



THE BRAG

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Arts Snap

The Old Fitzroy Theatre **LYING CHEATING BASTARD**

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I hate magic. I've always been that scoffing sceptic in the crowd who refuses to believe or endorse the tricks, let alone the performer. Until I saw **James Galea's** one-man show.

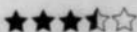
Directed by **Nicholas Hammond**, the show is essentially the story of Galea's lifetime involvement in the seedy world of Australian gambling. Playing on both the naivety and greed of his ever-astounded followers and, er, victims, Galea learns further tricks of the trade from his older mentor, a professional poker player. Through his guidance and influence, Galea becomes more involved in the glamorous world associated with high rollers, big money and plenty of risks.

Throughout the performance, Galea tells us "I win. Always, 'cos I never go against the percentages, I control the variables and I don't leave anything to chance." So I was surprised to see audience members still willing to duel, and of course lose, to the master - whose powers of manipulation and charm basically had people throwing their money onstage.

"Everything I tell is the truth. Maybe." With this warning, a glint in his eye and a charismatic smile, Galea takes us on a fascinating tour into the dark side of gambling, cheating and the consequences of being caught. The show's underlying theme is that his profits rely on our greed, stupidity and belief we can outsmart him.

Galea's entertaining and intriguing performance lies between theatre and cabaret, and does his 'Australian Magician of the Year' title justice. Furthermore, for the most part, he manages to pull off acting, piano playing, storytelling and magic show all on his own.

Definitely brace yourself for an interactive and potentially humiliating experience as the Old Fitz transforms into a side of Star City Casino you may have never imagined, and where the audience ultimately become players. Poker, anyone?



Prue Clark