Of course it does - this is a nightclub.

The stunningly versatile cast of five each play any number of roles. Two teenagers are giddy with having got in for the first time; later, one of them asks the other to be her "wing man" and dance nearby while she canoodles with a guy she's just met.

The fault-lines in the friendships of a group of mates gradually come out: the one who sleeps around (and who gives herself a quick shave down below mid-evening) is showered with disapproval by one of the others; the one who is normally teetotal is persuaded to take drugs for the first time and her subsequent mad behaviour causes equal amounts of disapproval to be poured on the drug-giver.

Two old friends meet up having not seen each other for a while; one is flying high with a great new job and cool new friends, the other feels herself being left behind. A girl has been told it's fancy dress and has turned up ridiculously in a grass skirt and coconut bra.

There is a brilliant skit with a couple of rude girls in jackets and high-top trainers debating whether to use a She-Wee device (sorry if this is too much information from me... it's a sort of funnel) and

go and pee in the gents instead. And the tripping girl in a cowboy hat, manically debating with herself - "more drink", "not more drink" etc - brings the house down.

The whole piece is so funny, so well put-together, and just has so much time for these various women and everything going on in their lives. Things turn quietly sombre near the end when one woman, having run into an old schoolfriend whose facebook profile suggests she's doing so much better in life, assesses her own life and wonders how it can be that she has achieved so little in her adult years so far. "It's not a life, it's an existence", she bitterly summarises. There's an acute sense that the enjoyment of the night out, and the temporary pleasures of drink, drugs, dancing etc, are only papering over the cracks in the lives of some of these women. The show manages to be a celebration and also an examination, which is a real achievement. But I'm making it sound too grand. Above all it's just a killer night out.

Reviewer: [Corinne Salisbury](#)