

SPAZNUTS

Spaznut's is Damian Callinan's first dip into fully biographical comedy and he's jumped in the deep end. From the moment the audience are invited to enter the waiting room of the sperm delivery suite by a matronly Callinan handing out sample jars, they are exposed to his eventful journey through infertility.

Attending his first session in a male infertility support group led by the boastfully fecund ex-catholic priest Gerald, Damian hears the thoughts of the other members of the group. Eric, a downtrodden veteran of the IVF rollercoaster. Brian, a recently divorced man's man who seems reasonably certain that he has a massive cock and Douglas, an infertile gay chap who's about to pay top dollar for an internet, surrogate child deal.

Damian is then invited to tell his story. After seeking permission to use a flashback, we find him arriving at the hospital to deliver yet another sperm sample. Procrastinating over 'doing the deed' he begins to unravel his journey from a 6 year old having his 'nuts' mauled by a couple of overly zealous district nurses through his years acting as a foster parent to state ward kids and ultimately to the news at 31 that his 'floomyptoomps had a low yargo factor.'

But the audience in the waiting room soon discover that the journey doesn't end there. Soon after finding out about his infertility, his marriage ended and in the tumult that followed, he never got to the bottom of what was actually wrong with him. Thus he climbs back on the medical trundle wheel so he can once and for all stop describing his condition with made up words like 'floomyptoomps.'

In the process he learns not only what's wrong with him, but some feint hope of fatherhood emerges. Thus he goes for one last trip to the sperm suite to give another sample using some less than orthodox marital aids.

Damian's stories of cold-handed IVF specialists ignite the passions of the rest of the support group whose cameos punctuate his revelatory monologue. Finally Damian, who after 10 years has grown comfortable with being infertile, has to decide whether he's going to go through with the tests.

Spaznuts uses Callinan's own experiences to explore how fertility shapes identity and what one goes through when that option isn't available. Far from being self-pitying, it celebrates a life without kids and large testicles.

SPAZNUTS HISTORY

2006 – Melbourne Comedy Festival

2006 – Victorian Regional Tour

2007 – Edinburgh Fringe Festival

SPAZNUT'S REVIEW 1

STEVE BENNETT - [UK] CHORTLE.COM.

Sometimes it seems just about every medical condition known to science has been exploited for a comedy show, but here Damian Callinan bravely tackles one of the most taboo: infertility. And in the testosterone-driven Australian culture that – if you'll excuse the expression – takes balls.

But you can tell from the very title of the show, Spaznuts, that there's going to be very little moping self-pity in this account. In fact, it's done with such matter-of-fact good humour that you almost forget this is his genuine problem, not just a collection of rather splendid dick jokes.

The show starts outside the venue, where Callinan, a star of TV sketch show Skithouse, poses as a formidable fertility clinic nurse, threatening to collect samples from the men queuing to get in. Inside, he employs his talent for characterisation by setting up his account in the context of a support group, sharing his experiences with the camp Douglass and boastful Brian – each of whom represent different male responses to the potentially devastating news that they're firing blanks.

So, in flashback, Callinan details his often humiliating treatment at the cold, cold hands of the medical profession, including such bizarre experiences as the orchodometer, a collection of little plastic pebbles for measuring plum size. Callinan cheerfully confesses that his are way down the scale.

This might seem like he's sharing too much information, as he tries to elicit an uncomfortable shock reaction from the embarrassing processes he underwent, but it's not. The whole account is pitched perfectly at a frank, mature, but still witty level, extracting the jokes from the bizarre situations he encountered without the comedy ever feeling gratuitous or ikky. He is, as he'd need to be, a master of euphemism to avoid matters getting too graphic. His talents for getting the level right even manifest themselves in his impression of a mentally challenged relative, which manages to be affectionate rather than offensive.

Callinan's infertility was a factor in the breakdown of his marriage, and it's a stark realisation to come to that you will never have children. But he's clearly accepted fate's hand, making his tale almost inspiring. Primarily, though, it's just damn funny.

SPAZNUTS REVIEW 2

TIM HUNTER – THE AGE

With a title that includes “Spaznuts”, you’d expect this one-man show from skitHOUSE regular Damian Callinan to be childish, but it’s not. It’s a trip into the dark and forbidden places of virility and male vulnerability.

The comedy starts before the show, with Callinan, dressed as a nurse, handing out specimen jars to male members of the audience, and quizzing them about their recent ejaculatory history. Once we are in the “cloak room”, “Gerald”, welcomes us to a male infertility counselling group with some soothing Enya, where we hear Callinan’s own story about infertility and his spaznuts.

It’s a well structured, funny show that talks openly about traditionally taboo topics, such as testicles and self-gratification, without becoming smutty and puerile. Other characters include Brian, who is infertile, but has a “massive c—k”, and Douglass, who is going through a donor program with his partner Kevin so they can have children.

And while laughing at male foibles and insecurities about their genitals, Callinan also manages to get a little poignant without becoming awkward, or at the comedy’s expense. Laughs, and something to think about - now that’s not a bad deal.