

I Hate Rabbits

Clara Iaccarino
April 23, 2008

You won't see any rabbits pulled from hats in James Galea's magic shows. Nor will you see girls sliced in half or people levitating above the stage. What you will see is a suave 26-year-old in ripped jeans and a T-shirt performing card tricks, reading minds and stealing audience members' watches before their very eyes. Advertisement

"I want to show magic to a new audience," he says. "It's not about an old fat guy pulling scarves out of his sleeve. It's just me and my talent. I don't need smoke and mirrors."

Galea says his show, *I Hate Rabbits*, is a stand-up comedy romp infused with magic. For a guy who learned his magic from a card shark who perfected the art of cheating to win illegal poker games, Galea is more fresh-faced pop idol than hustler.

"People are so used to seeing cliche tricks," he says. "Now they know as soon as they buy their tickets this is not a normal magic show; it's edgy and different. I'm trying to create my own style and it seems to be taking off."

Galea has just walked off the set of TV show *Mornings With Kerri-Anne* when we speak. He performed his signature card trick, one that earned him the title of Australian Magician of the Year, and is buzzing. With the cameras in tight for a close-up, and Kerri-Anne peering over his shoulder, cutting the cards to prove it isn't a trick deck, Galea told a story about a night on the town, using the cards to illustrate his tale. He meets two redheads (out come two red queens) and then goes to a club on King Street (he pulls the three numbers of the street address and a king). On it goes until James (he pulls a jack) hits the casino to play poker and produces a full house hand.

"If it goes wrong, there's no way out," Galea says. "It keeps my adrenaline rushing because I'm going all-out."

The Sydney magician says he was a late bloomer. Most magicians get the bug after receiving their first magic kit at five but Galea was 14 when he first started his tricks. He practised on his teachers, stealing their watches and finessing his card tricks. He says he escaped beatings from his three older brothers with his quick-handed tricks, stealing their watches too.

He learned to play the piano when he was three and had aspirations of becoming an actor or musician.

"My parents wanted me to have something to fall back on - they didn't want me to become an actor or a musician," he says. "So now I'm a magician. They love it now."

Galea says he has never had a "real" job. When his high school mates went to Queensland for Schoolies Week, he ventured to Las Vegas on a magical pilgrimage. Straight after school he worked as a magician in a restaurant, performing at tables.

He has since worked on cruise ships as the in-house magician, as well as combining his musical and magical talents for extravagant stage shows. He has performed at Hollywood's famed Magic Castle and in Las Vegas. He is now working with Hugh Jackman's production company, Seed, to develop a magic show for television that he describes as "Borat meets Hidden Camera".

Yet for his Cracker Comedy show, Galea is stripping it back. He says he needs nothing more than a bare stage to wow an audience. "The traditionalists are turning their nose up," he says. "They don't know why I'm not wearing a top hat and tails. But entertainment is changing in all areas. That's so old hat now - pardon the pun. I'm trying to make [my show] as original as possible."

Galea likens his training to that of a doctor or lawyer.

"They spend six years at university doing the hard yards," he says. "They learn everything they need to learn. I studied and studied for about six years to learn from the best, to learn from everybody out there."

Unlike the David Copperfields of the world, who suspend reality and make their magic accomplices swear they will never reveal the essence of their tricks, Galea doesn't want people to think his magic is real.

"Magic isn't real," he says. "It's all tricks but it's fun and entertaining. I hate when people try to make the audience believe they have special powers, that they are really floating in the air."

"What I do is a load of bull but you are going to have a whole lot of fun watching me do it."

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/23/1208743016825.html>