

# REVIEWS

## A Night with Beau Tyler

All Reviews included are unedited.

**2007**

THEATRE VIEW

**THE BEST MEDICINE**

A Night with Beau Tyler  
Written and Performed by Peter Feeney  
Directed by Greg Cooper and Jim McLarty  
Produced by Nicola Feeney  
FEENEY MCSWEENEY PRODUCTIONS  
at The Classic, Auckland

Reviewed by Nik Smythe, THEATRE VIEW, 4 Nov 2007

Many will already be familiar with Beau from the Memphis Meltdown television commercial - a brilliant marketing teaser campaign played on primetime national TV since possibly even before the live show was thought of.

As the audience convenes in the auditorium we are greeted with a series of inspirational quotes from the literary hall of fame - Churchill, Nietzsche, Wilde, etc, on the topic of the symbiotic relationship of success and failure, culminating in an impressive testimonial from President Bush of how Beau's unique programme helped him through the darkest hours of his second term. After the appropriate hyper-introduction the self-styled self help evangelist, cheesily attired by those male fashion dinosaurs Hallensteins, emerges to the voluminous applause of the crowd (as instructed via the big screen).

Without giving away the entire system and risking an injunction, suffice to say the basis of Tyler's self-help technology is that accepting defeat is the key to fulfillment, not focusing on success and thereby setting yourself up for failure. There's more to it than that, in terms of arranging one's social environment and so-on, but you'll have to see the show or else read Tyler's alleged no. 1 bestseller 'Feel the Fear and Fail Anyway!'

Expat American Beau and his institutional power-style ('Great to meet you, welcome to the rest of your life!) are recognisable to anyone who's seen a Tony Robbins ad, and the bones of his self-help shtick is so on the money that one wonders whether writer/Tyler Peter Feeney has done a number of these courses for material. Or is the stereotype just that two dimensional that you only need to watch the infomercial to figure out the whole shtick?

Once we've had an eyebrow-raising taste of one of his key patented and trademarked exercises, we settle into a heartfelt account of Beau's life story,. At first with only minor sinister undercurrents. He knew he'd hit rock bottom when he got a job as an impersonator of himself, hoping no-one would realise it's actually him ... That kind of thing. From there, as Tyler describes the events leading up to his massive personal turnaround, the scenario develops in a direction that really brings home the inherent pitfalls and traps of the self-improvement industry.

Peter Feeney is backed by an inspired and committed crew without whom Tyler could never have made this glorious 'comeback'. Directed by Greg Cooper and Jim McLarty, Cooper also takes dramaturge credit whilst McLarty supplies the necessary vocal intro skills - after all, celebrity is nothing without a cheesy deep-voice introducing it. Krista Nobilo provides the disingenuously cheerful voice of the manager of Tyler's corporate enterprise.

The exemplary PowerPoint presentation designed and operated by Michael Craven is the backbone of the seminar: the smoke and mirrors of the modern day public speaker. Produced by Feeney's wife Nicola, the whole power-package is complete with the perfect power-photos of Beau by Geoff Short, and the power-theme tune of Peter Hobbs.

There are genuine insights to be gleaned from this parody, and for some people it could arguably be more beneficial than any serious brand of personal development. It's inevitable that a percentage of the audience, myself included, will have attended something resembling what is being inflicted upon us here, so the relative merits between the genuine article and the implications of this outstanding satire can be explored. In any case, if laughter is indeed the best medicine, then A Night With Beau Tyler is efficacious therapy indeed.

#### PULP MAGAZINE

#### **BIG NUTS**

A character has escaped from TV and become flesh.

Beau Tyler, the self-help guru from the Memphis Meltdown commercial has taken on a life of his own swelling from a 30-second blip to a 60-minute voyage of self-parody.

The self-help industry is already entertaining to us non-believers, overly energetic, insufferably smug, self-satisfied showmen; stuffed into nylon suits they explode with obvious statements and circular arguments. So how do you parody something that is already a parody of itself? Peter Feeney has managed to do so - magnificently.

In order to even attend the Beau Tyler self-help workshop I had to confront two of my worst fears: the twin terrors of audience participation and intimate venues. Upstairs at the Classic on Queen Street is a cozy venue and even sitting near the back I was close enough for some of Feeney's spittle to reach me, but the size worked in favour of the production and made it easier for me to confront my second fear.

It wasn't possible to avoid the "everybody on your feet" sections because anyone who tried to was personally chastised from the stage. The only thing worse than participating is being seen not to participate. This led to an all-pervading atmosphere of relaxed fun.

The way Beau Tyler propounds his "surround yourself with losers" theory is utterly convincing, I am a follower, I believed, I was reaching for my credit card to book the bogus, full length Beau Tyler workshop. It was as simple and straightforward as the preaching of a real self-help motivator, perhaps that is why they fill stadiums.

The Beau Tyler character, fallen guru, rising phoenix-like was a perfect balance of pathos with self-love and ultimately explained why the genre he is subverting

works: all the arguments used by genuine gurus justify where you are now and promise where you will be, foolproof – as long as you pay for the CDs, DVDs, books and workshops.

Go and see A Night With Beau Tyler, it's funny, clever and original – and you get a free ice-cream on the way out, I think you can guess the brand.

Classic Comedy Bar until the 18 November.

Tickets from Ticketmaster.

Story by: Rob Connigale Published on 13 Nov 2007

## **2008**

### NELSON MAIL

#### **A Night with Beau Tyler at the Suter Theatre**

Larger-than-life character Beau Tyler stepped out of his Memphis Meltdown commercials and into the Suter Theatre with a life-changing message for his audience of "millions ... well, maybe 90" people.

In an hour-long "introductory seminar" based on the self-help movement typified by Tony Robbins et al, Beau led his eager "participants" on a journey of self-discovery and lunacy that was A Night With Beau Tyler, written and performed by Peter Feeney (Black Sheep) and directed by Greg Cooper.

Feeney's alter ego Beau introduced his audience to his unorthodox approach to the genre, known as his patented "Failure Across Revitalisation Techniques". This encourages its followers to avoid the competition and workload that is part of success, and learn to embrace "being average". As he put it, "do the Humpty Dumpty: have a great fall, and never let them put you back together again!"

Feeney's parody of the self-help phenomenon was spot on the accessories alone represented the artillery of any guru worth his salt (the tacky slideshow of motivational quotes, the headset, the bottled spring water).

As the melodramatic Beau, his American accent tackled Kiwi terms mercilessly ("Key-ah or -ah New Zee-land!"), while his comic timing was impressive. His off-the-cuff banter with the audience came easily, and, when not teasing his spectators, Rodney Hide and Gore were his favourite targets. Thanks to Feeney's forthrightness and the intimate venue, the atmosphere was so relaxed that even those who cringe inwardly at audience participation felt comfortable enough to put their misgivings aside and throw themselves into the "power purge" or, as Beau described it, an "emotional enema" into the face of your "failure buddy". Don't ask. I will, however, note that it seems that you are never too old to giggle at the word "sphincter".

After an hour, Beau left the stage rather abruptly, and many seemed to anticipate an encore. However, that aside, I left feeling satisfied, positive and "conscious of the immense inferiority of everybody else" (as Beau had advocated, quoting his personal inspiration "Oscar Will-day").

Great comedy, an enthusiastic audience, and a bit of "self-improvement" to boot: this was a "Beautox" I could get used to.

**Reviewed by Elle Hunt, 23 October.**

SOUTHLAND TIMES

**Self-help satirist makes jafa jokes but message is spot on**

Reviewed by NICOLA KEAN | Friday, 27 June 2008

The Failure Assisted Revitalization Technique was just one of the satirical motivational tools peddled by actor Peter Feeney in his one-man show A Night with Beau Tyler.

Based on Feeney's character from the Memphis Meltdown ads, the show took the idea to the logical next step.

Washed-out motivational speaker Tyler arrives in New Zealand looking for inspiration after the failure of his "power arrow" system of self-help.

In a moment of brilliance he realizes that embracing your inner averageness is the key to success.

During the seminar-style show, Tyler runs us through his new FART system and teaches the audience how to "power purge".

The Invercargill audience was a tough crowd, reluctant — perhaps justifiably — to engage in the participatory parts of the show.

Two people even walked out about 15 minutes into the show — which, given the size of the audience, was quite a brave gesture.

While Feeney's humour may have been Auckland-centric, his satire was spot on.

As Tyler's system begins to crumble mid-show, Feeney's message becomes more explicit: don't believe self-help gurus and certainly don't give them your money.

Feeney himself is flawless as Tyler, complete with American accent and wig.

He dominated the stage, bullying reluctant audience members to participate, prancing, power purging and generally terrifying the crowd.

A pants-wettingly hilarious night out. 5/5.

» WHAT: A Night with Beau Tyler WHERE: Civic Theatre WHEN: June 19

OTAGO DAILY TIMES

**FAILURE KEY TO SATIRICAL SUCCESS**

WELCOME to the rest of your life. Other self-help experts, you see, have it all wrong.

Aiming for success doesn't work because it just sets you up for failure. Beau Tyler knows much better. On the basis of an afternoon in the public library, he knows that the secret is to embrace and welcome defeat. In fact Beau's failure strategy is so successful that he's an adviser to some of the biggest names on the planet, include George W himself. His marketing enterprises include wildly expensive residential courses, CD sets that may appear way overpriced but in fact are specially reduced this week, his best-selling book Feel the Fear and Fail anyway — maybe even steak knives.

Written and performed by Peter Feeney, and directed by Greg Cooper, A Night with Beau Tyler is splendid satire, starting with the (intentionally) clunky video introduction complete with applause cues. Beau's mistimed entrance is delayed long enough for the expectation to be wearing off. The parody is sustained through to the ending, speeded up because Beau has run out of steam, and the relentless but amateurish sales pitch as the audience wonders whether to leave or not.

Peter Feeney does it well, drawing shamelessly on the manipulation tactics and fake sincerity of motivational speakers; conviction of televangelists; the slick insistence of advertorial writers.

There's audience involvement, including some activities which oblige people to stand up and carry out quite ridiculous exercises to the point of co-operation fatigue.

Last evening, the Fortune Studio was full, and everyone seemed entertained, rather than edified, by this ingenious, if not necessarily life-changing, hour-long send up.

On the way out, the foyer wasn't full of tacky merchandise – instead, we were all treated to a delicious frozen confection. You'll never guess what.

Reviewed by Barbara Frame July 29, 2008

#### WAIKATO TIMES

Reviewed by Matt Richens

Beau Tyler takes an hour long shot at self-help gurus, makes you laugh, makes you nervous, makes you purge your negativity (on to someone else), makes fun of Tony Robbins and gives away money and ice creams. Not a bad night out.

That's underselling it, to be honest.

I have not laughed so hard or for as long as I did last night despite feeling nervous the entire 60 minutes that the buzzing Tyler might single me out.

And I left feeling very happy with who I was. Not in a cheesy life-is-wonderful way, but by following Beau's secret to happiness; comparing myself to losers.

Decked in geeky braces and high pants, Beau Tyler is a throw-back to the Ritalin-needing motivators of the early 90s.

Peter Feeney, who plays Tyler in this one-man show, has been seen on our screens in Xena, Hercules, Shorty, the 2006 Kiwi movie Black Sheep, and even Power Rangers.

After those heady heights he was re-made (semi) famous by talking about his big nuts on television in Memphis Meltdown commercials. Tyler is a self-help guru who realized what most of us worked out years ago; self-help is a bit of a piss-take in itself.

The excitable Tyler, in between picking on audience members, runs round the theatre mimicking Robbins while delivering his new brand of self-help.

The difference is that Tyler's, apart from giving away ice creams, is failure based.

The Failure Focused Personal seminar is designed, like the others, to make you feel better, but not by working hard.

Tyler correctly points out hard work often just creates more opportunities – and more hard work.

By aiming low and comparing yourself to, and surrounding yourself with dropkicks, you're going to feel a lot better.

In fact, maybe that is why my friend took me. Thanks, mate.

#### THE TIMARU HERALD

Reviewed by Emma Bailey

Nothing starts a show like handholding – especially when the audience is predominantly male.

Last night Peter Feeney was Beau Tyler, teaching his faithful followers how to feel the fear and fail anyway.

The talented New Zealand actor took a swipe at every self appointed self help guru America has ever produced.

Diligently showing success does not protect us from the three C's: crime, cancer, and Celine Dion. We were asked to hold the hand of our failure buddy and feel good by comparison.

Ahh bless, finally I can stop reading text from new age types, in fact the best way to make money from self help books Beau prophesized, was to write one.

The show last an hour, which was the right length. We learnt how Beau had once been a self help man of success until his life crumbled and he got so low he ended up doing impersonations of himself. While the genre is well deserving of skepticism, he could not have gone much further in it.

The show inspired laughs, full audience participation with just the right amount of tragedy.

A Night with Beau Tyler finishes tonight at the Landings Services Building.

### **2009**

#### THEATRE VIEW

##### POWERFUL COMEDY

Downstage Theatre, Wellington

From 8 May 2009 to 23 May 2009

Wellington at last gets to spend A Night with Beau Tyler, or 70 minutes at least. Promising this 'hour' will change our lives forever, he has toured the country for 18 months. Rather than just lecture us with his "Feel the fear and fail anyway!" message, the motivational guru of the Memphis Meltdown TV ads guides us through the transformational process.

There is not much I can add to Nik Smythe's comprehensive review (November 2007), except to agree Peter Feeney's BT offers a brilliant spoof of the genre, and note the content has been kept up-to-date - e.g. among the many inspirational

quotes from luminaries through the ages, we get this from John Key: "A problem ignored is a problem half-solved."

For 'Full Participants' (as opposed to their 'Support Persons'), audience participation emanates (or do I mean enemates?) from practical engagement with BT's Failure Accessed Revitalisation Technique. This propels us into his 10 step plan for embracing a philosophy (or do I mean ontology: a way of being) he encapsulates in the glib notion that "In the land of the blind, the on-eyed man is king."

Just when I feel he is hammering the same message in different words - which, to be fair, is par for this sort of 'self improvement' course - he takes it to another level: a classic downer that ends up proving his point while laying the ground for a big finish. Clever.

With its judicious blend of extroverted charismatic engagement, PowerPoint presentation and compelling introspection, A Night with Beau Tyler invites us to experience and critique the manipulative technologies of transformational motivation while laughing a great deal: at him, them, and most of all our fallible, gullible selves. That's powerful comedy.

Reviewed by John Smythe, 9 May 2009