

The Sunday Telegraph

INSIDER

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The con in consequence

Mip Australian magician, James Galea, won legions of new fans last year with his hit show *I Hate Rabbits*, an edgy mix of magic and stand-up.

Wearing jeans and T-shirt, with a video camera screening close-up projections of his hands, he performed amazing card tricks and other mind-boggling acts — including appearing to read minds — involving sleight-of-hand in laid-back, hugely entertaining fashion.

Galea, 27, doesn't pretend that what he does is real magic. "It's just extreme skill with cards and dice and other things," he says.

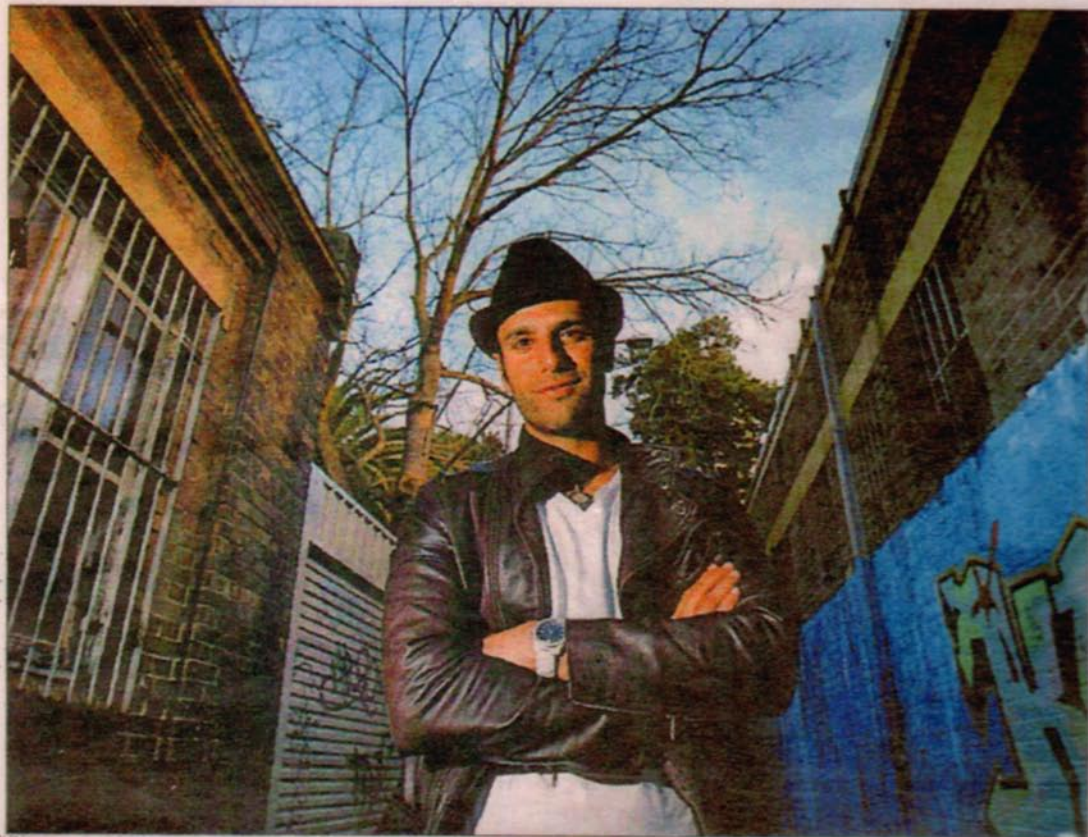
Now, the magician is working those skills — along with his ability as an actor, pianist and comedian — into a one-man play called *Lying Cheating Bastard*, about the rise and fall of a hugely successful Sydney con man.

Galea co-wrote the script with actor Nicholas Hammond, who directs. The pair met on a cruise ship in Hawaii 18 months ago. Galea was performing *I Hate Rabbits*.

Chatting in the bar one night, Hammond asked Galea how he got into magic and was so fascinated by the story that he suggested they use it as the basis for a play.

Growing up in a Maltese family in inner Sydney, Galea saw his first magic act as a teenager and was instantly hooked. From age 14, he was taught by a magician.

"It wasn't until later that I



Trickery of the trade: Magician James Galea in Woolloomooloo

Picture: Sam Rutty

realised he was a professional con man," says Galea.

"The things that I was learning as magic, he would do for real.

"I was learning to deal aces from the bottom of the deck and steal watches for entertainment, but he wouldn't give them back and he was dealing the aces to take people's money."

Lying Cheating Bastard is

about a super-slick con man, called Jimmy Garafa.

Taken under the wing of a mentor, he learns to charm willing folk and part them from their money.

In telling Jimmy's story, Galea uses his own skills as a card shark. As in *I Hate Rabbits*, close-up projections ramp up the degree of difficulty.

Galea has performed in Las Vegas and lived in Los Angeles

from 2005 to 2007 where he has an agent and manager. He will return there after *Lying Cheating Bastard* to pitch an idea for a new TV show.

Galea and Hammond also plan to write a screenplay of the play and will attempt to make it as a film.

Lying Cheating Bastard, Old Fitzroy Theatre, June 30 to July 25. Bookings: 1300 438849.