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Holding all the aces

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H E'S A magician who doesn't believe in magic and who learned his craft from a conman.

It's a formula that's paid off for the strictly honest James Galea (above), whose brand of magic has let him live the dream of performing in Las Vegas and packing them in at the Magic Castle in Hollywood.

Now Galea, 27, is part of a groundswell of dynamic young magicians ditching tradition. In his new show *I Hate Rabbits*, there's no smoke and mirrors, no top hat and cape, no woman being sawn in half. And definitely no rabbits.

"It's kind of like the anti-magic show," he says.

"I don't pretend it's real. I'm just creating the illusion that it's real and it's a much more fun journey."

Galea's specialty is card tricks, which he's been perfecting since he was 14 and taken under the wing of a seasoned "magician". Years later he learned the biggest trick of all — his mentor of five years was really a professional card-shark and conman.

"Two years ago I started hearing some stories around the block, put them together and went, 'Oh my God, that's the guy who taught me,'" he says.

"It was one of those penny-drop moment. The things I was learning as magic tricks he was doing for real.

"It was a great way to learn,

actually. I had friends who were learning from old magic books and I got to learn how to deal aces from the bottom of the deck from a card shark."

Needless to say, Galea is having some fun at Crown casino during his month in Melbourne. But he vows it's all above board and he doesn't have a dishonest bone in his body.

"They have a really good poker thing here, so I've been lucky enough to play with some cool people," Galea says. "But I don't cheat. I'm an honest person."

SEE > *I Hate Rabbits*, Forum Theatre, city, until April 26. Tickets: \$30/conc \$20. Bookings www.ticketek.com.au or 13 28 49. Visit jamesgalea.com

