

T-O-T-A-L-L-Y!



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Fringe Festival: 'T-O-T-A-L-L-Y' takes on issue of rape

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It should have been enough to make even a cheerleader lose her spirit. When she was a freshman on the Emporia State University cheer squad, Kingleigh Smith was brutally raped by players on the football team after she trusted them to walk her home after a party. Her solo show at the Capital Fringe Festival is a way of taking back some of the things those men took from her: her innocence, her confidence and her cheer.

For a show about rape recovery, "T-O-T-A-L-L-Y" is remarkably lacking in sorrow. Framing Smith's assault with cheerleading, a pursuit that requires one to act relentlessly upbeat, even if your team is being massacred on the field, is analogous to the way that Smith handled her horrible experience, putting on a brave face and focusing her positive energy on others. She's so giving that she even donated a kidney.

But Smith is no saint and hits rock bottom when, after hitting her boyfriend and experiencing intermittent paralysis of her legs, she visits a therapist and discovers that she has repressed her entire memory of the sexual assault. Over time, she's able to date again, and her account of finding a "lovah" on the Internet, criticizing a dirty-mouthed suitor for his poor grammar, is one of her funniest bits. Describing her seduction of a man, she pantomimed kissing him from head to toe. "I start at his forehead," she says, but instead of standing on her toes, she lowers her chin. "He was short."

You'd better get used to the title word — it's used liberally throughout the play, as Smith sprinkles her speech with "like" and "whatever" and other Valley Girl-

speaking. If it's annoying, you'll get over it in a few minutes because, for Smith, it comes from genuine enthusiasm, as though she's reclaiming the teenage years that she wasn't able to fully inhabit after her assault. Her performance is devoid of self-pity, as well as self-consciousness: She is as capable of pantomiming the sexual positions of her rape as she is of performing dorky dance moves and high kicks moments later.

The closest Smith comes to pity is wondering out loud about whether the universe is conspiring against her: "Looks like she's getting too close to being a superwoman, better put some [expletive] in front of her," she says. A whole lot of it, to be precise — but Smith seems to be able to vanquish it with a single, pompom-punctuated high kick.