

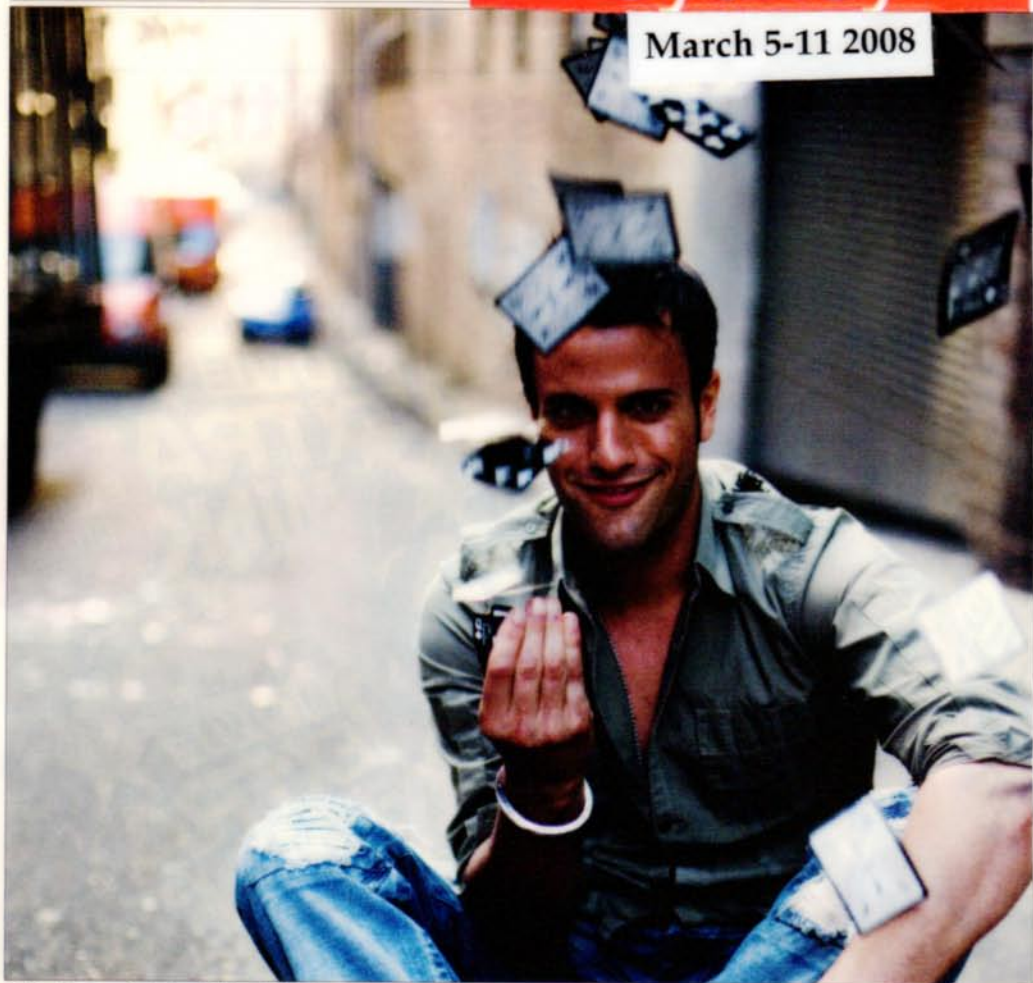
Time Out

Sydney

March 5-11 2008

Interview

Illusions of grandeur



Quite the card Galea dabbles in black magic: beheadings, arson, off-stage deaths

Aussie magician James Galea proudly wears the industry's top hat. Now **Andrew Georgiou** discovers the magic maestro has Hollywood heavyweight Hugh Jackman in his corner and a new career up his sleeve

How old were you when you first started to show an interest in magic, and how did it develop into a career?

I was 14 when I saw my first magic trick on TV and started learning magic the next day from a book at my high school library. I was instantly hooked. Then I met a magician (who I found out years later was a real life card hustler) who took me under his wing and taught me the tricks of the trade (no pun intended). After I finished school I started working around the world honing my craft.

You have been named Australian Magician Of The Year. How did you gain that title? Every two years all the best magicians from around the country are invited to compete for the title. I was asked to enter and was honoured to win.

How did an Aussie magician become the toast of Hollywood's 'Magic Castle'? That was a trip! I

was in LA last year with a group of friends and the people at the Magic Castle heard I was in town, so I got the call asking if I would do a week of shows there and was like, "Hell, yeah!" It went really well but I think they just liked my accent.

We hear Hugh Jackman is a fan of your work and has a vested interest in your future? Yeah, he saw one of my performances and now I'm really lucky to be working on some television projects with his production company.

How tough is the business of magic? What's the competition like? There isn't a big magic scene in Australia like there is in America and Europe. Over there, many restaurants and theatres will have some kind of magic performance, here it's very limited as to where you can see it. Because the scene is so small, most magicians know each other and we're all pretty good mates. We actually have a weekly poker game.

So people actually play poker with you? Um, yeah. Well, this is not a regular game, it's for magicians only where cheating is not only encouraged, it's expected and rewarded. **You've done thousands of shows**

all around the world. What's one show you'd rather forget? When I was first starting out, I was doing a show and getting absolutely no response from the audience even though I was doing what I thought was my best stuff. It turned out there was a miscommunication, and I only found out after the show finished, that half of the audience were blind and deaf. Good times all around!

Does your magic ever not work? Most of the time the audience can't really tell that something has gone wrong, and other times, it's hard to hide. I've set myself on fire, almost set a whole theatre on fire, accidentally nearly chopped someone's head off during a trick and I've had someone die after he was on stage with me. Actually, that doesn't sound too good does it? I should have just said no.

Name five great things we can expect to see at your Sydney shows next week. That'd just ruin it for you...but you can be certain you won't be seeing any rabbits! *James Galea performs I Hate Rabbits at Will and Toby's supper club on Sun March 9. See listings p69.*