

I Hate Rabbits | James Galea

Written by Lloyd Bradford (Brad) Syke

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James Galea, Australia's magician of the year, is a trickster, in more ways than one.

The slick, Footy Show-style, rockstar build-up to the first of his series of shows at Sydney theatre, seemed odd and out of context, if intriguing. And he clearly knows the value of suspense: the hour-and-a-bit show started about 20 minutes late.

He talked so much, with a kind of forced, neurotic confidence, I began to wonder if there really was any substance to the show. There was. **Galea** employs good, old-fashioned tricks; principally with cards. That might sound grindingly, insufferably boring and, were it not for his capacity to engage, his cleverness, slickness & originality, it probably would be. And, in case you're wondering how on earth everyone gets to scrutinize all the trickery, there are cameramen with him, at all the crucial moments.

Frankly, his false bravado is a little disquieting and discomfiting, even if it does serve to keep momentum. He's, arguably, just a little too 'smart' & familiar with those hapless audience-members unlucky enough to be in proximity; even calling one or two people idiots (even if they were, it's not really on).

His musical stings and segues are a little grating, too. But no one can take away from his mastery, as a magician. I really have no idea how he changed a 50, into a fiver, or stole a man's watch. (Half the entertainment, if not more, was via the schadenfreude attached to his anxiety over whether he'd see either again; lingering onstage, asking.)

Nor do I have the slightest clue as to how he 'guessed' a girl was thinking of the word optometrist. (His showbiz savoir faire is in nuances, like first guessing the word spectacles: he taunts & teases his 'victims', to an almost unbearable extent.)

He taught us a trick, too.

And he was truly entertaining, almost cracking his hard man persona, with a glimmer of warmth, as he tried to lead poor, old (but downright sporting) Peter, plucked from his comfort zone several rows from the stage, through a Goonish tutorial. But, really, his best was saved till last: an entire narrative, 'illustrated' with a deck of cards.

There was a shining shell-game sequence, also, in *I Hate Rabbits*, which, presumably, points to **Galea's** disdain for sub-standard, sloppy 'suburban' magicanship.

I can't imagine there's a magician on the face of the planet who could make him look ordinary: one gets the sense he really was indoors, practicing card-tricks, while his mates were out-and-about. It was worth it, from our standpoint. And, hopefully, from his.

Personally, I think he could still keep the momentum and excitement, while smiling a little more and taking a slightly cooler blowtorch to his audience. A little less lip.

He isn't chilled, but his cunning stunts killed.

James Galea
I Hate Rabbits

Venue: Sydney Theatre, Hickson Road, Walsh Bay

Dates: Thursday December 4, Friday December 5, Saturday December 6

Time: 8pm

Tickets: Full \$50, Concessions \$35

Bookings: STC Box Office (02) 9250 1777 / Ticketek 132 849

www.sydneytheatre.com.au