



Time Out rating:



Time Out says

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So there you are in a gay bathhouse, in the middle of a massive crystal-meth bender, naked and tied to a St. Andrew's cross—and who should walk in right at that moment but your boss at the job you called in sick to that day! We've all been there, right? Maybe not. But Steven Strafford has, during the three years he spent as a sometime actor and full-time meth addict in Chicago a decade ago. In his solo show *Methtacular!*, Strafford lays out the highs and lows of that period with remarkable candor, insight and humor.

Strafford is not just blowing smoke here: His degradations begin with stealing from friends, losing his job and trading sex for drugs, and end in a hell of violence, filth, psychosis and feral cats. But Strafford's warm, playfully queeny demeanor—he has a habit of cupping his face auntishly with his hands—draws you into his harrowing story, and the show is bedazzled out with original songs, witty language, tongue-in-cheek game-show segments and references to *The Facts of Life*. (John McDaniel is credited with music supervision, and William TN Hall provides valuable piano accompaniment.) Adam Fitzgerald's direction keeps everything up to speed but also carves out spaces for outside perspective, via videotaped interviews with Strafford's mother, and internal sensation, in eerie sequences that capture the actor's paradoxical sense of self-esteem while losing himself in crystal. ("There is nothing wrong with me," he says.) Even as *Methtacular!* wends toward a very-special-episode finale, Strafford's brave cheer and determination to entertain never let it fall into pity-partying. —Adam Feldman